Vision Statement

All academic journals face the same challenge. They must establish and maintain core areas of interest to serve a distinct scholarly community while simultaneously trying to grow their authorship and readership by incorporating new ideas, approaches, and even topics into their pages. After nearly twenty years of publication City & Community has a clear set of core foci and a strong reputation. Its firm base of readers and authors come from urban sociology and community studies, a variety of other subfields in sociology, and adjacent disciplines like urban policy, urban planning, and geography. While ours is a specialist journal, its aims and scope make room for a plethora of issues afflicting the modern, urbanizing world (the spatial dimensions of the current global crises of public health and climate change are just two prominent examples). City & Community is therefore in an ideal position to grow from its core by strengthening the dialogue between urban sociology and other sociological literatures. I believe it can become a leading voice in our discipline for the most crucial social problems as they are located in specific places and can be analyzed with urban and community frameworks.

My vision as editor of City & Community is for the journal to build on its foundation to broaden its influence within the field of urban studies and discipline of sociology. Its articles already reflect a healthy variety of theoretical orientations, methodological approaches, and empirical topics in community and urban sociology, and many of its authors are leading experts in their research areas. I will strengthen and use its core aims and scope to maintain and expand its authorship and readership, thereby improving its impact and ranking. I will make it a more powerful source of urban sociological knowledge by building and bolstering bridges to other subfields, while keeping it author-friendly. To enact this vision, I propose four interrelated and mutually reinforcing strategies, all aimed at making City & Community’s influence within sociology and urban studies both broader and stronger: selectivity, inclusivity, exposure, and mentorship.

First, I will work to make City & Community a more selective journal by ensuring the publication of the highest quality articles. The journal’s acceptance rate is currently at 25%, which is high among ASA journals. To lower it I plan to improve the review standards by increasing the number of reviewers per manuscript from two to three, and adjust the general rejection standards for reviewed manuscripts from the current policy of rejecting a manuscript only when both reviewers decide to reject to rejecting it when two reviewers decide to reject, thus expanding manuscript review and raising revision standards. I believe putting papers through a more rigorous review process will both lower the acceptance rate and raise the level of article quality. In addition, City & Community’s desk-rejection rate is about the same or a little lower than other ASA journals, but could be higher to help achieve my vision. I would want to raise this rate by increasing the standards for what gets sent out for review. Doing so would improve both the quality of manuscripts sent out and the turnaround time by not overloading the reviewer pool with weaker submissions—and a quicker turnaround time is good for both authors and the journal. Finally, making the journal more selective means finding more authors and reviewers within the discipline whose work could speak to urban research. I will therefore expand both the author and reviewer pools by activating the editorial board to use their networks to encourage new authors and locate new reviewers from a broader range of substantive and methodological expertise (see below). Central to my vision of expanding from the core is to find and showcase new directions for urban sociology, and I’ve always felt the most influential scholarly work puts in dialogue literatures that have yet to speak to one another, or at least have not done so adequately. A diverse and engaged editorial board is key to accomplishing that goal.
Second, and following from this last point, I plan to harness the power of inclusivity. Like all journals, ours benefits from a plurality of voices, which means the scholarship in its pages must reflect the diversity of research and scholars in our discipline. But while diversity is like being invited to a party, inclusion is being asked to dance. City & Community has become more diverse over the years in terms of its authors, content, and the composition of its editorial board. I want it to become more inclusive. For instance, and I will discuss this matter in greater detail below, I plan to not just ensure diversity among the journal’s associate editors, book review editors, and editorial board in terms of race, gender, type of institutional affiliation, areas of interest, methodological and theoretical approaches, and other criteria, but also make them active agents in its plans and decisions. I will also continue the recent effort of inviting guest editors to assemble symposia on important, under-examined, and timely topics within urban sociology and occurring in cities and communities today. Along with advancing knowledge and drawing broader attention to the journal, symposia are also wonderful opportunities to reach out to scholars from underrepresented groups to serve as guest editors, making City & Community a more diverse and inclusive source for urban scholarship.

Third, I will enhance the exposure of City & Community’s content for the purpose of expanding the journal’s readership and authorship. First, I will ensure calls for papers have strategic wording, placement, and circulation to attract a broad range of authors from a variety of subfields, backgrounds, and countries. This measure will help diversify and internationalize the journal. Second, I will use regional conferences like ESS and SSS to promote the journal and its authors. Given how organizer-friendly yet sizable such conferences are, using them to highlight the journal’s forthcoming symposia through panels and mini-conferences would be easy to do and provide broader attention to their publication. Finally, City & Community’s website and social media presence have come a long way in recent years (see below), but I would like to add more content to them and use them more regularly. I propose to include podcast interviews with authors of both articles and recently reviewed books to the website. I will make the journal’s Twitter account more active and add Instagram to its social media toolkit. These strategies have become commonplace promotional tools even in academia, and the journal has much room for growth in these areas. Savviness in social media will be an important criterion for my managing editor.

