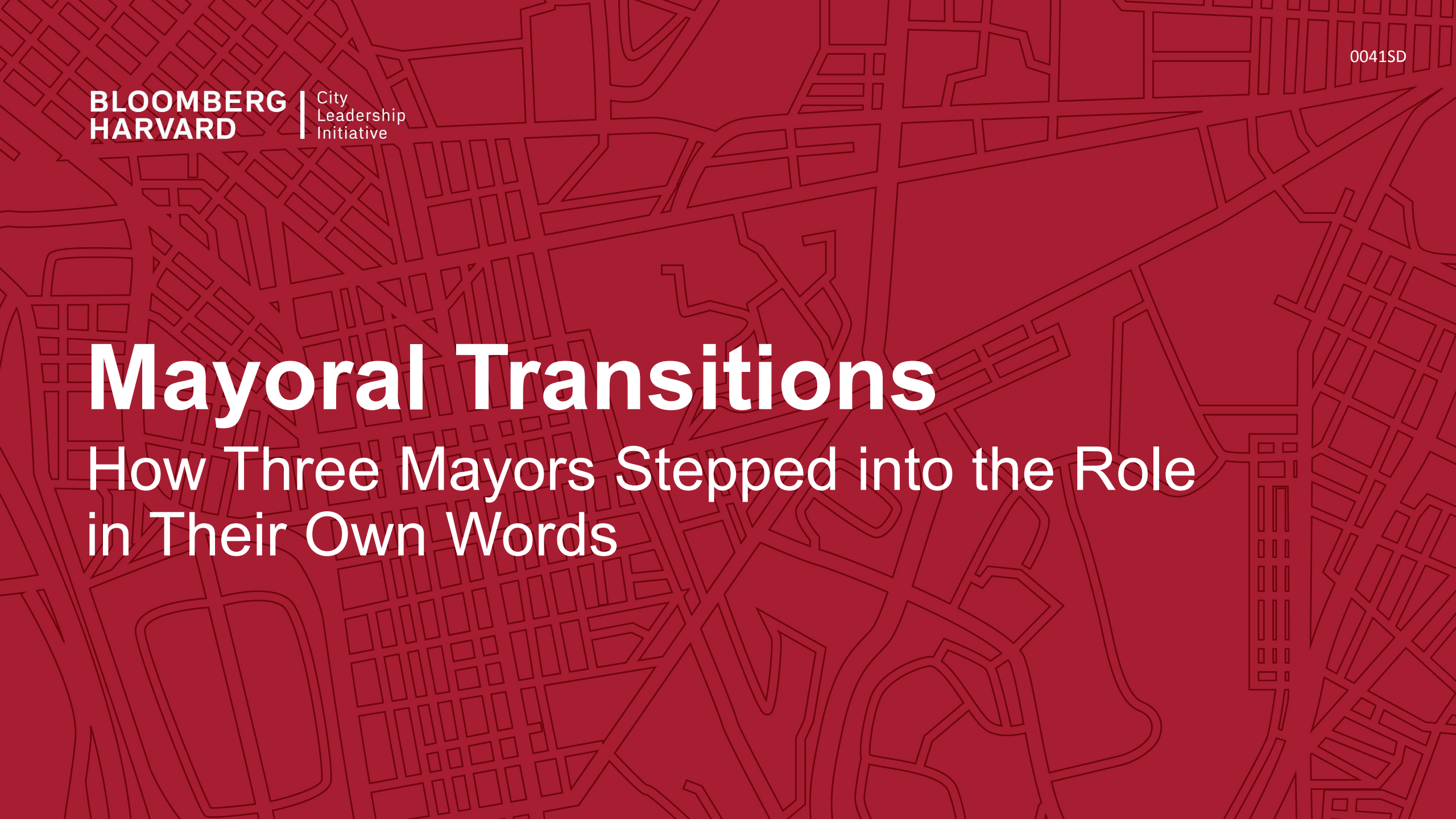


The background of the entire slide is a dark red color with a white line-art map of a city grid, showing various street patterns and building footprints.

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Mayoral Transitions

How Three Mayors Stepped into the Role
in Their Own Words

Learning Objectives

Learning Objectives

By the end of the case session, participants should know:

- all transitions are distinctive, and there is no single playbook.
- nevertheless, mayors and other public leaders can consider common themes that apply to many transitions and can help make the most of their first several months in office.

Participants should know how to do:

- a diagnosis of their own transition based on what they bring to the role, the circumstances of their election, and the wider context.
- value alignment between their transition/administration values and the activities of their transition.
- a values statement for their administration and identify their—and their team's— key first moves.

Finally, participants should know how to be:

- skeptical of one-size-fits-all transition advice.

The background of the slide is a dark red color with a white line-art map of a city grid. The grid consists of numerous rectangular blocks of varying sizes, some of which are irregular, suggesting a complex urban layout. The lines are thin and white, creating a high-contrast pattern against the red background.

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Exploration

Exploration

Each of the incoming mayors faced **key challenges**. *What were they?*



- Louisville, Kentucky, Mayor Greg Fischer



- Mount Vernon, New York, Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard



- Miami, Florida, Mayor Francis Suarez

Exploration (cont.)

Considering these *key challenges*, what should be their “first moves”?



- Louisville, Kentucky, Mayor Greg Fischer



- Mount Vernon, New York, Mayor Shawyn Patterson-Howard



- Miami, Florida, Mayor Francis Suarez

The background of the slide is a dark red color with a white line-art map of a city grid. The map shows a complex network of streets, with some areas having a more regular grid pattern and others being more irregular. The lines are thin and white, creating a high-contrast pattern against the red background.

