

International Rescue Committee  
5348 University Avenue, Suite 205  
San Diego, CA 92105  
Tel: 619 641 7510  
Fax: 619 641 7520  
[www.theIRC.org/sandiego](http://www.theIRC.org/sandiego)

INTERNATIONAL  
**RESCUE**  
COMMITTEE

75 YEARS FROM  
HARM TO HOME

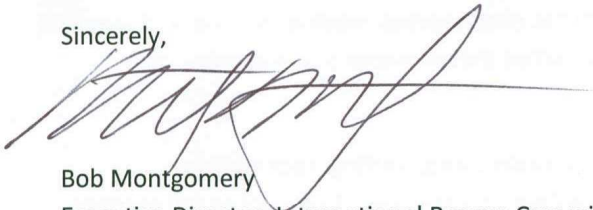
Dear Mid-City CAN,

The International Rescue Committee enthusiastically supports Mi-City Community Advocacy Network's application to the California Endowment Building Healthy Communities Initiative as our neighborhood's "lead planning agency". The IRC has full confidence in your ability to facilitate an accessible, comprehensive process in which we intend to fully participate.

At any given time, the IRC is on the ground in over 25 countries and active throughout the United States, working with people uprooted by war, civil conflict or ethnic persecution. Our San Diego Resettlement Office was opened in 1975 in response to the high influx of Vietnamese refugees and has resettled more than 21,000—primarily into the City Heights neighborhood—over the last 25 years. As an organization, we are invested in the past, present and future of this neighborhood and the people who live here.

Below we have listed the Outcomes we fill the IRC is most able to support given our current programming, however, we are eager to grow and change as this process unfolds.

Sincerely,



Bob Montgomery  
Executive Director, International Rescue Committee San Diego

**Outcome 2: Families have improved access to a health home that supports healthy behaviors.**

The IRC supports all our newly arrived refugee families in accessing medical care, connects them with their first "health home" and provides case management for individuals with severe medical needs. In the next year, the IRC Food Security and Community Health Program will add a "Health Home Navigator" to our staff, providing comprehensive case management and referrals to all IRC families.

**Outcome 3: Health and family-focused human services shift resources toward prevention.**

IRC's Food Security and Community Health Program was founded on the principles of prevention with particular emphasis on the importance of access to fresh, affordable, culturally desirable food. To this end, the IRC: operates a culturally-appropriate emergency food pantry for our refugee clients and other low-income neighbors; offers nutrition education to newly arrived refugee youth and families; manages 2.5 acres of community gardens that serve more than 100 City Heights families; and coordinates community programming (including nutrition education and physical fitness activities) at the City Heights Farmers' Market.

**Outcome 4: Residents live in communities with health-promoting land use, transportation and community development.**

In 2007, the IRC launched the At the Table Advocacy Initiative to engage refugees in the land use decisions that affect neighborhood health. Since that time, we have shared information about land use and food policy with hundreds of City Heights residents, engaged residents in advocacy around community garden permitting in the City of San Diego, and participated in drafting the Colina Park "Quality of Life Plan" and the City Heights Redevelopment Five Year Implementation Plan. IRC holds non-profit seats on the City Heights Area Planning Committee, City Heights Redevelopment Project Area Committee and Crossroads Redevelopment Project Area Committee. The IRC is also a partner in Walk San Diego's Health Equity by Design environmental justice project and is eager to engage in a comprehensive "Master Plan" for Little Mogadishu.

**Outcome 6: Communities support healthy youth development.**

IRC's Students Plus After-School Program at the Crawford Educational Complex is built on youth development principles and offers teens an array of activities, programs, and educational opportunities which enhance the school-day learning. Six days a week in at least 6 different classrooms a day, the after-school program provides young people with the following programs dedicated to healthy teens:

