

Municipal ID Cards

We can make our communities stronger, safer, and more welcoming

The lack of photo identification is a real problem for many types of local residents.

Immigrants and other vulnerable populations often lack a government-issued photo ID card. As a result, they face numerous and significant challenges. For example, they may face difficulty in cashing a check, registering their children for school, picking their children up from school, getting a prescription filled, or visiting a doctor. Residents without identification can feel at risk when they interact with police. Without an ID, immigrants, homeless individuals, foster youth, senior citizens, transgender individuals, and others cannot show where they live.

Municipal ID cards are an easy and effective solution to this problem.

An easy, effective, and legal solution exists. Municipalities across the country have launched identification card programs. They are a simple and cost-effective way to address these issues and build community.

Implementing a municipal identification card program is a simple and cost-effective means of building community and increasing accessibility.

Municipal ID cards are a form of photo identification issued by a city or county government, rather than by the state (as with a driver's license) or the federal government (as with a passport). They can be used to prove a person's identity inside of the city limits, or to access services from any institution that agrees to accept the card as proof of identity. They do not confer driving privileges, or take the place of state- or federally issued identification that is required for air travel.

Municipal ID programs are in place in dozens of cities around the United States.

New Haven, CT issued the first IDs in 2007 to help undocumented residents who, since they could not open

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36 cities now have municipal ID programs in place



Cities with municipal ID programs experience

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

and

IMPROVED PUBLIC SAFETY

Communities with Municipal IDs



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bank accounts, carried large amounts of cash and were often robbed. The effort has since spread across the country to more than three dozen municipalities, including Los Angeles, Cincinnati, and Johnson County, Iowa. Nearly a million New Yorkers have obtained a card since New York City launched its free municipal ID program in January 2015.

Municipal IDs improve community safety.

Adoption of municipal IDs helps foster police-community trust, especially with immigrant populations that may harbor deep reservations about contacting law enforcement. The cards make vulnerable citizens more willing to report crime and provide eyewitness accounts. Officers can positively identify someone that they stop, and do not have to automatically take them to jail for lack of identification. In Greensboro, NC, dozens of crimes have been solved because residents with IDs were willing to come forward and cooperate with police.

Municipal IDs promote local economic development.

The ability to open a bank account is another important benefit that municipal IDs bring. This is especially important for youths, senior citizens, immigrants, and others who may not have the photo identification typically required to open a bank account. Access to banking and financial services spurs economic development, and local businesses reap the benefits.

To encourage the use of municipal IDs, some cities and counties have combined the cards with other services. For example, some municipal IDs also serve as library cards or transit passes. New York offers free memberships at dozens of arts and cultural institutions, discounts on prescriptions, and discounts on movie tickets. These extra benefits broaden the appeal of the cards, without taking away their fundamental purpose of providing identification to residents who would otherwise find it challenging to provide photo ID.

Cities can set flexible ID policies at the local level, responding to local needs and conditions.

Jurisdictions with municipal IDs have approached the program in different ways, based on local needs and resources. Most provide the identification to residents for free, or at a nominal cost. Cities and counties are able to exercise full local control over the program. Although proof of residency is always required, cities have established varying ways of proving that residency. The cities have been particularly open to alternative methods of establishing residency for homeless individuals and survivors of domestic violence. The costs of operating the program are minimal, but cities have pursued different strategies of reducing or sharing the costs. Many cities sub-contract the implementation of the program to a non-profit organization or faith-based institution.

Municipal IDs promote inclusion, compassion, and unity.

Municipal ID programs lift up, empower, and respect those whom society too often marginalizes. That's why, when Pope Francis recently visited New York City, he was honored and pleased to be issued a municipal ID card.

Cities in all regions of the county have successfully implemented effective municipal ID programs. Those cities have seen widespread participation, better community-police relation, increased economic development, virtually zero identity fraud, and a more inclusive community. **Municipal ID cards create inclusion, compassion, and unity.**

It is time for Kansas cities to join this national movement to build community and grow local economies, by establishing municipal ID programs of their own. ■