

# South Sacramento Building Healthy Communities

## Case Study

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For The California Endowment

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Discovering better ways  
to solve social problems

## Preface

The Building Healthy Communities (BHC) Strategic Review is an independent examination of the BHC effort that has been commissioned by The California Endowment. The Strategic Review has been designed to provide The Endowment's leadership and Board with information that enables the foundation to better understand and reflect on the lessons learned from the implementation of BHC to date.

The following questions have guided the Strategic Review:

1. **Alignment of Site and Statewide Work:** To what extent and in what ways are Healthy Communities and Healthy California efforts aligned and working together to proactively address a specific issue, policy, or practice related to BHC goals?
2. **Power Building:** What factors are supporting and hindering power building among adult and youth residents to advance BHC goals of policy and systems change?
3. **Community Capacity:** To what extent and in what ways are the Hubs and other collaborative structures developing effective partnerships and increasing community capacity to influence policy and systems changes?
4. **Perceptions of Change:** What changes are being realized at a local and state level as a result of the BHC work?
5. **TCE Structures and Processes:** To what extent and in what ways are TCE structures and processes...
  - a. Affecting staff and senior leaders' abilities to effectively provide oversight, management, and support for TCE's activities, investments, and partnerships related to BHC?
  - b. Enabling TCE to adapt and respond to BHC communities' capacity needs?
  - c. Affecting alignment between Healthy Communities and Healthy California?

The California Endowment Strategic Review includes three in-depth case studies, two that focus on the experience of two BHC sites, South Sacramento and Santa Ana, and one that examines the foundation's Sons and Brothers work. These case studies examine why, how, and under what conditions the BHC work is being implemented. It does not seek to answer all five of the questions above. Rather, the BHC site case studies focus on understanding the power building and community capacity aspects of the BHC work to date.

This case study highlights the current strengths, challenges, and successes of South Sacramento BHC. Data were gathered to inform this review in multiple ways and from multiple sources – including 19 interviews with grantees, residents, systems leaders, and BHC staff; three focus groups with participation from 21 residents, youth, and grantees; and a review of more than 20 documents related to the planning and implementation of the Sacramento BHC work.

In addition to informing the case study, data and insights gathered through these activities will be included in the overall Strategic Review report.

This case study seeks to illuminate lessons and insights for other communities embarking on complex, policy and systems change efforts to improve the health of communities statewide.

## Tackling Tough Problems

Residents of South Sacramento take pride in being one of the most diverse cities in the state. Walking through Tahoe Park on a bright summer day, it is not unusual to see people of many races and ethnicities playing basketball together and cooling off in the public pool.

This playful scene belies the struggles many families face in meeting their basic needs. More than one-third of families in South Sacramento live in poverty. Crime and unemployment rates are high, fueled by gang violence and a poor performing, under-resourced, school system. The large and growing immigrant population is an incredible community asset, yet it also contributes to limited English language proficiency in schools – more than a quarter of Kindergarten students start public school with English as a second language.

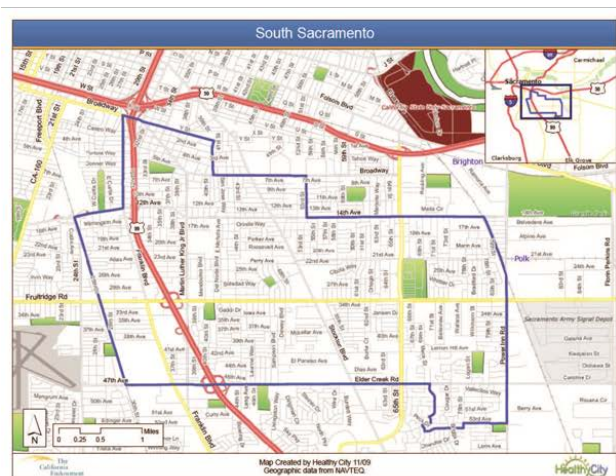
According to some residents, the challenging social context in South Sacramento is exacerbated by inadequate public policies:

*“[The BHC community] is a place that has been historically marginalized. Policymakers see it as a place where there are not many vocal community groups. The area has been redlined for decades. Bad policies are implemented here; trying to put natural gas storage under homes, establishing a halfway house for people out of prison, and relocating a homeless shelter not too far from here. It is the mentality of this area. Since we have immigrants, a transient community, and people that are not organized, it has become a dumping ground for bad policies.”*

The South Sacramento area spans city limits and the unincorporated area of the county limiting residents' political power, and making it easier for policymakers to overlook or even discount certain pockets of residents as their constituency. While foundations, nonprofits, and others have funded numerous programs and initiatives to improve the conditions in South Sacramento, the overall investment in public infrastructure and services has continued to decline. And, the problems persist.

With this context in mind, The California Endowment (The Endowment) selected South Sacramento (see map Figure 1) to participate as one of 14 communities in its 10-year Building Healthy Communities (BHC) strategy to improve the health of Californians. BHC tackles deeply rooted social, environmental, and economic challenges in the South Sacramento community in order to make it a healthier place to live, learn, work, and play. BHC is still in its early days; Sacramento has been implementing its BHC strategy for about three years. This case study describes the current efforts, both its successes and challenges, in order to learn from and improve the BHC effort as it moves forward.

