Healthy Development without Displacement
A Summit of the Healthy, Equitable, Active Land Use Network

Tuesday, October 6, 2015
Casa Italiana at St. Peter’s Catholic Church
Los Angeles, CA
Contents
Overview & Background ........................................................................................................ 2
Featured Speakers .................................................................................................................. 5
Panelists ............................................................................................................................... 6
Welcome to Chinatown ........................................................................................................ 8
Opening Remarks Highlights ............................................................................................. 9
Keynote Address Highlights ............................................................................................... 11
Opening Remarks & Keynote Address Q & A Points ........................................................... 12
Panelists ............................................................................................................................... 14
Closing .................................................................................................................................. 15
Relevant Resources ............................................................................................................. 16

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Overview & Background

On October 6, 2015, the Healthy, Equitable, Active Land Use (HEALU) Network convened practitioners, policymakers, funders and community advocates to discuss Healthy Development Without Displacement. The crowd consisted of nearly 100 participants engaged in anti-displacement work as well as practitioners seeking to learn more from local and national experts about how the tools and concepts to prevent and/or mitigate displacement apply in their own work. The recent groundswell of Healthy Communities initiatives highlighted an important tension that needed to be addressed: changes to improve community environments, such as walking trails, bike paths, healthy food retail, and parks and open space, can be perceived negatively by residents as precursors to gentrification, and, if no measures are taken to protect current residents, can ultimately lead to displacement of residents who would stand to benefit the most from these very community improvements.

Background

Gentrification and Displacement are Public Health Issues

The forced, involuntary, and “serial displacement” of communities is a serious concern that can widen health disparities and health inequities. Displaced residents are more likely to be low-income people of color. Both gentrification and displacement have profound implications on the stability and resiliency of neighborhoods. One of the hallmarks of gentrification is increasing pressure on the housing market and the resulting rise in housing costs. Residents don’t get to reap the benefits of improving neighborhood conditions as they are eventually priced out.

In order to resist displacement, families sometimes live in substandard, overcrowded conditions and sacrifice vital household expenditures such as food, healthcare, transportation and education in order to pay for housing. Physical improvements to a neighborhood associated with gentrification are not equitably enjoyed by all. In fact, health disparities widen as vulnerable populations disproportionately experience increased rates of chronic and preventable diseases, such as cancer, asthma, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. Negative environmental exposures are also a high risk for vulnerable communities in gentrifying neighborhoods. Poorer residents can be involuntarily forced into homes that are closer to hazardous land uses and pollution sources such as auto body shops or industrial factories, or into areas with severely decayed infrastructure. Displaced families are also burdened with undue costs associated with resettling in a new community or home. The added cost of a move can represent a large portion of a low-income family’s budget, leading them to choose between housing and other costs such as food, healthcare, education or transportation.

HEALTH EQUITY

“Health equity means that every person, regardless of who they are—the color of their skin, their level of education, their gender or sexual identity, whether or not they have a disability, the job that they have, or the neighborhood that they live in—has an equal opportunity to achieve optimal health.”


“Achieving health equity requires valuing everyone equally with focused and ongoing societal efforts to address avoidable inequalities, historical and contemporary injustices, and the elimination of health and health care disparities.”

US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2013.

GENTRIFICATION

“[Gentrification] is a profit driven race and class remake of urban, working class communities of color that have suffered from a history of disinvestment and abandonment. The process is characterized by declines in the number of low-income people of color in neighborhoods that begin to cater to higher-income workers willing to pay higher rents. Gentrification is driven by private developers, landlords, businesses and corporations and supported by the government through policies that facilitate the process of displacement, often in the form of public subsidies. Gentrification happens in areas where commercial and residential land is cheap, relative to other areas in the city and region, and where the potential to turn a profit is great.”

Causa Justa::Just Cause, Development Without Displacement, 2015

DISPLACEMENT

“Displacement occurs when any household is forced to move from its residence by conditions which affect that dwelling or its immediate surroundings, and:

- Are beyond the households reasonable ability to control or prevent;
- Occur despite the household’s having met all previously-imposed conditions of occupancy;
- And make continued occupancy by the household impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable.”


