

Building Healthy Communities in City Heights: A Proposal for the 9-Month Planning Process



During meetings on May 18, May 26, and June 1, the Planning Oversight Committee assisted Mid-City CAN in developing the following proposal, which was approved by the Mid-City CAN Coordinating Council on June 2.

Guiding Principles for the Planning Process

Oversight Committee members offered the following principles to guide the planning process:

1. **Be Inclusive:** All constituent groups have access to the planning process. Abiding by this principle means providing support, training, language translation and interpretation, child care, and technical assistance to all participants as needed for their full participation.
2. **Be Resident-Driven:** Recognizing that the people who live and are raising their families in City Heights have the greatest stake in the outcome of this project, the process must include authentic opportunities for residents to share in the development of the plan. The three Community Congresses provide the space for community feedback on the evolving plan, and serve as openings for people to engage in the process. Again, for resident engagement to be meaningful there must be some institutionalized form of support that assists residents in organizing themselves, analyzing the information created in this process, and articulating their perspective. It is also important that an asset- rather than a problem-based lens is used throughout the planning process to start from the many strengths and existing efforts this community brings to the initiative.
3. **Be Evidence-Based:** While the outcomes have been identified by The California Endowment, *how* those outcomes are to be met is largely up to the community. An evidence-based approach means the process must include gathering the baseline data necessary for understanding the present conditions and trends as they relate to the ten outcomes. The data collected must include gaining knowledge of the community's perspective. This data would be collected through the use of house meetings, focus groups, interviews, surveys, etc. The first three months of the planning process as proposed would be primarily focused on the gathering of this data and broadening community/resident engagement.
4. **Include a Learning Component:** Because this project takes the community and The California Endowment into uncharted waters, this process must build in a feedback and self-evaluation mechanism so that the project can self-correct as needed. Abiding by this principle requires building in space for this process. The Community Congresses can serve this function. Momentum Teams can be charged with providing a self-evaluation in their presentation during these events and space can be made for the broader community to assess the direction of the project.
5. **Be Flexible and Collaborative:** Democracy is not neat and neither is community engagement. If the process is successful at following the first two principles (inclusive and resident-driven) then it is likely that the number of people involved in the process will grow over the nine months. As more

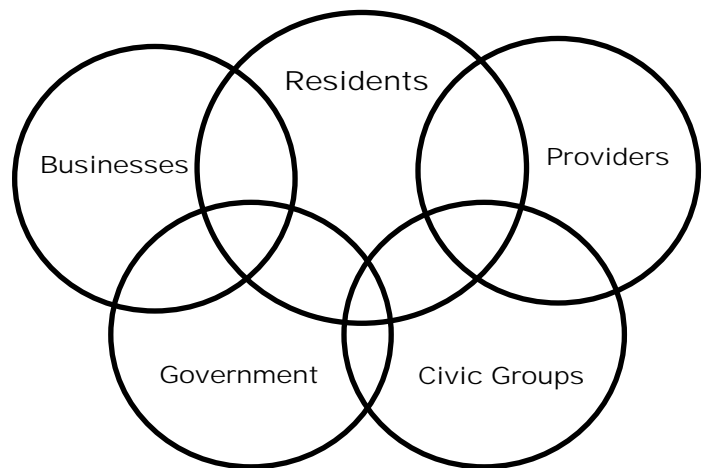
people become engaged there is likely to be a need to modify the evolving plan in order to incorporate the contributions of new people. The ability to be flexible is dependent on how well we incorporate learning, the above principle, into the planning process.

6. **Be Creative Risk-Takers in Our Approach to Social Change:** Ultimately, this initiative seeks to change local and statewide policies to enhance the quality of life for all Californians. This will involve a range of approaches to social change in order to maximize our long-term success in achieving such an ambitious goal. The process should build upon existing collaborative networks and promote cooperation and consensus over competition whenever possible. Experiments to enhance existing service quality and efficiency, pilot projects that embrace out-of-the-box solutions to old problems, and the authentic and powerful incorporation of residents into policy advocacy work will require all of our collective creativity and ought to push us at times to take risks and learn from them throughout this initiative. We have a unique opportunity and must not rely only on our sense of the possible from the past, but take on the impossible and the intractable. If not us and now, then who and when?

