

3-18-10 Built Environment Momentum Team Meeting 5:30-7:30 PM

Abigail, Irasema, Mark, Valerie, Georgette, Rich, Michelle, Brandon, Justin, Wendy, Jen, Sandra, Pat, Virginia, Axel, Jayne

Agenda:

Intros and welcome
Timing and scheduling
Summary of our process
Education and capacity building
Wrap up etc.

Summary of process this far:

Have been working in this momentum team for the past 9 months. Have been trying to deal with issues that are coming up in the California Endowment process head on such as the way that initiatives such as this one have started in communities; the power dynamic between residents and agencies. Rich apologizes that we have said that we have come to consensus in the past. We have not come to formal consensus in these meetings. Numerous times the group has talked how we want to prioritize engaging residents in a meaningful way and what this would take. This is why we brought Jesse to one meeting, and this is why we wanted to have Georgette and Virginia present today.

We have made two formal decisions in this group (so far):

1. We have decided on outcome four
2. We have decided upon capacity building as our goal

Presentation: (The sections in bold are questions posed by committee members during the presentations)

Building community base (with Virginia and Georgette)

Proyecto de Casas Saludables: (Virginia)

The most important part to create a community base is to look at the residents. How do you maintain a base for residents so that they can have their *own* voice? We have created a leadership academy. There are a lot of issues in the community. You lose residents if you engage them, but have no follow through. You need to gain trust with the residents and they need to know that you are there to support them. We learn from the community that there is a lot of interest in learning, but what happens after a resident begins to learn? You start a process of consciousness raising. The resident begins to understand that they cannot solely participate, but become a part of the community.

We offer the following workshops:

We teach people their basic rights: Rights as a tenant, rights to employment, rights for parents of children in schools and rights as an immigrant. This is just a start. There are usually 50-100 residents in each academy.

The most important part is what happens after they have graduated from the academy. This is a part of the responsibility to community organizers is how will we guide the residents after they graduate.

Next step is to follow the interest of the residents. This is why we say that we want to involve residents who have their own voice. There are other orgs who have their own models. But our purpose is to continue moving forward and strengthening our base. So what is important that we can create consciousness in a resident so that when a new issue arises is they will know how to address it on their own.

How have you created this?

Once we started working in the community, knocking on doors. We began addressing home infestations, doing surveys about the problems we encountered in homes. We found out that there were a lot of residents that had a ton of problems. This is where we started to create these academies because we found that the problems were so huge. When you begin to open the spaces and the doors of the houses you begin to have a huge responsibility to the people you are speaking with. We found that the problems weren't just the house, they were much larger: their children weren't graduating, they were unemployed. This is when we began to do trainings. This is when people began to empower themselves to learn about their own rights. They start to remember the people who came to speak to them in their houses. They also have learned that we have followed through over time. We as organizers also have a challenge. How can we step to the next level with our base? This is how we continue on with our work.

How do they bring their people?

How do they take their learning into action?

We have a large amount of people who have graduated and will graduate this Friday and the next week we will discuss with the graduates with what they want to do afterwards. The people always want to participate and get involved with issues in the community after the academies. We want to create these bases so that they can continue with organizing themselves on political terms, with ordinances, etc. and this is what we do with our work.

Once people graduate do they stay in Casas Saludables' group or do they become independent organizers?

Several of the active organizers have become presidents of ELAC in their own schools, they have become part of the town council in their own communities. Many are interested in knowing what PAC is about. They do not simply stay in Casas Saludables.

Casas Saludables gives people the opportunity to participate in something that comes from their own personal interest and their own chance to grow. The best example of all the parents who will be gathering for the May 8th rally to protest the budget cuts. There are also people in Colina Park. They have just finished the academy and they already want to clean their neighborhood. They want to be a part of their own neighborhood and see change.

Casas Saludables are developing residents as leaders. Some do continue to participate in the core group and at the same time are equipped to participate in other environments with their consciousness. The strongest group is our executive committee for Proyecto. They are the steering committee. Many of these women work in the resident momentum team and other momentum teams as part of Building Healthy Communities.

My own personal story is that I started as a mother who was volunteer in the school and then I started going out and learning more and more about the structure and the function of the school where my son went to and now we are running our own organization. It's a process with a lot of learning but I think it's very important to learn how to empower this base and to do a follow up with the next issues that will arise in the community.

How do we decide these workshops?

People are afraid of participating when they don't know their rights. When we have one on ones they say it's too political to be participating out there.