KEY TERMS
One of the more profound causes of health inequity and disparity is “social loss.” Long-time neighborhood residents have developed strong social ties and support networks within their communities. When these social connections are broken, this “social loss” creates excess stress and psychological effects, which in turn amplify adverse effects on physical systems that are necessary for resilience against disease and chronic conditions.\(^5\) Residents may feel that they have lost cultural institutions, culturally relevant businesses and a general feeling of having a place in the city to call home.\(^6\) Disruption of significant community ties include: loss of capital investments, which include home, job or business connected to an individual’s financial well-being and stability; inability to sustain a job due to increased commuting obstacles; and disruption in a child’s education.\(^7\) Policies that serially displace people have transformed communities and increased negative health outcomes, primarily for low-income communities of color, in the form of increased levels of violence in communities, family disintegration, substance abuse, sexually transmitted diseases and high levels of stress.\(^8\)

Serial Displacement & “Root Shock”
Persistent disinvestment in low-income communities of color correlates with high rates of chronic disease and injury. The seminal work of Dr. Mindy Fullilove addresses this nexus and focuses on serial displacement—forced, recurrent displacement of low-income people of color over time—and its impact on community health. Dr. Fullilove examines several federal policies, programs and practices that either explicitly or inadvertently displaced generations of families, mostly people of color, repeatedly over history, including segregation, redlining, urban renewal, planned shrinkage/catastrophic disinvestment, deindustrialization, mass criminalization, gentrification, HOPE VI and the recent foreclosure crisis. Her findings provide evidence of higher rates of HIV/AIDS in these communities and the onset and persistence of chronic diseases at higher rates than the general population.

In the 1950s, urban renewal policies that razed and displaced entire communities often enjoyed support from a public health framework on the grounds that these projects improved quality of housing. This marked a shift in the orientation of the public health community, away from a focus on community health promotion toward “blight abatement” with the federal Urban Renewal program. The Urban Renewal program was a response to years of disinvestment in urban cores, as well as the rapid rise of suburbanization and “white flight,” that left inner cities starved for resources. The communities ‘left behind’ by these processes were home to high concentrations of low-income people of color. Many of these communities were subsequently deemed blighted, demolished and rebuilt for subsequent community centers, roads, etc. With the backing of the public health field, Urban Renewal advocates were able to garner multi-sector support to demolish and rebuild anew in the name of the health of communities. Dr. Fullilove coined the consequences of displacement as root shock, “the traumatic stress reaction to the loss of some or one’s entire emotional ecosystem.” Multiple generations of families were uprooted from their social networks and supports. The repeated forced removal of families—a process often reiterated through several generations—through policies like urban renewal meant that families lost social capital, including the social networks and supports that may have played a significant role in enabling families and neighborhoods to survive and thrive. Families forced to start over—again and again—lose these vital and intangible resources, and in many cases could become more susceptible to developing chronic disease.
In Los Angeles today, and across the country, there is a great deal of momentum again around creating safe and healthy communities for all. We see this reflected in the City’s recently adopted general plan Health and Wellness element, the new Mobility Plan, and “Vision Zero,” as well as the mayor’s Great Streets Initiative, among others. The future direction of how we design and plan communities makes the need to understand the historical and current nexus of gentrification, displacement and health all the more imperative. Most importantly, how can we be impactful—creating healthier, safer, resource-rich communities—without accelerating displacement and repeating the past?

Healthy Development Without Displacement

Today, advocates for sustainable development that benefits—rather than displaces—low-income communities of color represent a diverse array of sectors and perspectives. In order meet these goals, agencies and organizations working on healthy communities strategies and healthy transportation initiatives must be mindful of—and integrated with—affordable housing and anti-displacement efforts, or else they risk negatively impacting the health and well-being of low-income communities of color over the medium- and long-term.

