URBAN POLICY & PROGRAM SURVEILLANCE PROJECT

What is Policy Surveillance?

Policy surveillance is the **ongoing systematic collection, analysis and dissemination** of information about public health laws and policies. Expanding upon this definition, the Urban Health Collaborative's policy surveillance project identifies best practices in select cities around the United States that are employing promising or effective policy, programmatic, and budgetary initiatives to promote health equity and improve health in cities. Researchers use policy surveillance to monitor policies at the ***country, state, or local level*** (Burris & Hitchcock, 2016).

Surveillance Methods
PHASE 1

We started this project with creating **three *News Surveillance*** Excel spreadsheets (one for each policy topic, e.g., Housing) to track the policy developments weekly/bi-monthly. Each spreadsheet had **four tabs** representing a city of interest: **Philadelphia, New York city, Washington DC, and Los Angeles**. We identified **five types of news sources**, and through an iterative process, the research team developed a customized list of the most relevant online news sources to monitor updates in each selected city on a bi-monthly basis.

This list will be updated as we discover new sources.

- General News
- Twitter
- City Government Agencies
- Advocacy Organizations
- Other websites

Environmental Policy News Sources

Philadelphia

General News	Google News Comprehensive up-to-date news coverage, aggregated from sources all over the world.	Green Philly Blog about sustainability in Philly.	The City Lab Committed to telling the story of the world's cities: how they work, the challenges they face, and the solutions they need.	Curbed Philadelphia From interior design and architecture to home tech, renovations, tiny houses, prefab, and real estate.	PlanPhilly Covers Philadelphia urbanism.
Twitter	@PHLPublicHealth Dedicated to serving the public's health in Philadelphia.		@PHLCouncil The official Twitter account of the legislative branch of Philadelphia government.		@CleanPHL Account monitoring Philadelphia's goal of becoming 90% zero waste and litter-free by 2035.
City Government Agencies	Office of Sustainability Working to improve quality of life in Philly by providing environmental, equity, economic, and health benefits for all.	Parks & Recreation (News) Aiming to become the nation's leader in the park and recreation field.	City of Philadelphia Executive Orders List of all executive orders signed in the City of Philadelphia (including environmental).	Philadelphia City: Planning Commission The responsibilities are spelled out in the City Charter and extend to additional roles specified in subsequent legislation and regulation.	
Advocacy Organizations	Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC) Informs environmental statewide policy advocacy with on-the-ground local and regional projects.				
Other	UHC Strives to improve health in cities by increasing scientific knowledge and public awareness of urban health challenges and opportunities, and by identifying and promoting actions and policies that improve population health and reduce health inequities.				

New York City

General News	Google News Comprehensive up-to-date news coverage, aggregated from sources all over the world.		
Twitter	@NYSDEC The official feed of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation.		@NYCCouncil The New York City Council comprises 51 Members. @MMViverito is the Speaker of the Council.
City Government Agencies	NYC Environmental Protection Protects public health and the environment by supplying clean drinking water, collecting and treating wastewater, and reducing air, noise, and hazardous materials pollution.	NYC Housing Authority (involved in environmental projects) A Press Release Page of the NYC Housing Authority.	Mayor's Office of Sustainability Overall Citywide sustainability policy development, oversight and implementation in coordination with relevant city agencies.
Advocacy Organizations	Environmental Advocates of NY Environmental Advocates of New York's mission is to protect the air, land, water, and wildlife and the health of all New Yorkers.		

Other	The Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy Advancing research and debate on housing, neighborhood and urban policy.	Environment New York Research & Policy Center Dedicated to protecting NY air, water and open spaces. Investigates problems, crafts solutions, educates the public and decision-makers, and helps the public make their voices heard in local, state and national debates over the quality of our environment and our lives.		

Washington DC				
General News	Google News Comprehensive up-to-date news coverage, aggregated from sources all over the world.			
Twitter	@councilofdc District's legislature, responsible for crafting laws. On Twitter, their goal is to engage with residents in an informative and conversational way.	@DOEE_DC Twitter feed for the Department of Energy & Environment in the District of Columbia.		
City Government Agencies	Department of Energy & Environment (DOEE) The leading authority on energy and environmental issues affecting the District of Columbia.			
Advocacy Organizations	Environmental Law & Policy Center Public interest environmental legal advocacy and eco-business innovation organization			
Other	NeighborhoodInfo DC Works to support community organizations, neighborhood leadership and residents and government as they work to improve the quality of life for people throughout the District of Columbia and the Washington region.			

