



PHOTO: EAST OAKLAND BUILDING HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

Healthy Development Guidelines

A Process for Equity in Oakland

Key Themes | Health & Climate, Health & Economic Opportunity, Environmental Justice, Healthy Food, Transportation, Housing, and Recreation and Active Design

SUMMARY

During the summer of 2014, Oakland residents, community organizers, government workers, and other leaders came together, grounded in a shared vision of a healthy, equitable, community. Over the next six months, the groups collaboratively worked toward this future by creating the Healthy Development Guidelines: a tool that promotes goals, policies, and development guidelines that strengthen environmental justice, sustainability, health and racial equity in Oakland.

LEAD AGENCY AND PARTNERSHIPS

A team from East Oakland Building Healthy Communities led the Healthy Development Guidelines project in partnership with Causa Justa: Just Cause, Communities for a Better Environment, East Bay Housing Organizations, HOPE Collaborative, the Alameda County Public

Health Department, and the City of Oakland Planning and Building Department. Raimi + Associates and ChangeLab Solutions provided technical assistance.

DRIVERS

In 2011, a crematorium was issued a permit to operate in East Oakland, near a neighborhood that was already highly impacted by pollution and social stressors. A community-based organization, Communities for a Better Environment, created a response against the crematorium, asserting that the development was environmentally unjust and should have gone through a public process before receiving approval. In addition to petitioning against the facility, East Oakland Building Healthy Communities and partner organizations conducted a Community Planner Leadership Academy in 2013 to empower residents to address planning, policy,



and public health issues in Oakland, particularly East Oakland. Meanwhile, the Alameda County Public Health Department and HOPE Collaborative worked with the City of Oakland Planning Department to find funding for a Health Element. The effort to find funding was not successful, but it did spur momentum and interest in health, setting the stage for additional action.

All of these events were the drivers behind the “Healthy Development Guidelines”. The crematorium placed pressure on the city to address health inequities in East Oakland while insufficient funding for a Health Element generated a policy gap. Meanwhile, the leadership academy created optimal conditions for engaging residents around these issues. Recognizing an opportunity for action, East Oakland Building Healthy Communities and the Alameda County Public Health Department developed a partnership. In 2014, they reached out to the City of Oakland Department of Planning and Zoning to create the Healthy Development Guidelines project. Both viewed the Guidelines as a tool that would proactively reduce health inequities in East Oakland, create an interim step towards a Health Element, and form the groundwork for an Environmental Justice Element in Oakland’s General Plan.

ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

In order to create an empowering engagement process, leaders designed an innovative organizational structure consisting of three parts: the project management team, community stakeholders, and technical advisory group (TAG). The project management team had cross-sectoral representation that included community based organizations and government departments. To ensure that the leadership prioritized resident’s voices, community-based organizations held the majority of seats on the team. All members of the project management team participated in meetings with community stakeholders and the TAG.

The resident engagement process, facilitated by the community based organizations, involved approximately 30 East Oakland residents. To reduce barriers for participation, the organizers provided interpretation and childcare services at all meetings. The resulting group, ranging in age from 16-75 years old, was multi-racial and multi-lingual (included native Spanish speakers). The residents also had broad a range of technical capacity (many of the members had previously participated in the 2013 Community Planner Leadership Academy). Meanwhile, the TAG, convened by the Alameda County



Photo Credit: East Oakland Building Healthy Communities

Healthy Development Guidelines Project Management Team



Picture of the Healthy Development Guidelines project management team.

Public Health Department with facilitation support from ChangeLab Solutions, consisted of about 20 members. This group included architects, for-profit and non-profit housing developers, community-based organizations (representing the community stakeholders), and staff from the City of Oakland Planning Department and Alameda County Public Health Department.

For six months, community stakeholders met bi-monthly while the TAG met once a month. As a starting point for the project, both groups set goals and standards related to a variety of policy areas including: housing, economic opportunity, environmental health, food access, community, culture, safety, transportation, recreation and active design. Additionally, the groups worked on education and capacity building during the meetings. Throughout this time, the community-based organizations served as an intermediary role, relaying feedback and insights from the TAG to residents and vice versa. As a result, community members gained insight into the planning process and TAG members built their understanding of barriers affecting low-income communities of color in Oakland.

After the groups drafted initial goals and standards, community stakeholders analyzed the policy language through a health equity lens. Using a color-coded system (green, yellow, red), residents indicated the strength of each goal and standard. In addition, they

provided recommendations for improvement. During this process, residents paid particularly close attention to indirect impacts such as displacement. Once the analysis was completed, ChangeLab Solutions integrated the recommendations into a new draft of the Healthy Development Guidelines.