Participants gathered on October 6 to learn about the factors that support healthy development without displacement and to explore an integrated approach. Sissy Trinh of the Southeast Asian Community Alliance opened the summit with an introduction to Chinatown’s struggles with displacement threats, telling the tale of three Chinatowns. PolicyLink’s Mary Lee provided the local policy context for Los Angeles and rooted the discussion in the health outcomes of displaced communities. Gilda Haas provided a historical timeline and reflections on the Los Angeles context based on her own work that has spanned over three decades. Finally, a panel of local experts ranging from affordable housing developers and advocates, healthy food advocates and retailers, and organizers on the ground working directly to promote anti-displacement development shared their expertise on the issue and exemplified the need for cross-sector partnerships to move this work forward.

Attendees ended the day invigorated by thoughtful and insightful speakers, shared conversations, and action planning happening at their tables. At this summit, we hoped to elevate knowledge and share successes across neighborhoods, cities, and counties, with the goal of generating policy and systems changes to ensure that gentrification and displacement are not the “inevitable” outcomes of development. Strategies that seek to change policies and systems must be replicable, policy-oriented, and change systems and norms. In order to move toward success, healthy communities initiatives must fundamentally restructure the relationship between people and the land use system, and they must engage, organize and mobilize the community so that development can truly improve the health of communities that are currently in place. In this recap of the Innovation Summit, we’ll walk through the day and share key learnings and highlight important conversations that are critical to moving the conversation to action and change.

REFERENCES


Featured Speakers

Mary Lee

Deputy Director
PolicyLink

Mary Lee is a Deputy Director of PolicyLink, a national advocacy organization working to advance racial equity, economic and social justice. As a member of the organization’s health team, Mary helps guide the PolicyLink Center for Health Equity and Place, providing research, technical assistance and training to public and private agencies collaborating to build healthy communities. She has co-authored reports and journal articles on access to healthy food, the built environment, and the impact of place and race on health. She is also a practicing attorney with more than 30 years of experience working in communities throughout California, with special emphasis on issues of housing, land use and community economic development. Her work has always focused on the legal rights of low-income people. Mary has served on a number of boards and commissions, including the Community Coalition, the Fair Housing Congress of Southern California, and the City of LA Transportation Commission. She is a native of LA and a graduate of Pitzer College and Boalt Hall School of Law, U.C. Berkeley.

Gilda Haas

Founder, Dr. Pop; Founding Director of SAJE
Professor, Antioch University

Gilda Haas is an organizer, educator, and urban planner who has been helping grassroots organizations build economies from the ground up for over thirty years. She taught economic development at UCLA’s Department of Urban Planning for over 25 years, where she was also the founding Director of their Community Scholars Program. Gilda is the founding director of Strategic Actions for A Just Economy (SAJE), an economic justice and development organization that is dedicated to building economic power for working-class people in Los Angeles. She is also a co-founder and Steering Committee member of the national Right to the City Alliance. Gilda currently is on the faculty of Antioch University’s Urban Sustainability M.A. Program, manages the popular education website of her alter-ego, Dr. Pop (drpop.org), and creates learning games about planning and economics. She serves on several boards, is dedicated to building infrastructure and capacity for worker cooperatives in Los Angeles, and is committed to supporting the next generation of leaders for a new economy. Gilda lives in LA and is married to mystery writer Gary Phillips and has two adult children, Miles and Chelsea.

Sissy Trinh

Founder and Executive Director
Southeast Asian Community Alliance

Sissy Nga Trinh is the founder and Executive Director of the Southeast Asian Community Alliance (SEACA). Sissy and her family fled Vietnam and moved to the United States when she was a child. After graduating from Pitzer College, she chose to use her education to fight for the rights of immigrants and the poor. Sissy’s experience as a community educator, organizer, and advocate inspired her to found SEACA—an organization dedicated to building the next generation of Southeast Asian leaders. Sissy is a 2002 Echoing Green Fellow and a 2015 Petra Fellow.
Panelists