Finally, City & Community has a great reputation as a place for up-and-coming scholars—junior faculty and even graduate students—to publish their work (it is where I published one of my first articles). Any efforts to expand the journal’s influence and enhance its status must not sacrifice this reputation. I would therefore like to formalize it through a mentorship program, without lowering the acceptance rate. I propose a professional development program to help such authors get their work published and hone their academic writing skills. I envision graduate students, post-docs, and perhaps even junior faculty either submitting their papers directly to the program, or myself, as editor, redirecting to it those submissions by such early-career scholars that are not quite of adequate quality and may be desk rejected otherwise. The editorial board and I would also directly seek out such scholars from all backgrounds and encourage them to consider their work for the program. The author would then get partnered with a more experienced scholar from the editorial board who would help develop and strengthen the paper for submission (the program would not replace peer-review, and authors may submit the paper elsewhere upon completion). I think such a program would bolster City & Community’s reputation as a source for scholars at early stages in their careers, maintain
opportunities for these scholars to publish in an even more prestigious journal, and help our subfield develop new generations of urban researchers.

**Priorities for Continuity**

The positive changes Deirdre Oakley has made to the journal since taking over as editor have improved its impact factor and ranking among urban studies journals and must remain for it to continue its growth. She has done a great job of expanding *City & Community’s* scope beyond Western and large cities (the New York Citys, Chicagos, and Los Angeleses of the world), with recent articles based on research in Chinese and Indian cities as well as in smaller cities, towns, and even rural areas both within and outside of the U.S. This empirical breadth is critical for recognizing the vast range of settlement sizes and types, expanding and revising our theoretical models of city and community life, and internationalizing the journal. Deirdre has maintained a healthy balance of articles with a range of methodological and theoretical approaches, and thereby ensured the journal doesn’t gain a reputation for emphasizing one approach over others. And she has also generated a lot of attention through symposia of full peer-review articles on such topics as urban resilience, the 2020 Census, and queer urbanisms. Each of these actions potentially exposes the journal’s content to a broader audience and expands the authorship and readership. My own recent co-edited symposium, on small cities, for instance, brought together work by geographers, economists, and anthropologists in addition to sociologists.

Another big improvement has been turnaround. How long it can take to get our work published and not hearing back from editors are common complaints among academics. As editor Deirdre has greatly accelerated the review and production times of manuscripts and successfully implemented the early view system, all to the delight of authors. I have also found her remarkably quick in her personal communications (others agree). If you email her with a question or concern, you get a thorough reply, and you get it fast. These efforts are more than niceties; they are essential to a well-run journal and can even make a difference in an author’s career. As editor I would maintain the quick turnaround standards on reviews, revisions, production, and early online publication, and speedily reply to authors.

**Challenges Facing the Journal**

Along with these recent positive developments, *City & Community* also faces several challenges. In recent years, an editor and a co-editor left before their term expired, the backlog ballooned, the impact factor halved, and the page increase issue has both raised tensions between the journal and ASA and created another backlog. We all hope the page increase becomes permanent and the backlog is reduced by the end of this year. The key objective will be to avoid repeating these events going forward. My plan is to be the editor of the journal for three years, and get reappointed for an additional two years, providing the journal with more editorial stability than it has had in a while. I will maintain the policy of a production lag of six months or less. If needs be, I will support and work toward adjusting the journal’s typesetting, such that the type and layout allow for more articles and publications during the year. I also plan to put the journal’s relationship with ASA on more solid ground through adherence to its journal policies and constant communication. I have a lot of experience steering programs within institutional settings, and my approach is always to identify the parameters and both work within and use them advantageously.

Another big challenge facing *City & Community* is becoming lost and unheard in a crowded field of sociological and urban studies publications—more traditional peer-review
journals as well as online content. Again, journals have to expand from their core to stay relevant. Since it is a section journal, CUSS members are a key source of its readership and authorship. It is therefore important to continue working with section leadership on its own membership count. But I believe the vision I have for the journal is designed to face this challenge by being more selective, meeting the imperative of inclusivity, exposing the journal to broader audiences, solidifying the journal’s status as a welcoming place for young scholars, and improving the performance metrics. These strategies will capitalize on the journal’s existing strengths, and prepare it for future challenges.

**Vision for Associate Editors and/or Editorial Board**

All editors have blind spots, or areas in sociology and even their own subfield with which they are less familiar compared to their own interests. I'm no different, which is why an inclusive editorial board is essential for my vision for *City & Community*. A journal’s associate editors and editorial board—their tasks and composition—have both functional and substantive roles. Functionally, boards review submissions and use their networks to find potential reviewers and authors. These tasks are crucial for a journal. Substantively, a diverse editorial board can expand the range of topics and subfields around the core of the journal, while ensuring broad theoretical and methodological variation. I will maintain both sets of roles, but I also want to take *City & Community*’s board a step further. I believe being on an editorial board should be seen as service to the journal, subfield, discipline, and, in our case, section.

