

Final Report

Peninsula Interfaith Action (now SFOP/PIA)

June 2014

A. Project Profile (1 page maximum)

Project Name: East Palo Alto Fair Housing Project

Lead and Partner Organizations: Peninsula Interfaith Action (now SFOP/PIA), Youth United for Community Action, Urban Habitat, Community Legal Services

Primary Contact Person: Jennifer Martinez, SFOP/PIA

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1336 Arroyo Ave, San Carlos, CA 94070

Sub-Grant Program: Housing the Workforce

Project Type: Community Response Sub-Grants for Displacement

Total Grant Amount: \$25,000

Total Match (if any): \$12,500 from Silicon Valley Community Foundation and \$15,000 from the Greater Communities Collaborative

Geographic Coverage of Project: westside of East Palo Alto, East Palo Alto

Brief Description (150 words maximum): Work with coalition partners to galvanize East Palo Alto residents in an Area Plan process on the city's "westside" (west of Highway 101) that will mitigate the displacement of up to 6400 low-income residents and people of color, increase affordable housing options on the Peninsula, and set a model of housing preservation strategies for the County. Also, participate in the Regional Early Warning System (REWS) project.

Images: see attachments

B. Project Description (1 page maximum)

1. Goals and Objectives: *Describe what the project expected to achieve, why there was a need for this project, who would have benefited, and how they would have benefited.*

The goal of the project was to pass an Area Plan for the westside of East Palo Alto that would mitigate the displacement of 6400 residents. There was need for the project because Equity Residential Properties (EQR), a well-capitalized Real Estate Investment Trust, notorious across the country for replacing low-income housing units with high-end condos, had recently purchased 1800 apartments on the westside. Those apartments

represented 50% of EPA's total rental housing and 15% of San Mateo County's housing stock for low-income residents. EQR had announced that it planned to demolish and redevelop a majority of those 1800 units in the next few years. Eviction notices had skyrocketed (over 300 in a single month in the summer of 2012) as EQR attempted to move residents out of those rent-controlled units and meet the growing housing demand for high-paid, high-tech workers, such as those employed at Facebook, now 2.8 miles from the westside.

If the project is successful, at least 35 low-income residents would have benefitted from intense training and leadership development and the residents of the westside would benefit from not being displaced in the long-term.

As for the REWS, if the project is successful it will help to mitigate the displacement of residents from around the Bay Area by enabling community groups and cities to see the warning signs of displacement and enact preventative measures.

2. Work Plan: *Describe the key tasks and deliverables for the project. Include information on outreach and engagement activities.*

The key tasks and deliverables are:

1. Coordinate a coalition of local organizations and create training curriculum and materials for coalition members
2. Engage hundreds of westside residents through surveys, house meetings and one-on-one conversations, create a survey instrument and produce final survey results
3. Train a core of 35 residents so they can actively participate in city-led workshops and clearly define their priorities for the Area Plan
4. Engage in the REWS process

3. Role of Lead and Partners: *List the lead and partner organizations and briefly describe the role each organization fulfilled on the project.*

SFOP/PIA – engage and train residents, help coordinate the coalition and participate in the regional work

Youth United for Community Action – provide space for coalition meetings, prepare the agenda for coalition meetings, assist in providing workshops for tenants

Urban Habitat – provide technical assistance to the coalition in the form of planning skills, support in the production of public materials

Community Legal Services – provide legal support/advice to residents and the coalition, monitor City Council agendas for relevant, related items

Urban Ecology (Carlos Romero) – provide technical assistance and training to residents re: planning skills

C. Challenges and Outcomes (1 page maximum)

4. Challenges: *Describe the main challenges faced. How did your team address them? Describe what worked well and what did not work. What would you have done differently if you could start over?*

The coalition team has faced two distinct challenges during the course of this project. The first is the timeline of the Area Plan process as it relates to a development moratorium that was passed in 2012. The moratorium is set to expire in November 2014 but the Area Plan will not be approved for implementation until at least the end of 2015. This means we are pursuing a new moratorium. We expected that this would be a possibility and have been preparing for it since early in 2014.

The second challenge has been in regards to the relationship between the coalition and the newly-formed tenants' committee. This committee has taken on a significant level of ownership over their participation and has formed into a powerful group in its own right. From the beginning of this project, we held a certain anticipation that the tenants would form their own organization, so this was not a complete surprise. However, the challenge has been to 1) help the tenants fully understand the role of the coalition, 2) help the coalition step back so that tenants can lead the agenda, and 3) integrate tenants into the coalition in a meaningful way (from always having translation at coalition meetings to changing the nature of the conversations to not be so technical). We are now successfully doing all of these things.