Clare Fox  
Executive Director  
Los Angeles Food Policy Council  
As Executive Director of the Los Angeles Food Policy Council (LAFPC), Clare collaborates closely with a large network of public, private, non-profit and community sector leaders to catalyze policy and systems change for a sustainable and equitable food system. Previously, she created and directed LAFPC’s flagship community engagement program, the Healthy Neighborhood Market Network, which offers business and leadership development opportunities to neighborhood markets in low-income communities to help them sell more fresh and healthy food. While at the Community Redevelopment Agency of the City of Los Angeles, Clare established a food access investment program called the Community Market Conversion Program, and coordinated a pilot in South Los Angeles in partnership with the LA County Department of Public Health. She also worked with UCLA Downtown Labor Center and Green For All on green job workforce development initiatives. Before studying urban planning and community economic development for her Master’s degree in Urban Planning at UCLA, Clare produced and taught radio production to young people throughout Los Angeles for Youth Radio and National Public Radio. All her work is informed by a lifelong commitment to social and racial justice.

Irma Rivas  
Former Owner  
Ensenada Meat Market  
Irma Rivas owned Ensenada Meat Market in the Virgil Village neighborhood of Los Angeles with her husband Henry for 11 years. Previously, Ms. Rivas worked in Savon Drug stores, where she learned how to manage retail operations and decided she wanted her own business. Born in Mexico, Ms. Rivas grew up in South Central Los Angeles. She is a mother of four and loves to hike. She also volunteers her time and expertise as a small business owner with the Los Angeles Food Policy Council’s Healthy Neighborhood Market Network.

Isela Gracian  
President  
East LA Community Corporation  
Isela Gracian currently serves as President for East LA Community Corporation. A graduate of UC Davis, Isela joined ELACC in 2004 as a coordinator for a job training and placement program and in her 11 years of service she has held various management positions including being Director of Community Organizing. Isela has led the organization’s strategic and operational planning efforts since 2010. She has overseen the organization’s media outreach and public relations efforts and is highly adept and fluent in strategic messaging, traditional and new media management in both English and Spanish. The California Women's Foundation recognized Isela for her thought-leading work formulating solutions to community issues by appointing her a California Women's Policy Institute Fellow in 2006/2007. She serves on various boards including Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Political Education (SCOPE) and California Reinvestment Coalition.
Joe Donlin

Associate Director/Director of Equitable Development
Strategic Actions for a Just Economy

Joe Donlin is the Associate Director and Director of Equitable Development at Strategic Actions for a Just Economy. He helps coordinate the United Neighbors In Defense Against Displacement (UNIDAD) coalition in South Central LA, is a Host Committee member of ACT-LA and represents SAJE in the Renters’ Day coalition. Outside of work, Joe loves to play sports, make songs with his son and spend time with trees, rivers and family.

Facilitated By

Manal J. Aboelata

Managing Director
Prevention Institute

Ms. Aboelata works collaboratively to improve access to healthy foods, prevent injuries, and increase access to physical activity opportunities across Los Angeles, California and the United States. Her work emphasizes policy and community-based approaches, and demonstrates an overarching commitment to working with under-resourced communities to foster health and safety. In addition to overseeing Prevention Institute’s California Approach to Prevention work, Ms. Aboelata coordinates the Strategic Alliance for Healthy Food and Activity Environments, a statewide advocacy network working to bring healthy food and physical activity opportunities to all Californians. She serves as Chair of the Board of the Los Angeles Neighborhood Land Trust and Chair of the Joint Use Statewide Taskforce. Ms. Aboelata received her Master’s in Public Health in Epidemiology from UCLA, where she was later inducted into the Alumni Hall of Fame.
Welcome to Chinatown

Setting the Chinatown Context

Sissy Trinh, Executive Director, Southeast Asian Community Alliance (SEACA-LA)

Sissy Trinh rooted the discussion in the local Chinatown context.

The history of Chinatown, located in the heart of LA, demonstrates perseverance and resilience in the face of adversity. The dominant narrative of Chinatown created by outsiders, masks the underlying assets, unique richness and culture that has built an informal, yet vital infrastructure for residents. Recent efforts to revitalize the area have operated on external perceptions, and in doing so, have missed the mark of what truly are the needs of Chinatown residents. This has created a “tale of three Chinatowns.”

