

THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION  
BROOKINGS CAFETERIA PODCAST

BROOKINGS METRO AT 25: BUILDING A MORE PROSPEROUS, JUST, AND  
RESILIENT FUTURE

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*RON BROWNSTEIN: Brookings Metro is just absolutely indispensable to understanding the core dynamics that are reshaping American life in the 21st century.*

DEWS: Welcome to the Brookings Cafeteria, the podcast about ideas and the experts who have them. I'm Fred Dews.

Last month, Brookings Metro, formerly the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, turned 25. Since Brookings Metro's conception in 1996, America's cities and urban communities have changed dramatically. Today on the Brookings Cafeteria podcast, you'll hear from metropolitan experts on how America's local communities have changed, where things stand at this crucial moment in time amid generational federal investment, and what it will take in the future for every community in America to be prosperous, just, and resilient. At the top of the show, you heard the voice of journalist and author Ron Brownstein on Brookings Metro's work in local communities, one of the voices from outside Brookings that you'll hear throughout this special episode of the podcast.

You'll also hear from two panels of Brookings Metro experts talking about the policy challenges and solutions they engage on, followed by a closing word from the deputy director of Brookings Metro. But first, I'm pleased to be joined by Amy Liu, vice president and director of Brookings Metro. Thanks for joining me, Amy.

LIU: It's great to be with you, Fred.

DEWS: Well, as I mentioned, and this is the 25th anniversary of Brookings Metro, and I'm pretty excited to say that I was there to watch you move in and I gotta say, I love what you've done with the place. Congratulations.

LIU: Thank you, Fred, and it's been wonderful to be working alongside you through these years.

DEWS: We're living in unique times amid a global pandemic, challenges to our democracy, and historical inequities playing out in so many ways. And meanwhile,

Brookings Metro is commemorating 25 years of experience working with leaders on the ground in American cities and generating change there. How have you seen the role of cities change over the last two and a half decades?

LIU: Well, Fred, you're right that we are living in some disruptive times, and that does demand that we do some deep introspection and action all at once. And we do believe that cities and local leaders are at the heart of tackling all those challenges you mentioned.

But in terms of the role of cities, Fred, I think cities have always been employment and population centers for the country. What's changed in the last few decades, however, is that cities as a whole are now seen as sources of economic dynamism and action. You know, the transition to a knowledge economy has accelerated the rise of cities and metropolitan areas as centers of digital innovation, diverse talent, and abundant opportunity. And meanwhile, as federal Washington has actually become more gridlocked, the locus of problem solving has shifted to the local level. And so what we've seen, Fred, is that philanthropy, corporations, media outlets—think Bloomberg and Axios with their own city channels now—and other national institutions, they've all invested in local issues or local solutions. And in turn, what that's done is it has expanded the capacity of local and regional leaders and entities to get even more things done.

So, together, what this means is that cities as a whole now are genuine places of optimism and progress, which is something we badly need today. And I'll say, since you were with us from the very beginning, Fred, this was not always the case. When we started Brookings Metro 25 years ago, cities were experiencing enormous disinvestment as suburbs thrived and city governments were racked by budget constraints and increasing poverty, which created a narrative about city dysfunction. And what you see today is that local communities are instead again at the frontlines of managing a public health crisis, ensuring

workers' transition to better jobs, addressing racial equity. There's more capacity and more solutions now, and more reliance on cities than in the past.

Now all that said, I do want to clarify that for all of the progress that cities have made in the last two decades that not all cities are doing well. We have high-growth tech centers that are grappling with issues of affordability. We have older industrial cities in the American heartland that still struggle to adapt and grow good jobs. And all places need to do better to be racially and economically inclusive, environmentally sustainable. And that's what we hope to help do in the years ahead.

DEWS: Yeah, it's been a fascinating and important journey to watch unfold, both at Brookings and in the nation at large. And you and your colleagues in Brookings Metro have for the entire time have been doing really important work and a lot of important work, research and data on city's economic issues, issues of justice and equity. But over the last year or so, you and the Brookings Metro team spent a lot of time rethinking how you can generate even greater impact going forward, as exemplified by the shift to Brookings Metro. Why did you spend all that time at this moment?

LIU: Well, Fred, I'm not alone to say that the events of 2020 required all of us to step back and ask hard questions about what we can each do to ensure that this country emerges from multiple crises as a stronger, healthier, and more equitable union. And that moment just happened to coincide with our coming 25th anniversary, so it was a great excuse for our team to do the hard work and ask, Why does Brookings Metro exist now? Who do we serve and how can we uniquely add value to our core stakeholders in this really critical time so that we can make a meaningful difference together?

I also felt it was my responsibility as a leader of a preeminent global organization that we interrogate whether we as an organization are perpetuating inequality and exclusion

ourselves through our research, our networks, our operation. And if we are, we have to fix that.

So finally, I'll just say that the pandemic and all the high profile cases of racial injustices exposed for the nation that systemic challenges persist in our nation, whether it's a digital economy that favors too few people and places; a proliferation of low-wage, low-quality work, especially for frontline workers our colleagues have chronicled; systemic discrimination of racism; or climate risks. All of these interrelated challenges that have come to the fore require us to continue to make sure we don't do business as usual. Instead, we have to change norms, change policies, change metrics for success. And I think that's why our team also asked, What would it take for us now to create change at scale?

DEWS: Well, I'll say for listeners that they can learn all about those changes, but also the continuing research that you and your colleagues are doing on our website, "Brookings dot edu slash metro." So, Amy, another question, and this has always fascinated me, and especially in these times, so much attention is put on Washington, the capital city and its polarization and the dysfunction here, but your team at Brookings Metro are seeing, and have always seen, genuine examples of progress and change in local communities, in states and cities and regions throughout the country. What are you hearing from local leaders on what it's going to take to come out better from the historic, systemic, and unprecedented challenges that we're facing now?

LIU: Yeah, Fred, we work with local and regional leaders on a regular basis, and as part of our strategic review, we did interview a bunch of local and national stakeholders and asked them what they needed in this moment. So, it's a great question. And our local leaders, our stakeholders are mayors, they're business groups, they're civic leaders, they're community and nonprofit executives, they're philanthropy—these are the network of leaders that really need to work together to get things done. You mentioned at the opening the intense

polarization in Washington. It doesn't mean that local leaders are immune to the politicization that we're seeing. But the reality is, if we want to address the issues of violent crime or good jobs, or worker pay, is our leaders have to actually work together. And what they do is they prize progress over partisanship. And I think that's what is so unique about the work that's happening on the ground.