Figure 1 – South Sacramento BHC: At a Glance



**Population:** Between 65,000 and 90,000 total residents living in racially/ethnically heterogeneous neighborhoods.

- 41% Hispanic; 21% Asian; 21% White; 12% Black and 5% Other
- Over 31% foreign born
- 48% speak a language other than English at home
- 30% of residents speak English “not very well”

**Socioeconomic Statistics:**

- Median annual household income is \$35,267
- 42% are single parent households
- 60% live below 200% of the federal poverty line

## Learning Into Building Healthy Communities

When BHC was announced in 2009, nonprofits across the city were excited to get involved. Some had a deep rooted history of work in South Sacramento, while others were new to the community. The activities and outcomes of the year-long planning phase, such as engaging multiple community stakeholders in the process, getting clarity around the goals and values of Sacramento BHC, and establishing the infrastructure for implementation, have laid the groundwork for carrying the work forward.

At the start of planning process, a group of community stakeholders privy to early conversations with The Endowment established a cross-sector Steering Committee, which included public officials, community-based organizations, and residents. This group would determine the vision for Sacramento BHC. Their charge was clear: develop a strategic plan for the next 10 years based on the “10 Outcomes” developed by The Endowment prior to the launch of BHC.

As the planning process got underway, The Endowment was still figuring out what BHC should look like in the 14 communities. Most of the place-based program managers, including senior level staff, were new to The Endowment, hired after BHC strategy was developed. Program managers were not sure what their role would be or how much guidance to provide during the planning process. Christine Tien, who had years of experience leading government initiatives around neighborhood health and safety, was hired by The Endowment to oversee and manage grantmaking for Sacramento BHC. She came on board after the Steering Committee met for the first time.

As Tien was getting up to speed on the Sacramento landscape and BHC’s evolving strategy, the Steering Committee was gathering community input for BHC’s strategic plan. Two values of BHC were evident to those involved in the planning process:

1. **Inclusion** – Perspectives from multiple stakeholders, which included systems leaders (e.g., health agency officials, school administrators), service providers, advocacy groups, resident organizers, and unaffiliated residents, informed the strategic plan for BHC.
2. **Community leadership**– The Endowment communicated that it was supporting communities to take the lead on BHC. Its messages emphasized the importance of building resident leadership and engaging residents in the BHC planning process.

Living out these ideals during the planning process proved challenging. For example, participation in the planning process was open to many different individuals and groups, representing different issues – food access, health care, youth development – and constituencies – parents, residents, immigrants. Yet, keeping parents, residents, and youth active on an ongoing basis was difficult. As a Steering Committee member recalls, *“Our early BHC meetings were huge – lots and lots of people – every nonprofit having to do with health was there.”* Over time, the timing, frequency, and set-up of Steering Committee meetings made it difficult for most residents to regularly attend and be active participants in the decision-making process. Eventually, the number of people attending Steering Committee meetings began to drop. A participant in the planning process recalls, *“We were not overly democratic at the beginning because we just had to do it.”* Some decisions about the strategic plan for BHC were being made with only a subset of Steering Committee members.

At the same time, many community members believed that The Endowment was sending mixed messages about BHC. Foundation staff would refer to BHC as “community led,” yet insisted on the use of its “10 Outcomes” and required the participation of certain groups on the Steering Committee. For example, economic development was a top priority in a survey completed by over 6000 adults and youth who lived or worked in South Sacramento. Yet, later, the foundation decided to deprioritize funding for economic development due to internal conversations about mission-drift.<sup>1</sup> And, there was little guidance from The Endowment about how residents should engage in the planning process beyond having a seat at the Steering Committee table, or who should participate. Would any “random resident” suffice or should residents with specific leadership capacities be brought into the BHC effort?

Yet, despite these challenges, people were willing to work together in order to identify the priorities and key strategies for Sacramento BHC, so that The Endowment would support their BHC efforts. As a participant in the planning process stated, *“Sacramento has an amazing history and willingness to work in collaboration. In general there is a climate of collaboration among nonprofits, government, and private organizations.”* In addition, The Endowment’s program manager for Sacramento, Christine Tien, was busy building relationships and trust with diverse community stakeholders, ranging from the Superintendent of public schools, to city councilmembers, community organizers, and nonprofit leaders. She regularly attended Steering Committee and Work

**Figure 2 - The Endowment’s “10 Outcomes” and Priority Outcomes\* for Sacramento BHC**

1. All children have health coverage
2. *Families have improved access to a health home that supports healthy behaviors*
3. Health and family-focused human services shift resources toward prevention
4. *Residents live in communities with health-promoting land-use, transportation & community development*
5. Children and their families are safe from violence in their homes and neighborhoods
6. *Communities support healthy youth development*
7. Neighborhood and school environments support improved health and healthy behaviors
8. *Community health improvements are linked to economic development*
9. Health gaps for boys and young men of color are narrowed
10. *California has a shared vision of community health*

\*Outcomes prioritized during planning are *italicized*

<sup>1</sup> Economic development remains officially one of the 10 Outcomes as described by The California Endowment. Sacramento BHC still has an affiliated work group of community partners interested in economic development in South Sacramento. However, The Endowment is not actively making grants in this area.

Group meetings, as well as having one-on-one meetings with grantees on a regular basis. Grantees noticed that Tien was different than other grantmakers, saying, *“She is completely available. She goes to the meetings, and is available by email and phone. I think this is wonderful. [...] She does a lot of listening, which is exactly what she should be doing.”*

At the end of the planning phase, in March 2010, the Steering Committee submitted its five priority outcomes (see Figure 2) and a set of activities that it believed would help Sacramento BHC achieve its goals to The Endowment. The strategic plan was approved!