7. **Create a Sustainable Healthy Community:** If this initiative is successful, City Heights will be a very different place in ten years. As the plans for creating the required change are developed attention needs to be paid to how these changes will be sustained beyond the ten-year period. This principle is directly related to the principle of making the process inclusive and resident-driven. Sustainability is only possible if the ultimate ownership for it belongs to the community residents themselves. Because community organizing is labor intensive and an ongoing task, the plan must include some mechanism to support community organizing/leadership development so as to insure a consistent resident voice in the life of City Heights.

Who is Involved in this Planning Process?

It is very clear that there is consensus that all constituent groups in City Heights should have access to the planning process, but there is not yet a shared definition of a “constituent group.” One way to think about constituent groups is by how people are connected to the community. The diagram to the right names five such groups: Residents, Service Providers, Government Agencies, Civic Groups, and Businesses. As the overlap of circles in the diagram indicates, these are not clear and distinct categories as many people will fall in more than one constituent group. Someone who works at an agency and lives in City Heights fits into both the provider and the resident constituent groups.



People can and do wear multiple hats. What is important is recognizing that each of these constituent groups have their own set of interests. And, while these interests often align, there are times when they can and do conflict. Building community consensus requires that these conflicts be addressed and

resolved in the final plan. What this means in practical terms is that the planning process must pay attention to who is at the table and work to insure that each constituent group has a seat.

The planning also must pay attention to the capacity of each constituent group to be a full partner at the table. All participants must have access to the training and technical assistance they need to be prepared to carry out the task. Because people are attached to City Heights in several ways beyond their place of residence it can be difficult to define “resident.” There are at least four ways to be attached to City Heights: (1) you live in City Heights, (2) you own property/business in City Heights, (3) your cultural community is in City Heights, and/or (4) you work in City Heights.

Proposed Planning Structure

Momentum Teams. The proposed planning process will strive to involve *all* constituent groups (residents, providers, government, civic groups, and business) and be organized around the four Big Results of the initiative that were developed by TCE staff, in the following manner:

- “Reductions in Youth Violence” will be addressed by the Community Peace Promotion Momentum Team
- “Increase School Attendance” will be addressed by the School Attendance Momentum Team
- “Reverse the Childhood Obesity Epidemic” will be addressed by the Food Justice Momentum Team
- “Provide a Health Home for All Children” will be addressed by the Health Access Momentum Team

Momentum Teams are Mid-City Community Advocacy Network’s name for a collaborative group of community members and other stakeholders that meet to make good things happen, and will be:

- Staffed by Mid-City CAN (meeting logistics, child care, interpretation/translation, agenda and note taking)
- Co-led by community members and other organizational stakeholders; each momentum team will be responsible for developing its own leadership
- Responsible for developing its own timeline and work plan; identifying and reaching out to those who are not yet at the table, but should be; and identifying its members’ training and leadership development needs to ensure equal access to and influence on the planning for all participants
- Open to a range of meeting times, formats, and channels for input and discussion (i.e. regular meetings during the day, less formal gatherings on weekends or weekday evenings, one-on-one meetings with key stakeholders and community members, use of technology, etc)
- Expected to send representatives to report to the Networking Council on a monthly basis to update others participating in the initiative on the work of their team; and report back to their team regarding other team updates

Ideally, these Momentum Teams will be useful vehicles for collaborative work throughout the ten years of this initiative, and may serve as an effective accountability mechanism TCE staff can depend on once its grant making has begun to assist the foundation in holding itself to the plan created during the 9-month planning process.

