



AN INITIATIVE OF

the de Beaumont Foundation + Kaiser Permanente

2025 POLICY ASSESSMENT

In 2025, local leaders navigated a complex landscape, working through shifting policy environments, constrained resources, and evolving community needs. Yet despite these challenges, they continued to show that progress is possible. Mayors and city officials, accountable to their residents every day, remain focused on advancing practical, evidence-based policies that deliver real solutions for their communities.

CityHealth's 2025 assessment shows that this determination and pragmatism are producing results. Cities achieved 35 policy improvements across CityHealth's 12-policy package, with notable gains in Smoke-Free Indoor Air, Greenspace, and Legal Support for Renters. These gains contributed to five new cities earning a first-time overall medal, and six other cities improving their overall medal status. In a significant milestone, Chicago joined the top echelon of cities that have earned an overall gold medal. With 51 of the nation's 75 largest cities now earning overall medals, this year's results reflect both the growing momentum of local action and the steady resilience of city leadership.

Cities are catalysts for change. They accelerate new policy ideas, test and refine solutions, and drive progress because residents rely on them to meet their unique needs. As the level of government closest to the people, cities often move quickly to turn strategies into sustained solutions. From strengthening early childhood education to expanding renter protections to increasing access to greenspace, cities continue to demonstrate that the best ideas often begin locally and scale nationally.

These policies serve as proof points for what works. Across the country, innovation at the city level is improving health outcomes, strengthening communities, and offering models that others can follow. This year, Austin's climate equity plan, Chicago's healthy food standards, and Los Angeles' Legal Support for Renters program each show how cities lead by example — and through CityHealth's partnerships,

OVERALL RESULTS

Out of the nation's 75 largest cities, there were:



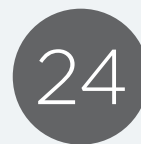
gold medal cities



silver medal cities



bronze medal cities



did not have enough strong policies to warrant a medal

68%

of America's 75 largest cities (51 of 75) earned an overall medal in 2025



47.6

MILLION

people live in a city that has earned an overall medal

An increase of nearly 4 million people compared to 2024

Eight exemplary cities rise to the top by earning overall gold medals: **Boston, Chicago, Denver, Minneapolis, New Orleans, Portland, San Antonio, and St. Louis** — with Chicago earning its first overall gold under the current policy package, having previously earned an overall silver.

Ten other cities showed progress by improving their medals in 2025, including five that moved from an overall bronze to an overall silver: **Cleveland, Columbus, Louisville, Nashville, and Oakland**. Five cities earned an overall bronze medal for the first time: **Austin, Cincinnati, Irvine, Phoenix, and Tulsa**.

these successes are shared, replicated, and scaled to benefit more communities nationwide.

Several CityHealth policies were championed at the state level through the ballot/referenda process. Unfortunately,



Gold medal city Chicago

EARNING AN OVERALL MEDAL

GOLD



Cities must earn **5 or more gold** medals across the 12 policies

SILVER



Cities must earn **5 or more gold or silver** medals across the 12 policies

BRONZE



Cities must earn **5 or more gold, silver, or bronze** medals across the 12 policies

NO MEDAL



Cities that received **less than 5** medals across the 12 policies were not awarded an overall medal

in some states, voter-approved measures were later repealed by the legislature, which altered the policy landscape for local jurisdictions. For example, Missouri's legislature repealed Earned Sick Leave protections that passed through a 2024 referendum, which would have expanded protections to residents in St. Louis and Kansas City. CityHealth will continue to monitor developments like these and will work closely with our partners and city leaders to navigate challenging dynamics to ensure residents benefit from policies designed for their communities.

CityHealth remains focused on what matters most: helping cities succeed. We recognize the headwinds local leaders face, but our role is to equip them with clear, actionable tools and resources. By meeting with officials, sharing best practices, and offering targeted technical assistance, CityHealth strengthens the ecosystem that supports city leadership, helping local governments overcome barriers, celebrate progress, and create lasting change.

As this year's findings make clear: cities deliver. Cities are proving grounds for solutions that work by driving progress in health, equity, and economic opportunity. By equipping cities with tools, resources, and technical assistance, we can continue building stronger, healthier, and more resilient communities for all.