## A Comprehensive Approach to Building a Healthier Place

For the past three years, Sacramento BHC has been carrying out its ambitious plan for community change largely with its core ideals and activities intact. It has required The Endowment and its grantees to be comfortable trying new things, taking risks, and learning as they go. In fact, a common refrain for BHC has to do with the “comprehensive” and “broad” nature of the work. Each year, more than 35 grantees receive BHC funding to address the five priority health outcomes stated in the BHC plan.

- In the area of **Health Happens with Prevention**, a mix of community-based and regional organizations are making it easier for residents to apply for and receive health insurance coverage, are recruiting volunteers (“navigators”) to help residents navigate the health system in a culturally appropriate way, and providing health education and other health services for specific groups in the community, including African Americans, Southeast Asian, and Latinos.
- In the area of **Health Happens in Schools**, The Endowment is funding several school-district led initiatives in partnership with community-based organizations and parents. These efforts seek to identify and curb chronic absenteeism, to increase school attendance and safety, and to educate students and their families about the importance of physical activity and healthy eating.
- In the area of **Health Happens in Neighborhoods**, organizations are training youth and residents to be leaders and advocate around land use, healthy food access, community safety, and economic opportunity. Specific grant activities include funding the convening and facilitating of community pedestrian safety meetings, capacity building for the Mayor’s Gang Prevention Task Force, door to door grassroots canvassing for increasing food access, and expanding farmer’s markets.

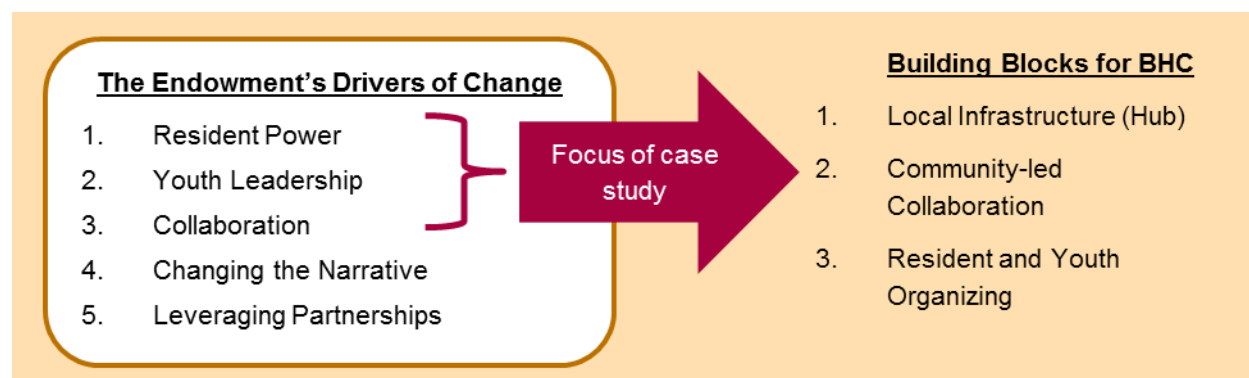
What is largely absent from The Endowment’s grantmaking in Sacramento is funding for direct services, such as afterschool programs or counseling. In fact, its focus on policy and systems change distinguishes BHC from many other community-based efforts. It is this focus on policy and systems change that has led The Endowment to develop relationships with city leaders and school administrators, as well as nonprofits, advocacy groups, and organizers.

## Establishing the Building Blocks for BHC

In order to achieve its transformational vision for the community, The Endowment has emphasized five elements (or “drivers”) of change (see Figure 3). The five “drivers” (page 1) are envisaged to be fundamental to creating the policy and systems changes that will promote a healthier Sacramento. While each of the five elements has been attended to over the first three years of implementation, cross-sector collaboration and power building among residents and youth are considered by The Endowment to be especially critical to laying the groundwork for Sacramento BHC as it moves forward.

Perhaps the most unique and critical aspect of the local BHC efforts to date has been the establishment of a coordinating body, separate from the foundation, called the “Hub,” which connects and convenes systems leaders, residents, and grantees to support the development of the local BHC plan. These three elements – creating a local infrastructure that connects grantees and partners, fostering an environment for collaboration across sectors and inclusive of residents and systems leaders, and developing and elevating the voice of resident and youth leaders – have been vital to the effort in the first three years.

