



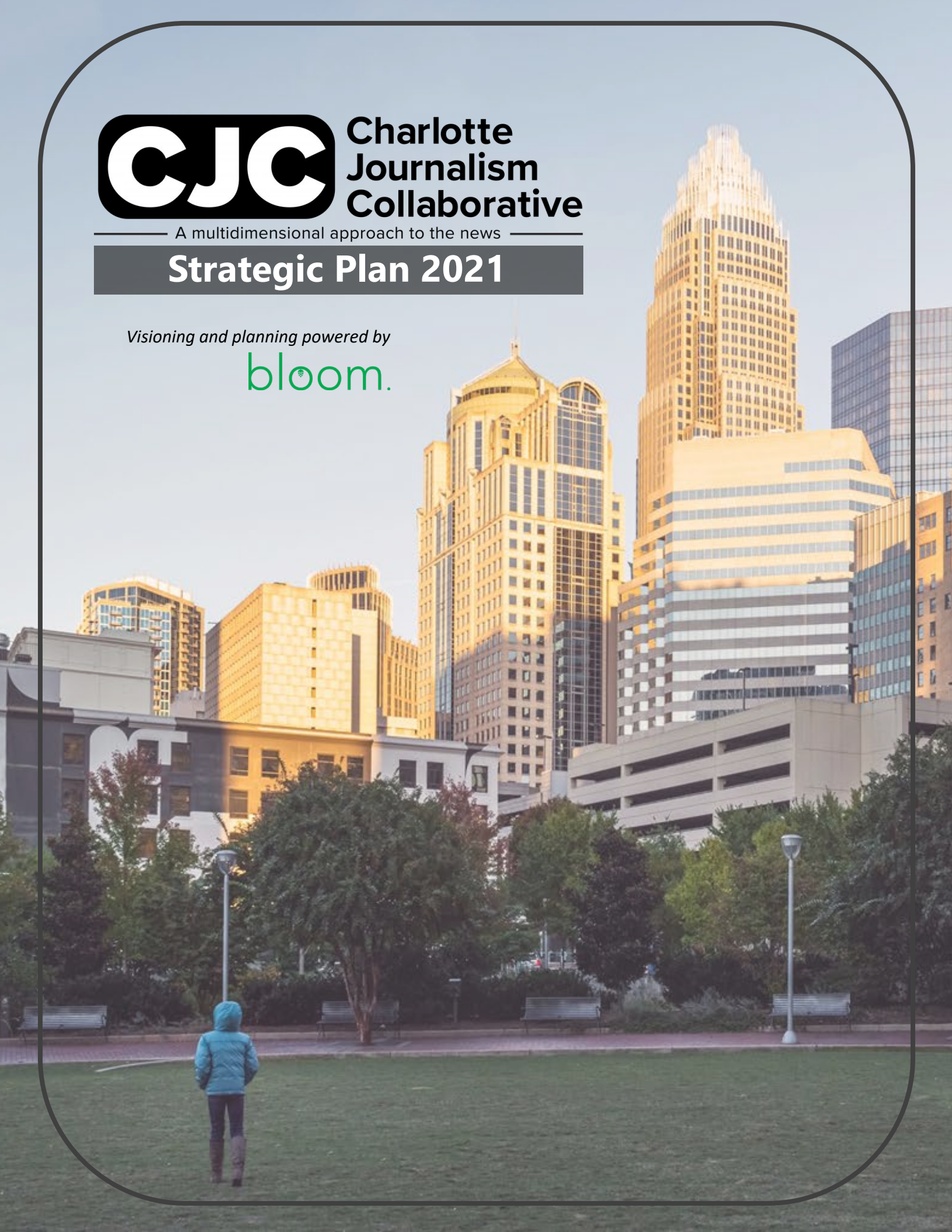
**Charlotte
Journalism
Collaborative**

— A multidimensional approach to the news —

Strategic Plan 2021

Visioning and planning powered by

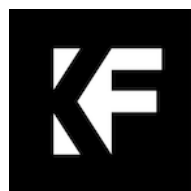
bloom.