External Perceptions: Chinatown as Rundown and Outdated

Recent efforts to revitalize the Chinatown neighborhood have built on an external narrative of Chinatown as rundown and outdated. It paints a picture of a community full of trinket shops and dim sum restaurants. The Cornfield Arroyo Seco Plan (CASP) sought to integrate transit-oriented development, getting people out of their cars and into the streets, in an area that is transected by three major freeways. This is the Chinatown that planners see and seek to transform. However, such a cursory glance overlooks the fact that Chinatown has the highest transit usage rates in the city and that more than one-third of adults walk to work.

Lived Experiences: Chinatown as Culturally Diverse with Strong Public Health Infrastructure

Elements of what is known as “new urbanism” (urban design that supports diversity, walkability and active lifestyles through anti-sprawl policies and making communities less car-dependent) are innate in the Chinatown community. Residents have been growing their food for decades in parkways, balconies and buckets, and the community is served by hundreds of small businesses; over two dozen are food retailers. Beyond what is immediately visible in Chinatown is an informal public health infrastructure, social networks, and safety nets that are vital elements of the neighborhood’s resiliency. Medical services are culturally appropriate and more often than not available in the language residents seek. The threat of displacement risks more than housing shortages and homelessness—residents in Chinatown and beyond are at risk of losing critical public health resources, such as language access and food retailers.

The Real Struggle in Chinatown: Opportunities for Growth and Transformation

Chinatown residents are overburdened by pollution, wage theft, and lack of affordable housing – all issues that were missing from the original iteration of the CASP. The outsider narrative has overshadowed the fact that Chinatown is the second poorest neighborhood in LA after Skid Row and that many families struggle financially to cover their basic needs. Ms. Trinh summed, “Chinatown residents are not at risk for displacement, they are at risk of homelessness.”

From Struggle to Victory

The organizing led by Southeast Asian Community Alliance-LA (SEACA-LA) was fueled by the prospective developments that were proposed for the Chinatown area by the mantra, “just because money is being spent in your neighborhood doesn’t mean it benefits your community.” SEACA-LA organized youth and trained them on land use policies and pollution. Equipped with greater knowledge, the youth canvassed the neighborhood and talked to residents of Chinatown. A combination of coalition building, legal advocacy, and insistence on having their voices included in the CASP exemplified a model for future community involvement. SEACA-LA and Chinatown’s tireless efforts secured over $200 million for affordable housing and a CASP that better reflected and addressed the needs of Chinatown residents.
Opening Remarks Highlights

Policy Context and the Intersection of Displacement and Health
Mary Lee, Deputy Director, PolicyLink

Ms. Lee set the stage for the summit and provided an “on the ground” policy context on the intersection of displacement and health.

There is a tendency to think of gentrification and displacement as recent issues but, in reality, displacement is a driving narrative in the history of the US. Government-sponsored policies have led to displacement repeatedly through policies like eminent domain, and more recently with urban renewal, highway construction, and the foreclosure crisis. The burden of these policies has fallen disproportionately on people of color. This goes back to the founding of the US, as Native Americans were expelled from tribal lands, Africans were brought here by force and Japanese-Americans were removed from their communities and placed in internment camps. Thus, it’s crucial to recognize that we are starting from a point that is already tainted with racialized policies. Within this context, equity does not mean giving everyone the same amount of support but requires a deep understanding of the lasting impacts of past injustices and a commitment to recovering lost ground.

Health Implications of Displacement
Health disparities are magnified by factors, such as race and income, and manifest as increased risk of cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, asthma, and other chronic illnesses. Families that are displaced often move to undesirable and poorly maintained areas of a city and suffer from increased susceptibility to chronic diseases and worsening health disparities as a consequence. Moreover, the loss of social capital can strip people of their resilience, which is rooted in family and kinship networks, as well as social and economic institutions, like jobs and faith communities. Social loss can also exacerbate existing health conditions.

Ms. Lee shared a story about the construction of a hospital in South LA, exemplifying the displacement that communities foresee with development. One finding of the Watts uprising in 1967 was that South LA had been completely disinvested and, in particular, lacked access to healthcare. One Supervisor pushed to establish a hospital in the community; although construction of the hospital required some people to move, the community was supportive because they knew that a hospital a greater benefit and need. However, seven years later there was then an effort to take out the whole neighborhood to made space for a shopping center and hotel. The community refused to move and lose access to the hospital they had fought for.

