

**MUNICIPAL ID  
PROGRAMS  
POSSIBILITIES  
FOR INCLUSION  
& DIGNITY**



WINDSOR LAW  
Centre for Cities



University  
of Windsor

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## MUNICIPAL ID PROGRAMS

### Possibilities for Inclusion & Dignity

September 2022

#### Centre for Cities (C4C)

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#### About the Centre for Cities (C4C)

The Centre for Cities at Windsor Law supports research, teaching and public engagement on the legal and policy tools related to municipalities and good citybuilding.

Founded in 2019, C4C is a non-partisan centre that provides avenues for students, faculty, municipal governments, community organizations and advocates to exchange ideas and to work together to achieve the goals of sustainable and inclusive local governance.

#### Land Acknowledgement

This paper was primarily written on the territories of the Three Fires Confederacy, comprised of the Ojibwe, Odawa and Potawatomie peoples. The land on which the University of Windsor Faculty of Law specifically sits is subject to an agreement between the Huron-Wendat peoples and the Jesuits in 1780. The land has been inhabited by many other Indigenous peoples. Protocols regarding permission to enter Indigenous territories differ.

This paper reflects a colonial understanding of access to land. The primary goal of the paper is to improve access for excluded peoples; these same people have historically been welcomed to Indigenous lands. Indeed, Indigenous peoples provide the earliest examples of honourable welcoming practices on Turtle Island.

#### Acknowledgements

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## Introduction

People use a variety of documents for personal identification every day. When we purchase goods from a business, secure credit, apply for a library card, or receive health care we present some card or form that identifies us as residents of a particular location.

People often think of identification as a driver's license, health card or passport – documents issued by a provincial or federal government. But "ID" is also issued by businesses, libraries, point collection systems, and many other entities. Different types of ID, of course, have different purposes. For example, not having a points card from Tim Horton's has very different implications than not having a driver's license or health card.

State-issued ID can also have devastating effects on individuals and communities. Misuse, theft, fraud, profiling and surveillance of personal ID can have serious outcomes. However, ID also plays the contradictory role of providing access to essential services. These goals are often difficult to reconcile when creating an ID program.

For many reasons explored here, some American and one Canadian municipality have adopted "municipal ID" programs. As the name suggests, a municipal ID is a personal identification card issued by a city. As noted later, some American religious organizations have also launched similar ID programs with some success ("community IDs").

In its most basic terms, a municipal ID grants access to certain municipal services and businesses, and can serve as identification for banks, credit unions, police, or other bodies. Importantly, each municipality decides which services to include in a municipal ID program.

This paper serves as a backgrounder to the concept of municipal IDs. In Part 1 of the paper, the authors introduce the definition of, and rationale for, municipal ID programs, alongside the research methodology for this paper. In Part 2, the authors highlight several exemplar cities that have adopted municipal ID programs, alongside one city in which a church launched a similar program. We also include a chart with summary information regarding other municipalities' ID programs. In Part 3, the authors consider benefits as well as problems with municipal ID programs, including questions regarding privacy and immigration. The authors conclude in Part 4 with a summary of good practices for municipalities in Canada considering a municipal ID program.

In sum, while municipal IDs have significant potential to increase access to services and support businesses, they require investment and careful planning to ensure safety and security of all users. When well-designed and meaningfully implemented, municipal ID programs can improve access to basic services for people with precarious immigration status, provide a stop-gap measure for people who lose their identification, increase efficiency for municipal services seeking a "one stop shop" approach, and support local businesses. It is certainly not a panacea for the complex barriers facing many communities; nonetheless, it can serve as one step toward inclusion.

Where one uses an ID card—  
Local Businesses

# PART 1 WHAT IS A MUNICIPAL ID?

 **KOPS** RECORDS  
416.593.8523  
kopsrecords.ca



# 1

## What is a municipal ID?

A municipal ID is a card or document issued by a city, town or other jurisdiction that allows, at minimum, access to municipal services. Municipal ID programs have grown in popularity since first being implemented in North America in 2007; many important lessons have been gleaned from mistakes and successes in multiple cities.

Municipal IDs are formally valid only in the city of issuance, although municipalities can choose to accept ID from other places. The services accessed with a municipal ID card vary widely based on the choices made in each city. For example, some municipal IDs have been used for identification in interactions with police, schools, and other city officials as well as local banks and stores.<sup>1</sup>

Importantly, municipal IDs can serve purposes other than identification. For example, they might be used to access municipal services such as libraries, museums, art galleries, sports facilities, and so on. They can also be used as access or discount cards for local businesses. Others are used as prepaid or full-fledged debit cards. Some jurisdictions are considering including them as public transit cards. Indeed, the “vaccine passport” issued by various provincial governments is another type of identification that could have been included in a municipal ID program.

Whether municipal ID can and should be used during police checks depends on how the ID will be used and whether the ID is only provided to persons without official immigration status. It also depends on the data gathering practices upon program application. We examine both these issues in greater detail later.

Each jurisdiction sets an age of eligibility to receive a municipal ID card depending on the types of services they wish to include. In New York, for example, the applicant must be over the age of 10.<sup>2</sup> In Detroit and New Haven, cards are issued to all residents regardless of age, gender identity, or other social markers.

Municipal IDs do not confer legal status, authorization to work or permission to drive, prove legal age to purchase alcohol or tobacco, establish new city benefits for cardholders, or change cardholders’ eligibility for any existing local, provincial, or federal benefits or services.



Where one uses an ID card—Food Bank

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## Why a municipal ID?

As case studies below illuminate, the impetus to start a municipal ID program has differed depending on the needs of each community and its populations. For example, some communities found theft of money and ID from people experiencing homelessness was so high that an ID program with banking services was necessary. Other communities were concerned that too many people were not accessing necessary municipal services because of problems securing other forms of ID. Shared among these communities is the impetus for full inclusion, harm reduction, and safety for all. While not explored here, there are many important, existing services that provide supports to people trying to secure or replace ID.

Municipal ID programs have also been seen as cost saving or business improvement measures – potential ways to promote their business and increase loyalty. Additionally, a ‘one stop’ approach to accessing museums, libraries, and other municipal services has been effective for some communities.

Communities have different barriers to accessing and maintaining identification. Communities that face these barriers include:

- people who are homeless,
- youth in the foster care system, or youth exiting the foster care system,
- older adults with low income,
- formerly incarcerated people,
- people whose gender assigned at birth does not reflect their gender identity,
- students from other countries,
- young people,
- persons without immigration status,
- people who cannot afford to replace ID,
- people in remote communities,
- and many others.

More broadly, municipal ID programs are simply another way that cities are taking care of people in their communities.