*Figure 3 – Building Blocks for BHC*



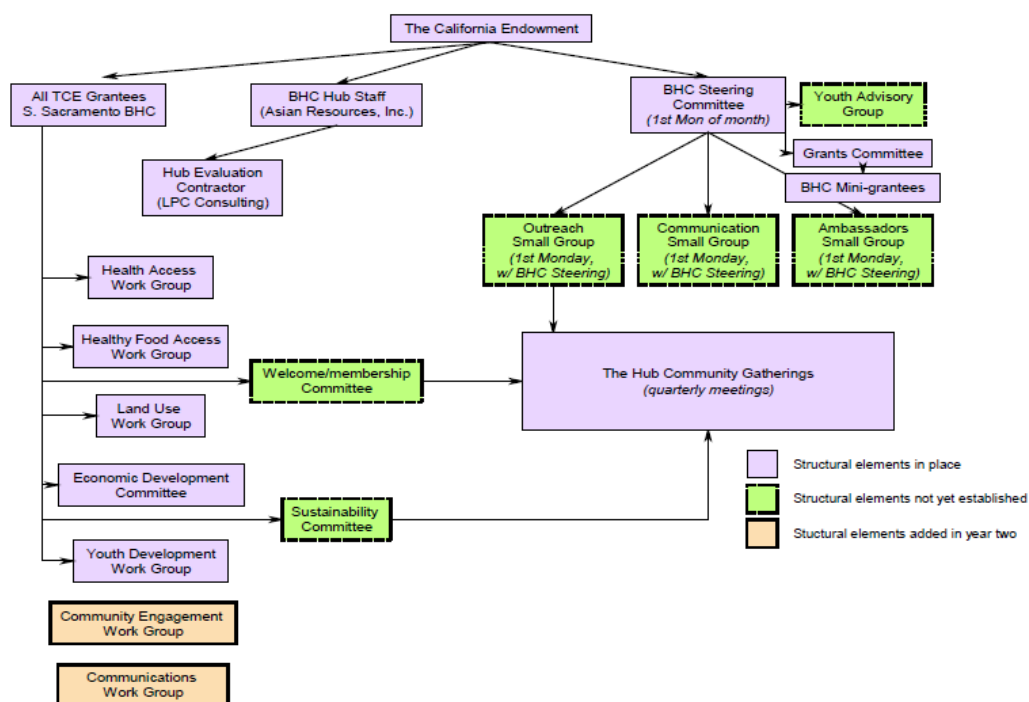
## The Evolution of the Hub

The Hub is a new entity in Sacramento that grew out of BHC. According to an early document, the Hub is “a group of individuals who come together to share decision-making and guide the effort at each site throughout the BHC initiative.”<sup>2</sup> Based on what The Endowment had learned from foundation initiatives in other communities, it required all of its 14 communities to identify or establish a structure that could sustain collaboration between partners locally. This is providing a space for the broader community to participate in the implementation of BHC. In South Sacramento, the Hub consists of three primary formal, organized bodies: Hub staff, a BHC Steering Committee, and Work Groups (Figure 4). The structures of the Hub have remained largely intact since implementation of BHC began in 2010.

When people think of the Hub, usually the first person to come to mind is Kim Williams, the Hub Manager. Williams is a familiar face in the community. Previously the Director at the Boys and Girls' Club of Greater Sacramento, she is now affiliated with Asian Resources, Inc., the host and fiscal agent for Sacramento BHC. Williams and the other two Hub staff play a critical role in the Sacramento BHC work. As one grantee stated, “*Kim is the driver in moving this work forward.*” Hub staff coordinate multiple meetings a week, identify grantees and partners that can help respond to requests from The Endowment (interviews, youth speakers at events), connect local partners and grantees, as well as oversee other BHC administrative tasks. Several grantees noted that Tien and Williams work together. As a grantee and South Sacramento resident stated, “*Christine and Kim have the license to operate. I know their mission statement. [...] Christine and Kim they are a team! They bounce stuff off each other.*”

<sup>2</sup>Document available [online](#). After the planning phase, TCE released a second document on The Hub, entitled [Why Have a Hub?](#) in which it describes the Hub as “a place where decision-making is shared, and all the parties with a stake in BHC constructively explore their differences and develop a joint strategy for action.”

Figure 4 – Hub Structure



The Steering Committee, which originated during the BHC planning phase, continues to meet monthly with a new cohort of members. The role of the Steering Committee is to “represent community residents and organizations equally.” To do this it “would meet regularly, make decisions, and provide oversight for the implementation of the 10 year initiative.”<sup>3</sup> In order to ensure representation of systems leaders, The Endowment required four of the Steering Committee seats to be filled by representatives of government agencies (city, county, public health) and the school district. Current grantees, or those seeking BHC funds, were no longer permitted to sit on the Steering Committee once the BHC plan was in place.

The role of the Steering Committee has not been clear to many systems leaders, organizers, and residents involved in BHC, and efforts are underway to better articulate its goals. The primary role of the Steering Committee has been to identify and support small projects, such as providing mental health support to individuals who were formerly incarcerated, through a mini-grant fund. It also hosts celebratory Hub gatherings for the entire community four times a year. It has no authority over The Endowment’s local BHC grantmaking.

During the shift to implementation of BHC, a number of Work Groups were created to move the work forward around the five priority areas. Unlike the other Hub structures, Work Groups are comprised exclusively of BHC grantees. For example, the Food Access Work Group was comprised largely of organizations that had been working together prior to the launch of BHC as part of the Sacramento Region Food System Collaborative, and already shared a common goal around improving access to healthy foods in low-income neighborhoods. The level of collaboration within the Work Groups varies; in most cases the Work Group is a forum for sharing information and providing updates, in a few others, grantees are identifying opportunities to work together toward a common goal. Interaction between the Work Groups is fairly minimal, and occurs mostly at the quarterly Hub community events or intermittently

<sup>3</sup>LPC Consulting Associates. (September 2011). *The South Sacramento Building Healthy Communities (BHC) Initiative: Year One Evaluation Summary and Report*.



when The Endowment decides to bring its various Work Groups together. For example, The Endowment convened the Work Groups in June 2013 to participate in a full-day workshop to discuss the vision and goals for Sacramento BHC.

The Hub provides opportunities for organizations and individuals to learn about and participate in BHC activities, as well as to better connect and coordinate their efforts.

## Enhancing Community-led Collaboration

The Endowment recognizes that changing how decisions are made or how resources are allocated to improve health (i.e., systems change), requires “multiple agencies, community members, and other stakeholders” to work together.<sup>4</sup> Many organizations in South Sacramento are accustomed to collaboration. In order to improve health access, for example, local service providers know that coordinating services and providing referrals can make it easier for patients to get the care they need. The level of collaboration at the heart of BHC is broader than this typical service coordination or bilateral partnership between two organizations or agencies. What makes collaboration in the context of BHC unique is that it aims to happen across multiple sectors – including adult and youth residents, nonprofits, systems leaders – and across different types of nonprofits – service providers, advocacy groups, and organizers. Further, The Endowment has taken a backseat in many of the conversations, in order to allow the stakeholders at the table to determine the nature and goals of collaboration.