Gentrification is often viewed as progress and inevitable. When neighborhoods attract desirable economic development, such as new retail outlets and movie theaters, displacement is seen as collateral damage necessary to welcome these new amenities. The “invisible” outcomes of displacement are often forgotten. When families are displaced they may lose their social networks and supports and are often forced to move in to communities that offer a lower quality of life by lacking access to vital services, healthy food options, hospitals, and schools. Community social networks and supports may be harder to rebuild in communities that experience higher rates of violent crime and lack safe communal gathering spaces, such as parks. Government programs that move displaced people into new communities show improvements in income, but they do not always do better in terms of health conditions and quality of life.

“If we can’t change this, nobody can. There’s power in this room. You have that power.”
-Mary Lee, Deputy Director, PolicyLink
Anticipating Our Own Success: Tools and Strategies to Promote Health Without Displacement

Just as we know that the forces of gentrification and displacement are impacting cities all over the country, there are tools and strategies that we can learn from other parts of the country to promote healthy development without displacement. One important strategy is simply “anticipating our own success” – recognizing that if we are successful in getting parks in our neighborhoods, enhancing schools, and establishing urban agriculture, then the undesirable neighborhood becomes desirable to outsiders. Anticipating our own success means that as we work on emerging projects, such as advocating for light rail, we must also build in code enforcement regulations, enhance housing policies and renters’ protections, and amend zoning rules in order to prevent displacement in the first place. Additionally, Ms. Lee emphasized that we are “building on a foundation of racialized policy,” evident in our transit codes, zoning, and planning policies. In recognizing this, we can use those same tools to protect low-income residents, homeowners, and commercial tenants.

Commercial Corridors Go First

While we often focus on the displacement of homeowners and tenants, displacement of commercial spaces is often what precedes and leads to displacement of residents. When business owners are displaced, that can have a multiplying effect; they are the support for not just their own family but also their employees, who in turn support their families as well. The same types of strategies that are available to residents can also be applied for businesses, such as rent control for businesses, long-term leasing options, and having business owners participate in plan development.
Keynote Address Highlights

Reflections on the Los Angeles Context
Gilda Haas, Founder, Dr. Pop; Founder Strategic Actions for a Just Economy; Professor, Antioch University

Ms. Haas ground the conversation in the Los Angeles context and provided historical examples of displacement and lifted up the power of organizing as an essential building block to prevent and/or mitigate displacement. Ms. Haas has been working in housing, organizing, community economic development and social justice for over 35 years and never before has she seen such a groundswell of energy and attention on the issue of gentrification and displacement. She attributes the rise in heated debates and renewed focus on policy change to the fact that “gentrification in Los Angeles got gentrified.” Ms. Haas provided a historical perspective and groundwork that calls for collective action to address the issue of displacement, invoking collective memory to learn from past challenges, and reimagining and shifting the conversation around development and opportunity.

Harnessing the Strength of Collective Memory & Action to Advance Our Work

Although gentrification and displacement are not new phenomena, the time is ripe for a diverse, multi-sector collaborative to mitigate and prevent the resulting negative outcomes. With renewed fervor and synergy amongst community groups and other organizations, we have the right people to do this work right here, right now. This unprecedented time that we are in now allows us the opportunity to build upon our unique strengths and assets to build a strong effort to prevent the displacement of communities. A diverse alliance should also heed a diverse collection of lived experiences and memory. Ms. Haas called for the need to invoke institutional memory to empower communities and strengthen allies in the work to be able to imagine new solutions by learning from past challenges. One strategy is to integrate the history and struggle of communities into the built environment. The more we invoke memory and acknowledge the litany of government-sponsored policies and programs that have magnified the displacement of vulnerable communities, the better we will understand the importance for equity to make up for past losses. Remembering and building from past challenges and victories can shift power to organized coalitions and the people most impacted by displacement.