We ask: "What does politics mean to you?"

We say: "Not having work and not having food on your table is very political." These are decisions made from above.

Many don't feel like they have rights because their immigration status isn't official. We tell them their kids go to school here, you buy things here, you are a taxpayer here. You have human rights, you have the right to speak up.

Many are scared of City Hall. The first workshop was "the wheel:" who am I as a human being, my health in the community, and why do we participate in the community?

The attorneys from the Employee Rights Center come directly to the workshop and they speak to the residents.

The last workshop is how the government works, and what people do in these offices.

I think that the academy is important to find out exactly what the needs of the residents are. The idea is to continue creating spaces for the residents.

How do these issues come up?

We started pushing with the Healthy Homes Ordinance because most of the housewives internalized that the issues in their houses were their fault. This is why we brought this issue from a perspective as an issue that is coming from above to them. Within the houses asthma is such a problem. This is where the educational workshops come from. This is where we can tackle this issue and get a change.

After the academy, we can't say that the resident hasn't become conscious. Each resident wants their own end. People become conscious and speak to people at their own level. This is when people begin to bring the issues back to the group. They tell us what they want to work on. No mother wants to do nothing when there is a huge problem with roaches in her house and her child loses part of their hearing because a roach climbed in their ear. They have lived this need and they want to change it.

Upside down triangle model created by Environmental Health Coalition: (A model that they have been working on in National City and Barrio Logan.)

Georgette:

Four levels of leadership:

1. Potential leaders

2. Activist
3. Supporter
4. Core: the people who run strategies who decide what issues that people will be working on.

SALTA: Salud Ambiental Lideres Tomando Acción: (this is their leadership academy)

What the groups learn in the leadership academy:

Consciousness building, understanding universal issues related to environmental advocacy, understanding power, what does community organizing look like, what is advocacy, media training, delivering testimony to decision makers

Example from Barrio Logan:

The residents decided that they wanted to change their community plan:

EHC did a land use training to prepare people for this process. This took place over ten year process. The leaders go into the community when they decide that they want to go into the community. What are the important issues? There are four principles that were created by the community.

When people decided that they wanted to change the map of Barrio Logan it was decided by the community after 10 years. This map is reflected by the plan that the residents want.

The idea is to start with the people and you start to listen to the people and connect their worries and their concerns into a frame of capacity building. When you do community organizing you cannot disregard what the residents are saying. If you start to bring up your issue and don't listen to their issues and push their issues aside then you begin to lose people. The residents saw the industries as an issue to their livelihood (noise, health, can't sleep at night) but they took it to the next level and helped the residents connect the dots. This is capacity building. This is showing the relationships. We took the map back to the community and shared it with everyone in the whole neighborhood. This took two years. The goal was to share it with absolutely everybody.

If Building Healthy Communities will continue on for ten years we need to change the triangle to an inverted triangle. The community needs to own this if this is going to work.

How can your work in organizing from EHC and organizing principles of different levels of involvement how is this going to look here in City Heights? How many of these 90,000 people will be involved in this process? If you knock on 100 doors and 10 people answer these doors you have done a good job. How will this reflect on this logic model and this plan?

You look at 100 doors a month and it is a continued process. Some people will fall and there are these people who want to participate in the process and they get hooked. They get exposed through an event. The way you hook them is you bring something that they care about. If you can't provide a hook then you will lose people left and right. We have different levels of trainings that we provide because of this purpose. There is never a closed circle. We are constantly meeting people and getting to know them. If you don't come at them in a respectful way with getting to know them you scare them. You lose them.

They have done a marvelous job with 4,000 people over 25 years. We are looking at 90,000 people speaking many languages. How does this look?

The only way that I see City Heights changing is taking agencies that are very segregated and having them work together. There has to be a conversation that needs to occur about bringing people together. We keep calling this resident driven, but we have to discuss what this **looks like**.

We have this model in City Heights Building Healthy Communities where you have house leaders. This model is good as a survey tool but not an organizing tool. This is dangerous because the training and the capacity building was not done with these people and it leaves them asking Mid City CAN: "Why are we having these meetings?" If you hold meetings and ask them to come without understanding why they are holding the meetings or why they should come, you quickly lose people and lose the legitimacy of the project.

Is there a risk between having no goal and being didactic?

You never come to the community and say "I want to organize" and not have something to offer.