To strengthen local journalism and encourage greater connection between reporters and Charlotte residents, Solutions Journalism Network launched the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative (CJC) in 2019, a partnership of six major media companies and other local institutions focusing on issues of major importance to the Charlotte region. Members of the collaborative include The Charlotte Observer, La Noticia, QCity Metro, Qnotes, WCNC-TV and WFAE 90.7 FM, as well as the James L. Knight School of Communication at Queens University of Charlotte, the Charlotte Mecklenburg Library and Free Press.

The CJC is supported by the Local Media Project, an initiative launched by the Solutions Journalism Network with support from the Knight Foundation to strengthen and reinvigorate local media ecosystems.

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**Finding solutions, informing
communities, together.**

OUR CORE VALUES

We Choose **Courage** Over Comfort.

We report for truth, even when the truths are unpopular or uncomfortable.

We explore alternative, creative ways of reaching audiences with an eye towards impact.

We utilize our collective power to research and voice solutions to city crises even when powerful people and institutions are invested in maintaining the status quo.

We Act In Service For Our **Community**.

We remain hyper focused on the problems facing Charlotte residents.

We seek solutions for community health and well-being and aim to strengthen the overall connections with the local news ecosystem.

We present news that resonates with and reflects diverse communities.

We intentionally create opportunities for diverse communities to engage.

We share information that helps residents navigate complex situations.

Stop housing harm in Charlotte.

We do this through rigorous and collaborative solutions journalism. As we grow as news professionals and as a collaborative focused on increasing opportunity for engagement and trusted information in the local news ecosystem -- our goal is to impact the community we serve while revitalizing a sustainable and trusted news community that is supportive and vital to the growing city of Charlotte.

The Charlotte Journalism Collaborative is dedicated to provide a platform and structured community journalism partnership that supports the future of Charlotte in its work, serves as a trusted source of information and news and addresses the problems that are the most important to our city's residents.

Before the CJC, there was little conversation about potential solutions to the affordable housing problem in Charlotte.

In year one, Charlotte Journalism Collaborative partners produced a total of 31 stories on the topic, including eight statement stories that were complicated and contextual – requiring experienced reporting and a longer time commitment to develop.

In addition, over 120 affordable housing stories and 80 episodes of WFAE's Finding Home series were shared among the collaborative.

In year two, we published and shared over 80 stories on affordable housing and on the impacts of COVID-19 on the Charlotte community. This included a growing trend for joint reporting projects where reporters from our media outlets worked together to research, write and publish pieces – expanding capacity, the sense of collaboration and the amplification of important news and information.

The first foray: an historical backdrop of failure

The statement story published by the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative partners, “From Brooklyn to Ballantyne: The story behind Charlotte’s affordable housing crisis,” was a sobering indictment of Charlotte’s housing failures and missteps, and a reminder that vestiges of the Jim Crow South were woven throughout the history of who lives where – and how well – in North Carolina’s largest city.



February 1961: A bulldozer pushes over the first house in Brooklyn, an old Charlotte neighborhood, to make way for urban renewal.

This history stretches back to 1960s urban renewal, when Charlotte conducted an epic tear-down of low-cost housing occupied by Black people, then failed to replace much of it. "Adequate housing for low-income residents is perhaps the most pressing single need in Charlotte," a Charlotte Observer editorial declared in 1968.

The story continues today, as the Lynx Blue Line zips past thousands of new luxury apartments but few affordable ones, even though a city policy encouraged affordable housing along the route.

Charlotte's shortage is now described as a crisis, with an estimated deficit of 34,000 below-market units. Most are needed for people making 60 percent or less of the area's median income, which is \$79,000 for a family of four. This deficit likely underestimates actual needs, housing professionals say, because older, cheaper apartments are being demolished or upgraded faster than they can be replaced. Charlotte has added an average of 312 city-subsidized units a year over the past decade, according to a recent report.