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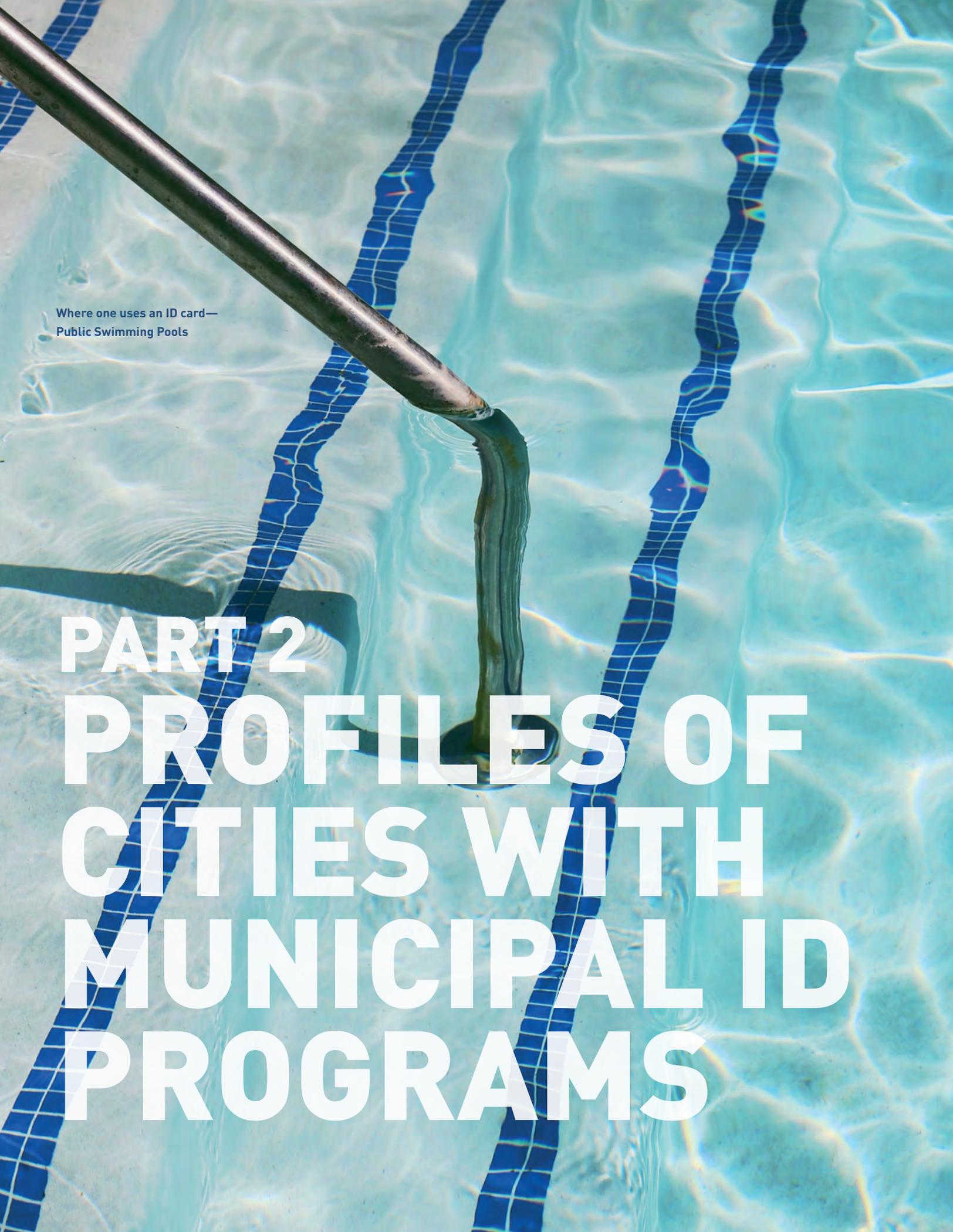
## Research Methodology

This report was written during the Covid-19 pandemic. The authors primarily relied on publicly available information regarding municipalities with municipal ID programs. Because there is so little empirical or peer reviewed literature on municipal ID programs, the authors relied on council reports and minutes, reports produced by activist groups, municipalities, businesses, and other bodies with connections to municipal ID programs. When this was difficult to ascertain online, the authors reached out to administrators for practical information about how municipal ID cards operate in their jurisdiction. The authors did not restrict research on municipalities to specific characteristics such as population size, but only investigated cities within North America.

The report contains information about the municipal ID programs in many cities, but the authors chose to highlight a few particular cities. The authors chose these cities for their diversity in size, population, urban density, location, and the types of programs or services included in the municipal ID program.

### CONSIDER:

- It is difficult or impossible to attain an ID card if you are under the age of 16.
- If you lose your ID, it can be both expensive and onerous to replace it.
- If you do not have a home, keeping track of your stuff is challenging and hanging onto ID can be almost impossible.
- For trans communities, securing ID that reflects gender identity and proper name can be difficult.
- When you are waiting for an immigration application to be approved, you may not typically have Canadian or provincial ID.
- Many people choose not to drive, thereby limiting access to the most ubiquitous form of personal ID.
- People living far from an urban centre can find it difficult to access ID replacement services.
- Renewing licenses and other identification can be expensive.
- It sometimes takes a long time to replace ID.



Where one uses an ID card—  
Public Swimming Pools

# PART 2 PROFILES OF CITIES WITH MUNICIPAL ID PROGRAMS

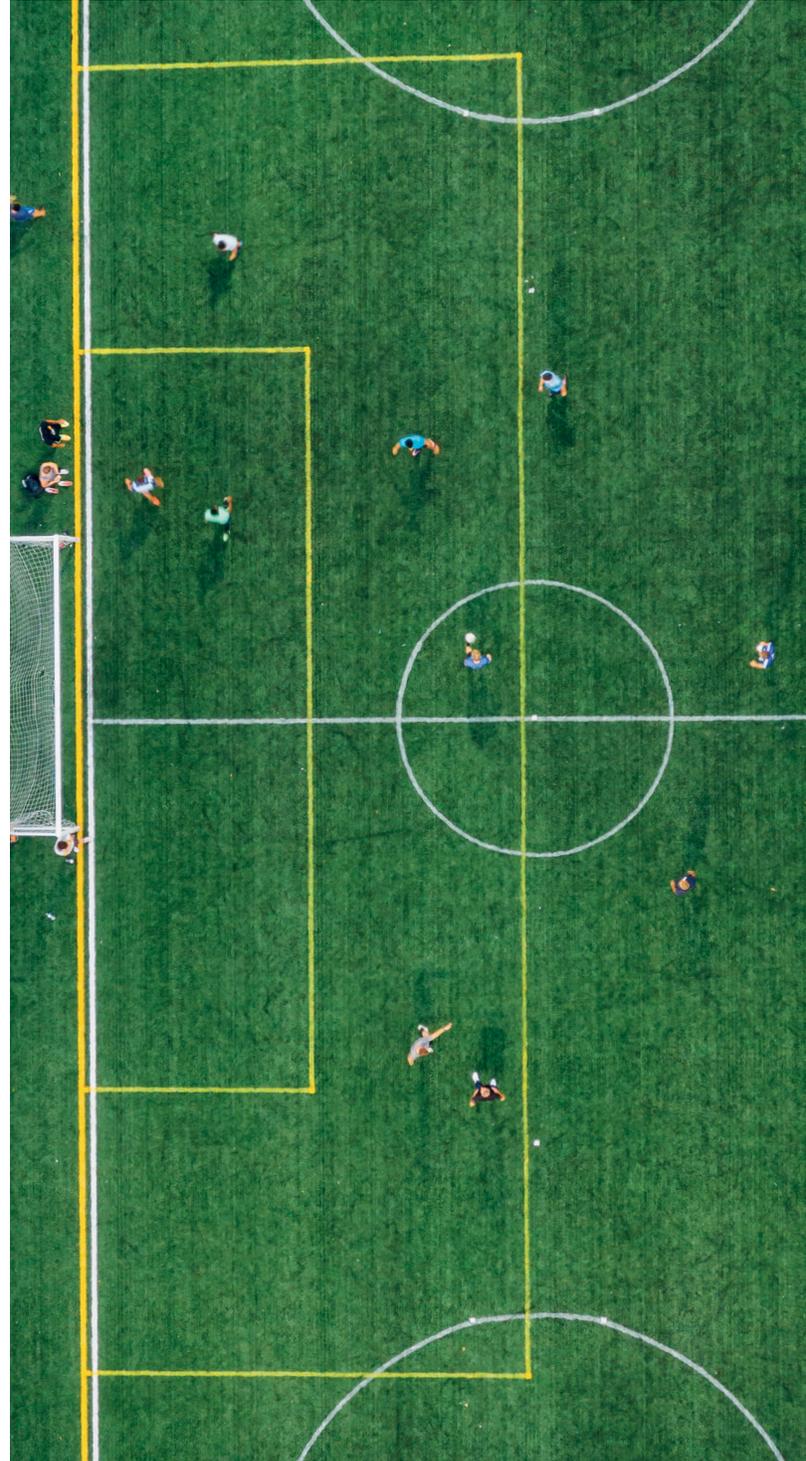
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# 2