Reimagine & Shift the Conversation around Development & Opportunity

“Shifting the way we think about land and development can help sprout the seeds for change that are needed to encourage our imagination for transformation. The current messaging and systems in which we operate stifle the imagined possibilities; the fiscalization of land use in Los Angeles is crowding out all other conversations and this is what Ms. Haas refers to as “entrenched power.” When real estate and profit motives control the dialogue in the city, we don’t believe that we can provide quality affordable housing in the communities where people live. Changing this type of thinking requires changing the conversation and challenging the status quo. Invoking memory is one way that we can get there—learning from past challenges to foster innovative policies and practices. “The possibilities for change are in our collective imagination.”

Work for Transformation & Innovation

“We can’t solve different problems with the same thinking we used to create them” – Albert Einstein

This was the mantra that led the work of the Communities for Accountable Reinvestment coalition in the 1980s. They sought to address the fact that banks were redlining neighborhoods and specifically avoiding investments in particular neighborhoods. This left a large portion of the population unbanked and divested. When advocates realized that the current banking system would not serve or be the answer for communities in need, they formed a coalition to
advocate for and successfully launch a “people’s bank.” However, during the financial crisis of 2008-2009, the previous deregulation of banks, smaller savings and loans were bought and absorbed by larger banks that were the problem to begin with. “When we bail out the banks first, we are denying everyone the right to engage in the messy work of collective, creative problem solving—that is what democracy looks like… We don’t learn from mistakes that are made from on top of us, except that it hurts,” said Ms. Hass, sharing that in order to reinforce the voice and power of communities, we need to build collective strength, and knowledge work through our own solutions. This is the type of work that fosters sustainability at the community level.

**Future Directions**

Just as the forms of displacement have evolved throughout history, so has the face of gentrification. Ms. Haas brought in the example that many people believe that South LA is not gentrifying, but in fact it is! A recent council vote to change the name of South Central Los Angeles to South LA is one example. But a simple name change does not change the current conditions in which residents live. We need to be aware of how these actions, however big or small they may seem, amplify the current systems and policies that perpetuate the status quo and erase our historical linkages, making it increasingly difficult to advance successful collaborative strategies.

**Opening Remarks & Keynote Address Q & A Points**

**Q: What is the opportunity for public health in this sphere? When has public health been a tool for good versus unintended negative consequences?**

- Public health is often surprised that the health-producing development they’re suggesting to communities is met with resistance. The public health sector may feel people do not realize their personal health risks from highway emissions or empty lots, but in reality, healthy developments are met with resistance because development too often threatens displacement of people and communities. While the education and research we have supports the health strategies we promote, that knowledge cannot override the community’s needs and priorities. Community residents must be part of the process.
- Ms. Haas discussed the macro impacts of an extractive economy, which pollutes the land and air, and extracts labor without fair pay. An example of this is when we see that coal is bad for the health of the land and communities and there is a push to ban coal. In certain parts of the country, there are no jobs outside of coal; in order to deal with coal, we must also address the need for jobs.
- A simple rule can be that if a policy is not reducing inequality, then do not do it; instead, improve that policy until it does reduce inequality.

**Q: What are land use strategies for business owners?**

- Development currently builds on a scale that caters to large-scale developers and focuses on a market audience that does not currently exist in place, but that will eventually be brought in. Instead, development can be focused on a more modest scale, which can better meet the needs of existing residents.
- Specific strategies include “first right of refusal” or subsidies for business owners. First right of refusal is an agreement between an owner and a renter, in this case a business. If and when the owner decides to sell the building or renovate a building requiring all tenants to temporarily move, existing tenants are given the right to return before a building goes on the market. This is a method of retaining local businesses while neighborhoods undergo change. While there may be resistance to providing subsidies, high-end, large-scale developers are often subsidized. Local municipalities should more readily subsidize small businesses that need this support as well.

“We’re doing this to build community muscles and relationships; pushing back against what makes us think about oppression in the same way that the people who built it do.”

- Gilda Haas, PolicyLink
Q: How are other communities meeting these challenges and planning for the future?

