

NEW REPORT: autonomous technology valuable for communities, but more development needed



From Lilian Coral, Knight Foundation <web@knightfoundation.org>
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Dear Stephen,

In 2018, Knight Foundation launched [a \\$5.25 million initiative](#) to engage local residents around autonomous technologies to ensure they reflect community input and meet local needs. Today, [a report](#) evaluating the impact of several pilot projects lays out clear lessons for how cities can deploy autonomous vehicles (AVs.) The findings also identify that the non-technical functions of deployment – such as onboarding support for local small businesses, assuring shared infrastructure like sidewalks and crosswalks are passable, and allowing for direct community engagement – are critical to success.

Our investment has allowed for a collaboration with Kiwibot to launch pilots in Detroit, Miami-Dade County, Pittsburgh and San Jose, with technical assistance and evaluation provided by [Cityfi](#) and [University of Oregon's Urbanism Next Center](#). Due to increased demand for delivery during the pandemic, sidewalk delivery robots have been deployed in greater numbers the past few years. And while there is a lot of attention on these technologies, city officials often don't have direct experience with them, making regulation and answering community concerns challenging.



Partnering with Kiwibot delivery robots allowed the four communities to learn more about how the technology works in the real world and incorporated a unique community engagement model that allowed residents to provide direct feedback about the robots.

In a nutshell, here's what we've learned:

- 1. The technology works in controlled settings and was deployed safely.**
- 2. Current use cases are limited, but there are many opportunities for**

expansion in urban environments.

- 3. Demonstrations and community engagement were essential to addressing the public's skepticism and sparking curiosity.**
- 4. There is a need for more willing private sector partners to pilot autonomous products.**
- 5. AV delivery regulation at the city-level provides necessary flexibility.**

See the report

A core component of Knight's [smart cities program](#) is that technology — including AVs — are tools that can be leveraged to help boost civic engagement and build more successful, inclusive cities. Our hope is that the findings in this report will help community and government leaders put people at the center of the decision-making process in communities across the country.

Consider sharing our findings with your network and give [@knightfdn](#) a follow on social media for the latest updates of our smart cities investments.

Best,

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