5. Outcomes: *Describe key outcomes, achievements, successes, deliverables, findings and/or lessons learned for the project. Describe who benefited from this project (may be individuals, groups or organizations) and how.*

We have successfully engaged over 300 residents and trained 40-50 residents in an ongoing, intensive way. Residents are forming their own formal tenants association. We have engaged residents in 9 community-based and city-led workshops and have arrived at a clear platform with proposed planning and policy solutions to deal with displacement issues.

In addition, the coalition between SFOP/PIA, YUCA, Urban Habitat and now Community Legal Services is becoming stronger and better able to work together. Each organization is developing trust, contributing well and working in their area of expertise. It is clear that the coalition's work together in previous projects has enabled this process to move more smoothly and quickly than we would have otherwise been able.

Finally, SFOP/PIA usually works with congregations. However, for this project it was clear that we needed a specific tenant strategy, so we helped to build a tenants committee. There are strengths and disadvantages to both strategies of community engagement and organizing. In the next place where SFOP/PIA launches an anti-displacement effort, we are looking at a hybrid model of the two.

D. Replicability and Dissemination (1 page maximum)

6. **Replicability** *Describe what, how and where (within the region) the above mentioned project outcomes may be applied to address similar issues as your project.*

The above outcomes can be applied to any neighborhood where there is a high density of multi-family rental housing and/or a planning process. In fact, SFOP/PIA is considering replicating the tenant engagement process in two other cities in San Mateo County. The coalition work can also be replicated in as much as a lead organization is able to put together coalition partners that bring needed but distinct areas of expertise. This has been a real strength of the EPA coalition. Where this situation may not be entirely replicable is in the long-term nature of the coalition, which has led to some of the current success we are experiencing.

7. **Tools and Resources** *List the tools and resources developed through this project. These may include policies and strategies, analysis and communication tools, collateral material, key findings, etc. Please attach copies of the materials to this report.*

Survey for Canvassing

EPA Combined Workshops Doc

Westside Platform

8. **Sharing and Dissemination** *Describe how and with whom you will share these tools and resources over the next 12 months. How can other communities access the tools and resources developed through this process?*

SFOP/PIA is now participating in building a coalition for San Mateo County that will address displacement issues. These materials and the lessons learned through this process will be shared with partners in Redwood City and San Mateo and Mountain View (Santa Clara County). In addition, we are participating in the REWS study with other CBOs and lessons learned can be disseminated in those spaces. Finally, our Co-Director Jennifer Martinez is now the co-chair of the Equity Collaborative and can share resources and lessons through that role.

E. Recommendations and Next Steps (1 page maximum)

9. **Recommendations**

List and describe the top four to five recommendations from your project. Recommendations may include but are not limited to (1) policies, projects and/or programs that may be adopted at the local and/or regional level (name agencies and/or organizations where possible); (2) tools, approaches and/or methodologies that may be adopted for analysis, communication and/or decision-making; (3) funding, capacity-building and/or engagement strategies for target communities (specify geographic areas

where possible); and/or (4) implementation of specific projects and/or programs to support regional goals.

- 1) In order to have a strong anti-displacement effort in place, organizations and residents should look at city policy opportunities (such as, tenant protections and rent stabilization) and planning tools (such as, down-zoning and community benefits policies).
- 2) Multiple members of the coalition were funded through the HUD grant, making it possible for the organizations to participate on par with each other (e.g. the local CBOs and the more resources regional organizations). This funding was critical to the coalitions ability to navigate the challenges of the planning process and to deeply engage residents at the same time. In most instances, a project of this sort is funded in a very limited way leading to failed completion or superficial resident engagement.
- 3) It is essential to ensure that residents are at the center of the planning process, that supporting organizations are willing to move at the pace that residents require and deeply engage in a one-on-one way to win trust and support leadership development. What this also means is that residents need to take ownership of the process by reaching out to each other, hosting their own meetings where they get to discuss what is most important to them (whether or not its part of the planning agenda) and meeting with public officials separately from (or in conjunction with) organizational staff. Treating residents as co-collaborators will hopefully create a solid base of tenant leaders to carry on the work of defending tenant rights even if CBOs move on to other projects.
- 4) Coalitions that are successful should continue to be funded beyond a single project. The multiple iterations of working together for many years creates a synergy and an historical memory that is able to engage in higher-level, complex work and be even more successful.