Los Angeles				
General News	Google News Comprehensive up-to-date news coverage, aggregated from sources all over the world.			
Twitter	@LACityCouncil The official account of the legislative branch of LA government.	@LACitySAN Protects public health & the environment.	@LISC_LA Invests in local leaders and organizations to transform communities into healthy, sustainable places of choice and opportunity.	
City Government Agencies	pLAn: Sustainable LA Progress in implementing Sustainable pLAn.	LA Sanitation and Environment Protects public health and the environment through the administration and management of three program areas: Clean Water, Solid Resources & Watershed Protection.	LACity An official website of the City of Los Angeles.	LA Department of Regional Planning Performs all land use planning functions for the unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County.
Advocacy Organizations	California Environmental Rights Alliance The mission of this organization is to achieve environmental justice and improve community health in California.			
Other	Sol Price Center for Social Innovation Promotes the exploration and understanding of how to create sustainable, holistic vitality in low-income, urban communities.			

Education Policy News Sources

Philadelphia

General News	[Google News](#) Comprehensive up-to-date news coverage, aggregated from sources all over the world.	[The Inquire (Education section)](#) Local news on the educational issues.	
Twitter	[@PHLCouncil](#) The official Twitter account of the legislative branch of Philadelphia government.		
City Government Agencies	[Mayor's Office of Education](#) Works with public and private partners to support local schools and make educational opportunities more accessible for all.	[The School District of Philadelphia (News & Press Releases)](#) A link between The School District of Philadelphia and its stakeholders, particularly parents, community members and local and national media outlets.	[City of Philadelphia Executive Orders](#) List of all executive orders signed in the City of Philadelphia (including educational)
Advocacy Organizations	[Philadelphia Education Fund](#) Affecting the outcomes and elevating opportunities for Philadelphia student.		
Other	[UHC](#) Strives to improve health in cities by increasing scientific knowledge and public awareness of urban health challenges and opportunities, and by identifying and promoting actions and policies that improve population health and reduce health inequities.		

New York City

General News	[Google News](#) Comprehensive up-to-date news coverage, aggregated from sources all over the world.		
Twitter	[@NYCSchools](#) NYC Department of Education, serving 1.1 million students in over 1,800 schools.		
City Government Agencies	[NYC Office of the Mayor: News](#) The Official Website of the City of New York.	[NYC Department of Education: The Morning Bell](#) Official Blog of the NYC Dep of Education.	[NYC Department of Education: News and Speeches](#) The largest school district in the US, serving 1.1 million students in over 1,800 schools.
Advocacy Organizations	[Advocates for Children of NY](#) Works on behalf of children from infancy to age 21 who are at greatest risk for school-based discrimination and/or academic failure, including children in foster care.		
Other	[The Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy](#) Advancing research and debate on housing, neighborhood and urban policy.		

Washington DC

General News	[Google News](#) Comprehensive up-to-date news coverage, aggregated from sources all over the world.		
Twitter	[@councilofdc](#) District's legislature, responsible for crafting laws. On Twitter, their goal is to engage with residents in an informative and conversational way.	[@CRPE_UW](#) Center on Reinventing Public Education. Developing system wide solutions to transform K-12 public ed.	[@BrookingsEd](#) Examining the challenges facing the American education system and identifying practical policy solutions.
City Government Agencies	[Council of the District of Columbia](#) An official website of the central and chief policy-making body for the	[DC Public Schools (News)](#) An official website of the	[State Board of Education (News)](#) Responsible for advising the State

	District of Columbia. Ideal for finding and tracking the status of Bills.	District of Columbia Public Schools.	Superintendent of Education on educational matters.
Advocacy Organizations	Children's Law Center Advocacy both in and out of the courtroom. These efforts help more District children to achieve a better education, good health and a stable, loving family.		
Other	NeighborhoodInfo DC Works to support community organizations, neighborhood leadership and residents and government as they work to improve the quality of life for people throughout the District of Columbia and the Washington region.		

Los Angeles

General News	Google News Comprehensive up-to-date news coverage, aggregated from sources all over the world.		
Twitter	@LACityCouncil The official account of the legislative branch of LA government.	@LATeducation LATimes education coverage.	@LASchools Official account for L.A. Unified School District.
City Government Agencies	Office for the Advancement of Early Care and Education Shapes policy recommendations, facilitates planning, and provides a range of services aimed at improving the availability, quality and access to early care and education programs.	LA Unified School District The official news website of Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD).	LA Unified School District Policies and Procedures Policy bulletin of LAUSD.
Advocacy Organizations	SpeakUp Board Watch An organization founded by parents who want to change that dynamic and improve public education in California (monitor policies related to only LA).		
Other	Sol Price Center for Social Innovation Promotes the exploration and understanding of how to create sustainable, holistic vitality in low-income, urban communities.		