- **Tutoring and Homework Help:** Students drop-in to one of two classrooms after school to complete homework assignments. Eight to ten volunteer tutors help daily.
- **English as a Second Language Class (2 levels):** Newly arrived refugee and immigrant students volunteer to partake in this important after-school programming. Each ESL class teaches reading, writing, and speaking in a youth friendly environment with adult support and activities that promote a strong sense of belonging.
- **Outdoor Adventure Club:** Students interested in hiking, mountain biking, surfing, rock climbing, snorkeling, kayaking and more join the Outdoor Adventure Club to learn how. Exposure to fun outdoor adventures increases young people's interest in physical activity, builds self-esteem and camaraderie.
- **Sports:** Even though high schools offer competitive sports teams, newly arrived refugee and immigrant students cannot devote the time needed to competitive sports while also completing difficult homework assignments. IRC offers both boys and girls soccer programs as well as boys baseball throughout the summer.
- **Local to Global Club:** Each Friday, a group of twelve students gather to talk about education in the international community. Their commitment to ensuring that all children have access to education worldwide culminates in a benefit concert each June. The concert raises approximately \$1,500 for children in Tanzania and Ghana. The concert organizers exhibit healthy lifestyles by making a difference in the world.
- **Hip Hop Dance:** Once a week, young people engage in their favorite after-school activity – HIP HOP! Physical activity combined with new moves and the latest music makes Hip Hop dance one of the best tools to promote healthy youth development.

Overall, the IRC's Students Plus After-School Program provides young people with a safe space for educational and creative pursuits. Other programs include youth theater, photography, crafts, field trips to the beach, service-

learning projects, Japanese Club, youth-as-coaches soccer program, and an exciting summer program. Youth programming promotes healthy behaviors, safer communities, and individual youth success.

**Outcome 7: Neighborhood and school environments support improved health and healthy behaviors.**

IRC is committed to the idea that a healthy neighborhood environment is paramount to individual and family health. To that end, we have invested heavily in transforming the neighborhood and school environments of City Heights. The IRC initiated San Diego's first permitted community farm which will offer growing space to 80 families beginning in May 2009 as well as transform a vacant landscape into a vibrant community resource. In a similar vein, the IRC launched the City Heights Community Health Garden in April 2009 which offers small plots to 18 families and features a large communal "health demonstration garden" that features herbs and foods that combat asthma, diabetes and hypertension.

The IRC also co-operates the City Heights Farmers' Market in partnership with the San Diego County Farm Bureau and an 8-member steering committee (including the SD County Childhood Obesity Initiative, Hunger Coalition, Network for a Healthy California, Price Charities, SD Youth and Community Services). The farmers' market has a variety of innovative programs aimed at increasing access to fresh fruits and vegetables including food stamp accessibility, outreach and pre-screening; promotion of the federal Farmers' Market Nutrition Program; a Backyard Farmers' booth that creates a venue for the sale and trade of City Heights grown produce; and the Fresh Fund which "tops up" produce purchases with cash incentives for customers who receive food stamps, WIC or SSI/Disability.

Additionally, IRC operates a gardening and food justice program at Crawford High School which includes a ½ acre school garden and fruit tree orchard. The garden provides an outdoor education venue for teachers and after school activities, acts as a base for IRC's Summer Youth Internship Program, and supplies Culinary Arts classes with fresh fruits and vegetables.

**Outcome 8: Community health improvements are linked to economic development.**

IRC's Community and Economic Development Department hosts a variety of programs aimed at helping low-income residents of City Heights gain not only self sufficiency, but economic success. Some of its programs include:

- Financial Education
  - Offers a host of classroom-based trainings in addition to intensive one-on-one financial counseling and consumer advocacy
  - Has a variety of loan products available to clients, including credit-building micro-loans, debt consolidation loans and emergency loans, all offered with very low fees/interest rates
- Small Business Development
  - Offers intensive one-on-one technical assistance in all matters of business start-up
  - Offers business loans of up to \$15,000 to start or expand small businesses
- Employment/Career Development
  - Helps clients through classroom-based and one-on-one sessions to develop their resume, search for open jobs, and prepare for interviews
- Tax Preparation
  - Offers free tax preparation services to residents by hosting an official IRC-certified Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program

All of these services assist families in achieving enhanced earnings and reduced transactional expenses, resulting in improved family budgets and a foundation for future economic success. With enhanced earnings and reduced

expenses, families will necessarily be better able to access and afford health services. Specifically, costs for preventative health care will be far more manageable for families.

**Outcome 9: Health gaps for young men and boys of color are narrowed.**

In 2008, the IRC formalized its Soccer Program for high school boys. The program now serves 66 young men who attend the Crawford Educational Complex. Teams practices twice a week and games are held Saturday mornings. In addition to providing young men with much needed organized physical activity to maintain a healthy lifestyle, the Soccer Program provides a sense of belonging, a safer neighborhood park, and access to consistent and caring adults in the form of coaches. The soccer program recruits young men of all backgrounds at the high school. The health benefits include physically active teens, active minds, and improved mental health.