Background

CityHealth, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, works to advance a package of health-promoting policy solutions that ensure all people in America's largest cities have access to healthy choices. This menu of 12 equitable policy solutions can help all people have a safe place to live, a healthy body and mind, and a thriving environment. Each policy solution has specific criteria needed to earn a gold, silver, or bronze medal. Policy criteria and additional information can be found at cityhealth.org.

KEY FINDINGS: Policy Medals

In 2025, America's 75 largest cities earned 434 individual policy medals (+3%) across all 12 policies, including 175 (+9%) gold medals, 121 (+7%) silver medals, and 138 (-7%) bronze medals.

Cities can earn gold, silver, or bronze medals depending on the number and strength of their policies in each area. For a full description of how medals are awarded for each policy and to learn about CityHealth's methodology, visit cityhealth.org or see the accompanying 2025 Report Methodology. The methodology also contains information on preemption, a legal principle that allows a higher level of government to limit or eliminate the power of a lower level of government to regulate a specific issue.

434 TOTAL POLICY MEDALS



Gold medal city Portland



Complete Streets

Complete Streets policies balance people's needs and safety across all forms of transportation, including walking, biking, public transit, and cars. From street lighting to bike lanes to crosswalks, these policies ensure that all residents have safe, convenient ways of getting around and staying active. All people from all neighborhoods should have access to Complete Streets that help them get where they need to go, live, play, and grow.

CityHealth assessed cities' Complete Streets policies with criteria that include measures to prioritize vulnerable users, ensure compliance, and collect and publicize equity data.



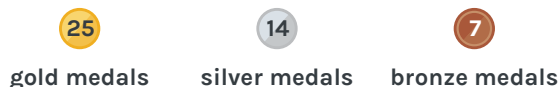
32 of 75 cities earned a medal for Complete Streets (+3%)



Affordable Housing Trusts

Affordable Housing Trusts are a community-driven way for cities to invest in building and maintaining affordable housing for everyone. These trusts receive ongoing dedicated sources of public funding to support the preservation and production of affordable housing and increase opportunities for families and individuals to access quality affordable homes.

CityHealth assessed cities' Affordable Housing Trusts policies using criteria that include multi-stakeholder oversight requirements, diversity in funding sources, and regular evaluation and public reporting.



46 of 75 cities earned a medal for Affordable Housing Trusts (no change)

"We stand united with leading health, civil rights, parent, and community organizations — and an overwhelming majority of voters — to stop the tobacco industry from targeting our kids and our communities (and especially our Black communities) with flavored products."

— Columbus, OH Mayor Andrew J. Ginther and Montgomery, AL Mayor Steven L. Reed



Earned Sick Leave

Earned Sick Leave policies require employers to allow employees to take paid time off for illness or injury for themselves or their family members. Done well, these policies can reduce the spread of contagious illnesses, increase employment and income stability, and save cities money in health care costs. Cities that require companies to offer Earned Sick Leave ensure that all employees feel secure in their jobs when they fall ill — and keep communities healthy by stopping the spread of contagious illness.

CityHealth assessed cities' Earned Sick Leave policies with criteria that include the ability for workers to use Earned Sick Leave to care for family members or recover from domestic violence, the minimum of sick time a worker can earn, and the size of businesses covered under the local law.

9

gold medals

22

silver medals

8

bronze medals

39 of 75 cities earned a medal for Earned Sick Leave (~3%)



Flavored Tobacco Restrictions

Flavored Tobacco Restrictions policies prohibit all retailers from selling flavored tobacco products — including flavored e-cigarettes and menthol cigarettes — to protect the health of our communities. Prohibiting the sale of flavored tobacco products can reduce use of these dangerous and addictive products and supports the well-being of everyone, especially young people.

CityHealth assessed cities' Flavored Tobacco Restrictions policies with criteria that include prohibiting the sale of three categories of tobacco products: menthol cigarettes; flavored e-cigarettes and vaping devices; and other flavored tobacco products including cigars, cigarillos, dipping tobacco, chew, and hookah.

7

gold medals

7

silver medals

8

bronze medals

22 of 75 cities earned a medal for
Flavored Tobacco Restrictions (+1%)



Eco-Friendly Purchasing

Eco-Friendly Purchasing policies help to limit exposure to toxic chemicals in city-owned buildings. Since cities collectively spend billions of dollars every year purchasing potentially toxic products, prioritizing the city's selection of less harmful products in three categories — cleaning supplies, foodware, and furnishings — enables leaders to use the power of city procurement to impact health. When city leaders buy eco-friendly products for city buildings, they make it clear that the health of our communities and our environment is worth protecting.