Housing Policy News Sources

Philadelphia

General News	Google News Comprehensive up-to-date news coverage, aggregated from sources all over the world.	Curbed Philadelphia From interior design and architecture to home tech, renovations, tiny houses, prefab, and real estate.	PlanPhilly: Covers Philadelphia urbanism.	The Inquire (Real estate section) Local news on real estate issues.
Twitter	@PHLCouncil The official Twitter account of the legislative branch of Philadelphia government.		@RTPhiladelphia Bringing volunteers and communities together to improve the homes and lives of homeowners in need.	
City Government Agencies	Philadelphia Housing Authority The nation's fourth largest public housing authority; an award-winning housing community developer.	Office of Homeless Services (Latest News) Information on Philly's homeless housing system.	Division of Housing and Community Development (News) Philadelphia's lead agency for policy and planning for affordable housing and community development.	
Advocacy Organizations	Philadelphia Association of Community Development Corporations Through policy and advocacy work, strives to create a more supportive environment for community development activities.		The Philadelphia Coalition for affordable communities Calls to action to curb displacement in Philly's gentrifying neighborhoods.	
Other	UHC Strives to improve health in cities by increasing scientific knowledge and public awareness of urban health challenges and opportunities, and by identifying and promoting actions and policies that improve population health and reduce health inequities.			

New York City

General News	Google News Comprehensive up-to-date news coverage, aggregated from sources all over the world.		
Twitter	@NYCCouncil The New York City Council comprises 51 Members. @MMViverito is the Speaker of the Council.		
City Government Agencies	NYC Department of Homeless Services Provides services to the homeless, though its aim is to overcome homelessness.	NYC Housing Five-Borough, Ten-Year Plan that targets for new construction, preservation and the incomes of household.	NYC Housing Authority A Press Release Page of the NYC Housing Authority.
Advocacy Organizations	Habitat NYC Plays a critical role in housing policy reform to benefit New Yorkers across the five boroughs.		
Other	The Furman Center for Real Estate and Urban Policy Advancing research and debate on housing, neighborhood and urban policy.		

Washington DC

General News	Google News Comprehensive up-to-date news coverage, aggregated from sources all over the world.
Twitter	@DCDHCD DC Department of Housing & Community Development. Producing and Preserving Affordable Housing, revitalizing neighborhood.
City Government Agencies	DC Housing Authority Provides quality affordable housing to extremely low- through moderate-income households, foster sustainable communities, and cultivate opportunities for residents to improve their lives throughout the eight wards of Washington, D.C.
Advocacy Organizations	The Coalition for Nonprofit Housing and Economic Development (CNHED) Fosters just and equitable community development solutions that address the needs and aspirations of

	low- and moderate-income District residents by convening, advocating, and educating diverse stakeholders.
Other	NeighborhoodInfo DC Works to support community organizations, neighborhood leadership and residents and government as they work to improve the quality of life for people throughout the District of Columbia and the Washington region.

Los Angeles

General News	Google News Comprehensive up-to-date news coverage, aggregated from sources all over the world.
Twitter	@LACityCouncil The official account of the legislative branch of LA government. @Planning4LA Official Twitter for the Los Angeles Department of City Planning.
City Government Agencies	LA Housing & Community Investment Department Promotes livable and prosperous communities through the development and preservation of decent, safe, and affordable housing, neighborhood investment and social services.	The Department of City Planning Preparing, maintaining, and implementing a General Plan for the development of the City of Los Angeles: Transportation, Housing, Open Space, and Land Use Elements.	LA Department of Regional Planning (Housing) Describes the Housing Element plan.
Advocacy Organizations	Housing Rights Center Supports and promotes fair housing through education, advocacy and litigation, to the end that all persons have the opportunity to secure the housing they desire and can afford, without discrimination.
Other	Sol Price Center for Social Innovation Promotes the exploration and understanding of how to create sustainable, holistic vitality in low-income, urban communities.

Our Sources

Twitter has become a popular platform for receiving instant news updates, which is why initially we included Twitter accounts of city legislators, school districts, and research institutes. We also believed that advocacy and research institution websites would be helpful to identify the most recent policy actions. However, as the project progressed we have noticed that these sources were not the most useful form of news medium. Legislator accounts focused on hearings and neighborhood events; advocacy websites were concerned with discussing a policy/project that has already been in place, encouraging policymakers to focus on a particular issue or advocating for state rather than city level policies. Research centers focused their postings on their own research projects and events - not on the local policies and programs, unless their research focused on the local topic.

