THE BEYOND SERIES | ABSTRACT | SEPTEMBER 2026

Beyond Government

The Case for Civic Capitalism

Companies cannot depend on healthy communities while treating civic capacity as someone else's balance sheet.

Modern firms can command enormous physical and economic footprints from headquarters far removed from the places carrying their operations. That distance weakens the leadership and relationships that once accompanied corporate presence. Government is left holding problems markets helped create but cannot solve through public programs alone.

THE CIVIC BALANCE SHEET

Every enterprise depends on civic assets it does not own: workforce capability, infrastructure, functioning institutions, supplier ecosystems, social trust, community legitimacy and the ability of a place to solve problems. Every company therefore has a Civic Balance Sheet, whether management recognizes it or not.

THREE CORPORATE FOOTPRINTS

PHYSICAL	ECONOMIC	CIVIC
Land, facilities, energy, water, transportation, environmental effects and infrastructure.	Investment, jobs, wages, purchasing, suppliers and taxes.	Effects on institutions, leadership, entrepreneurship, trust, networks, ownership and adaptive capacity.

CAPACITY OVER CHARITY

PLACE-BASED SELF-INTEREST	THIN CONNECTIONS	DELIBERATE TRANSFER
Healthy civic systems are productive assets supporting long-term enterprise value.	Highly automated or remotely governed operations may create large physical and economic footprints but little organic civic capacity.	Companies can transfer knowledge, networks, authority, opportunity and institutional strength—not only money.

EXECUTIVE IMPLICATION

MANAGEMENT AGENDA	PUBLIC BOUNDARY
Assess whether civic assets around major operations are appreciating or depreciating and act before weakness becomes operating risk.	Corporations should strengthen civic capacity without governing communities or replacing legitimate public authority.

BOUNDARY AND USE

Civic Capitalism is not nostalgia for an exclusionary past or a claim that every company should act alike. The thinner the civic connections created by the business model, the more deliberate the response should be.

THE GOVERNING IDEA

Corporate citizenship writes checks. Civic capitalism builds the capacity a place needs after the check is spent.

OFFICIAL MANUSCRIPT	CONTINUE THE WORK
David M. Smitherman, Beyond Government: The Case for Civic Capitalism. The Beyond Series, Bear Strategies, 2026.	Request the full manuscript or discuss commissioned white papers, opinion pieces, research and publishing collaborations, executive education, or speaking engagements: david@bearstratusa.com.