

Built Environment Momentum Team
PROPOSAL FOR CAPACITY BUILDING IN CITY HEIGHTS
Reclaiming City Heights for Social and Environmental Justice

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Introduction

A successful community project hinges on sustainability. To attain sustainability a project needs to involve community members from its inception. The following document outlines a capacity building process to create a sustainable base of residents.

This capacity building process is a multi-year project that sees individual residents as the center with community organizations, organizers and existing community leaders as support to provide the necessary tools to engage residents. The goal is also to engage a group of people that represents the diversity of City Heights including ethnicity, culture, age and gender to create a land use centered Community Development Action Plan (CDAP) that will be adopted and implemented.

The proposed capacity building process will focus on land use, simply defined as how land is used, and issues that build a healthy and sustainable community to foster resident knowledge around the concept of *Why Place Matters* and develop skills to organize and advocate for change. This emphasis is chosen because of City Heights' unique history of inequitable land use decisions, the lack of robust, diversified community engagement in these decisions, and the significant connection among land use, health, and resident concerns.

This capacity building process involves holistic education of residents and existing community organizations. Often times organizations focus on resident development and resident education rather than understanding that residents also have lessons to teach. To make this process successful it's essential that community organizations are also willing to learn and grow in this process.

This document is broad and over arching because land use issues relate to all aspects of the health of a community: from access to food, access to health care, education, housing, economic development, safety, and so on. Land use decisions have real impacts on all residents of the community in all aspects of their lives.

Goals

- To create a City Heights community where residents live with health-promoting land use, transportation and community development. (**TCE Outcome 4**)
 - To increase opportunities for diverse low-income City Heights residents to organize for desired change on land use planning issues and health concerns.
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Objectives

I. Establish Community Control

Tactics/Strategy

1. Engage in resident assessment process:

- a. This assessment will occur through one-on-one and small group conversations to understand how the built environment affects their lives and identify their level participation (See Appendix A for details).
- b. Residents can be involved in different ways and participate at different levels. This assessment will ask residents to self-identify their ability to participate. (See a list of categories in Appendix B).

2. Conduct leadership development and empowerment trainings:

- a. Focus areas for community resident leadership development will include *education*, more of an emphasis on capacity building; *organizing*, as in teaching the various models that apply to the build environment and *technical skill/tools* that are necessary to implement a CDAP.
- b. Trainings will encourage residents to build relationships with each other and empower them to become community leaders while engaging them and others in the planning process.
- c. Build a base of knowledge among residents relative to land use issues and their relationship to health.

Sessions

1. What is City Heights? (A potential mapping exercise, and discussion of what people understanding of the physical boundaries of City Heights)
 - a. How does my community work? (Will include a history of development of City Heights, current land uses and problems including impacts to health and quality of life from land use decisions)
 - i. Included are demographics, history, systemic-racism history, organizations, land use decisions
2. Facilitation training (Will be part of an ongoing process in order to teach residents how to lead.)
3. Conflict resolution (Will be part of an ongoing process in order to teach healthy problem solving as issues of importance arise.)

4. Why Place Matters. (Will include conversations on access to health care: neighborhood and regional perspective, and the connections between jobs and health.)
 - a. Demographics, statistics
5. Organizing (Discussion of different organizing models.)
6. Advocacy
 - a. How government works (National, State, County, City)
 - b. Policy
 - c. Media
7. Land Use and Policy (An overview of community planning including the relationships between the City's general plan, community plans and zoning. May include a neighborhood walk-around to compare actual land uses to those indicated on planning maps and field trips to observe the impacts of planning on other communities in the City)
 - a. Zoning/mapping
 - b. Community Planning
 - c. Transportation
 - d. Current, future landscape
 - e. Redevelopment (risks and opportunities)
 - f. Affordable Housing
 - g. Gentrification (Displacement of current residents and ways to protect and promote low-income housing.)
 - h. Green Space (parks, gardens, joint use fields)
8. Government services (such as education and health)
9. Economic Development
10. Housing rights
- TBD-- Cultural sensitivity, cultural competence, Rights issues (education, immigration, employment.)