The Work Groups provide one forum for different types of nonprofits, such as service providers and advocacy groups, to communicate with one another. *“Before [service providers] were getting grants from TCE but they were not working with any other organizations,”* explained a community organizer. *“They would develop a framework that would work for them but were not inclusive of the community and what others are doing. So [TCE is] starting to make everyone talk to one another.”* For example, youth violence prevention is an issue ripe for collaboration. The Endowment recognizes the potential synergies between nonprofits focusing on youth development work and organizing groups, such as Sacramento ACT, which is equipping youth to speak out on violence and trauma in the community. By staying present in the community and building relationships with grantees, program manager Tien is in a good position to encourage these linkages to be made. She attends meetings on occasion, primarily to listen, and may be asked to answer a few questions. Ultimately, however, the direction of the group is up to those who are sitting at the table.

In some areas of work, particularly Food Access, organizations are accustomed to working together in this way. Food Access grantees have developed a shared vision for what they want to achieve as a collective. Some other Work Groups have struggled to coalesce. The Health Access Work Group was on the verge of dissolution at the end of 2012. In order to avert this, Tien brought on Elaine Abelaye-Mateo, a well-regarded community leader and founder, former Executive Director of Asian Resources, Inc. to facilitate the Health Access Work Group meetings. After much debate and discussion, the group was able to identify their role and purpose for BHC and commit to coming together.

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<sup>4</sup>What Is Systems Change? [A Toolkit for Federal Staff Who Work With Comprehensive Community Initiatives.](#)

The type of cross-sector collaboration that brings together systems leaders, nonprofits, and residents largely happens outside of the Work Groups and traditional Hub structures. For the past three years, The Endowment has supported the development of neighborhood, citywide, and regional multi-sector collaboratives to address priority issues and build community capacity. For example, The Endowment provided seed funding to create and coordinate activities for the citywide Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force (see callout box).

Three years into BHC, there is a desire to take collaboration to the next level. At first, networking and information sharing were sufficient reasons to put the time, energy, and resources into attending multiple BHC meetings per month (or even per week). However, organizations are now familiar with the landscape of organizations and key players. The Endowment has started talking about focusing Work Groups around specific "campaigns." What those campaigns will look like is still to be determined, and will likely require significant community leadership.

### Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force

The Mayor's Gang Prevention Task Force, which began in 2010 brings together city officials, community-based organizations, public school administrators, and other funders to address the issue of safety and gang-related violence across the city. In addition to supporting the quarterly meetings, The Endowment funded a research study of community indicators (e.g., education, employment, health) for five Sacramento neighborhoods, including one that covers a large portion of the South Sacramento BHC target area. The research was conducted and shared in way that has enabled city officials to use the data to inform future city investments in safety. It also underscored that violence is not an issue only in the realm of law enforcement, by grounding the conversation in a holistic vision of a healthy community. The Task Force has served as a model for other communities, including BHC Long Beach.

## Resident Organizing

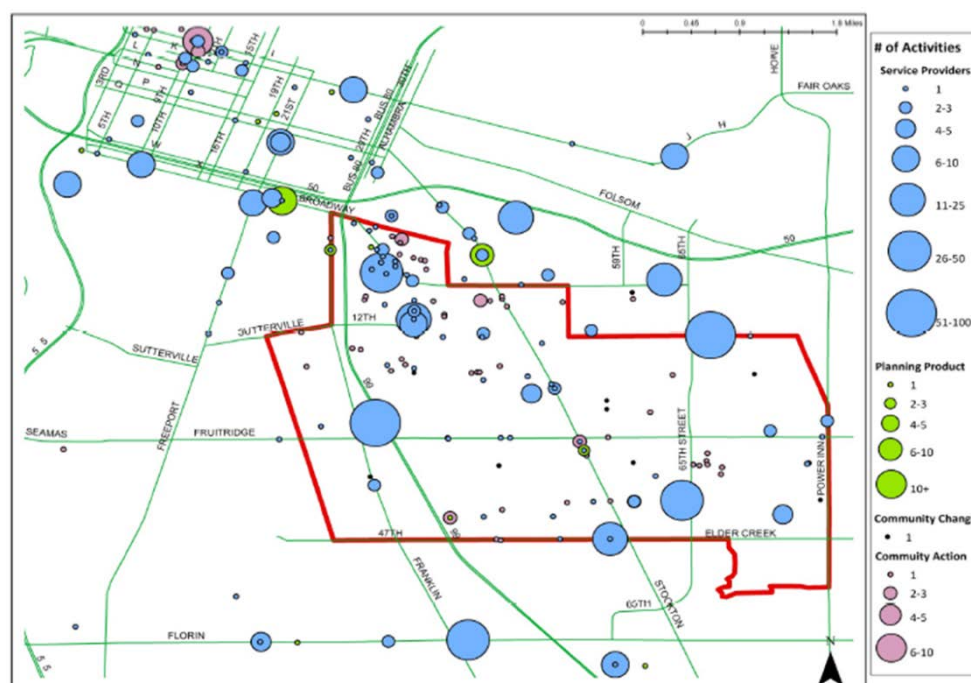
A third important aspect of the current Sacramento BHC work is the emphasis on "building power" among adult and youth residents, which is central to the work in all 14 BHC communities. Although residents have been involved in providing input for BHC since planning began, many BHC leaders and grantees consider "resident engagement" to be the greatest challenge facing the local work. While engagement can refer to a variety of activities, The Endowment has communicated that resident engagement is more than receiving services, attending meetings, or volunteering. Rather, BHC aims to train and empower residents to speak out on behalf of their community. A few organizations focused on resident organizing, such as Sacramento Area Congregations Together (ACT) and Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE), have been active in South Sacramento prior to the start of BHC. Most grantees, however, do not have experience with regularly involving residents in their efforts.