So let me just go back to your question. What do we hear that they needed from, at least from Brookings Metro as they try to rise to this moment? First, they said, we need to give them credible local data and frameworks that help them make sense of what is happening in their communities and anticipate what's next. They said help us prioritize and assess what matters because there's a lot, we're drinking from a firehose and it's where should we spend our time? Give us examples of what other cities are doing so that we can learn, not reinvent the wheel. And, more importantly, be part of a bigger collective movement. They also said help us deliver more responsive state and federal policies, because of all the hard work we're doing, it's actually really tough to work around policy barriers that are hard wired in decades-old public policies.

And finally, they said, we need a holistic, affirmative vision of what is possible. This work is so hard and we need to believe change can happen. And I'm really grateful you're going to hear from colleagues on our team later in the podcast because they will give you even more examples of what local leaders really need for transformative change and rebuild better. But I would argue that I find local leaders a bit exhausted, certainly by the challenges of the past year, but they are eager and ready to roll up their sleeves and respond to the moment.

DEWS: Well, Amy, I think that's a nice segue way to a question about the stakes. Amid so much uncertainty over the last couple of years, amidst so much hyper polarization in

Washington, especially, what does it look like for the country when American cities are successful?

LIU: Fred, I think it's really important in this environment that we demonstrate that the journey to be a more perfect union is always ongoing, but possible. And so I want to close, Fred, by just summarizing, as a result of all these questions and hard questions from the past year, what are we going to do to help our local leaders meet this moment and to create a more perfect union, as the stakes are so high? And then what that might mean. I would say that, first, Brookings Metro now exists to advance an affirmative vision in which every community in this union can be prosperous, just, and resilient, no matter its starting point. Whether Washington or Wichita, or Minneapolis or Memphis, we believe every community can be a better version of itself. To do that, we will serve local leaders—the mix of public, private, philanthropic leaders who work every day in cities and regions to make change possible. And these leaders also need supportive state and federal policies. So we will work with lawmakers to bridge local, state, and federal interests.

And we will stand out from other national organizations and do unique work because of our unique value-add to these communities. We will help them see around the corner with new data-driven insights that they trust. We will collaborate, so those insights lead to common cause and new solutions in their communities. And then we are going to connect these leaders to other cities to inform their implementation and to make sure that state and federal policymakers support their ingenuity and create greater reforms.

And that, in short, Fred, is why we have a new mission to collaborate with local leaders, to transform original insights into solutions and practices that scale nationally through our networks and through policy. The stakes require us not just to be working in an ad hoc way in different cities across the country. It is time that we help cities build the capacity to drive progress for the nation. We help them to deliver solutions at scale, at the

systemic challenges we all face. And that we have more allies in common cause because the work is too important for us to be working in a divided way, but in a more collective way. And I think if we can do this together, Fred, with local, state, and federal leaders, we have a really good chance of creating a more prosperous, just, and resilient future.

DEWS: Well, Amy, I want to thank you so much for joining me on the podcast today and shedding light on the challenges and also the great opportunities that lie before us and for American cities. And also, congratulations to you on 25 years of important scholarship and leadership in the space. It's been wonderful to watch this program grow and thrive so well.

LIU: Well, thank you so much, Fred, and I have to say we wouldn't be able to do this if it wasn't for the support of Brookings, who's really supported our team to continue to innovate and experiment. And this Brookings community has been just a great place to do this work.

DEWS: Next on the episode, we'll hear from three experts in Brookings Metro: Senior Fellow Mark Muro, Fellow Joe Parilla, and associate director of regional engagement Jade Arn, as they discuss this unique federal moment for local and state leaders. On the way there, here's what David Johnson, president and CEO of the Central Indiana Corporate Partnership, had to say about collaborating with Brookings Metro.

*DAVID JOHNSON: Brookings Metro is going to be immensely valuable to states like ours, and probably every other state the country, in terms of helping to figure out how best to recover from COVID and what building back better is really going to look like.*

PARILLA: I'm Joe Parilla, fellow at Brookings Metro.

ARN: I'm Jade Arn, associate director of regional engagement at Brookings Metro.

MURO: Hey, and I'm Mark Muro, senior fellow here.

PARILLA: So great to be doing this with you both. Mark, maybe I'll kick it off with a question for you. We're in this really exciting moment where local and state leaders are



planning for really what is a round of federal relief and stimulus investments that haven't been seen in our lifetimes. How have we got here? What led us to this point? And then we can dive in on responses, but maybe just scene set for us a bit.

MURO: Yeah, yeah, totally, Joe, yeah. It's taken some doing, let's say that. It wasn't always like this for sure. And we've been here at Brookings Metro in the middle of a pretty long slog that's been involved in getting the nation, and the government, and cities to where they are now on these topics. When Brookings Metro was founded twenty-five years ago, and for a decade and more, cities were still viewed as problems, troubled, you know, full of the wrong people, ungovernable. Cities seemed on the wrong side of all the big trends—suburbanization, the so-called death of distance that came from the internet. It didn't look good. So there's a lot of work needed just to see the assets, to talk about the assets, kind of a rehabilitation in action.

And there was a decade where a lot of us were determined to advance an asset-based story in which cities and regions were the dominant drivers. Through that, these cities were increasingly recognized as hubs of innovation, amenities, technology, exchange, diversity, skills, trade and sector dynamism. The whole works. And that was progress, a lot closer to the moment you're talking about, Joe.

But then there's been the need to grapple much more seriously with race and full array of disparities that were exposed in the pandemic and after the killing of George Floyd.

So, this recent period we're seeing is the emergence of a vision of inclusive growth. And I think that's what we're really talking about here. It's taken 25 or 30 years, but the nation does now, I think, better see the centrality of cities, see their needs squarely, and actually importantly, trust their leaders to manage the investment of truly significant resources.

So, that's I think what's gotten us here. It's taken a while for the zeitgeist, the trends, and policy come together. But like Joe, Jade, you know, we should talk a little about what the leaders out in the country are saying. I may be totally wrong in the way I'm seeing things, but thinking about the unprecedented flows of relief, recovery, economic development, money coming down the pike here, what are we hearing from local leaders in terms of how they plan to use these funds?