## Profiles of cities with municipal ID programs

Below, we survey a number of communities that have adopted municipal ID programs, specifically: New Haven, New York, Detroit and Montréal. New Haven, Connecticut is the first jurisdiction to have adopted a municipal ID program, launched for several reasons including the inability for some communities to access banking services. New York's municipal ID program has by far the greatest number of cardholders and the greatest number of services included. Its program is a prime example of both maximum inclusion and protection of personal information. Detroit's ID program is a good example of a program launched in a border city. Montréal remains Canada's only jurisdiction with a municipal ID program. In each section, we examine why and how each municipality launched its program, followed by information regarding eligibility and administration, the services included in the program, and a summary of the "lessons learned" from each jurisdiction.

**A municipal ID is a card or document issued by a city, town or other jurisdiction that allows, at minimum, access to municipal services.**

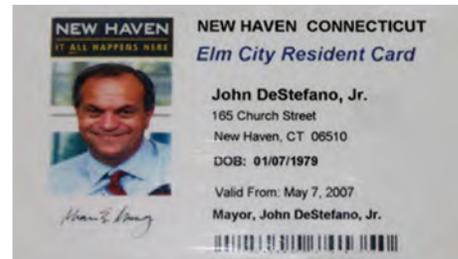


Where one uses an ID card—Access to Municipal Recreation Programs

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## New Haven, Connecticut

Population: 130,331



### Background & Rationale

New Haven, Connecticut introduced the first municipal ID in the United States in July 2007. The Elm City Resident Card program grew out of a 2005 report by *Junta and Unidad en Latina Accion* and Yale Law School which focused on some of the main challenges facing undocumented individuals in New Haven.<sup>3</sup> The initial plan for a municipal ID was rejected in December 2006. The plan was redrafted in May 2007 so that the card would have many uses, making it useful for all city residents to obtain rather than strictly undocumented residents.

As is the case with many communities, undocumented residents in New Haven were frequent targets of theft. Since they could not open bank accounts, they were widely believed to have easy access to large amounts of cash carried on their person or stored in their homes. The public and local media began referring to undocumented people as “walking ATMs.”<sup>4</sup> Victims or witnesses to these crimes were usually reluctant to talk to the police, for fear that they would be asked for identification and, when unable to provide any or only provide identification that would reveal them to be foreign-born, subjected to scrutiny of their immigration status or the status of family members.<sup>5</sup>

Municipal officials in New Haven responded by developing programs that they thought would better safeguard the health, safety, and welfare of all city residents, including undocumented immigrants. From this the Elm City Resident Card program was born.

While the program first aimed to improve safety for vulnerable communities, it has had many positive outcomes for other communities including older adults, youth, business owners, and the city more generally.

### Eligibility & Administration

All residents of New Haven are eligible for the Elm City Resident Card. The program was marketed to older adults and youth and included medical information and emergency contact information. The card is administered by the Office of Vital Statistics at New Haven City Hall. To obtain a resident card, the applicant must present acceptable identification, proof of residency, and pay a fee (\$10 for adults and \$5 for young persons 16 and under).<sup>6</sup>

#### Acceptable Identification to apply includes:

One of the following valid documents:

- Passport
- U.S. Driver's License
- Consular ID Card
- U.S. or foreign Military Identification Card (with original birth certificate)<sup>7</sup>

OR TWO of the following documents:

- National Identification Card (must have photo, name, address, date of birth and expiration date)
- Foreign Driver's License (current-NOT expired)
- Visa (current)
- ITN Card (must be accompanied by an ID with a photograph)<sup>8</sup>

AND two of the following documents dated within the last 90 days:

- Utility bill with name and address
- Insurance bill
- Bank statement
- Employment pay stub
- Voter registration card
- Original documents from a health or social services organization attesting to the fact that the applicant is a New Haven resident.<sup>9</sup>

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### Services Included

New Haven's municipal ID program offers access to public golf courses and discounts at stores citywide, including restaurants, bakeries, nail salons, pharmacies, shoe stores, gyms, dry cleaners, and even a cosmetic dental office. It also serves as a prepaid debit card which allows cardholders to load up to \$150, to pay for small expenses at participating stores and parking meter fees in the city.<sup>10</sup>

### Lessons Learned

- Include a broad population eligible to use the card. If municipal ID cards are only issued to undocumented migrants, the card can serve as a red flag for lack of status.
- If used for broader purposes, the card not only serves to protect people who require ID, it also supports businesses and makes day-to-day municipal transactions more efficient.
- Partnering with credit unions, banks or other financial institutions can reduce theft and crime (although care must be taken to ensure privacy is protected).
- Broad community support is important for program success.

**New Haven, Connecticut introduced the first municipal ID in the United States in July 2007.**



Where one uses an ID card—Public Library

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## New York, New York

Population: 8,419,000



### Background and Rationale

The idea of a New York-specific municipal ID program started in 2007, when a council member proposed designing a card system based upon the Elm City Resident Card. In 2014, then newly-elected Mayor Bill De Blasio announced the new “IDNYC” program to allow city residents lacking legal immigration status to access municipal and private services and facilities that require photo identification. Marketed as a “tool for empowerment” the IDNYC was ultimately launched in January 2015.<sup>11</sup> Alongside personal identification, the card also provides discounts to many businesses within the city including movie tickets, Broadway shows, sporting events, and YMCA memberships. Furthermore, cardholders can open a bank account at several financial institutions in New York City. The IDNYC is the largest municipal and most comprehensive ID program in North America.

Success of this program is due to many factors and lessons learned. First, a concerted effort has been made to encourage people outside of marginalized groups to register for the ID. IDNYC utilizes outreach teams in all five boroughs to connect New Yorkers to IDNYC at pop-up sites throughout the city, in schools, and through a mobile “command center”.<sup>12</sup> IDNYC also has partnerships with State Senators, Bronx Community boards 12 and 7, and a special mobile enrolment center serving veterans at the Department of Environmental Protection.<sup>13</sup> Teams joined cultural events with trusted intermediaries, including partnerships with the Sikh Cultural Center in Richmond Hill where organizers distributed Punjabi language materials and made announcements at traditional *langar* meals in gurudwaras.<sup>14</sup> Through the Borough Park Jewish Community Council, IDNYC worked with local synagogues to promote the IDNYC program to Yiddish speakers, including by placing Yiddish language ads in local community papers. African immigrant communities in Harlem are also a program priority. After connecting with West African community leaders along 116th street, outreach teams worked with the Senegalese Association to bring mobile enrolment services to the area, advertising IDNYC to French, Bambara, and Wolof speakers.<sup>15</sup> IDNYC continues to work closely with cultural partners to identify opportunities for further collaboration and awareness of IDNYC and its benefits.