The city's popularity exacerbates this shortage, as growth outpaces construction, driving up prices. Local rents have climbed 45 percent since 2010 and now average more than \$1,100 a month. In many ways, those problems, fueled by stagnant wages and gentrification, mirror housing shortages in urban areas around the world.

In one way, though, Charlotte stands out. In 2014, a groundbreaking study of U.S. social mobility ranked Charlotte last, 50th among 50 of America's largest cities. The study revealed that children here who were born poor mostly stay poor, that Charlotte wasn't the opportunity-rich place many citizens assumed. It was, in fact, the opposite – a city rife with economic inequality. A local task force tagged a lack of affordable housing as a major cause.

Excerpt taken from "From Brooklyn to Ballantyne: The story behind Charlotte's affordable housing crisis," by Pam Kelly for the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative. June 17, 2019

Finding solutions:

In Baltimore, families living in low-income and crime-ridden neighborhoods got extra money to move to the suburbs.

In New York City, tenants threatened with eviction received free help from lawyers.

And in Chatham County, Spanish-speaking immigrants who were being kicked out of a mobile home park got help from a non-profit.

Excerpt taken from “Status quo is not working.’ Can Charlotte find solutions for affordable housing crisis?” by the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative. May 26, 2019.



Citizens arrived at the Charlotte City Council meeting on Monday, April 9, 2018 with signs referencing affordable housing. Credit: Jeff Siner, *The Charlotte Observer*.

The focus of this project is on the enormous challenge of affordable housing in the Charlotte metro area. Reporting illuminates the journeys of area residents seeking housing in a market where costs continue to rise rapidly, to help build sustainable lives and showcase the housing challenge. Coverage takes a multi-dimensional approach – investigating solutions relevant to the problem and conducting critical analysis of government actions to tackle this problem.



Building collaboration:

When the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative formed, its nine members committed to leverage the power of their shared resources to advance stories for the greater good that no one of them could mount on their own.

Excerpt taken from "Collaborative Case Study II: The Charlotte Journalism Collaborative" by Michael Davis, Southern Region Manager, Solutions Journalism Network. April 13, 2020



"At a time when local journalism jobs are disappearing and trust in media has hit an all-time low, the Solutions Journalism Network has taken on the challenge by organizing collaborative journalism reporting projects that promote excellent reporting and civic dialogue. The model has the potential to be part of a new wave of great local reporting, which is vital to building strong communities."

Karen Rundlet, Knight Foundation director for journalism

Engaging community:

The future of journalism is happening inside and outside of newsrooms. It's happening in hollers in the South where there have been no trustworthy local newsrooms for years. It's happening in alleyways and in restaurants. It's happening in person, and it's also happening online.

The future of journalism includes journalists, and it includes so many other people who have never once considered themselves bearers of the news. Community organizers will play a role in the future of news. Baristas will play a role in the future of news. There will be gardeners and retired people and students and actors. All of us will be there. And all of us will need information, stories and community.

Excerpt taken from "Gathering Toward Solutions: A community playbook for journalism collaboratives" by Alicia Bell, Free Press for Solutions Journalism Network. June 2021



Credit: Movement Strategy Center

Building power through collaboration, the CJC is focused on knowing people through 1:1 and small group conversations, forums, informal gatherings, workshops, newsroom visits, pop-up sites and dream salons.



Community engagement has been an important component of the collaborative's work since it launched. What began as reporters spending time in communities and inviting community members into collaborative meetings eventually became accented by periodic community events.

