People’s Planning for Development without Displacement: Transportation, Housing, and Environmental Justice

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Pacoima?

- Low-income, primarily immigrant, community in LA’s industrial outer-ring suburbs
- Dense, transit dependent
- Not politically powerful
- Thus neglected planning & infrastructure
- Major health issues (pollution, lack of resources)

But! Rich with invested residents and vernacular culture! And not currently threatened by displacement.
Pacoima Beautiful

- Founded in 1996 by 5 moms
- Member-driven environmental health and justice non-profit focused on education, advocacy and local leadership
- Funded by LA County Dept. of Public Health’s RENEW Initiative with other grant/donor support
Goals:
- Increase equity and encourage activity through community planning and improvement projects
- Work toward the physical, environmental, fiscal, spiritual health of our community

Mechanisms:
- Create a community vision via People’s Planning School
- Incorporate the vision into planned infrastructure investments like CRA/LA
Caminos del Pueblo & Displacement?

- Active transportation is key for fiscal and physical health, but conditions are sub-standard due to historic neglect and inequity
- How can we improve conditions without pushing this vibrant community even further away from jobs and other important resources?
- Infrastructure investments must be led by residents’ vision, residents who are informed and engaged
Caminos del Pueblo/Complete Streets Process

- People’s Planning School
  - 6 month workshop series
- Information gathering
  - Household surveys
  - Bike/ped counts
  - Community surveys
- Long-term visioning and advocacy
  - Civic Engagement
  - Community Vision
  - Leadership development
- Grassroots Beautification Projects
  - Street trees, public art
Community Priorities for Design Elements

- **Safety**
  - Traffic Calming
  - Bike infrastructure
  - Cross-walks, ped. lights

- **Quality of Life**
  - Transit amenities
  - Trees, maintenance
  - Preserve local culture (murals, signage)

- **Health**
  - Improving conditions
    - promotes activity
  - Land use concerns
People’s Planning School Considerations

- Opportunity Cost: make it worth their while!
- Logistics: location, language, timing, childcare, food, rewards
- Know your audience: what do they know/want to learn?
- Don’t overload sessions, allow time for review
- Have a diversity of learning methods (activities, lectures, games, field trips, discourse, etc.) and speakers
- Consider framing given potential outcomes (or not, if group is more engaged, ready for a longer-term campaign)
- Incorporate interested residents into an active campaign with real ways for them to engage
- Mediate long timelines with more immediate successes
More Immediate Tools

- Host a dinner where you discuss local issues with your neighbors/members
- Build on that with fun workshops!
- Take a walking tour with cameras
- Rethink “design” with art supplies, models
- Public Health framing for new audiences
- Plan a grassroots project in your community
- Coalition efforts like RENEW, UNIDAD, Green LA, ACT-LA
More Difficult to Address

- Bureaucracy
- Mismatch between official and community timelines
- Differential valuation of stakeholders
- Budget cuts (reforming redevelopment?)
- Maintenance agreements
- Politics
- Language barriers (English, jargon)
- Busy schedules
- Move towards project-specific planning rather than comprehensive planning
- Amount of patience, funds needed for infrastructure projects, leadership development
Opportunities for Change

- Long-term investment in local leadership development
- Equity levers for infrastructure investment and community input structures, a la City of LA Bike Plan
- Alternative maintenance agreements
- Enhanced public participation policies
- Affordable housing throughout the city!
- City could hire community organizations as “consultants”
- Others?
Thank You!

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