II. Develop caring relationships where mutual respect is developed and create opportunities for fun cultural events

Tactics/Strategy

- a. **Leadership:** Prepare residents for leading in new and existing bodies
- b. **Two-Way training:** Prepare existing organizations to be sensitively welcoming and accessible to emerging leaders
- c. **Diversity:** All sectors of the community will be involved in the process. There will be ethnic, cultural and age diversity as well as participation from local business owners.
- d. **Sensitivity:** Organizers will understand the culture, age, etc. of the population they are working with.

- e. **Dialogue:** Community trainings and community events should be held in a discussion based forum as opposed to an expert handing out knowledge.
- f. **Listening:** Organizers need to emphasize listening to residents. Residents need to feel that their participation is not a waste of time and that their ideas are important.
- g. **Motivation:** Easy targets and early wins are key to motivating residents to remain involved.
- h. **Sustainability:** Residents need to be continually trained and leadership needs to be constantly renewed. Old leaders need to train new ones and outreach is ongoing.

Outcomes

I. Empower community members to participate in Neighborhood Associations, local schools, and to run for seats on Project Area Committee, Area Planning Committee and non-profit boards.

Tactics/Strategy

- 1. Prepare residents for leading in new and existing bodies
- 2. Prepare existing organizations to be sensitively welcoming and accessible to emerging leaders.

II. Develop a Community Driven Action Plan (CDAP)

Tactics/Strategy

- 1. Develop a draft CDAP as part of the training. The plan will provide an opportunity for residents to articulate their vision of a healthy and economically secure neighborhood. Development and implementation of a community plan that is responsive to the needs of community residents is one way to revitalize this neighborhood and protect against future attempts to site incompatible land uses.
 - a. As part of the training, the Core (See Appendix B) community leaders will develop an initial vision for the community plan based on their own experience, previous studies and surveys and discussions with their neighbors/groups.
 - b. This plan will be very broad, and touch on aspects of a healthy and sustainable community, including but not limited to land use planning and redevelopment, recreational facilities and access, educational resources, affordable housing, sustainable jobs, transportation, health care, social services, healthy foods, and other ways to create and support “healthy community.”

2. **Outreach and educate the community about the plan.**
 - a. Following the initial visioning of the CDAP, the participants will develop a community outreach and education plan to gather additional community input. The outreach plan may include a series of community forums, house parties, a door knocking campaign, cultural events, and presentations to existing groups. Community leaders will be responsible for promoting community participation in a manner consistent with their own strategies.
 - b. After receiving broad community input, the draft CDAP will be amended and additional outreach to educate the public and secure support for the plan will be conducted. The presentation will rely heavily on good visuals to enable the audience to participate in the vision of the plan. The visuals will be designed so that they can easily be modified to show different options and incorporate changes developed over time.

3. **Advocate for adoption of the CDAP by the City of San Diego.**
 - a. The CDAP will be much broader than a typical community plan. Those elements that are appropriate will be pulled out and refined. Project partners will advocate with the city to make this plan the “official” Community Plan and to change zoning and other policies as necessary.
 - b. Adoption of the plan will include formal presentations to the District City Council Representatives, the Area Planning Committee, the City Planning Commission, and the City Council. It will also involve meetings with other government agencies that would be impacted by the plan or be responsible for implementing its various components. These can include the City Planning and Community Investment department (which includes Redevelopment), CalTrans, city traffic departments and transit authorities, school districts, and park and recreation officials.

TIMELINE

Creating a sustainable base of residents and collaborative partnerships is a slow process. A potential 5 year plan would include an entire year to convene individuals and organizations that have been part of CH Building Healthy Communities Initiative and spend time assessing resident readiness and levels of engagement, designing workshops and building capacity. The second year would focus on developing and finalizing the Community Driven Action Plan (CDAP), engaging community members to participate in Neighborhood Associations, to run for Project Area Committee, Area Planning Committee seats and non-profit boards and local schools, while securing approval of the CDAP from City officials. The third through fifth year would focus on implementing and advocating for the CDAP.