As the project neared completion, small groups consisting of both TAG and resident members began refining the guidelines within specific policy areas. Moreover, the project management team worked with Raimi and Associates to conduct focus groups with planning department staff as well as for-profit and non-profit developers. Feedback was used to evaluate the guidelines and inform implementation strategy.

HEALTH, ENVIRONMENTAL, AND/OR CLIMATE IMPACT AREA

In Oakland, low-income communities of color bear disproportionate health risks when compared to their neighbors locally, regionally, and statewide. Examples of these health inequities include:

- » **Life Expectancy:** Data from the Alameda County Public Health Department show that the average life expectancy at birth from 2011-2013 was 72.2 years for African Americans living in the Oakland Flatlands, while for Whites living in the Oakland Hills it was 84.0 years, a difference of 11.8 years.
- » **Air Quality:** In 2014, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District identified East and West Oakland as communities disproportionately impacted by air-pollution in the Bay Area. Moreover, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission determined East and West Oakland to be “Communities of Concern.”
- » **Environmental Health:** CalEnviroScreen 3.0 includes most of West and East Oakland within the top 25% of disproportionately burdened communities in the State of California.

The Healthy Development Guidelines address these health inequities by promoting sustainable, equitable, and just policies in Oakland. Moreover, this project



Photo Credit: East Oakland Building Healthy Communities

intersects with environmental and climate impact areas. For instance, the air quality policies integrated into the development guidelines align with the City's efforts to advance climate adaptation and mitigation.

FUNDING SOURCE

Funding for this project came from a variety of partners. East Oakland Building Healthy Communities funded and staffed the Resident Leadership Trainings (e.g. food, space, childcare, and materials) while the Alameda County Public Health Department funded and staffed the technical advisory group (e.g. food, space, and materials). The City of Oakland also provided in-kind resources, staff, meeting space, and materials. Additional funding for technical assistance came from The California Endowment.

RESEARCH AND DATA

The group gathered data from a variety of sources: CalEnviroScreen, Alameda County Vital Statistics, Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development, American Community Survey, and Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Additionally, in May 2015, Susie Levy, a former graduate student intern with the Alameda County Public Health Department, published an evaluation report that outlined the strengths/weaknesses of the endeavor and provided recommendations for future improvement (as noted below).

CHALLENGES

While the Healthy Development Guidelines project was underway, Susie Levy, a former graduate student intern with the Alameda County Public Health Department, conducted an evaluation of the engagement process and partnership. Her research provided insight into several challenges such as timing, scoping, communication, and trust.

Due to an ambitious project timeline, the project management team calendared meetings close together. Unfortunately, this made it difficult for them to schedule work between meetings. Moreover, given the rich feedback and the desire to incorporate many new ideas into the process, project managers found it difficult to keep the scope of the project within reason. Adding to their strain on capacity, the leadership team also experienced confusion around roles. As a result, the project process was not as efficient as participants would have liked. What's more, the evaluation revealed ongoing tension between residents and the City of Oakland Planning and Building Department. This distrust was due to the separation between TAG and resident groups, historic distrust, and anxieties regarding follow through.

In order to address some of these challenges, the leadership team created an "organization chart" to clarify roles and streamline the development of the guidelines. To improve trust, residents met directly with city staff and TAG members in future meetings.

Additionally, ChangeLab Solutions facilitated a fishbowl exercise where the deputy director for the city planning department provided training on the city planning review process then residents and developers shared their concerns with each other. These strategies helped both groups build trust over time.

OUTCOMES

Once the project was finalized, staff from the City of Oakland Planning and Building Department completed a training on how to use the Healthy Development Guidelines tool. Since then, the department has incorporated several guidelines into their Standard Conditions of Approval, specifically around environmental health, economic opportunity, and access to open space. Moreover, the city has integrated the guidelines into their development review process. For example, they included a new section in their development permit application on tenant protections and began collecting tenant eviction data related to new development.

At the present, the project management team continues to work with the city planning department. Together, they are exploring ways to use the Healthy Development Guidelines as a framework for specific plans, general plans, and an East Oakland plan focused on climate change, environmental justice, health equity, and economic opportunity. In addition, the leadership team is working with city staff to review five policy priorities for future City Council consideration. Recently, the council passed a **resolution**, commending the group for their collaborative and engaging partnership.

Overall, the Healthy Development Guidelines has generated several positive outcomes. The project strengthened the relationship between the community-based organizations, residents, and government departments in Oakland and created a foundation for future work to build upon.

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