You always have to look at where people are at. Parent groups, church congregations, etc. You never bring your agenda. You identify these places and you study the people and understand why they are there and open the channel of communication. There is a reason why they are there. You have to be available 24/7. You have to be there for them if they need you for something. You have to continue to help in whatever way possible. You have to become a part of their life. "*La gente no estan felices con comida que se expira el dia siguiente*" "People aren't happy eating food that goes bad the day after they get it" You need to be around for people.

If you were to design the ideal process from here forward, what does this look like?

How true are we to the resident driven process? We need to do resident leadership development. We have to wake people up. People are so stuck in their day to day. People don't see healthy foods as something important. They want to have food on their table. People have to pay their rent. There should be one momentum team. Not so many meetings. Residents should be running their own meetings. We should dismantle all the other teams and just have one.

We can't idealize the process. We have to live it and feel it. We really need to have some time to actually spend time with the residents. If we don't have the capacity to organize a base from the people who live here helped by the people who work here, after ten years, how are we going to look at each other and say: "Wow we have seen changes here."

After ten years some people will have changed jobs, moved, but the same problems will still be here. There is a process. It's not easy but we're working with human beings and it's a learning experience. And the fact that we've spent so many hours in so many meetings over the past nine months, shows that we really have an interest here.

It would really be great if we didn't have to live with set agendas. What we are talking about is creating a real, grass roots framework, where residents can actually have a place on the table. This is different than any other framework than any other plan has created.

Is this possible? Will we be able to create this? Will California Endowment allow us to do this? This is very different than what other Momentum Teams are doing in Building Healthy Communities.

Yes, we will be able to do this.

National City's Community plan: We are finally taking this plan from the community to the NC City Council. This was the West Side Community Plan from the residents and the EPA picked National City as one of the model plans from the entire nation. This is a plan that was built by the residents. The California Endowment helped fund this planning process. You really have to trust. It will come.

City Heights is unique that there has been a lot of planning processes. TCE is simply the most recent.

In all of these surveys safety has been at the top of the list. It's our job to put all of these issues together. There is an opportunity to take the information from the survey and framing the information to create a capacity building work plan. This leads into a bigger picture which is the whole community.

We do have a starting point of broad outcomes it will still match the TCE outcomes. This will meet both ends at the same time and will continue to build onto where it fits. The outcomes are very vague and we can look at them

One of the reasons why City Heights was picked by the California Endowment was because of the New Roots Community Farm. It was a project that was started but the residents have taken much farther and I'd like to see this momentum team in the same idea. We can do a project but the residents will take it farther and we have to be okay with it.

Safety: Many people have a lot of fear and much of the time the answer is always more cops. On the way here I saw two black kids, one of them with a red shirt on and two white cops pull them over and harass them. I asked them why they pulled them over and they told me that one had a red shirt on. And it's not always the solution. We need to look at the larger structural issue of gangs and the perception of what gangs are and their causes.

Technocrats vs residents issue. How do we go about organizing people? How has this community seen change in the past? It's because of the way that the neighborhood associations, the PAC and Area Planning have organized and we should be working on bringing people into these organizations.

This team has been through a process and has come very far. People have become frustrated and have been working through this process.

We have decided to focus on capacity building. In order to decide that this will work, we need to decide that it's okay to create a sub group that will continue to work on this and this group will come back to the main group. If this is okay, who wants to become a part of this sub group and get into the difficult work in this process?

The whole idea of a sub committee is to create a menu of options of best practices around capacity building to bring back to the group. This is a time commitment that is required and work that needs to be done.

The Sub Committee will be creating a work plan:

Creating a first draft and then getting feed back. Then it would get sent through e-mail and people would be able to digest it and then bring it back to the group. This would be a group of people to create this plan and would be sent in to TCE as the final plan. This is an issue because of the short time frame that is allotted.

This is a huge contribution not just to this team as well to the overall process. This is a fatal flaw that Mid City CAN did not work on in the beginning. This is a lesson learned. I am excited that this team is interested in working on this. This is a lesson learned from TCE as well. They in the process of understanding a need for capacity building in order to have change and sustainability.

We can not just have meetings. We have to propose solutions. Eventually we will narrow down the solutions and eventually it will happen if you start soon.

**We created a working group in order to move forward capacity building that will report back to the larger committee. The members of this committee will be:
Kathleen, Rich, Virginia, Michelle, Georgette, Sandra**

We need to have our logic model finished before May first this is less than six weeks away.