PARILLA: Right, and you know, I think you brought us through 25 years really quickly, but of course, this was punctuated by all these crises. First, the public health crisis, the ensuing economic crisis, all coinciding with racial and social reckoning. And, so in many ways, there had been this long preparation for local governance to receive these resources to really address some longstanding problems, but they're simultaneously having to address all these near-term crises while I think also being sophisticated and savvy enough to think, Hey, this is an infusion of resources that could allow me to address a lot of the longstanding challenges that I had in my city, or in my state.

And so I think that is the starting point for receiving these resources. And there's a lot of resources. A lot of leaders are focused on this \$350 billion within the American Rescue Plan, which was a 1.9 trillion dollar bill. But the 350 billion really went to local, state, and tribal governments to address the public health and economic crisis, address the fiscal challenges that they kind of were thought to have had--some did have, some not so intensively. And then Treasury has said, not only can you use these dollars to really deal with those health and economic effects, but you can do so in a way, and you have a time horizon through 2027, to spend the money in a way that leads to some longer term outcomes related to inclusive growth as kind of the starting point.

So, what we've been hearing, and this is based on dozens of interviews that our colleague Brad Whitehead did and a lot of conversations that we've had, is that the initial

tranche of that funding—so half of the money came this past spring to these governments—it's really a stabilization agenda, they're putting the floor back under government by refilling government coffers, putting services back online that may have been taken off, ensuring that they've got the staff and technological capabilities to, like, invest wisely to address these challenges, and then putting a floor under residents in communities. So, ensuring that, A, the public health conditions are safe enough for economic activity to resume. There's no recovery without addressing the virus, of course. And then, too, stabilizing households such that they can participate in an economic recovery. So this is things like housing stabilization and anti-homelessness. This is things like moving emergency relief for food, rent, even broadband access. And a lot of that relief had been flowing through local governments during the CARES Act, which had been the federal bill at the height of the crisis in 2020. And so you've seen a bit of a continuation there in terms of the stabilization agenda.

What we haven't seen, at least by our review of these interviews and looking across a bunch of different cities, is major transformational, strategic, multi-jurisdictional, multisector programs and strategies that are really aimed at kind of big bets to address inclusive growth. And that, I think, is not because local leaders are not interested in doing that. It is because, A, they are still dealing with a crisis and, B, they have to plan for those kinds of investments. If you want to address problems in a way that you haven't before, you have to plan and resource policies and strategies in a way that wasn't being done before.

And so we're seeing right now an open question as to how many local governments are going to seize that mantle of transformation. And, you know, we put out a piece last week called Opportunity Knocking, and the notion was, Hey, these resources are once in a generation opportunity and opportunity is knocking and will local leaders answer the door? And so, a lot of the insights that I just put forward are embedded in that piece, and I encourage people to check it out.

ARN: Thanks, Joe. I think your observations are spot on and definitely in line with a lot of the conversations that we continue to have today. I think what's really going to be interesting from my perspective is to see what kinds of programs or sort of longer term strategies different regions are looking to advance through a couple of discrete funding opportunities through the Economic Development Administration. So, I know that we're all kind of eagerly anticipating the announcement of awards through the Build Back Better regional challenge. Out of the 529 phase one applications, it'll be really interesting to see what ultimately is submitted to go through that first TA and planning phase.

I think it's hard to say, but I'm curious, too, if what we're seeing with the rescue plan resources under the state and local fiscal recovery funds will play out similarly here, if there are going to be longer term strategic cluster strategy plays here through this investment, rather than the focus on projects maybe as discrete interventions that maybe had already been sort of planned and aren't necessarily connected to a longer term intensive growth strategies in a particular region.

So, I don't know if you have any thoughts on that either of you, Mark or Joe? I know that you've had a lot of conversations over the past couple of months with different places probably thinking about both the Build Back Better regional challenge, as well as some of the Good Jobs Challenge opportunities through EDA as well. And my sense is those are some of the some of the discussions that are happening in different regions as they're preparing for both of those opportunities.

PARILLA: Yeah, what's really interesting about those two programs is not their scale. It's the clarity with which the federal government put forward requirements on those grants to, for local institutions to behave in a way that could make it more likely to lead to longer term economic transformation. So, what do I mean by that? I mean, one of the challenges with the fiscal recovery funds that I talked about earlier is that, A, they offered kind of no

carrots or sticks for multi-jurisdictional collaboration. So like in a region, every municipality, local city government, county government got their own resources. But it's been hard, as we've observed, for these jurisdictions to co-plan and co-invest at a regional scale—we know so many of these challenges are regional, and yet there's been no incentive to do that kind of regional collaboration, whereas these EDA grants explicitly did do that.

By the same token, there was no real incentive for, I think, a lot of good reasons, for there to kind of be this forced multi sector collaboration with the Fiscal Recovery Fund. So, I think smart local governments are, and government leaders are, undertaking processes that are multi sector, meaning they're consulting community based stakeholders, they're talking to philanthropy about how they can braid and blend government investments with philanthropic investments, they're talking to the private sector about how they can play a role. But I guess the Build Back Better regional challenge and the Good Jobs challenge, those were those were requirements from EDA for all of those actors to work together. And that's just what coming off of the 2008-2009 ARRA lessons learned when we did, you know, a rescue bill—work that I know you looked a lot at back in the Great Recession. The lesson learned there was if you can bring together multi-jurisdictional, multisector coalitions to do planning, you had a better shot of these investments making lasting change as opposed to kind of a one, a one and done. So it's really interesting even to compare and contrast these things within the American Rescue Plan, depending on which part of the bill you're looking at.

MURO: And yet, of course, that's an unnatural act. So you need these incentives. You know, it's hard stuff.

PARILLA: So it's easy, I think, to assume that local leaders, whether—and when we say local leaders, we're talking about mayors, and city council, so elected officials, public officials, but then also civic leaders, the individuals that are running major non-profits or

philanthropies, university presidents, community college leaders, economic development and workforce development leaders—it's easy to assume that they have, you know, what they need to make informed decisions for their communities. They've been planning around these issues for a while. They obviously are painfully aware of the challenges in their communities. And yet I don't think we can presume that right now. This is just an extremely complicated governing exercise, probably the most complicated governance exercise in recent memory. And so the question, I think, is how can we empower, inform, work with and through local leaders to ensure that they're, got all the information that they that they need to make good decisions at this moment.

MURO: Yeah, totally. I mean, a few things come to mind. Some informed by Brad Whitehead's interviews that you referenced with local leaders and associated ... association professionals. I mean, one thing is ensuring that agency guidance on fund usage is very clear. There have been, I think, questions about CARES Act implementation, and I think there's open questions of ambiguity and maybe holding back some of the deployment of resources or creating a kind of caution. So I think, you know, making sure that guidance is very clear and so on.