CityHealth assessed cities' Eco-Friendly Purchasing policies with criteria that include annual reporting requirements, adherence to independent standards, and the inclusion of all requests for proposals (RFPs) and contracts.

8

gold medals

1

silver medals

9

bronze medals

18 of 75 cities earned a medal for Eco-Friendly Purchasing
(no change)



Greenspace

Public greenspaces, from parks to trails to public commons, help families be healthier in body and mind and keep our environment thriving. Greenspace policies can expand equitable access to parks, increase tree canopy, and reduce pollution. These policies ensure all families, not just a few, have access to public land, nature, and their benefits.

CityHealth assessed cities' Greenspace policies with criteria that include measurable goals to expand park access or tree canopy, park and greenspace spending levels, and the prioritization of underserved and disinvested neighborhoods.

28

gold medals

13

silver medals

17

bronze medals

58 of 75 cities earned a medal for Greenspace (+5%)



"Thanks to Denver voters, our city will take flavored tobacco off store shelves. This will mean better health for our communities, better health for our youth, and less targeting of people of color with these poisonous products."

— Denver Councilmember Darrell Watson



Healthy Food Purchasing

Healthy Food Purchasing policies set standards for the food available for purchase on city property. These policies can help ensure that healthy food options are available in city-owned or controlled places and give city residents food choices that can help them achieve and maintain a healthy weight. Cities that prioritize health in their food purchases increase access to healthy choices — and can use their purchasing power to lead by example.

CityHealth assessed cities' Healthy Food Purchasing policies with criteria that include mandating nutrition standards and which venues the policy applies to.

4

gold medals

3

silver medals

21

bronze medals

28 of 75 cities earned a medal for Healthy Food Purchasing (+1%)



Healthy Rental Housing

Healthy Rental Housing — also known as “proactive rental inspection” — policies have a strong evidence base that shows the link between potential health harms within rental properties and the ability to proactively inspect and remediate these harms. These policies can help detect life-threatening toxins like mold and asbestos, and have a strong upstream prevention focus that could prevent poor health problems before they start.

CityHealth assessed cities' Healthy Rental Housing policies with criteria that include the interval and location of inspections, landlord payment of registration or inspection fees, and evaluation and reporting requirements.

3

gold medals

4

silver medals

16

bronze medals

23 of 75 cities earned a medal for Healthy Rental Housing (-1%)



High-Quality, Accessible Pre-K

Done right, all children benefit from early childhood education, regardless of family income or Zip code. CityHealth's assessment of High-Quality, Accessible Pre-K programs evaluates 10 quality benchmarks established by the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), as well as measures around access, local funding, and data collection. When all families have access to high-quality pre-K, more children have the opportunity to succeed as they begin their educational journeys.

CityHealth assessed cities' High-Quality, Accessible Pre-K policies with criteria that include the number of NIEER quality benchmarks the program meets, access thresholds, collection of equity data, and inclusion of local funding.

26

gold medals

10

silver medals

35

bronze medals

71 of 75 cities earned a medal for High-Quality, Accessible Pre-K (-3%)



Legal Support for Renters

Most renters lack the means to obtain legal representation when faced with eviction, preventing them from fully benefiting from the legal protections they're entitled to. Legal Support for Renters — also known as “right to counsel” — policies ensure all eligible tenants have access to full legal representation, which substantially improves the likelihood that residents will stay in their homes; or, if they must move, that they will have more time to find new housing and a lower risk of homelessness. These policies also help renters keep their records free from evictions and can help reduce rent debt.

CityHealth assessed cities' Legal Support for Renters policies with criteria that include eligibility requirements, degree of coverage, and evaluation and reporting.

3

gold medals

7

silver medals

9

bronze medals

19 of 75 cities earned a medal for Legal Support for Renters (+3%)



Smoke-Free Indoor Air

Cities can put people's health first by ensuring that businesses and other indoor spaces remain free from the smoke and vapor from tobacco (including e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products) and cannabis. Smoke-Free Indoor Air policies protect non-smokers from the harmful effects of tobacco and reduce smokers' consumption of tobacco at the same time. Casinos, gaming venues, multi-unit housing, and bars — or any other public space we enjoy with family and friends — should have clean air to protect everyone's health.