I therefore propose having an active group of associate editors, book review editors, and editorial board members by initiating additional tasks to their roles. In addition to reviewing manuscripts, identifying reviewers, and reaching out to potential authors, I will ask members to share their efforts and ideas for a variety of matters related to the journal, such as identifying possible editors for symposia, creating content for the website, and serving as mentors in the professional development program to help up-and-coming scholars. A structured division of labor would ensure each board member is not overburdened by these tasks. We will also hold quarterly virtual meetings and meet in person at the annual ASA meeting to discuss the state of the journal. I see these initiatives as vital to enacting my vision for building upon the journal’s foundation. Growing the board is necessary to grow the journal.

**Candidate Qualifications**

I have considerable experience with *City & Community* in both authorial and editorial roles. I have published two articles in the journal, one of which introduces the subject of my recent co-edited symposium, have a third paper currently with “revise and resubmit” status, and have published two book reviews and a review essay. Along with being a regular peer reviewer and avid reader of the journal, these publishing experiences have taught me *City & Community*’s scope and style. Since 2018 I have been co-editor of book reviews at the journal, and for over a year worked as a guest editor on the symposium “Centering Small Cities,” which was published in the March issue. These two roles have given me direct looks at how the journal actually works in terms of the revision and production processes. Finally, I also serve on the editorial boards for *Contemporary Sociology*, the *Journal of Urban Affairs*, and *Work and Occupations*, and the online journals *Metropolitics* and the *Journal for Undergraduate Ethnography*. These positions have exposed me to a variety of approaches for academic publishing and given me a lot of ideas for how I would steer a journal and construct its editorial board.
My own research and scholarship are firmly rooted in urban theory and contexts. And while my primary identity is as an urban scholar and my intellectual home is urban sociology, I have also contributed research to the sociology of culture and the sociology of work. I’ve published two monographs based on my research through Princeton University Press (with a third under contract), edited two volumes of existing and original works in urban ethnography (for Routledge and Emerald), and published articles in such journals as the *Urban Affairs Review* and the *Journal of Urban Affairs*. I have also been very active in CUSS, currently serving on the council and the nominations committee, and having served on the publications committee and the Jane Addams Award Committee on two occasions.

My disciplinary service and leadership extend to the Eastern Sociological Society, the second-largest professional society for sociology in the U.S., having been program chair for the 2017 annual meeting and member of the executive committee from 2017-20. I am also an active member in the ASA sections on the Sociology of Consumers and Consumption (current chair); Organizations, Occupations, and Work; and the Sociology of Culture. Organizing the ESS conference and serving on various award committees (books and articles) for each of these bodies over the years has also exposed me to scholars and scholarship in a wide variety of subfields that are often both adjacent to and distant from urban sociology. I think I am well-read beyond urban sociology and am well-prepared to tap into these networks for *City & Community*’s benefit. In terms of additional leadership, I have been deputy chair of the sociology department at John Jay College for two years (stepping down over the summer) and have been director of the International Migration Studies MA program at the CUNY Graduate Center for the past year. I have learned a great deal about how to lead an institutionally-based team from both of these experiences. Finally, I am a podcast host at the *New Books Network* channel in sociology, which has shown me a proven template for how to promote academic books for a broader audience.

**Anticipated Institutional Support**

I hold multiple positions at CUNY: associate professor in the department of sociology at John Jay College, member of the doctoral faculty in the sociology program at the Graduate Center, and director of the MA program in International Migration Studies. If I am selected as the editor, *City & Community* would be based at the Graduate Center, which is CUNY’s institution for graduate studies. The Graduate Center’s doctoral program in sociology awards among the most Ph.D.s in our discipline in the country, and is home to a large number of urban sociologists (including three former chairs of the section). It is also obviously located in New York City, the country’s largest metropolis.

If selected for the editor position I would receive three forms of institutional support: one course release per year from John Jay, access to doctoral students in the Ph.D. program via courses and workshops, and dedicated office space for the journal’s activities at the Graduate Center. I have included three letters outlining this support from Yi Li, Provost of John Jay College; Lynn Chancer, Executive Officer of the Ph.D. program in sociology at the Graduate Center and professor of sociology at the Graduate Center and Hunter College; and Julie Suk, Dean for Master’s Programs and professor of sociology at the Graduate Center. I should note that each form of support is currently protected for next year, and Provost Yi states in his letter that he will fight to protect my course release if it comes under threat. I do not anticipate my workload being a problem for next year or going forward, and the journal would be very supported at CUNY.