Another thing is that Congress and agencies can do that can make a big difference is investing in technical assistance. I mean, it seems we've done this edgewise for decades. But a great example of this done at really at scale is the Build Back Better regional challenge we've been talking about, which is awarding 500,000 dollars in technical assistance and planning funds to 50 or 60 regional coalitions to develop their ideas before awarding 20 to 30 regions, you know, significant 25 to \$75 million implementation grants. So that's certainly going to help leaders develop and deliver better ideas and implementation. And so I think not viewing that as edgewise but moving it central to the hoped for the emergence of new skills, new implementation, really and frankly new inspiration and ambition.

So I think that's very important and it's something that we're seeing in a few other areas, too. So this may become a kind of distinguishing aspect of this round in some parts of the government.

And one other support for strong results is simply peer learning. Build Back Better regional challenge is very much investing in providing such resources through a community of practice for awardees to allow best practice learning and sharing to enhance outcomes. I think this is also encouraging, and I think it makes a ton of sense in the sense of maybe as a prompt to philanthropy and other interested organizations to get into the business of creating more shared learning platforms.

ARN: Yeah, I think a lot of what you just outlined, Mark, is in line with what we're thinking about in terms of opportunities for Brookings Metro to help partner with and empower local leaders in this moment. And I think that looks like, for example, translation, unpacking, and mapping out what lives within these various bills and regulations. For example, the myriad of components and programs just within the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act. I know, Joe, you and some of our other colleagues, as you just mentioned, have been doing a lot of thinking and work around what's within the rescue plan. I know our colleagues are thinking a lot about IIJA. And then, Mark, you've been doing a lot of thinking about what lives within Build Back Better and other things. So I'd certainly encourage you all to hop in with some comments on the thinking that you're doing and work in that space.

But another area that I think we see a need for and have an opportunity to partner and collaborate with local leaders on is around monitoring and learning. So like the writing that we've been doing on all of these various acts, the tracking of spending, convening of local leaders around how to use these funds, thinking through innovative uses ways, to my next point, organize themselves for impact. So I think we have an opportunity to work with

different groups of local leaders to really harness those federal dollars for a longer term inclusive recovery as we've just been talking about.

And then I think really adding up insights for the federal government based on not only input from local leaders who are ultimately responsible for implementing these resources, but also creating spaces and tables for them to come together with our experts here at Brookings Metro and with federal agencies and other federal leaders around design and implementation. So, for example, bringing together some folks around some of the programs that SBA is looking to launch to have discussions about the actual practical implications when it comes to implementing those on the ground. So, I don't know, Joe, if there's anything, or Mark, that you would add on in terms of examples of those kind of four categories of ways in which we're envisioning helping empower local leaders in this really, I think, complicated and ripe for opportunity time?

PARILLA: I think those are any of those are exactly the four things: translation, monitoring, organizing local leaders, and adding up the insights so that whatever we're learning from these interviews and working sessions and ad hoc conversations is somewhat organized for the federal government, who is also trying to very much understand how is implementation going, what is needed in terms of rule clarification, are there federal resources that can be brought to bear for some of the things that Mark talked about with respect to technical assistance and peer learning. And the federal government has activated within individual agencies these this kind of continuous learning regime when it comes to new policies and programs, and now it's just having to do that across its entire apparatus because every part of the federal government is being activated in really new and complicated ways. So I think you did a great job of kind of walking through what's needed.

The only two things I'd highlight are just examples that folks may be interested in looking at—our infrastructure team led by Adie Tomer had a great piece about the



infrastructure bill, just a really crisp look through what's in it, what does it mean. And what the work that they're doing around both documenting this historic infrastructure moment, but then a partnership that they've undertaken in San Diego to almost have a learning laboratory in one city for how that region is utilizing both the American Rescue Plan, the infrastructure bill, potentially Build Back Better, along with other funding sources to make really significant changes to policies that influence the built environment related to housing, transportation, and land use. So that, to me, is that the right mix.

And then taking the research insights, the application in a place and then filtering it back up to those federal agencies that are going to be actually rolling out a ton of new programing as part of the infrastructure bill, I just think is a really good impact model that is incorporating a lot of the things that you just said, Jade.

And then the other thing I'll add is that this is a moment that is really vulnerable to a wonky term, but information asymmetries. Like everybody kind of presumes everybody knows everything. And yet we get incredibly basic questions about eligible uses for these resources, good policy and practice. And so it would be a shame, I guess, for the federal government to activate several trillion dollars and then not pull behind it, along with philanthropy and other nonprofits, the kind of muscle to make the most of those dollars. Like, on a relative scale, it does not cost much money to set up a learning network or a community of practice. But the amount of resources that could be influenced in this moment are tremendous. So the ROI on getting that right seems pretty high.

And that's where I do think EDA should be commended for this their approach with their grant programs to have learning networks tied to them, and that philanthropy has really spent a lot of time thinking about, you know, those types of that type of learning infrastructure. And it just needs to be activated right now and it can be domain specific—you can do it for different individual policy domains, and then I think it can be process specific

meaning, how do you lead a recovery planning exercise that is inclusive and durable and sustained. And so getting the civics right around American Rescue Plan planning is something that we're contemplating. How do you work with a few cities to make sure that the right players are at the table and that, you know, money's being activated in the best way possible and then it's sustained. I think the big challenge with ARP is this fiscal cliff. And so Mark, what do you think?

MURO: I mean, these are exactly the kind of things that it is impossible to discuss as an objective of recovery work and reinvestment work in the United States. But it's absolutely crucial to renew government to deliver on this stuff and to recreate the networks of actors out there. So you know this, I think this is one of the sleeper issues and one of the real contributions and kind of distinguishing aspects of this round of generational reinvestment we're talking about. So I'm with you. I think it's exciting to look at.

ARN: Joe, you got into this a little bit in your comments a moment ago, and actually you too, Mark, as you were just wrapping up. I think we're just in such a different place now for a variety of reasons. But over a year ago, the outlook for local support from the federal government was frankly rather bleak. And now, with the midterms on the horizon, how can the American Rescue Plan, the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and potentially additional support from reconciliation provide lasting economic change that outlives the next immediate political cycle?

MURO: There's a political moment that has delivered the opportunity for locally driven, locally assembled lasting change, and I think that's what can endure through political cycles. So it's strong implementation really matters—focusing on key core issues and regions, doing an excellent job in implementing this; setting clear guiding principles and definitions; collaborating, coordinating, intentionally seeking lasting change. I mean, make

that the objective in regions. And I think that's where things are, you know can become more durable and can begin to have a lasting influence on even the national discourse.