Community Outreach. Recognizing that each constituent group will have its culturally-specific preferences and perspectives, and will not have equal access to and influence on the Momentum Team-based planning process at the outset based on these various cultural norms and skill sets, Oversight Committee members believed in the value of “house meetings”

(small group gatherings at private residences, schools, parks, place of worship, etc. for the purpose of outreaching to a specific group) to create safe and appealing spaces to introduce this initiative to community members and recruit them into the Momentum Teams. These house meetings will:

- Be organized by community-based organizations using their existing networks of community members in order to expand their base and strengthen the leadership capacity of their constituents
- Provide stipends to house meeting hosts
- Have similar agendas and measurable objectives across the different communities targeted for outreach
- Target all of City Heights’ racial and ethnic communities, youth, and seniors

Participating community-based organizations will have access to a draw-down account for these house meetings and invoice Mid-City CAN monthly for host stipends and an agreed-upon additional amount per meeting to support these organizations’ work to recruit house meeting hosts. This draw-down account will have per-organization limits, a time period during which all house meetings are expected to take place, and targeted numbers of individuals reached per racial/ethnic group, young people, and seniors. Organizations interested in participating will complete a Request for Qualifications to ensure that they meet minimum organizational capacity and administrative requirements.

It is expected that some residents and racial/ethnic/cultural communities will be interested in participating in Momentum Teams earlier than others. Mid-City CAN will support residents’ own sense of timing and readiness to engage in the Momentum Team component of the planning process, and will support some resident communities’ potential interest in organizing a separate “track” of resident-based planning that would produce its own set of recommendations, which would then need to be reconciled with the Momentum Team recommendations before the end of the planning process. Community Congresses are designed to create spaces for residents and other stakeholders to interact in meaningful ways, which may require all-day conference-like agendas, in contrast to the model of a shorter and less participatory community forum.

It is critical that Momentum Teams expect from the beginning that new participants will be coming to their meetings and planning activities *throughout* the 9-month planning process. Indeed, a primary goal of community outreach efforts and the Community Congresses is to invite more residents and other stakeholders to join the Momentum Teams. This will be a challenge to the patience of those who began working together on the teams at the beginning of the process, but it is essential to incorporate these new voices along the way in order for this planning process to include as broad a base of perspectives as possible.

Resource Teams. The following Resource Teams, open to all interested and particularly geared to individuals and organizations with expertise in the respective area, would be tasked with the following responsibilities to enhance the effectiveness and inclusivity of the planning process as a whole:

- Training Team: responsible for identifying and meeting the training needs of all participants in the process (including monthly mini-trainings during Networking Council and Red Comunitaria meetings), and building the long-term capacity of the community to train its own leaders in the future; members will be required to participate in a train-the-trainers workshop at the beginning of the planning process
- Conflict Resolution Team: responsible for listening to and addressing all participant-identified conflicts during the planning process
- Communications and Marketing Team: responsible for creating a broadly inclusive process to develop a common set of messages and images associated with the initiative, and communicating information effectively and equitably between the many individuals and organizations participating in the initiative
- Technology Team: responsible for using technology to increase the effectiveness of communications, group deliberation and decision making, and social networking
- Evaluation Team: responsible for establishing baseline data and evaluating the process and outcomes of this planning effort
- Language Access Team: responsible for developing an interpreters and translators bank, and for proposing training opportunities to build the community's long-term capacity to communicate across language groups
- Youth Resource Team: responsible for ensuring that the planning process and initiative are accessible to young people, creating opportunities for powerful youth connections across racial/ethnic and cultural lines, and developing meaningful spaces for adults and young people to interact
- Legal Team: responsible for proposing increased and comprehensive resident access to legal services to enhance community health

As other needs and opportunities are identified, Mid-City CAN will encourage the development of additional Resource Teams, which will be expected to organize and facilitate their own activities.