CityHealth assessed cities' Smoke-Free Indoor Air policies with criteria that include the types of workplaces and venues the policy applies to and the inclusion of vaping and marijuana.

31

gold medals

6

silver medals

6

bronze medals

43 out of 75 cities earned a medal
for Smoke-Free Indoor Air policies (+16%)



Safer Alcohol Sales

When communities have smart policies and practices around alcohol sales, it helps keep everyone safer — and physically and mentally healthier — by reducing excessive drinking and related violence. Safer Alcohol Sales policies put cities in charge of the location and practices of alcohol retailers. Policies that govern where, when, and how alcohol may be sold in a neighborhood can reduce crime, increase safety, and decrease spending on health care and criminal justice.

CityHealth assessed cities' Safer Alcohol Sales policies with criteria that include coverage of all alcohol sales, ability to address public health and safety, and enforcement.

23

gold medals

12

silver medals

35 of 75 cities earned a medal for Safer Alcohol Sales (+1%)

Only gold and silver medal levels exist for this policy.



OUR METHODS

CityHealth's policy package was developed in consultation with local leaders, public health experts, researchers, and members of the business community. Twelve health-related, health equity-promoting policies were selected that benefit people's health, well-being, and quality of life. These policies and their associated criteria were chosen with the following guiding principles in mind: 1) Policies demonstrate evidence of health impact; 2) Policies are largely under city jurisdictional authority; 3) Policies are replicable, having been successfully adopted in at least one of the 75 largest cities; 4) Policies are pragmatic, including a likelihood of gaining bipartisan support; and 5) Policies employ best practices, with criteria recommended by subject matter experts and implementation partners.

To award medals, the Center for Public Health Law Research at Temple University's Beasley School of Law and other evaluation partners performed policy surveillance, the systematic collection and analysis of laws of public health significance, based on the criteria established for each policy. Medals are awarded for high-achieving policies (gold), good policies (silver), and acceptable policies (bronze). Cities with no policy, or a policy that did not meet the minimum requirements, received no medal. CityHealth's assessment also includes information about relevant county and state-level laws impacting city policy adoption. Additional information, including all policy criteria, methodology, and data on state-level preemption, is available at cityhealth.org.

EMERGING TRENDS

As cities across the country navigate a challenging landscape, local leaders are responding with resilience, creativity, and a clear focus on their communities' most pressing needs. Addressing the housing affordability crisis remains at the top of the agenda for many mayors and councilmembers — a priority reflected in CityHealth's policy package, where one-third of the solutions are dedicated to housing.

One of the strongest areas of progress this year was Affordable Housing Trusts. As housing costs continue to rise, cities are increasingly turning to housing trusts as a proven strategy to build and preserve affordable homes. Ten cities earned or improved medals in this policy area. These trusts enable cities to finance new affordable developments, support energy-efficient upgrades, and keep existing housing accessible. Anaheim's launch of the Anaheim Local Housing Trust Fund is a notable example, with plans to support affordable communities, first-time homebuyers, and residents at risk of eviction.

Legal Support for Renters policies are also gaining momentum as cities confront rising eviction rates. In April, Los Angeles adopted a tenant's right-to-counsel law following nearly a decade of local advocacy — prioritizing tenants in "high vulnerability ZIP codes" as the program is phased in over the next five to seven years. This marks a significant step toward strengthening housing stability and protecting the rights of renters across the city.

PREEMPTION CONTINUES TO LOOM LARGE

Preemption occurs when a higher level of government overrides local authority, often preventing cities from addressing urgent challenges facing their residents. In Texas, for example, the statewide Regulatory Consistency Act sharply restricted local authority over issues ranging from worker protections to tenant evictions. Although the statute, which many are calling the "Death Star" law, is currently being challenged in court, its sweeping scope has already discouraged some cities from pursuing policies tailored to their communities' needs.

Some cities have attempted to push back through legal challenges or by operating within state limits through temporary pilots, but these strategies rarely offer durable solutions. State preemptive threats or actions can hamper cities from responding to urgent community needs, limiting their ability to adopt policies that would otherwise benefit health.