PARILLA: The biggest concern I hear when I talk to folks in local government is just they don't want this to be a temporary blip where they create a bunch of new programs that need ongoing support, but then we return at the end of this window of tremendous federal stimulus to the era that we had just been in, which was kind of bare bones in terms of the federal government's investment in local communities on issues that are pertinent to inclusive growth.

And so it is a very hard needle to thread to simultaneously say, I want to kind of change the trajectory of my local economy over a period of time, which can't really be done in a couple of years, you know. It's got to be done over an investment cycle, really, you know, 10, 20 years. So the creative work that needs to be done, particularly for the second tranche of American Rescue Plan funding—setting aside the infrastructure bill, which has its own kind of time horizon and slightly different than the American Rescue Plan, but just focusing on the American Rescue Plan for a minute—there are probably ways to build in sustainability to strategies that are supported by ARP. But it's going to kind of require all the things you just said, Mark, in terms of bringing in non-governmental players that are typically not operating on political cycles in the same way that local government is.

And to the extent that there are active philanthropies, you know, that have played a major role in communities as diverse as Detroit and Pittsburgh and Indianapolis to say, okay, well, if government's going to start this, do I have an exit ramp where there's going to be sustained co-investment from philanthropy or corporations or just other sources? And then can the federal government maybe learn a bit from what works with ARP to say, okay, if this is really what rebuilding better looks like, how do we sustain flexible capacity building resources for local communities to achieve the types of economic outcomes that we all want

to see? So it's not ... We're not going to have the American Rescue Plan every five years, but we could have more than what we had as a baseline prior to the crisis in terms of flexible funding to support the types of economic planning and implementation that we've been talking about here.

ARN: I would just echo everything that Joe said. I think there's a real intentionality around that, at least in conversations at the local and regional levels.

PARILLA: It's been great chatting with you all. I wish we were actually in the Brookings Cafeteria. Soon, maybe. But, thanks so much for a good conversation. Next up, we get to hear from three great colleagues: Jenny Schuetz, Molly Kinder, and Andre Perry, they're going to discuss really interesting work they're doing to highlight public policies in need of reform, including the nation's disparate housing policies, labor developments amid the great resignation—it's a new term for the labor market—and value of assets in Black communities throughout the country, the work that Andre has been leading for a couple of years now. So check that out. Thanks, everybody.

DEWS: Tawanna Black is founder and CEO of the Center for Economic Inclusion, an organization dedicated to advancing economic inclusion across all sectors in the Minneapolis-St. Paul region.

*TAWANNA BLACK: Brookings Metro has been a credible and intentional research partner who can not only help us bring to light the facts about our region as it relates to inclusive growth but can help put a lens on the interpretation of that data and opportunities for action.*

DEWS: And now, here's our second panel.

SCHUETZ: Hi, I'm Jenny Schuetz, I'm a senior fellow at Brookings Metro.

KINDER: Hi, I'm Molly Kinder, I'm a fellow at Brookings Metro.

PERRY: And I'm Andre Perry, senior fellow in Metro.

SCHUETZ: Molly and Andre, it's so great to see you, theoretically. We're coming to the end of yet another year of what's been now our second almost full year of the pandemic. So this has been a tough time for all of us. But the end of the year is a nice time to kind of sit back and reflect a little bit what we've learned, what we've been doing. Molly, it feels like every time I pick up a newspaper or turn on the headlines, there's some conversation about the future of work and the uncertainty workers and workplaces and all things related to labor markets, which is one of your areas. So I'm wondering, as you sort of look back over the last year and a half, what do you think that we've learned about the relationship between workers and firms over the last year and a half?

KINDER: Great, thanks, Jenny. So what strikes me is here we are going into the second pandemic holiday season. It's amazing for workers in grocery stores, in warehouses, package handlers. This is the second busy holiday season that they've confronted so far in this pandemic. And my gosh, have workers gone through a lot from, you know, months and months of exposure to COVID without even being able to be vaccinated. Still, today here we are worrying about a new variant that might escape some of our immunity. And then at the same time, so many workers were furloughed and laid off last holiday season.

And now, if you fast forward to today, what we're seeing in headlines is how understaffed and overstressed and overworked so many of these hourly frontline workers are. We're in the middle of a labor shortage, which means that oftentimes workers are going to work in environments where there's not enough staff, which makes for them a much more stressful experience.

And what I'm hearing when I talk to workers and what we're seeing in headlines is that's leaving workers with this big question, is this even worth it, particularly if the pay they're bringing home is low? And I think that is really feeding in to what we're seeing in the

headlines with workers voting with their feet, with a huge number of workers, particularly in frontline and low wage industries, leaving their jobs in pursuit of something else.

I also think you're seeing a lot of strikes, a lot of unrest, labor unrest, a lot of union activity. And I think a lot of this is changing what workers are expecting and asking of their employers. And it's not just an issue of pay, although that's obviously a big one. I think workers are expressing a frustration with their schedules, their hours with the nature and demanding nature of their job, often with a lack of respect.

And finally, a lot of workers would like to have more say in what their job is, what the working conditions are, which is why I think you're seeing a really a historic level of support for unions. So I think a lot has changed over the last nearly two years of the pandemic because of how much workers have gone through. They're expecting more. They're demanding more. And because of this labor shortage, they have a little bit more leverage to actually to get more out of their employers.

SCHUETZ: Yeah, all of that completely resonates from what we've been reading in the papers. Andre, often when we look at statistics about the economy sort of progress, how we're doing coming out of the recession, the topline numbers are very high level in aggregate. So what's the national unemployment rate or, you know, every week we get the total number of jobs lost, the monthly jobs reports. So these very top level statistics. And you've obviously spent a lot of time thinking about sort of what happens below that level. What are we missing when we just focus on the sort of high level, and in particular what are we missing about how Black Americans, different population groups are doing?

PERRY: Yeah. Jenny. What's interesting, we started tracking full employment during the Trump administration because as many people know, Trump boasted of low unemployment rates, the lowest for African Americans, the lowest for Hispanics, the lowest in on record for America in general.