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Diagnosis

**Acute or chronic
challenges?**

**Residents trust or
distrust city hall?**

**Engaged or
disengaged staff?**

**Smooth or turbulent
transfer of power?**

**Administrative
competence or
incompetence?**

Diagnosis questions:

Solely based on the information provided in the case, which of these listed conditions are present, neutral, or lacking for each mayor? Which of these present opportunities? Which of these present challenges?

Acute
crises

Chronic
challenges

Residents trust
city hall

Residents lack trust
in city hall

Smooth transfer
of power

Turbulent transfer
of power



Insider or outsider?

Administrative
competence

Administrative
incompetence

Staff engages in
problem-solving

Staff awaits directions
from the top

Diagnosis: Fischer



Place the
mayor's initials
on each spectra.

Acute
crises

Chronic
challenges

Residents trust
city hall

Residents lack trust
in city hall

Smooth transfer
of power

Turbulent transfer
of power



Insider or outsider?

Administrative
competence

Administrative
incompetence

Staff engages in
problem-solving

Staff awaits directions
from the top

Diagnosis: Patterson- Howard



Place the
mayor's initials
on each spectra.



Insider or outsider?

Diagnosis: Suarez



Place the mayor's initials on each spectra.



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Application

Application

- In addition to assessing the backdrop of a transition, consider how leadership values might uncover a path forward.
- Reflect on your core beliefs: *What guides you in your personal and professional life? What allows you to oversee, lead, and manage others effectively?*
- Work independently to complete the values statement template:

“As mayor, I believe that _____, _____, and _____ matter most for achieving my goals and the goals of those I serve.”

Application (cont.)

- *Turning to your own leadership transition, what are you inheriting?*
- *Given your draft leadership value statement, what should be some of your first moves?*
- *What is the most significant challenge awaiting you?*
- *How are you and your advisors preparing to deal with that challenge right now?*

Takeaways

Wrap Up and Takeaways

- There is no single way to design a transition. There isn't one "roadmap." Transitions are highly contextual and personal.
- Although elected leaders often use the first one hundred days to formulate strategy, gain stakeholder buy-in, and then roll out policy initiatives, most find that the process of taking office requires making a series of transitions that extend well beyond that time frame.
- Adopt a diagnostic mindset. *What are the critical assets that you and your team uniquely bring? What challenges does your city face at this moment? What gaps do you notice and what steps can you and your team take to address them?*

Takeaways (cont.)

- Consider how to leverage being an outsider or an insider; each identity has its strengths and weaknesses.
- Prepare yourself (and your team) to be nimble as circumstances change and you learn more about the challenges you face.
- Recognize the values you bring to your office. *What feels like bedrock and where can your leadership philosophy evolve and remain consonant with your values?*

Epilogue

Epilogue

- **Mayor Fischer:** After reelection in 2014 and 2018, he termed out in 2022. He was president of the US Conference of Mayors in 2020 and 2021.
- **Mayor Suarez:** In November 2018, voters rejected his bid to change the city's charter to strengthen the office of the mayor. Finishing out his first four-year term, Suarez won reelection by 13,000 votes in November 2021. In January 2022, he was sworn in as the 80th president of the US Conference of Mayors.

Sources: "Past Presidents," US Conference of Mayors, <https://www.usmayors.org/the-conference/leadership/>, accessed April 2024; Joey Flechas, "Miami Mayor Francis Suarez reelected in a landslide victory," *Miami Herald*, November 3, 2021, <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/politics-government/election/article255310071.html>, accessed May 2023.

Epilogue (cont.)

- **Mayor Patterson-Howard:** While managing the pandemic, she made strides in building a team and pushing through long-defunct projects. Among them was reopening “Memorial Field”—an athletic facility that had fallen into disrepair for nearly three decades—in September 2022 and beginning work on the first comprehensive city plan since 1960. After a four-year term, she ran for reelection in 2023; former mayors Richard Thomas and Andre Wallace had planned to do so as well but “fac[ed] court challenges to their nominating petitions.” In April 2023, Patterson-Howard was sworn in as the president of the African American Mayors Association. In November 2023, she ran unopposed and was reelected—the first Mount Vernon mayor to be reelected in nearly two decades.

Sources: Matt Spillane and Jonathan Bandler, “Memorial Field, 'jewel of Mount Vernon,' unveiled after long-awaited rebuild,” Rockland/Westchester Journal News, September 21, 2022, <https://www.lohud.com/story/news/local/westchester/mount-vernon/2022/09/21/memorial-field-mount-vernon-rebuilt-athletic-complex-unveiled/69506858007/> and Jonathan Bandler, “Mount Vernon seeks first comprehensive plan since the 1960s: How it will work,” Rockland/Westchester Journal News, December 8, 2022, both accessed May 2023; Jonathan Bandler, “Mount Vernon's Patterson-Howard is new president of national Black mayors group,” Rockland/Westchester Journal News, April 25, 2023, <https://www.lohud.com/story/news/local/2023/04/25/mount-vernon-mayor-shawyn-patterson-howard-to-lead-black-mayors-association/70148056007/>, accessed May 2023; Katerina Belales, “Shawyn Patterson-Howard becomes first Mount Vernon mayor to be reelected in about two decades,” News 12 Westchester, November 8, 2023, <https://westchester.news12.com/shawyn-patterson-howard-becomes-first-mount-vernon-mayor-to-be-reelected-in-about-two-decades>, accessed April 2024; “Past Presidents,” US Conference of Mayors, <https://www.usmayors.org/the-conference/leadership/>, accessed April 2024.

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