Excerpt taken from "Gathering Toward Solutions: A community playbook for journalism collaboratives" by Alicia Bell, Free Press for Solutions Journalism Network. June 2021

2021-2022 Strategic Priorities

- 1** Determine legal/organizational structure for the CJC and execute associated set-up tasks
- 2** Design and implement workflows (from assessment to impact) for projects, journalists and partners
- 3** Launch \$1.5 Million multi-year funding plan to support the CJC through 2026, securing \$30K gifts and \$70K pledges in Year 1
- 4** Execute an organizational brand review and begin establishing the brand in Charlotte
- 5** Host a State of Housing Summit
- 6** Conduct a community discovery listening tour, targeting a diverse group of community members

1

Determine legal/organizational structure for the CJC and execute associated set-up tasks.

This will ensure the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative can operate independently and allows for a streamlined fundraising structure. It also will further establish the structural integrity of the CJC.

How it moves us toward our BIG VISION:

- Increases opportunities for the Charlotte Journalism to collaborate in local and regional nonprofit spaces
- Increases opportunity for funding to support the projects of the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative and provides important benefit to potential funders

Metrics:

- Completion of any paperwork and filing necessary for legal/organizational structure

2

Design and implement workflows (from assessment to impact) for projects, journalists and partners.

This will ensure that all projects and programming of the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative aligns with our core purpose and values. It will clarify roles and responsibilities of partners and further collaboration. It provides increased CJC visibility and provides metrics to support future funding.

How it moves us toward our BIG VISION:

- Increases the power of our voice, while expanding audiences
- Enables the CJC to monitor audience and impact and adjust as necessary
- Helps identify gaps in partners, reporters and staff and support

Metrics:

- 100% of CJC partners utilize workflows
- 90% of CJC projects are run through workflow
- Development of process and workflow documentation which becomes part of onboarding process for new partners

3

Launch \$1.5 Million multi-year funding plan to support the CJC through 2026; secure \$30k gifts and \$70k pledges in Y1.

This will make sustainable, committed funding a reality – that supports the development and collaboration within the local news ecosystem and increases opportunity and ability for the CJC to grow.

How it moves us toward our BIG VISION:

- Gives significant runway to produce impact
- Showcases funders' commitment to the local news ecosystem

Metrics:

- Gifts of \$30,000 obtained for 2021-2022
- Pledges totaling \$70,000 for 2022-2023 secured

4

Execute an organizational brand review and begin establishing a brand in Charlotte.

This provides the opportunity to design a brand that aligns with purpose and speaks to the community. Cohesive branding and promotion can increase our audience and further our value of “strengthening the overall connections with the local news ecosystem.”

How it moves us toward our BIG VISION:

- Increases visibility and influences power to impact change

Metrics:

- Do people know and understand who the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative is?
- Do people have trust in the Collaborative?
- Do people and organizations who are working in affordable housing look to us for information?
- Does the community look to us for information?

5

Host a State of Housing Summit

This will further raise visibility and awareness of the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative as a convener and information leader. It creates a tangible purpose that highlights our journalism work and its impact.

How it moves us toward our BIG VISION:

- Increased opportunities for funding
- Support influence on local and state decision makers
- Presents solutions to the community
- Changes the way the community thinks about local news

Metrics:

- 100 attendees, including city leaders, housing advocates and community members in Y1
- Shifts in policy making (quantitative)
- Shifts in trust of local news (quantitative)

6

Conduct a community discovery listening tour, targeting a diverse group of community members.

This helps build trust in local news and keeps the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative hyper focused on problems facing Charlotte residents. It helps us tell the real stories.

How it moves us toward our BIG VISION:

- Ensures we are covering the right thing – is this what people care about?
- Helps us understand the problem AND the impact
- Growing trust = increased audience participation

Metrics:

- 4 quarterly community engagement events
- 12 one-on-one meetings with a diverse group of community leaders and/or housing advocates
- Implemented structure for community feedback and communication

Join us today!

To learn more about the Charlotte Journalism Collaborative and find out how you can support this project, schedule a meeting with us today.

We'd love to partner with you!

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