But as you indicated, when you look under the hood and you look at the racial disparities, you look at the regional disparities, our concepts like full employment really don't capture what's going on in cities across the country. And we know that in the meat of the pandemic, unemployment was at a record high. And then we started to see the recovery, which, quite frankly, was a lot better than many people predicted early on. But we started to see very different outcomes for Black workers and white workers and that Black workers are still posting much higher unemployment rates overall, in some cases double. The most recent jobs report showed that Black unemployment rate was double that of whites. And so Jerome Powell, who just got a another four years, when he raises interest rates, what will that mean for Black Americans overall? That's something to keep a lookout for.

And in addition, we also saw a reversal of months and months of increased participation by Black women. We saw a dramatic decline in labor participation, but it coincided as schools started to reopen and more students started to go in, which suggests that the cost of childcare may have something to do with this. And a lot of people are pointing to that, including our own Kristen Broady as well as Makada Henry-Nickie, indicated that that child care might play a part, but they also know that Black women just don't drop out of the labor force for economic reasons, or they're not sitting on the couch. They're probably in the informal economy and gig work and other jobs that aren't necessarily picked up by the employment numbers. And so there is a tale of caution.

And then one other point I want to make the 16-to-19-year-olds are really struggling in Black America, really struggling. And when we're talking about women, when we're talking about young Black men, these are the people we really need to see equity from our labor markets because those are the people who, you know are essentially the underappreciated assets and in our communities.

So, we should not just look at the big unemployment numbers, the aggregate numbers, because the stories underneath the hood of that aggregate number tell a different story.

But I'm going to throw it back to you, Jenny. You know, housing has been on the lips of every commentator and newscaster, it seems, that we've heard a lot about moratorium, about barriers to homeownership. Tell us what's going on with housing in general during this pandemic? And are there any housing policy models or successors worth tracking?

SCHUETZ: Sure. So I think similar to what Molly was pointing out, the pandemic has really cast a spotlight on a bunch of trends that already pre-existed but have really come into sharp relief and gotten more attention. There are three trends in particular that I think we've paid attention to. First is just how many Americans were getting by month to month, barely able to pay the rent or the mortgage, you know, one missed paycheck away from going through an eviction or foreclosure, no financial cushion even before the pandemic hit. Right. So we, I think middle class Americans were not aware just how financially fragile a lot of households were, and particularly renter households who tend to be younger, lower income have less wealth.

The second thing that we've seen is how different the federal government's approach is in the rental market and the homeownership market. So the U.S. decades ago decided it was going to put all of its eggs in the homeownership basket. Federal government has a really big footprint in the mortgage market, so it has policy tools to help homeowners when they get into trouble. You know, the federal government was essentially able to say all homeowners can have a year to pay their mortgage payments, a year of forbearance. There's no similar mechanism in the rental market, right. Rental markets are regulated at the state level. Renter protections are carried out by local governments through the county court system. And we've seen that there just isn't an infrastructure to support renters. There isn't financial support.



There aren't consistent legal protections. And that's been just a giant blind spot for a lot of policymakers for a long time.

The third trend that we've seen as we've gotten into the recovery: People are starting to go back to work. They are looking to expand the amount of housing they have to maybe have a home with a home office. So we have to see just this enormous increase in demand, both renter households and homeowners, first-time homebuyers, people wanting more space and not having enough houses. So, you know, for really for the last 30 years, we've been under building housing, especially in the places with strongest demand, places with strong job markets, with good schools, with access to economic opportunity. And the last year and a half have shown us just how much pent up demand there is and that our supply system, our whole housing production system, fundamentally isn't able to step up and to provide more housing, especially in these places of high demand, often because of the rules that local governments apply that make it difficult to build housing. So these are very longstanding trends. We're not going to fix them overnight.

Maybe a teeny tiny silver lining of all of this attention is that we're having more conversations about what we need to do differently. So the enormous and unprecedented amount of federal financial support for renters, we've never seen anything like that. It's tided people over, but we're also seeing proposals in the Build Back Better Act, for instance, for long term increases in rental support that would be incredibly important and useful. We're having more conversations at the federal, state, and local level about how do we deal with the supply problem? How do we actually get more homes online? And everybody from the Council of Economic Advisers to states like California and Washington that are passing statewide zoning reforms and local governments, communities are having these conversations. How do we build more housing in the right places? How do we get around these deeply entrenched patterns of racial and economic segregation that are reinforced by

some of these zoning rules? And this is at least coming to the forefront of a conversation about something that's urgent and some promising reforms that we might be able to push on now that there's more public attention to the problem.

PERRY: Now, that sounds like you've written extensively on that. It sounds like some book material. Very quickly, you got something coming out here soon?

SCHUETZ: Yes, and I used my pandemic time off, quote unquote, to write a book called "Fixer Upper: How to Repair America's Broken Housing Systems," which will be coming out from Brookings Press in February 2020. So mark your calendars.

SCHUETZ: We'll have to do a joint book tour, Andre. You and I can pair up and pitch our books together.

PERRY: Let's get it.

KINDER: Well, I know I already have Andre's book squarely on my bookshelf prominently at home, and Jenny, I can't wait to have yours. You managed to name it after one of my favorite TV shows, and I have no doubt the book will be as entertaining, but also as illuminating as your Twitter feed, which is a must follow.

So, Tawanna's quote a few minutes ago was really instructive to hear. At the end of the day at Brookings Metro, our goal is to be candid with local leaders and with communities about the economic realities in their backyard, and the policy recommendations that can make a difference. And to that end, Andre, Jenny, myself, our colleagues at Brookings Metro, we're each working respectively on a policy driven initiative. In our group here, we've got resilient regions, worker pay and power, and valuing Black assets. And these initiatives are really meant to prioritize specific swaths of policies. So Jenny, how are you working with your colleagues to deliver on our Resilient Regions Initiative work and what have been some of the policy wins you've encountered?

SCHUETZ: Sure. So the Resilient Regions Initiative—I should say I'm working closely with my colleagues at Adie Tomer and Joe Kane, our colleagues Rushaine Goulbourne and Caroline George. The idea behind resilient regions is really that the U.S. needs to make some big structural changes to the way cities and urban areas develop over space, particularly around the built environment. And we're focused on how a better way of approaching urban development can improve our climate resilience, economic opportunity, and reduce some of the inequities that we see in our society.

So one way to think about this, for instance, is that more than two thirds of new housing that we add each year is built in suburban and exurban communities—so on kind of the fringe of urban areas. That means that most of the homes we're building are really far away from jobs, so people have to drive long distances to get back and forth to work. We're also building these primarily in low-density, car dependent suburbs, which means that even to do something like go to the grocery store and get a gallon of milk, people have to get in their car and drive. This is obviously bad for the planet, but it's also not great for individual households, right. Owning and maintaining a car is really expensive, especially for low wage workers who often get pushed to kind of the urban fringe in search of cheaper housing. And we also see these patterns really reinforcing long standing patterns of racial and economic segregation, where rich people outbid poorer households for the most desirable locations.