IDNYC pop-up teams brought a sharp focus onto communities in acute need of ID card services, particularly people with insecure housing. Program staff worked with the Glenwood Family Residence, training staff and clients struggling with insecure housing to ensure they gained access to identification. In addition, IDNYC launched a Veteran Designation in July 2015, resulting in 9,257 veterans who have chosen to have this special marker on their IDNYC cards to indicate service in the U.S. Armed Services.<sup>16</sup> The designation entitles veterans to exclusive benefits and better connects veterans to the services and discounts.

New York has had significant success implementing their municipal ID program. As of July 2021, there are 1.4 million card holders.<sup>17</sup> This figure was slowed by the pandemic as at this point, renewals can only be done in person. The NYC municipal ID program had a 2021 preliminary budget of \$21.2 million.<sup>18</sup>

Over time, the IDNYC has remedied issues related to accessibility and security of personal information. In 2014, IDNYC disclosed information concerning one applicant pursuant to a judicial subpoena from the Manhattan DA’s Office.<sup>19</sup> The request originated with the NYPD. After this incident, IDNYC established policies whereby an applicant who does not have a stable home address, or who is a survivor of domestic violence, may prove residency by providing a letter from a city agency, nonprofit organization, religious institution, hospital, or health clinic.<sup>20</sup> If an applicant uses one of these letters, they will be eligible for a card, but no address will appear on it. Alternatively, a nonprofit organization or religious institution may provide a letter permitting an applicant to use the organization’s address as the “care-of” address, which will appear on the applicant’s card. Additionally, the documents provided by applicants are not retained by IDNYC. This prevents program records from being subject to subpoena while also ensuring proper eligibility.

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## Eligibility & Administration

All New Yorkers over the age of 10 are eligible for a card and subject to a comprehensive point system. To apply, applicants need to provide:

- Proof of identity: at least three (3) points
- Proof of where the applicant lives: one (1) point
- At least one (1) document must have a photo
- At least one (1) document with the applicant's date of birth.

At least four (4) points of documents are required. At least one (1) document must have the applicant's date of birth, and at least one (1) document must have a photo of the applicant.<sup>21</sup>

If between the ages 10 and 21 and/or disabled and do not have enough points or a photo ID, applications can be submitted with a caretaker.<sup>22</sup> The card is administered by the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs.

## Services Included

The IDNYC card is accepted as an official form of identification by many organisations:

- City agencies to access many services and programs
- NYPD for the purposes of issuing summons or desk appearance tickets instead of arrest
- For entry into public buildings like schools
- For taking the high school equivalency exam in New York City
- By employers, when submitted with proof of work authorization.<sup>23</sup>

A guide available in nearly thirty languages provides an overview of all many benefits included with the IDNYC card. As summarised below, these benefits range far beyond the typical uses of a typical state-issued ID card.

Since the start of the program, cardholders have used IDNYC to purchase 75,537 discounted tickets to Broadway and Off-Broadway theatre performances, classes, sporting events, movies, and city landmarks like the Empire State Building and the Statue of Liberty.<sup>24</sup> These discounts are provided by A.R.T./NY, a consortium of Off-Broadway theatres; the Entertainment Benefits Group; The New York Theatre Ballet; SoHo Playhouse; the New York City Football Club; Brooklyn Sports and Entertainment; Baruch Performing Arts Center; the Chelsea Film Festival; Entertainment Cruises; CourseHorse and KidPass.<sup>25</sup>

The City's partnership with the Brooklyn, New York, and Queens Public Library systems continues to allow New Yorkers to use

their IDNYC cards as a single, city-wide library card. Since January 2015, over 87,479 cardholders have added this functionality to their IDNYC.<sup>26</sup>

39,526 New Yorkers have signed up for discounted fitness options, including public tennis permits and adult memberships at NYC Department of Parks and Recreation Centers; family and individual memberships at YMCA facilities throughout the city; and Bike New York, Citi Bike, NY Roadrunners, and Aviator Sports and Events Center memberships.<sup>27</sup>

The City's official prescription drug discount plan, Big Apple Rx, is integrated into the IDNYC card to provide prescription drug discounts at more than 2,000 pharmacies citywide. Since the program's launch, IDNYC cardholders have used this benefit to save over \$846,146 on prescription purchases.<sup>28</sup>

Food Bazaar stores in Queens, Brooklyn, and the Bronx, IDNYC cardholders saved over \$136,805 in discounted grocery purchases in the final quarter of 2018, bringing total grocery savings to more than 1.9 million dollars (\$1,987,989) from January 2015–December 2018.<sup>29</sup>

Since January 2017, parents, guardians, and other individuals have been able to use their IDNYC numbers online to access their own or their children's official immunization records from the Citywide Immunization Registry, at My Vaccine Record. Parents can check which vaccinations their child still needs and print out a vaccination history to complete medical forms for childcare, school registration, college admission, camp enrolment and more.<sup>30</sup> To date, 2,771 cardholders have accessed vaccine records using an IDNYC number.

## Lessons Learned

- ID programs should include targeted outreach to cultural groups with marketing in their native language
- Creative expansion of the program to grant access to many types of services, ranging from local business to large corporations such as Costco can increase its use
- ID programs should include alternative documentation options for applicants without a permanent address
- Programs should not retain personal identification to ensure safety of applicants and the program
- Funding outreach and publicity is essential for program success.

# Detroit, Michigan

Population: 674,841



## Background and Rationale

Detroit launched a municipal ID program in December 2016. Detroit City Council unanimously approved an ordinance that sets the framework for issuing and accepting a municipal ID card.<sup>31</sup> Like IDNYC, early proposals for the ID emphasized support for Detroit residents without immigration status but eligibility was expanded upon rollout. Upon launching the Detroit ID program, Mayor Mike Duggan linked the program with the need to grow the city's urban population. As he noted, "[t]his is something that will make Detroit so much more accessible for so many people who are living here right now who call Detroit home, but don't have the same benefits".<sup>32</sup> While the initial program goal was to issue 35,000 city ID cards in the first two years, there were approximately 10,000 cardholders as of January 2022.<sup>33</sup> While clearly benefiting many Detroiters, the program's take-up rate is not as large as initially hoped.

## Eligibility & Administration

Initially only intended for residents 14 years of age and older, today all City of Detroit residents can apply for the Detroit ID Card, regardless of age, permanent housing, criminal record, gender identity or immigration status. The program is administered through the City of Detroit Health Department's Administrative Office. The application fee is \$25. Those under 18 years of age or over 62 years of age may receive their cards for \$10. There is a fee discount for those who qualify.<sup>34</sup>

To obtain an ID, applicants must exceed a 300-point threshold based upon several documents. For example:

- A valid U.S. or foreign passport is worth 200 points
- Bank records and baptismal records are among documents worth 50 points.<sup>35</sup>

In addition to hitting the 300-point mark, applicants must show proof of residency with a utility bill, lease agreement or other document that is dated within 30 days of the application.<sup>36</sup> The IDs include the applicant's age, address, date of birth, signature, and a photograph.<sup>37</sup> Addresses are not included for victims of domestic violence and individuals lacking a permanent resident or living in shelters.<sup>38</sup> In these circumstances the applicant can receive a letter confirming identity from a shelter or a community aid organization.