- Places that are doing this well are places that are building alignment of organizing and policy. Examples of policy are just-cause eviction policies and rent control. Organizing efforts include eviction blockades and building capacity for worker ownership.

- One criterion for planning and policy can be asking whether the effort advances prospects of working-class people to have more control over the economy. If the answer is no, then ask what it would take to give working-class people more power? This requires a long-term strategy to build a new economy and, in order to work towards that, we can ask how this effort builds power for where we want to be in ten years, and how we are building relationships in the process to ultimately push against how we think about oppression.

- Society’s current view on good development is not in agreement with stopping the displacement of people. The Dudley Street Housing Initiative in Boston and the Market Street Plaza in San Diego are two places that Ms. Lee identified where the community was successful in driving development.
Panelists

Panel Discussion and Audience Q & A

We were joined by a diverse panel with expertise in planning, land use, community organizing, housing, small business, food systems, and economic development. Our goal was to hear from local experts about the challenges and opportunities we face as a city, county and region in dealing with displacement from a range of sectors and viewpoints. Here are some of the highlights:

The Challenges

- All communities deserve access to healthy, culturally relevant, and affordable food, but how do we put forth strategies that do not contribute to gentrification and displacement?
- Irma Rivas, a former South LA store owner of 11 years, spoke about her family’s efforts to provide healthy food to meet the needs of a changing community, but still losing the business due to unaffordable rising rents.

The Opportunities

- The LA Food Policy Council (LAFPC) works with corner store owners and staff to provide training support in business development, healthy food retail, and building leadership and skills existing in the community so that they can further expand and experiment with healthy food options.
- Organizing in order to build local capacity and knowledge regarding city planning decisions can help empower a community by providing a sustainable grassroots structure to retain collective community memory and knowledge. By integrating local history and knowledge into the built environment, communities can become more resilient to displacement pressures.
- There are a number of approaches to support more vibrant small businesses. One approach is to invest in small businesses based on the social, political, economic, and cultural capital they provide for the community. Another approach aims to support businesses through community engagement, organizing, power building, and shifting dynamics in order to promote a community-driven approach to small businesses. Building power and organizing the community happens when there is open communication with local businesses and landlords. Community is engaged by being asked to provide support.
- The legalization of street vending in LA can be one way to support local food workers and entrepreneurs that are on the frontlines of bringing healthy food to communities that are often underserved. Legalizing all street vending can help support all food vendors, and within that, healthy food can be promoted.

Other Highlights

- Economic opportunity and the structure of the economy have impacts on the health of populations, the environment, and whether workers are fairly compensated. An individual’s socioeconomic status/position is directly linked to access to health care and their ultimate health outcomes. Communities can respond to the current economic situation by providing quality financial services in the form of credit unions and small savings and loans operations. In this way, we can provide services for the unbanked (populations not currently served by a financial institution) such as loans for housing, credit and other services that can ensure an individual can participate fully in the local economy.
- In order to impact the future and community planning, we cannot work on a project-by-project basis given the speed at which projects enter the neighborhood. There is a need to preserve existing affordable housing and build new affordable units, provide home ownership opportunities, and support income generation and economic stability through financial education.

“Food justice is about supporting food workers and entrepreneurs. It’s about supporting all food vendors, and within that, healthy food.”

- Clare Fox, Executive Director
  Los Angeles Food Policy Council
Closing

On behalf of Prevention Institute and the HEALU Network, we want to thank all the attendees for their participation and contribution to the rich discussion generated from our speakers and panelists. We believe that there are ways to strategically leverage Los Angeles’ current focus on healthy communities and health in all policies to advance implementation policies and accelerate action on our collective vision to make our communities healthier, more equitable places to live, while preserving neighborhood stability. We hope to further explore the notions raised during the summit in the future, to further move dialogue and thinking to innovative actions in Los Angeles. Again, we thank you for your participation, and we look forward to working together towards a healthy, equitable future for all Angelenos.
Relevant Resources

A Roadmap Toward Equity: Housing Solutions for Oakland, CA

Causa Justa :: Just Cause. Development Without Displacement

Special thanks to our co-sponsors:

Community Intelligence
East LA Community Corporation
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