Over the past few years, more residents are getting involved in large-group BHC gatherings. Attendance at quarterly community Hub events nearly doubled from the beginning of 2012 to the end; increasing from 75 to 150 community members.<sup>5</sup> Besides the celebratory, festive Hub gatherings, most resident engagement takes place through trainings, education activities, events, and direct services (e.g., health insurance application assistance, legal services). The dispersion and relative magnitude of resident and youth engagement in BHC activities as part of the Hub, and through the work of grantees, is shown on the map of South Sacramento (Figure 5). The number of resident engagement activities in year two of implementation is represented by the circles on the map which indicate services provided to residents in

<sup>5</sup>LPC Consulting Associates. (January 2013). *South Sacramento Building Healthy Communities (BHC) Initiative: Year Two Evaluation Report*.

blue, planning involving residents in green, and community action taken by residents in pink. Within the BHC area, outlined in red, resident engagement appears heaviest in the northwest corridor of Oak Park, though it spreads across the entire area.<sup>6</sup>

Figure 5 – Resident Engagement in BHC, Year Two



Note: Red border indicates the South Sacramento BHC target area

Residents believe they have an important role to play in BHC. As one resident explained, *“We residents are supposed to be at the center of the Hub, and all these [BHC] organizations should have their tentacles into us.”* However, the Hub is structured such that nonprofits, particularly BHC grantees, are the dominant voice at the table. Shifting the paradigm among nonprofit service providers and community leaders about the role of residents can be a challenge. As a community organizer explained,

*“Service providers are great at identifying and supporting communities with all their needs - health care, immigration et cetera. These organizations see the problems that the community has. If a lot of people come asking for health plans or with immigration issues you see where people are falling through the cracks in terms of policy. The relationship with the community is problematic because people get services, but there is no empowerment. You don’t need to teach them about the system. You just help them.”*

The issues that residents have been organizing around are often related to something that seems urgent, tragic, or particularly disenfranchising, such as the tragic loss of a high school student who was hit by a car near a dangerous intersection in the BHC area. After the incident, local councilmember McCarty called a meeting at which residents and local advocacy groups, including WALKSacramento met with the councilmember and Department of Transportation officials to discuss what the community could do to make the streets safer for pedestrians. As a resident described,

*“I saw the community coming together – city government, neighborhood organizations, school district representatives, residents – after the accident. For a few days WALKSacramento sat at*

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

*the intersection and did an audit. Residents and the Sacramento bicycle advocates [were working together].”*

Several grantees and residents involved in BHC believe their work has contributed to greater resident involvement in advocacy and policy change efforts. Others consider the contribution of resident voice to policy “wins” – protesting the opening of a McDonald’s on a fast-food heavy street, passing new zone ordinances that allow residents to raise chickens – to be relatively minimal. Some residents agree, with one acknowledging, *“It’s more the organizations that are doing policy change stuff; they haven’t tapped into residents themselves. [The policy changes] are still driven by the organizations, not driven by the residents.”*

The Endowment’s grantees lead the training and organizing activities, while the foundation plays a supportive grantmaker role. The types of issues and activities that organizing groups can and should address with their funding is specified in their grant agreements. However, organized residents could pursue issues that do or do not align with The Endowment’s priorities. When the Sacramento City Unified School District recently decided to close seven schools due to declining enrollment, five of which were located in the South Sacramento area, a small group of organized residents came together. The decision making process afforded little consultation with the broader community, but local nonprofits were hesitant to tackle the issue. According to a resident organizer, *“A lot of the nonprofits working with the schools receive funding from the school, and they could not actively fight fact because it’s a conflict of interest.”* Instead, small group of parents and residents were organized to fight against the school closures, and eventually filed a lawsuit against the district.

The Hub could have become a primary hotspot for residents and organizers to come up against powerful school administrators. In fact, the group that organized around the school closures did use a community Hub gathering to bring the issue to the attention of other community members. Yet, the Hub remained neutral and did not take sides, and the meeting was used primarily to discuss how to move forward. At the same time, the participants at the Hub meeting urged the district to be more inclusive in the future and to engage residents and other groups in determining how to ensure the success of students who will be moved to another school. Managing conflicting interests of systems leaders and residents can be difficult, and in this case the approach made it tenable for the schools to continue participating in BHC.

## Youth Leadership Development

Engaging youth, in addition to adult residents, in BHC is a foundation-wide priority. In Spring 2013, program manager Tien reported to the foundation that more than 100 youth were involved in BHC activities in Sacramento. Youth are engaging in a variety of ways, both through the Hub and through the work of BHC grantees. For example, youth have participated in trainings around an organizing campaign (e.g., creating community gardens, school reform); testified at local school board and city hearings; learned about nutrition and how to cook healthy meals; planned community-wide events, such as the annual Summit for boys and men of color; and worked as summer media interns creating video and online media based on the priorities of Sacramento BHC.