## Services Included

The Detroit municipal ID cards give access to a wide range of services including:

- City services
- Proof of identity for the Detroit Police Department and Detroit Public Schools
- Opening utility accounts with DTE and Detroit Water and Sewerage Dept.
- Opening a checking or savings account with One Detroit Credit Union
- Enrolling children in school
- Applying for jobs
- Applying for housing
- Receiving discounts at close to one hundred local businesses and cultural activities across Detroit<sup>39</sup>

## Lessons Learned

- Expanding the program to encompass more than those without immigration status allowed for greater support from city council
- Card can be marketed as a tool for specific local needs. In this case, Mayor Duggan connected the card to the urgent need to expand the urban Detroit population and improve accessibility
- Accommodations should be made for individuals living in shelters and for survivors of domestic violence

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## Montréal, Québec

Population: 1,850,208



### Background and Rationale

Montréal was the first and is still the only Canadian city with a municipal ID program. Toronto City Council debated the adoption of a municipal ID program but has not yet formally pursued it.<sup>40</sup> The impetus for starting the program in Montréal was concern about access to services for people without formal documentation. Having no proof of identity or residence resulted in limited access to the programs and municipal services available to Montréal's resident population. The initiative was inspired by New York's IDNYC and was launched by the City of Montréal in June 2019. Based on the principles of inclusion, this policy aims to allow everyone residing in Montréal access to all municipal services, without discrimination, regardless of their immigration status. The card was launched under the Access to Municipal Services Without Fear Policy (*Politique d'accès aux services municipaux sans peur*).<sup>41</sup>

To date the participation numbers for the City of Montréal Municipal Identification and Residence Card have been modest. More than 500 cards have been issued.<sup>42</sup> In addition, 1,607 people were contacted to inform them of the program and to offer a card.<sup>43</sup> There has been positive reception to the card from those who have registered, as 81 percent of cardholders would recommend the card to others. Since being launched in 2019, the program uptake has been significantly impacted by the COVID19 pandemic. Furthermore, despite some positive reception, there have been serious concerns raised about the card given its restriction to persons without status. As noted above, limiting a municipal ID to a certain population will automatically identify a person without documentation to police and others. It is also unclear what information is collected as part of this program. Again, there are clear solutions to this problem. For example, IDNYC amended its data collection policy to ensure documents are not retained.

The next phase of the ID project is to move the production of the ID card from *Médicins du Monde* to the city office. There are also ongoing efforts to expand the services included. Many advocates push for some form of healthcare to be included within the card. This is difficult given the provincial jurisdiction over healthcare in Canada. Current efforts are being made to build relationships with banks and pharmacies, particularly

because pharmacies played an integral role during the COVID19 pandemic. At this point, further development of the city's access without fear policies, specifically as they pertain to police, are essential to make the program more effective. There is no "Don't Ask" policy in Montreal; as a result the card is not currently acknowledged by local police.

### Eligibility & Administration

The ID cards are administered by *Médicins du Monde* which is authorized by the City of Montréal. The city contracted with *Médicins du Monde* as they believed people without status may not be comfortable registering for a program through government institutions. *Médicins du Monde's* role in the community offered a grassroots approach to implementing the program. The cards are available to people and families who cannot provide proof of identity or address due to immigration status or who do not wish to use their asylum seeker documentation as identification, as well as migrants without proof of identity or address.

### Services Included

The ID card can be used for the following purposes:

- Municipal services (schools, pools, sports, day camps, etc.)
- Food banks
- School registration
- COVID-19 vaccination
- Banking transactions
- Signing a lease<sup>44</sup>

### Lessons Learned

- If the card is limited to persons without immigration status, ensure the card is not used as a method of personal identification to police
- Widespread use is essential to ensure persons without documentation are not targeted
- Connecting an ID program to an Access Without Fear policy may have drawbacks
- Clear data collection policies that ensure privacy are essential.

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## An Example of a Faith-Based Approach: Greensboro, North Carolina

Population: 291,303

### Background and Rationale

The interfaith organization FaithAction in Greensboro, N.C., has sponsored photo ID Cards in cities and counties across the United States since 2014. Over the past 8 years, FaithAction ID has grown its network of ID partners to provide over 30,000 “community ID” cards to individuals who may not currently have access to government issued forms of ID, including new immigrants and refugees, homeless and elderly individuals, those released from jail, and others who believe in a diverse and inclusive community.<sup>45</sup> FaithAction ID has since expanded to numerous communities across the Midwest and Southeast, including Greensboro, Winston-Salem, Durham, Chapel Hill, Carrboro, Hillsborough, Asheboro, High Point, Burlington, Graham, Elon, Elkin, Morganton, Boone, Mebane, Gibsonville, and Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina, as well as Aiken, South Carolina, Gainesville, Florida, Charlottesville, Virginia, Ames, Iowa, and Cincinnati, Ohio.<sup>46</sup>

Greensboro is the first jurisdiction where a community ID has been created and administered by a faith-based organization. It is also one of the few jurisdictions to have an ID program without an accompanying access without fear or sanctuary city policy. In fact, it is the only jurisdiction to have launched an ID program without any city council consideration of access without fear or sanctuary policies. Indeed, North Carolina has no sanctuary cities.<sup>47</sup>

Faith Action ID has implemented their program effectively despite resistance from federal and state authorities due to their emphasis on education and partnerships with local law enforcement. Dozens of law enforcement departments, city and social service agencies, health centers, and schools support the program and participate in ID drives, along with numerous businesses and cultural arts organizations that offer card holders unique discounts.<sup>48</sup> For the past three years the North Carolina State Assembly has proposed legislation to ban the card as part of a larger immigration bill. The problem with the Faith Action IDs, opponents say, is the insufficient checks on those who are issued a card.<sup>49</sup> Others say the cards simply exacerbates undocumented immigration. Since the card’s



inception, the North Carolina Assembly has worked to delegitimize the IDs, passing a bill making it illegal for state agencies to accept the cards. To counter this approach, the North Carolina Association of Chiefs of Police persuaded a legislator to add a rider to the bill allowing police officers discretion to accept various forms of ID.<sup>50</sup>

The FaithAction ID card inspired other faith groups. For example, the Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati created the “MARCC” card. Approved by city council in 2016, the city fully recognizes the card which is administered by the religious organization.<sup>51</sup> Catholic Charities of Southwestern Ohio, which is part of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, creates the ID, verifies applicants’ documents, and distributes the card.<sup>52</sup> Since 2016, the MARCC ID program has expanded to include Hamilton County and several other local governments in Butler and Warren counties in Ohio, and Covington, Kentucky.<sup>53</sup>

While a full analysis of this approach requires its own paper, it is fascinating to consider the religious roots of welcoming community and sanctuary practices. In medieval England, for example, churches served as spaces where fugitives or others seeking refuge were immune to arrest. Churches continue to play a role in the provision of sanctuary to individual failed asylum seekers. In some ways, municipal IDs issued by religious organizations serve as a modern evolution of sanctuary.