So we're using a lot of resources, we're damaging the planet, we're limiting economic opportunity for a lot of people. The problem is that to fix that, we've got to get over a bunch of structural issues. Things like decisions over land use are made at the hyper-local level by individual neighborhoods that don't match the regional scale of the labor market. And we don't price things appropriately, especially things like pollution, use of natural resources. So we don't have an incentive to sort of come up with a better way to build cities, given these sort of big structures about how we make decisions.

So, Adie and Joe and I are really excited about a couple of new projects. We have just this fall launched a five year partnership in the San Diego region. We'll be working with the San Diego Regional Policy Innovation Center, which is a newly stood up, essentially think tank in the San Diego area, the San Diego Foundation. Elected officials and staff from the county and a bunch of cities. This is really an all hands on deck effort to think more holistically about housing, land use, worker training, transportation infrastructure, water, climate resilience—all of these are part of the same problems, and some of the policy solutions can get it better outcomes across these dimensions. So this is a fantastic example of what Metro is hoping to do, that we're going to work with community leaders on the ground in a particular place, develop solutions that are effective, that are politically feasible, test them out and see how they work, and then take these lessons and share them with other regions and parts of the country. So we're hoping very much to learn from San Diego, try some things, and then be able to share those lessons so that other communities find a better way to build cities.

Molly, you're active in the new worker pay and power initiative. Tell us a little bit about what the thinking is behind this and what you're hoping to do.

KINDER: Great. Thanks, Jenny. So one of the reasons why I was so excited to join Brookings Metro over two years ago was because there was already such great work happening with our colleagues around low wage workers. So Martha Ross and Nicole Bateman put out just an incredible report a little over two years ago documenting just a preponderance of low wage jobs in this country, that nearly half of workers earn low wages, wages that are really difficult to support just even the basic needs of a family, let alone save and invest and build for a future. So this is something that Brookings Metro has a really strong head start. We have a strong core of us who are really thinking a lot about how do we improve the quality of jobs.

And the Worker Pay and Power initiative is really building on what we've seen over the pandemic. And to Jenny's point earlier, that the pandemic has really shown a harsher spotlight on existing problems. Pay, low pay for workers is one of, I think, the biggest headlines of the pandemic. And if you think back to the beginning, at first what happened was there was just society waking up, being much more aware that the workers who were staffing our grocery stores and our nursing homes and our hospitals, who were risking their lives when so many of us, including the three of us who are talking right now, were safely working from home. So much of that burden of the risk of keeping the country moving in the pandemic fell on workers who didn't even earn enough to provide for the very family members their jobs were putting at risk.

And I think there was a collective eye-opening, a collective sense of this is not okay in a country as wealthy as ours, that there is so much low wage work and so much sacrifice. And I think a lot of what we saw with the work that I did with colleagues last year was really shining a spotlight on that sacrifice of frontline essential workers.

And there were some wins. So from a temporary perspective, we did see some large companies and retail companies and others temporarily raising wages for workers in the form of hazard pay. And that's an issue that we did a lot of work on. We put together some data that really chronicled that some of the biggest names in retail and grocery where there was so much public goodwill for the workers who were doing that work in the pandemic, those companies were earning just unprecedented profits and really not turning that around and paying workers a living wage. So we raised attention to that and we saw a lot of policy response in terms of cities and counties passing mandates to raise wages for workers, as well as companies responding.

And now a lot of our work for the Worker Pay and Power Initiative is focusing on permanent wages—how are we going to get to a place where workers in this economy, who

are producing value for society and value for the economy, can actually provide the basics for their for their households. We're doing some really deep analysis to look at where is pay for front line workers today, starting with some of the biggest name employers across industries. We've done a really deep dive that's going to come out in the new year, looking at exactly how much workers' pay has gone up and comparing that to companies' performance, how shareholders have done, and really asking some deep questions about how equitable our economy is and the extent to which our major employers in this country are living up to the pledges they've made to pay workers fairly.

We have a piece coming out that's going to show that despite all the headlines you've heard with worker wages going up, actually for a lot of frontline workers at some of the most famous companies that you can think of when you take into account inflation, wages are barely up. For some, they're not up at all. And we have some quotes in there from Lisa Harris, who's a Kroger cashier, saying just the enormous sacrifice and stress of her job, it's she barely makes more when you take into account inflation than she did two years ago, and it's causing her to really question, is this even worth it? So we're raising some really big questions about how can companies how can society deliver better for workers.

And I think this last part of it around worker power is so salient, especially today with not just public sympathy toward workers, but actually more power in the hands of workers to demand more, more labor unrest, more interest in unions. So our work is really understanding, number one, what can be done to ensure that workers have that power, have that voice to be able to shape the conditions and the pay and the benefits that matter to them? And really, actually, why is this even in the interests of businesses to allow workers to unionize? I'm working with a new nonresident senior fellow, Katie Bach, on a piece laying out why this actually might be in companies' financial interest as well.

So our work is really about this core question of how do we improve the quality of jobs, the pay, and the power for so many millions of hourly workers in this country who, as we've seen over the last two years, have sacrificed so much.

Now, Andre, last but not least, we'd love to hear from you a little more about the Valuing Black Assets Initiative and your successful work bringing these issues to the forefront. And it has indeed been successful. I feel like every time I turn around, there is your work is being cited and from everything from popular culture to the media to policymakers. So tell us exactly what this is and the success you've seen.

PERRY: Well, first of all, I'm excited about the initiatives I've heard so far. And I hope listeners can see how the crossover that's involved, that you must work with the built environment, you must work with people. You can't ignore the policies, that overarching context in which we live. And so there's a lot of connections between our work.

You know, for me, I always tell people that nothing grows without investment, nothing grows without investment. And when we look at the state of Black communities, a lot of people always look to individual behaviors as the causes for those conditions. One of my favorite quotes in all the world is by Vietnamese philosopher Thích Nhất Hạnh. Excuse me if I'm mispronouncing that. But he states, if you see a head of lettuce and it's not growing, you don't blame the lettuce. You look to see if it's getting water. You look to see if the soil is enriched. You see if it's getting sunlight. You never blame the lettuce. What we do in Black America is we blame the lettuce all day long. And so for me, I want to get back to what's the rainwater we need in Black communities? What does the soil need to feel and look like? What's the rainwater and the sunlight that we need?