Notably, the youth participating in leadership and development activities reflect a diversity of life experiences. Many have experienced significant instability in their lives, such as parents being incarcerated, drug addiction in their homes, and dealing with homelessness. Their participation in BHC appears to be largely driven by the encouragement and support of an adult ally such as a mentor, organization leader, or a parent. One young person reflecting on how she got involved in Sacramento BHC explained how a trusted adult helped her *“realize there is light in life”* and encouraged her to get more involved in the community.

Participation in BHC activities seems to have had an impact on the attitudes of youth and their outlook for the future. For example, youth talk eagerly about “giving back” by sharing what they have learned with their peers and taking on leadership roles. For example, through the local boys and men of color work, youth are becoming equipped to train other youth to become speakers and presenters, so that they can continue to share their stories and advocate effectively. In addition, youth express optimism about the change that they and others can make in their community through BHC. Opportunities that expose youth to different environments (e.g., nature, different cities) have contributed to this sense of hope, and fueled interest in getting more involved to change the status quo. Other examples of how youth believe they are being affected by their involvement in BHC include:

- **Becoming a peer leader:** *“You can sit down with other people and help them out.”*
- **Increasing sense of community:** *“Before this program I didn’t care about the community, but now that I’m involved in BHC I’m in other events, and I see that there are changes being made.”*
- **Increasing self-esteem:** *“...for someone my age to look up to me, that was something.”*
- **Increasing self-awareness:** *“I’m overcoming my insecurities.”*
- **Increasing empathy for others:** *“I’ve been trying to accept others [...] And now I know that people with money aren’t always bad. People do want to help. People do see that there’s wrong, and they can make it right with what they have.”*

At the same time, keeping youth engaged in the structures around Sacramento BHC work, particularly in the Hub, has been difficult. In the second year of implementing BHC, nearly every steering committee meeting included a discussion around youth engagement – underscoring its value and importance to BHC leaders, and also the challenge of doing it well.

Two things really stand out in talking with youth and their youth development organizations about what it would take to increase youth participation in BHC further. First, youth are excited to be involved in activities with a clear purpose and a focus on action. They are interested in taking action to improve the community. It’s difficult to sustain youth participation in planning conversations that are not directly tied to a specific campaign, action, or event. Second, youth time is not without its costs. Many youth, particularly those in need, have to get a paying job to help support themselves or their families, and volunteering hours to work on campaigns is not feasible. As one youth said,

*“I understand the morals of volunteering without getting paid and giving to the community. But, if my mom is crying at home...if that’s an issue, I could go and get a job instead, but it would not be [a job] full of morals. When that job pays more than you doing something for your community, it makes it hard to give in the community.”*

Providing stipends, as through the summer media lab internship, is vital to continued youth engagement. Making sure that youth meetings and committees are action oriented and stipends are available for youth are concrete ways to maintain youth engagement in BHC over time.

## Reflections on Strengths and Challenges

This case study only scratches the surface of the numerous and varied activities and outcomes associated with the local BHC work. The development of Sacramento BHC over the past three years – its strengths, as well as the challenges – provides information that local leaders and The Endowment can use to better support the BHC work going forward.

Areas of Progress	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The Endowment has gained the trust of multiple community stakeholders.</li> <li>➤ The Endowment is increasing the capacity of service providers to reach more people.</li> <li>➤ Organizations are focusing their work more intentionally on activities, services, and opportunities within the BHC target area.</li> <li>➤ Through BHC, stakeholders in South Sacramento are learning to collaborate in new ways, and with more diverse types of individuals and organizations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ The purpose and role of the more central BHC structures, especially the Steering Committee, have not been well defined.</li> <li>➤ Funding for policy and systems change is perceived as reducing resources for the core mission of some service delivery organizations.</li> <li>➤ BHC leaders and grantees do not have a common understanding of what systems change looks like in the context of BHC.</li> <li>➤ When residents do organize around an issue, their efforts could directly oppose the interests of other BHC partners</li> </ul>

## Areas of Progress

The following examples illustrate several aspects of the BHC effort that are working particularly well:

- **The Endowment has gained the trust of multiple community stakeholders.** Although Program manager Tien was new to the community when she started at The Endowment, she has brought a posture of listening and learning to the work. By making herself available to hear from and troubleshoot with grantees, has been critical to building trusted relationships in the community.
- **The Endowment is increasing the capacity of service providers to reach more people.** Despite the fact that BHC is focused on policy and systems change, the majority of organizations receiving BHC funding are nonprofits with a primary role of providing services (health, mental health, counseling, or education) for adults and youth in the community. As a grantee explained, *“The ability of grantees to provide services to a wider net is The Endowment’s major contribution.”* In some cases, BHC funding has allowed organizations to increase their services two- or even four-fold.
- **Organizations are focusing their work more intentionally on activities, services, and opportunities within the BHC target area.** The Endowment’s designation of funds to work within a specific, bounded area has fueled organizations’ interests in working in the area and provided them with the necessary resources to scale their operations there. This has increased the different types of activities and services available to residents. Coalitions operating on a citywide or regional basis also mention being more intentional about where they hold meetings and who participates. One grantee said, *“We’ve intentionally held meetings in the Hub zone [BHC area]. And we’ve had quite a strong participation from agencies working in the area.”*
- **Stakeholders in South Sacramento are learning to collaborate in new ways, and with more diverse types of individuals and organizations, through the BHC process.** There is evidence that nonprofits and organizers are more aware of how they can work together to achieve a common goal. As one grantee put it, *“TCE is requiring us to collaborate – they wouldn’t fund us without it – allowed people to put perceived territorial differences aside and work together. There’s trust building and relationship building involved with that.”* While it is still early, there is a

strong desire among several grantees to identify specific policy or systems change targets, so that the focus of their work together is even more clear.