### Eligibility & Administration

To receive a FaithAction ID (or FaithAction network partner ID), participants must:

- Attend a mandatory orientation that explains the benefits and limitations of the card
- Provide proof of identification (passport, embassy ID, driver’s license, or national ID card)
- Provide proof of current address (utility bill, bank statement, health record, lease agreement)

ID cards cost \$10 in cash and must be renewed each year.<sup>54</sup>

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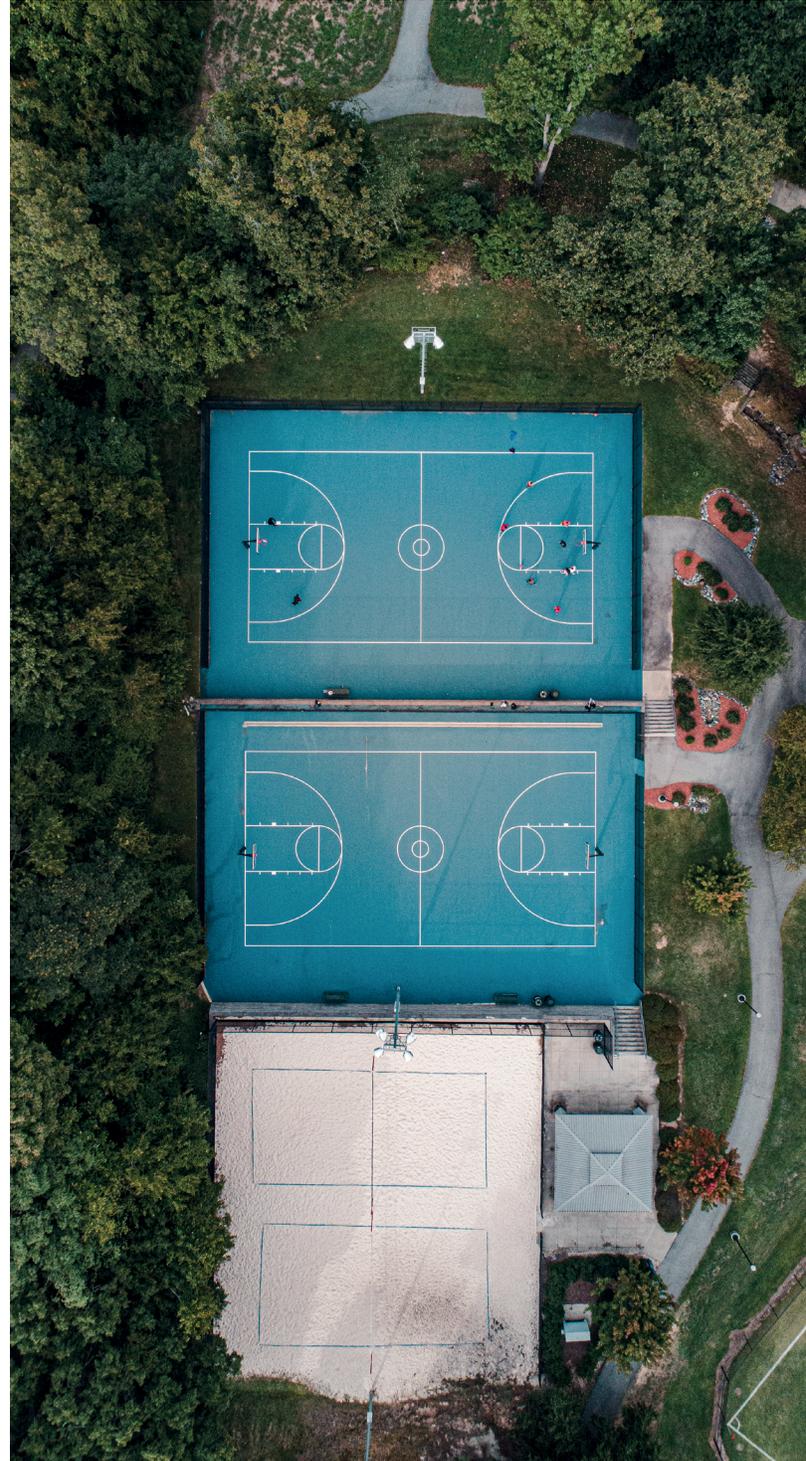
### Services Included

The FaithAction ID provides card holders with a verifiable form of identification that can be used as a tool by law enforcement, health centers, schools, nonprofits, businesses, and cultural arts organizations to better identify, serve, and protect them. The ID card provides greater dignity and access to card holders, while building greater understanding, trust, and cooperation with community partners.

### Lessons Learned

- Emphasis on education through mandatory orientation and training on police interactions are notable features of the program. This is particularly important because the network is mainly in jurisdictions where there are no access without fear policies or sanctuary ordinances.
- Within a particular cultural context, faith organizations may provide helpful alternatives to state-issued identification programs. Absent federal or state-level action (or outright hostility), municipalities may choose to partner with non-traditional organizations.
- Support of local law enforcement is essential if the card is to be used as a method of identification with police.
- Again, partnerships with businesses and other services are important to ensure wide use.

**Greensboro is the first jurisdiction where a community ID has been created and administered by a faith-based organization.**



Where one uses an ID card—Access to Schools

## Other Cities

The chart below summarizes key information from a range of other cities that have adopted municipal ID cards.

City	Population	Name of Program	Issuing Authority	AWF Policies	Date Launched	Services Included
<b>Chicago, Illinois</b>	2,746,388 <sup>55</sup>	City Key Program	City Clerk's Office	Yes <sup>56</sup>	December 2017	Transit card; library card; benefits at local businesses; ID for prescription drugs <sup>57</sup>
<b>Northfield, Minnesota</b>	20,790 <sup>58</sup>	City ID	Northfield Public Library	No <sup>59</sup>	March 2018	Local discounts; library access; city services access <sup>60</sup>
<b>Oakland, California</b>	440,646 <sup>61</sup>	Oakland City ID	Oakland City ID	Yes <sup>62</sup>	February 2013	Proof of ID to local police and other authorities; access to homeless services; open a bank account; access food assistance <sup>63</sup>
<b>Providence, Rhode Island</b>	190,934 <sup>64</sup>	IDPVD	Mayor's Office	Yes <sup>65</sup>	June 2018	Proof of ID to police and other authorities; proof of residency; local discounts <sup>66</sup>
<b>Richmond, California</b>	116,448 <sup>67</sup>	Richmond City ID	Richmond City ID	Yes <sup>68</sup>	October 2014	Prepaid debit card; proof of ID to local police and other authorities. Valid for use at community college; food assistance programs <sup>69</sup>
<b>San Francisco, California</b>	873,965 <sup>70</sup>	SF City ID Card	Office of the County Clerk	Yes <sup>71</sup>	January 2009	Medical and allergy information on the cardholder; ID for opening a checking account; public library card; local discounts <sup>72</sup>
<b>Hartford, Connecticut</b>	121,054 <sup>73</sup>	Hartford City ID	Town and City Clerk's Office	Yes <sup>74</sup>	May 2017	Access City services; grant admission to City buildings, such as schools; proof of identification with the police. Some banks and credit unions accept as a form of primary or secondary identification for opening a banking account. <sup>75</sup>
<b>Newark, New Jersey</b>	311,549 <sup>76</sup>	ID Newark	City of Newark Municipal Council	Yes <sup>77</sup>	June 2015	Access city services and programs, proof of ID, residency, and identification to open a checking account at participating banks. Local discounts, free museum membership, entry into public buildings, schools. Allow access to services at hospitals, banks, municipal agencies, etc. <sup>78</sup>
<b>Washington D.C.</b>	689,545 <sup>79</sup>	DC One Card	Office of the Chief Technology Officer	Yes <sup>80</sup>	May 2014	Access to city services and transit including public schools, recreation centers and libraries. Building access card for municipal employees. <sup>81</sup>
<b>Cincinnati, Ohio</b>	309,317 <sup>82</sup>	MARCC ID Card	Metropolitan Area Religious Coalition of Cincinnati	Yes <sup>83</sup>	May 2016	Proof of ID to police and other authorities; proof of residency; local discounts, obtain health and dental care, obtain building and event permits. <sup>84</sup>

Where one uses an ID card—  
Homeless Shelter

**PART 3**  
**CHALLENGES**  
**WITH**  
**MUNICIPAL ID**  
**PROGRAMS**

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# 3

## Challenges with municipal ID programs

While municipal ID programs have had significant success in some jurisdictions, “getting it right” during program creation is essential. The risks of poor design, particularly for communities with precarious immigration status, is high.