10. Next Steps *Describe the next steps for your project and how the proposed recommendations will be institutionalized in your community.*

Next steps for this project are to pass a new moratorium, get the westside platform included in the final Area Plan and get that plan passed by city council. The tenants will be leading the public phase of this work, meeting with city council members and giving testimony at council hearings. Already, some members of the coalition are beginning to work together on another effort to build an anti-displacement coalition for San Mateo County. We will be seeking funding for the respective work of each organization.

Hi my name is _____. It is likely that there will be future development here and we are starting a planning process to ask people what they want the community to look like in the future. Can I ask you a few questions that will help me understand what residents want?

Date:

Volunteer/Organizer:

East Palo Alto Westside Housing Survey

1. How long have you lived here?

2. Do you plan on staying here?

If no, how come?

3. What do you like about this neighborhood?

4. What is your greatest concern living here?

5. What do we need in our community? (pick your top 3 out of the following)

More housing

Cheaper housing

More open space/parks

More public transportation

Better parking

More Senior/Youth activities

More jobs

Other

6. What does your daily commute look like? Where do you commute to and how?

7. Part of this redevelopment might include jobs that pay \$18-\$30 an hour coming to this area. Do you see any barriers to getting these jobs?

8. Are you interested in contributing your ideas to a community planning process for the neighborhood?

Yes / No

Name: _____ Contact Information: _____

Did resident mention any of the following that might require specific follow-up or referral

Towing Accumulating Late Fees Brown Water

Memo

To: MTC
From: Jennifer Martinez
cc: SFOP/PIA Office
Date: June 18, 2014
Re: EPA Fair Housing Project: Resident Training Workshops

In the summer of 2013 the coalition met several times with Raimi & Associates, the consultants who are leading the Westside Area Plan process. The intention of the meetings was to prepare “westside workshops” for residents that were designed to train them for active, knowledgeable participation in the city’s workshops. These trainings are in addition to the weekly Monday night meetings that the tenants committee has for itself.

So far the coalition has hosted 5 workshops (workshop 1 was done in two parts as was workshop 4):

Westside Workshop 1a – 8.10.13: introduction to the idea of planning and community assessment with interactive activities (see [Workshop1StationMap](#)).

Westside Workshop1b – 9.7.13: a repeat of the first workshop but conducted on the other side of University Ave (it became clear in the first workshop that residents on either side of University Ave live different patterns, and do not overlap very much). Out of these workshops and the resident survey, the coalition produced a summary document (see [Info from Workshops 1a and 1b, EPA Combined Workshops](#)). (in total, over 100 residents participated in workshops 1a and 1b)

Westside Workshop 2 – 10.25.13: 45 residents engaged in a “planning process” using maps and small blocks that represented different kinds of development (commercial, low-density housing, high-density housing, parking, parks, community space, etc.). They were asked to make priorities and decide what was most important to them. The overwhelming majority named housing as the most important element.

Westside Workshop 3 – 12.14.13: taking what was learned from workshop 2, the coalition prepared a training to engage residents around the question of affordability and density. The training presented three scenarios, offering different kinds of affordability and corresponding

density. Through this workshop, it became clear that residents are interested in the highest rates of affordability and no displacement policies.

Westside Workshop 4 – 1.31.14 & 2.7.14: this workshop engaged in a discussion about the west side tenants' platform for the area plan. The principles underpinning the platform are 1) no displacement and 2) maximum affordability (see Westside Campaign Platform 5.13.14). Due to the intensity of the discussion, tenants began the conversation on 1.31.14 and had to schedule a second meeting on 2.7.14 to finish working out the platform.

Westside Workshop 5 – 6.2.14: this workshop was specifically designed to prepare residents to share their platform while engaging in the city's workshop that dealt with development priorities. The training again reviewed the planning process and the opportunities in the process; it reviewed the agenda for the city's workshop and created space for residents to practice saying their platform out-loud.

So far, there have been two "westside town hall" meetings hosted by the city. See attached agendas. At each workshop 45-50 residents have participated. See attached photos. In addition, residents have been actively participating in the city's Westside Action Committee, the city-selected group that is overseeing the planning process. See memo re: Westside Action Committee.

In addition, tenants have been participating in city council meetings. In particular, they turned out over 150 residents and testified at the council meeting on 4.15.14 that led to the passage of the new Tenant Protection Ordinance for the city. We do not have the sign-in sheets for this or the town hall meetings because those were collected by the city.

See more information about the city's planning process and community participation here <http://vista2035epa.org/community-engagement/>.

Staff time on this has been 65 hours.