So essentially, the Valuing Black Assets Initiative is a series of partnerships and reports that really highlight the strengths in Black communities, the assets that are worthy of investment but are devalued. You know, the study that really captured a lot of this is what we

did on home values where we looked at homes in Black neighborhoods where the share of the Black population is 50 percent or higher, compared them to homes in which the share of the Black population is less than a percent. And we controlled for education, crime, all those individual behavioral characteristics people say the reason for what without controlling for those things amounts to about a 50 percent difference. But when you control for those issues are those factors, you can still come up with a 23 percent gap, about 48,000 per home. Cumulatively, there's about a 156 billion in lost equity that we need to restore. And so that that situation in housing is in many ways a metaphor for Black Life. We have assets that are much stronger than they are priced. And so we must figure out ways to make markets work for people, to remove the drags of racism from markets, and to assume that Black people are not broken.

And so we've developed a series of activities, and I'll just name three. I'm excited to announce a great partnership with the NAACP through what we're calling the Black Assets Index. We're going to quantify the strengths in Black communities along critical assets. And so instead of looking at deficits and comparing these assets to white assets, we're going to look at the strength within various cities in Black communities.

Another critical partnership that we're doing is with our own Bass Center with Tracy Loh and Jennifer Vey. We're going to do what I talk about in my book, "Know Your Price: Valuing Black Lives and Property in America's Black cities," available wherever fine books are sold. One of the chapters was a titled Buy Back the Block, in which we're going to work with local communities to figure out ways to scale businesses in ways that will also increase ownership of property in key commercial corridors.

And finally, I've just named one thing that has started recently, and this goes back to the housing devaluation work. We partnered with Ashoka, the social entrepreneurship organization. We're going to give awards up to \$100,000, several awards up to \$100,000 for



promising innovations around housing devaluation. So new credit scoring systems, new algorithms to value homes, new proposals for zoning ordinances. So, the theory is we want to invest in the people who are proximate to the problem of devaluation, because oftentimes those individuals and those organizations don't get the kind of exposure of a Brookings, but they might have great ideas. So we want to lend our imprimatur and our resources to uplift those strong ideas. And so all of that, and there's more, are part of the Valuing Black Assets Initiative, but at its core, it's about recognizing the intrinsic value that are in the assets in Black communities.

KINDER: Brilliant, Andre, that's so well said. And hearing you speak, it always strikes me not only have you done such a great job of shining a spotlight on a big problem, which is the fact that Black assets are so devalued, but you really shift the narrative from sort of a deficit framing to one of more of an empowered and asset rich framing. So I think it's just so exciting to see what you're doing. Same with Jenny. I'm so excited about your initiative. It's just this conversation reminds me of why I love working at Brookings Metro with smart, hands-on scholars like you.

To wrap things up, we're going to kick it back over to our colleague at Brookings Metro, Senior Fellow and our deputy director Alan Berube with some final words.

BERUBE: Hi, I'm Alan Berube, senior fellow and deputy director at Brookings Metro. That name, Brookings Metro, is an update from our former name, the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, and it represents a commitment, really a recommitment to the power and potential of our metropolitan areas to reinvent America's future. As Amy Liu and I wrote in a recent blog post, the 56 U.S. metro areas with populations of at least one million—from Fresno, California to Greater New York—account for 57 percent of the nation's population, 60 percent of its jobs, and fully two thirds of total gross domestic product.

More than that, these metro areas are a window into the America that we will become. Their populations are already majority people of color, a milestone the United States will reach a little more than 20 years from now, and they possess most of the jobs of the future and digital, scientific, and professional services that will increasingly define our nation's economy.

Supporting the success of these places, then, means supporting the success of our country as a whole, and we're prepared to do that at Brookings Metro as we launch five new initiatives designed to help local leaders tackle their most pressing challenges to unlock inclusive growth and equitable opportunity.

Our Inclusive Innovation and Talent Development Initiative aims to ensure the rapidly expanding digital economy delivers benefits, and greater opportunity for women, people of color and heartland regions.

Our Resilient Regions Initiative is developing new approaches to regional land use, transportation, housing, and infrastructure that promote climate resilience and an equitable economy.

Our Transformative Placemaking Initiative at Brookings Metro's Bass Center is helping local leaders integrate investments and strategies to yield vibrant opportunity, rich neighborhoods and commercial corridors.

Our Valuing Black Assets Initiative is measuring and spurring investment in the assets critical to wealth creation and economic growth in Black communities.

And our Worker Pay and Power Initiative is advancing changes in public policy and corporate practice to result in higher pay, greater voice, and enhanced job quality for front line and low wage workers.

Across all of these focus areas, Brookings Metro is working right now to build stronger bridges between local leaders and federal decision-makers. Unprecedented levels of

federal investment in physical and social infrastructure and community and household economic health, through the American Rescue Plan and the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, have the potential to generate transformational local change if local leaders use the dollar smartly and federal and state officials provide them with the tools and incentives to meet their challenges in a metropolitan scale.

As Amy and I observed in our piece, embracing metro leadership is also a route to bolstering the fortunes of America's smaller cities, towns, and rural communities. Metro prosperity can enable wider geographic prosperity if we commit to strengthening broader regional supply chains, protecting and preserving our natural resources, and improving the hard and soft infrastructure that traverses our urban and rural areas.

Of course, Brookings Metro is also a lot more than a name. We're a group of people who embrace a common set of values. Real world impact, a just society, diverse voices, a culture of collaboration in our workplace and communities, and a commitment to learn. And we share a common vision, too, for every community in our nation to be prosperous, just, and resilient no matter its starting point. We're excited to begin our next chapter of impact at Brookings. We hope that you'll join us on that journey.

DEWS: A team of amazing colleagues makes the Brookings Cafeteria possible each week. Gaston Reboredo is the audio engineer, and our audio intern this semester was Nicolette Kelly; Bill Finan, director of the Brookings Institution Press, does the book interviews; and additional collaboration comes from my communications colleagues Marie Wilkin, Adrianna Pita, and Chris McKenna. Thanks also to Ian McAllister, Soren Messner-Zidell and Andrea Risotto for their guidance and support.

David Lanham, director of communications for Brookings Metro, co-produced this episode with me, and also my thanks to Julia Kraeger, senior director of external relations at Brookings Metro.

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Until next time, I'm Fred Dews.