City government websites, such as official websites of Environmental, Housing and Education Department, as well the City School District, became the main sources of information for this surveillance project with these four selected cities. However, other cities may have different structures of city websites, other research and advocacy organizations that are active in posting public health policy and program updates, and/or government officials who use Twitter to inform residents about city level plans. Thus, when expanding this work, it could be beneficial to initially explore the media action among all potential venues to determine the best places to monitor.

The number of news sources varied across cities, topics, and news types. Some cities had centralized websites (e.g.: DC Department of Energy & Environment (DOEE)) and most policies and programs on a particular topic could be accessed via this one source. Also certain news types were more useful than others for monitoring policies and programs (government websites vs. advocacy organizations).

Surveillance Methods
PHASE 2

To provide detailed information about the policies and projects identified in the *News Surveillance Spreadsheets*, we created **three Selected Regulations & Projects Surveillance** Excel spreadsheets (one for each policy topic – Education, Environmental, and Housing). Included in our surveillance are legislation, regulations, major programs, and budget plans at the city level. Once we identified a relevant policy or program, we added its title and a hyperlink to the spreadsheets. In order to be included these policy interventions had to have a proposed duration of 1+ year, and have been initiated after March 2017 (the start of the pilot) or been ongoing at that time). When we identified a policy or program development, we recorded its titles, description; timeframe; links to relevant documents (e.g. an executive order, bill description, plan summary); the original news source. To track the progress for a policy or program, our team goes back to the website where it was initially identified or a page with updates (e.g. Sustainability Plan quarterly updates) if available.

At the beginning of this project we actively referred to the news sources tables developed during Phase 1. As the project progressed, we have noticed a "snowball effect," where when reading about one policy we would get a reference to another relevant policy or program. When that reference would lead to a
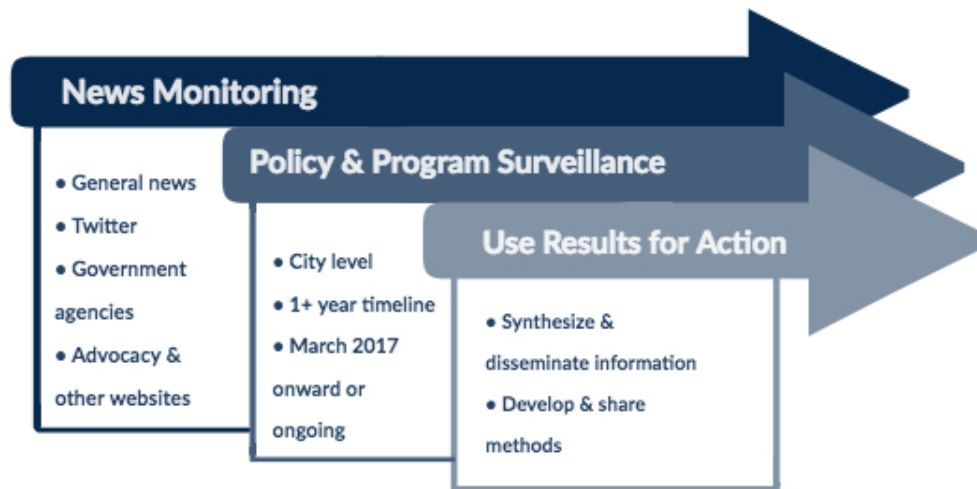
source that had an extensive amount of other policies mentioned, we would add it to the news table. If it was a stand along website, for example DC Vision Zero, we would do not add it to the list of news sources and only use it to monitor updates for that specific program.

As the project progressed, we identified new ways to categorize information. We have added the following columns to the Policy Surveillance Spreadsheets:

- Start Date – date the policy/program has started
- End Date – date the policy/program is expected to end
- Last Checked – the month the program/policy was last monitored
- Type - types of regulations/programs included:

  - Policy
  - Law
  - Executive Order
  - Bill

  - Program
  - Plan
  - Budget
  - Other

- Passed (only for laws, polices, executive orders, and bills)

  - Passed
  - Not Passed

  - Under Review
  - N/A

- Status (for programs, budgets, and plans):

  - Ongoing
  - Ended

  - N/A

This project can be summarized as a 3-step process:

News Monitoring
- General news
- Twitter
- Government agencies
- Advocacy & other websites

Policy & Program Surveillance
- City level
- 1+ year timeline
- March 2017 onward or ongoing

Use Results for Action
- Synthesize & disseminate information
- Develop & share methods

References

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