Governance and Coordination. The Coordinating Council of Mid-City CAN will serve as the body ultimately responsible for meeting the objectives outlined in TCE's Building Healthy Communities initiative planning grant while holding the process accountable to the principles stated above. Council members are elected to two-year terms; half of the Council membership is elected during each October's Networking Council meeting. Momentum Team and Resource Team representatives will report on their progress to all attending monthly Networking Council (currently held Tuesday mornings in English) and Red Comunitaria meetings (currently held on Monday evenings in Spanish) to facilitate information sharing and inter-team coordination through the planning process.

Proposed 9-Month Timeline

Months 1 to 3 (June-August): Community Outreach and Momentum Team Development

- **Broad Community Awareness:** Achieving this outcome requires doing outreach within each of the five constituent groups (residents, businesses, providers, civic groups, and government). Racial and ethnic groups, young people, and seniors will be a focus for outreach through the vehicle of house meetings. The focus of the outreach would be on the initiative and how people can become engaged. Particular attention would be paid to what each group needs to enhance their access to the process.
- **Four Momentum Teams Formed:** Momentum Teams will be formed as outlined above to begin developing a plan for accomplishing the four Big Results of the initiative. These efforts will be tied to the outreach efforts to ensure that all constituent groups are represented.
- **Momentum Teams “On the same page”:** The Momentum Teams become organized by deciding on operating rules, goals, meeting schedules, etc. Teams identify and gather the data needed for their task. All participants have access to the technical assistance they need to be meaningfully engaged in the discussion.

This stage of plan development culminates with a Community Congress where the Momentum Teams report to the broader community and invite more people into the process. The focus of the report is on how the work will be structured and how one can participate.

Months 4 to 6 (September-November): Strategic Plan/Logic Model Development

- **Momentum Teams Develop Strategic Directions:** The Momentum Teams are fully engaged developing broad strategic plans for achieving the outcomes encompassed in the four Big Results. All participants continue to have access to the technical assistance they need to be meaningfully engaged in the discussion.
- **Overall Strategic Direction Developed:** The four Momentum Teams come together to share their work and create an overall broad plan that ties together the work of the four teams.

This stage of plan development also culminates in a Community Congress where the concept-level plan is presented to the broader community. The purpose of this step is to engage the broader community in the discussion, obtain feedback on the direction the Momentum Teams are moving, and to invite more people into the process.

Months 7 to 9 (December-February): Plan Writing and Dissemination

- **Momentum Teams Complete Tasks:** Using the feedback gained at the Community Congress, each Momentum Team works with their plan by developing the concrete steps needed to accomplish the related outcomes.
- **Final Plan Produced:** Once each Momentum Team completes their plan, the four Momentum Teams come together to combine each plan into the overall strategic plan for the community.

This stage in the development of the plan culminates in a Community Congress where the final plan is presented to and accepted by the broader community. The formal acceptance of the plan is followed by a community celebration.

First Six Weeks Work Plan

- **Week 1 (June 15)**
 - Community forum organized at Hoover High School to:
 - reconvene all constituent groups, invite the Resident Selection Committee to introduce themselves, and the Planning Oversight Committee to present the planning process design
 - introduce the Momentum and Resource Teams, house meetings, and train-the-trainers workshop
- **Week 2 (June 22)**
 - First meetings of Momentum and Resource Teams
 - Orientation meeting with all organizations interested in facilitating house meetings to finalize funding mechanism, meeting agenda and objectives
- **Week 3 (June 29)**
 - First meetings of Momentum and Resource Teams
- **Week 4 (July 6)**
 - Train-the-trainers workshop for all interested in participating on the Training Team
 - First house meetings
 - Red Comunitaria (July 6)
- **Week 5 (July 13)**
 - Momentum and Resource Team meetings continue
 - House meetings continue
 - Networking Council (July 14)
- **Week 6 (July 20)**
 - Momentum and Resource Team meetings continue
 - House meetings continue
 - Training Team presents training recommendations to Coordinating Council for approval, scheduling