### Marketing to General Population

The most significant hurdle for a successful municipal ID program is widespread use, especially by communities not typically subject to police scrutiny. If a wide cross-section of citizens does not see value in the municipal ID program, the card will not be able to accomplish one of its goals of helping vulnerable groups. In a study conducted to evaluate the Elm City Resident Card, residents who reported they would be unlikely to apply attributed this to perceived lack of need.<sup>85</sup> Thus, it is important to expand a municipal program to include a wide range of services that make the card useful.

Further, the card could be yet another site where systemic racism is operationalized, most obviously through policing and carding practices. For example, a study conducted by The Yale Institute for Social and Policy Studies found that Latinos were asked to present an identification card more frequently than white customers in Arizona.<sup>86</sup> Among those who were asked for identification, a municipal-issued ID card was declined at equal rates from Latinos and whites, while an unofficial ID card was declined more from whites than Latinos. The study proposed that the association of Latino identity with foreignness and undocumented immigration led to this result.

### Police Identification

Whether to include municipal ID as a valid form of identification for purposes of policing is an important decision for municipalities. ID programs led by faith-based organizations have partnered with local police services to promote outreach and understanding between cardholders and police services. In these cases, users are given an orientation which includes training on how to engage with police.<sup>87</sup> Whether a municipal ID should be used as identification for police services remains an open question dependent upon local police culture, data retention policies, how widely the card is used and by whom. It is important to note that the card should not be used to permit carding practices, particularly when carding is already prevented by existing legislation.

The question of police identification is also tightly linked to whether a municipality has existing Access Without Fear (AWF) or sanctuary policies. Typically, municipalities with such policies have active “Don’t Ask” policies regarding residents’ immigration status. As noted above, FaithAction ID programs do exist in jurisdictions without AWF or sanctuary policies. While concerns about policing cannot be completely eliminated, three aspects are essential. First, cardholders are given education about police interactions. Second, the card issuing authority in these jurisdictions have partnerships with local law enforcement. Third, police are provided with education programs to understand the lived realities of immigration, homelessness, and poverty. In essence, the card program is used as an opportunity for practical intervention and education.

### Documentation & Data Security

As with any program in which personal information is shared, there are concerns that vulnerable individuals are submitting sensitive documents such as health records, bank statements and children’s school records. Consequently, cities must take steps to assure that law enforcement and immigration authorities do not have free access to that information. Some municipalities such as New York and some faith-based organizations immediately return all documents upon verification of identity.

Relatedly, fraud was initially a concern in IDNYC. However, in a 2015 program audit less than 0.01 percent of cards were detected to have a high likelihood of suspected fraud.<sup>88</sup> If there are concerns regarding fraud, investigators on the program integrity team proceed with an investigation in accordance with program protocols.

There are various ways to ensure personal information provided by a municipal ID program is kept confidential. As noted above, IDNYC encountered issues with privacy early in the program’s existence. The American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) challenged the record keeping practices of the card at the implementation.<sup>89</sup> Prior to changes being implemented by the city, the NYPD, FBI, and Department of Homeland Security could request NYC ID applicants’ most private information without a warrant.<sup>90</sup> In 2014, the New York Civil Liberties Union (NYCLU) issued the following recommendations for the program in New York:

- The Human Resources Agency, tasked with storing the information required for the NYC ID, should be required to provide notice to any ID holder when his or her information is requested by another government agency (including Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Department of Homeland Security).<sup>91</sup>
- Sensitive information such as health records and family members that is otherwise irrelevant to the NYC ID program should be redacted before private documents of NYC ID applicants are duplicated and stored.
- Facial recognition software, which is invasive and often inaccurate, should not be used in conjunction with law enforcement authorities like the FBI and NYPD, and any NYC ID applicants who believe they were wrongfully matched by the software should have an effective means to appeal.

IDNYC has since been included in the NYC Administrative Code. Under Section 3-115(e)(4), information collected about applicants is treated as confidential and may only be disclosed if authorized in writing by the individual to whom such information pertains, or if such individual is a minor or is otherwise not legally competent, by such individual's parent or legal guardian.<sup>92</sup>

In Canada, data security continues to be a concern. Specifically, some advocates are concerned that a municipal ID program may be legally required to share personal information with federal authorities.<sup>93</sup> In Canada, the protection of information possessed by the city is governed by the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA). Under s. 32 of the MFIPPA, the City cannot disclose personal information except under limited circumstances. Two of these exceptions are directly relevant to the enforcement of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act (IRPA):

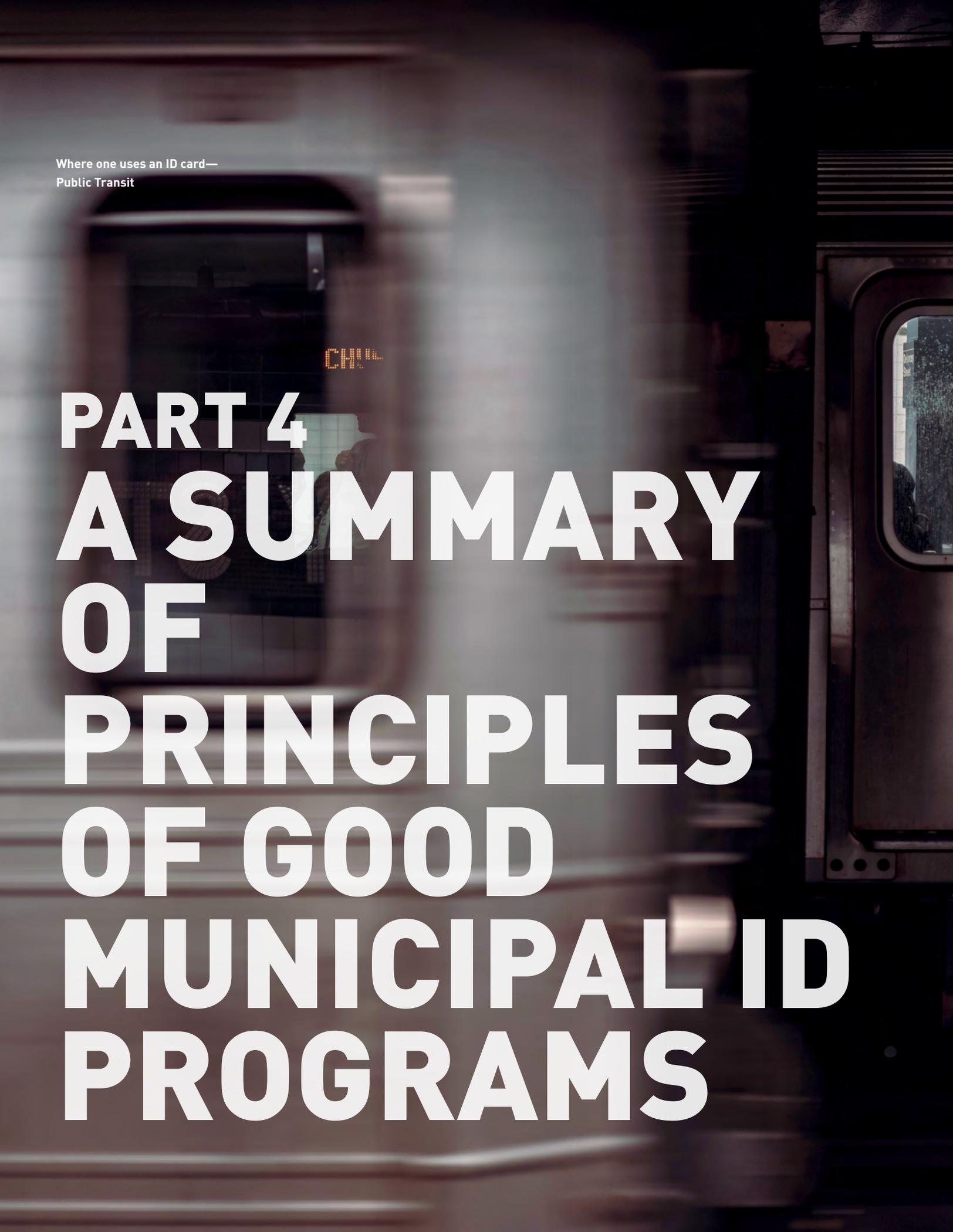
- If disclosure is to an institution or a law enforcement agency in Canada, to aid an investigation undertaken with a view to a law enforcement proceeding or from which a law enforcement proceeding is likely to result.
- For the purpose of complying with an Act of the Legislature or an Act of Parliament, an agreement or arrangement under such an Act or a treaty.<sup>94</sup>