OPPORTUNITY IN 2026

As the nation continues to face an affordable housing shortage, housing will remain a top priority for local leaders in 2026. CityHealth's housing policies — Affordable

Gold medal city New Orleans



Housing Trusts, Legal Support for Renters, and Healthy Rental Housing — provide three proven strategies for cities to create and preserve affordable housing, keep residents securely housed, and ensure safe, healthy living conditions across all income levels. Together, these policies help cities support families who rent, assist first-time homebuyers, and stabilize housing conditions in neighborhoods where affordability pressures are most acute.

Healthy Food Purchasing also presents a significant opportunity for cities in the year ahead. By ensuring that nutritious foods are available in government offices, parks, recreation centers, schools, and senior facilities, cities can lead by example for businesses and consumers. At a time when conversations about diet, chronic disease, and misinformation are widespread, municipal purchasing power is a practical and highly visible way for city leaders to promote science-based standards and expand access to healthy options citywide.

Throughout this year, city leadership has become a powerful space to lead by example. Local leaders have been models of navigating competing interests while prioritizing

their city's needs; building, maintaining, and learning from bipartisan relationships in their city and across the nation; and representing their city's values. Leaders will likely continue to see opportunities to showcase these dynamic skills in 2026 as well.

NEXT STEPS

CityHealth's goal is that all city leaders will use this assessment as a tool to work together and move toward the gold standard for each policy. These data are intended to serve as an accountability framework, giving residents, policymakers, and community leaders the tools to drive health improvements in their cities.

CityHealth works with subject matter experts, technical assistance partners, communications specialists, and government relations professionals to support cities in adopting the policy package and celebrating their achievements. To connect with CityHealth and access the many resources available for cities, we invite you to connect with us at cityhealth.org/join-us.

MEDALS

This is the 2025 assessment of how the nation's 75 largest cities rate in 12 policy areas. Learn more about each city at cityhealth.org.



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	2025 Overall Medal	Affordable Housing Trusts	Complete Streets	Earned Sick Leave	Eco-Friendly Purchasing	Flavored Tobacco Restrictions	Greenspace	Healthy Food Purchasing	Healthy Rental Housing	High-Quality, Accessible Pre-K	Legal Support For Renters	Safer Alcohol Sales	Smoke-Free Indoor Air
Albuquerque, NM													
Anaheim, CA													
Anchorage, AK													
Arlington, TX													
Atlanta, GA													
Aurora, CO													
Austin, TX													
Bakersfield, CA													
Baltimore, MD													
Boston, MA													
Charlotte, NC													
Chicago, IL													
Cincinnati, OH													
Cleveland, OH													
Colorado Springs, CO													
Columbus, OH													
Corpus Christi, TX													
Dallas, TX													
Denver, CO													
Detroit, MI													
Durham, NC													
El Paso, TX													
Fort Worth, TX													
Fresno, CA													
Greensboro, NC													
Henderson, NV													
Honolulu, HI													
Houston, TX													
Indianapolis, IN													
Irvine, CA													
Jacksonville, FL													
Kansas City, MO													
Las Vegas, NV													
Lexington, KY													
Lincoln, NE													
Long Beach, CA													
Los Angeles, CA													

 = city improved overall medal status since 2024.



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Louisville, KY													
Memphis, TN													
Mesa, AZ													
Miami, FL													
Milwaukee, WI													
Minneapolis, MN													
Nashville, TN													
New Orleans, LA													
New York, NY													
Newark, NJ													
Oakland, CA													
Oklahoma City, OK													
Omaha, NE													
Orlando, FL													
Philadelphia, PA													
Phoenix, AZ													
Pittsburgh, PA													
Plano, TX													
Portland, OR													
Raleigh, NC													
Riverside, CA													
Sacramento, CA													
Saint Paul, MN													
San Antonio, TX													
San Diego, CA													
San Francisco, CA													
San Jose, CA													
Santa Ana, CA													
Seattle, WA													
St. Louis, MO													
Stockton, CA													
Tampa, FL													
Toledo, OH													
Tucson, AZ													
Tulsa, OK													
Virginia Beach, VA													
Washington, DC													
Wichita, KS													

= city improved overall medal status since 2024.

CITYHEALTH, an initiative of the de Beaumont Foundation and Kaiser Permanente, works to advance a package of tried and tested policy solutions that ensure all people have access to healthy choices. Together with visionary city leaders, CityHealth helps cities adopt policies that can make their communities healthy and resolve critical health disparities — now and decades down the road. Learn more at cityhealth.org.



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