## Challenges

At the same time, the local BHC efforts face multiple challenges that could stall or hinder progress toward accomplishing the BHC goals.

- **The purpose and role of the more central BHC structures, especially the BHC Steering Committee, have not been well defined.** According to a member of the Steering Committee, *“The Steering Committee is still trying to figure out our role. At first we weren’t sure if would have input into funding decisions or if our role was more as a connector. TCE did little to frame or guide that conversation about roles. They let the process evolve organically, but I think these conversations went nowhere.”* Without a clear purpose or goal in mind, systems leaders and residents can easily become disengaged due to the investment of time and resources required to collaborate.
- **Funding for policy and systems change is perceived as reducing resources for the core mission of some service delivery organizations.** One grantee explained the tension between direct services work and youth leadership development saying, *“To work in this community, you really need to focus on the immediate needs of youth. For us to be successful, we need a little component that is case management. [...]The case management piece allows us to connect the youth that come in for leadership activities to all the services that we’re doing.”* There is local resistance to a funding strategy that focuses solely on advocacy and organizing for change without attending to the immediate needs of adult and youth residents.
- **BHC leaders and grantees do not have a common understanding of what systems change looks like in the context of BHC.** Grantees acknowledge that BHC is geared toward “policy and systems change” rather than provide direct services. Yet, as one grantee explained, *“There is a lot of room for interpretation about what systems change means. In the future, some things that TCE is funding now might not be funded, because they don’t fit the mold of BHC anymore. The more time passes, the greater clarity TCE has around what it wants to see happen.”* In addition, several nonprofits in the community use “systems change” to refer to expanding or replicating services. Focusing on change “within” a system, such as school administrators adopting new school nutrition standards or expanding a successful program to more schools, may detract from urgency around changes “of” systems, such as establishing new processes for residents to provide input into local transportation or land use policy decisions.
- **When residents do organize around an issue, it could directly oppose other key BHC partners.** This tension surfaced with the recent school district decision to close seven under-enrolled schools next year, five of which were located in the BHC area. Handling the conflicts that arise between organized residents and systems leaders is difficult to navigate for foundation staff. Reflecting on the school closure issue, a BHC leader explains, *“Some [BHC] grantees – not through work funded by [The Endowment] – were actively opposing school closures. [...] So the school district got confused, because these people were fighting against us.”* The tension between systems leaders and residents’ interests is recognized by The Endowment, though Program managers are left with little guidance or a concrete process for managing it.

## Looking Ahead

Over the past three years, The Endowment has begun laying the foundation for community change by developing an infrastructure that connects grantees and partners to the broader BHC effort (i.e., the Hub), supporting and seeding community-led collaboration, and enabling organizations to train and empower adult and youth residents to become agents of change. BHC aims for transformative and sustained change, which takes a long time. The problems that are being tackled defy a single solution or simple response. Yet, the challenges facing this complex undertaking cannot and should not be ignored.

Looking ahead, youth hope to see people acting in ways that create an even greater sense of community in Sacramento. This includes seeing more people get involved in community events and activities, having more youth step out and speak up on issues they care about, and seeing people helping others more. In addition, residents and other community members want to see their community continue becoming a safer and healthier place, with policies and services in place that will sustain improvements in health and wellbeing over the long haul.

In order to bring about the changes that people in the community hope to see as a result of BHC, the challenges facing Sacramento BHC must be addressed. For example, the BHC Steering Committee has started having conversations to better define the group's role and purpose in BHC, as well as how or whether the Work Groups and Steering Committee can be better connected. As these conversations move forward, participants may want to consider how to balance the need for planning and discussion with action, especially to keep adult and youth residents engaged.

In addition, BHC leaders recognize the tensions between the policy and systems change focus of BHC and the capacities of service delivery organizations to be involved in the effort. Developing strong, strategic partnerships with additional local funders and service delivery organizations to fill the gap left by a focus on policy and systems change could serve to both build a broader set of community relationships and also contribute to greater impact. Identifying how to fulfill the goals for policy and systems change, while also meeting the immediate needs for improving the health of residents and young people living in South Sacramento, is critical to the future success of BHC.

Finally, The Endowment is continuing to make grants to strengthen the existing local infrastructure for resident organizing. For the most part, organizing efforts are being funded through the work of specific BHC grantees, such as Sacramento ACT and Ubuntu Green. In order to further develop the organizing infrastructure in South Sacramento, The Endowment and its local partners can invest in building the capacity of existing resident and youth leadership organizations or make investments in new efforts, such as parent organizing or youth organizing. What seems most important for sustaining resident and youth leadership in the community is ensuring that community members are able to rally around issues that they care most about.

The Endowment will continue playing a critical role in ensuring the conditions and leveraging the resources that enable grantees, residents, youth, and other community partners to be effective. Foundation leaders must consider how they can best support the Sacramento BHC work going forward, despite the various tensions and challenges (these considerations are the focus of the overall Strategic Review report).

As with any effort aimed at deep, long lasting community change, there is a great commitment to BHC and the promise it holds to transform South Sacramento despite the present challenges. The Endowment, its grantees, residents, and other partners continue to come to the table in order to ensure that everyone – regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and income – can live a healthy life.







## FSG

FSG is a nonprofit consulting firm specializing in strategy, evaluation, and research, founded in 2000 as Foundation Strategy Group. Today, FSG works across sectors in every region of the world—partnering with foundations, corporations, nonprofits, and governments—to develop more effective solutions to the world's most challenging issues.