Again, these concerns can be remedied in the implementation process with careful planning. Whether a municipality would require an Access Without Fear or sanctuary policy before implementing a municipal ID may be a case-specific determination, as discussed below.



Where one uses an ID card—Identification for opening a banking account

Where one uses an ID card—  
Public Transit



**PART 4**  
**A SUMMARY**  
**OF**  
**PRINCIPLES**  
**OF GOOD**  
**MUNICIPAL ID**  
**PROGRAMS**

# 4

## A summary of principles of good municipal ID programs

Below, the authors summarize some considerations for municipalities in Canada considering implementing a municipal ID policy.

### Connections to an Access without Fear or Sanctuary Policy

Note that many cities in Canada have adopted sanctuary or Access without Fear (AWF) policies. These policies range from quite detailed to rather cursory. Some include police and some do not. As noted above, all municipalities with municipal ID policies already had a sanctuary or AWF policy in place. In the authors' view, it is possible to create a municipal ID policy without a corresponding sanctuary policy. Much rests on the role of police, the effectiveness of 'don't ask' policies, and protection of personal applicant information.

### Business and User Outreach

Unsurprisingly, the most effective municipal ID programs have been the ones with the greatest level of financial investment and careful implementation. Greater investment has resulted in opportunities to partner with a wide array of businesses, offer more expansive services, and conduct outreach to many different communities. Investment in ID programs allows for broad outreach to citizens and businesses, giving the cards the necessary enrollment to fulfill their goal of providing access to services for all who live in the city. In addition, it allows small and large businesses alike to participate (consider IDNYC partnerships with Costco and YMCA, as well as local shops). Broadening the uses of the card results in greater diversity of card holders, ensuring the card is not an indicator of lack of status.

The cards that have had the most success with marketing to many different population groups have had significant partnerships with local businesses and attractions which create benefits for all cardholders. In addition, there has been large scale and targeted outreach at cultural centers, with information circulated in many different languages. Moreover, many cities have had greater success in garnering local political support for a card program when it is described as multipurposed rather than purely for undocumented migrants and vulnerable groups.



Where one uses an ID card—City Services

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## Financial Services

The first American municipal ID program - the Elm City Resident Card - was created to address a lack of access to financial services for undocumented residents. When the card was launched, many banks would not accept municipal IDs as valid documentation to open an account. In the spring of 2015, officials from the Federal Reserve, Treasury Department and Office of the Comptroller of the Currency changed policy such that banks could use municipal ID cards in New York as identification to access banking services. The letter did not compel the banks to accept the IDs, leaving the decision up to the individual financial institutions to “assess the risk presented” by each customer.<sup>95</sup> Many large banks and financial institutions have elected not to accept the cards due to perceived risk, but thirteen local banks and credit unions in New York City accept municipal ID cards as acceptable identification to open an account.

In Oakland, the ID program has partnered with MasterCard and University National Bank to allow the ID card to double as a MasterCard debit card. The debit feature has been hugely important for individuals who have no place to put their

**Investment in ID programs allows for broad outreach to citizens and businesses, giving the cards the necessary enrollment to fulfill their goal of providing access to services for all who live in the city.**

money and would be at substantial risk of theft. Cards can be loaded with cash at participating Western Union locations. They provide users with access to direct deposits, online bill payments and money transfers. The card can be used anywhere MasterCard is accepted. The two in one, debit and ID card has been popular with many diverse groups in Oakland.

## Protection of Personal Information

Lawmakers in states such as Hawaii, Massachusetts, Washington, and Vermont have developed various measures to prevent state and local resources from being used to enforce federal immigration law.<sup>96</sup> In Vermont, a law requiring local governments to get approval from the governor before assisting federal enforcement was signed into effect.<sup>97</sup> In Washington state, the Governor issued an order that state agencies will not collect information on immigrants beyond what is necessary to perform agency duties and will not use resources to apprehend people for being in the country illegally, except as required by law.<sup>98</sup> New York City changed its initial policy on document retention. The IDNYC program no longer retains documents regarding applicants to the program. The most effective way to protect the data of applicants is to not retain it. Concerns around ICE and other federal authorities acquiring data on cardholders may undermine a program and discourage people from applying. Multiple jurisdictions have allowed the cards to be acceptable police ID and the program does not retain records, this is most notably done in Oakland and New York. Lack of similar policies in Montreal have raised serious concerns about how and whether personal applicant information can be accessed. This is more concerning given the program is specifically aimed at persons without documentation. There are a variety of ways to ensure data security. Of course, the best way to ensure data security and prevent any seizure of documents is to not retain original documents used to verify card eligibility.

## Education

While including educational programming as part of a municipal ID program may be beyond the scope of what a municipality considers necessary, it can be an important measure to increase understanding for both law enforcement and card users. This seems to be an important feature of faith-related ID programs in the U.S but does not seem to be a central component of municipally-run programs.

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## Conclusion

Across many American jurisdictions, it has been clear that municipal ID programs are an effective tool to improve access to services for vulnerable groups. Decisions regarding what services should be included and whether ID should be used for police identification vary depending on the unique nature of each jurisdiction. Best practices have emerged which seem to strike a balance between protecting the integrity of a program and doing the least possible harm to already vulnerable applicants. As noted above, it is universally true that a broad range of services made available through the card improves registration numbers and ensures diversity amongst registrants. Regardless of the benefits of municipal ID

programs, there are problems of inclusion that a municipal ID program cannot remedy. Discrimination in provision of services, assumptions made about cardholders, and over-policing cannot be solved by a municipal ID card alone; however, these programs have the potential to reduce discrimination and improve access to services. Municipal ID programs reflect the growing Canadian trend of municipalities taking control of services within their legislative power to improve the lives of residents, especially when provincial and federal governments have failed to do so. In sum, well-designed municipal IDs have significant potential to improve access to a wide range of services in a municipality.



Where one uses an ID card—Public Library

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There have been no complaints or issues reported by cardholders as a result of the leak. Regardless, the city terminated the contract with MoCaFi. MoCaFi denies all claims and released a statement. "MoCaFi does not share personal information with law enforcement agencies unless required to do so by law." There has been no confirmation at this point but the concerns raised by advocates and cardholders affirms the need for solid data security strategies.
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