

COMMUNITY-CENTERED HEALTH HOME CASE STUDY: ASIAN HEALTH SERVICES

Background

When a Chinatown resident was struck and killed by a car while crossing the street, the incident made Asian Health Services (AHS) staff aware of pedestrian safety as a health issue in their community.

Surrounded by major state highways, Chinatown is one of Oakland's major traffic arteries. In addition to vehicle traffic, there is also a high volume of pedestrian traffic. The combination of traffic density, community demographics, and high pedestrian volume created high risk for injury and death in the community.

Beyond One Intersection

Inquiry: Mr. Lee's death spurred the investigation of car-pedestrian accidents. The clinic's youth advocacy and leadership program gathered data about pedestrian safety in the neighborhood. They mapped locations of accidents and photo-documented car and pedestrian incidents, such as cars turning in front of pedestrians or vehicles obstructing crosswalks. Chinatown's elderly population makes up about one in three of Chinatown's pedestrians and accounts for approximately 23 percent of all pedestrian fatalities. Given the neighborhood's wide streets, existing crosswalk signal mechanisms did not allow sufficient time to cross the street, making the neighborhood especially dangerous for elderly pedestrians.

Analysis: AHS worked to collaborate and build coalitions with several community groups, business owners, city planning agencies, and the Oakland Chinatown Chamber of Commerce (OCCC). A series of public meetings was held to involve the community. AHS and OCCC established a community advisory committee consisting of approximately fifteen key stakeholders. This committee helped not only to build constituency around improved pedestrian safety, but also encouraged community members to increase their involvement in transportation decision-making processes over the long-term.

As a result of the collective advocacy of these groups, the City Council funded installation of a "scramble" crosswalk, one in which all vehicle traffic is stopped and pedestrians can cross in all directions, including diagonally, at a key intersection in Chinatown. While this was a huge win for the group, this was only the tipping point of AHS's work to improve the built environment surrounding its health center. AHS began to view their work in this area as a push toward environmental justice within their community.

Clinic Profile

- Oakland, California
- 24,400 patients
- 99% racial or ethnic minority
- 70% best served in a language other than English
- 37% uninsured

CCHH Model Elements

Inquiry: Geo-mapping and photo-documentation of incidents.

Analysis: Crosswalk timing identified as key risk factor for elderly population. Economic development and equity, physical and transportation development identified as key related factors.

Action: Develop community informed transportation and planning project – members make recommendations, litigate and seek financing to support goals.



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AHS and its community partners identified three upstream pedestrian safety factors that needed to be addressed: 1) economic development and economic equity within the community; 2) physical development in nearby communities that would negatively affect traffic patterns in Chinatown; and 3) current state of transportation development in the neighborhood that had resulted in adverse effects for the community. With these priorities set, AHS and its partners were prepared to take action.

Action: AHS, OCCC, the Oakland Pedestrian Safety Project, and the City of Oakland formed a coalition and developed *Revive Chinatown!*, a community transportation and planning project to counter the three identified factors that most influenced health in the community. The group capitalized on coalition members' long-standing relationships with community members, businesses, and merchants to involve the community and to collect public input.

Subsequently, *Revive Chinatown!* and related partnerships have:

- Developed recommendations for sidewalk extensions, pedestrian “bulb-outs” at key intersections, special pedestrian lighting, additional scramble cross-walks and pedestrian countdown signals, and conversion of streets from one-way to two-way
- Sued the city of Alameda (which is accessed via Chinatown) to scale back proposed business, housing and commercial projects that would have increased traffic in Oakland
- Procured increased funding for pedestrian improvements in Chinatown
- Received an Environmental Justice Grant from the Transportation Department

Strategy

To better understand how to address structural factors influencing the community, AHS and OCCC opened up a community design conversation that convened urban planners, designers, architects, and artists who together developed and proposed innovative ways to revitalize Chinatown. Through public meetings and the establishment of a community advisory committee, many projects regarding traffic and pedestrian safety in the neighborhood have moved forward, with the vision of making Chinatown's commercial district a regional shopping destination rather than simply a thoroughfare. The project served to raise awareness among residents, workers, merchants, and community groups about pedestrian safety and transportation issues, and also to engage those community members in long-term decision making processes around transportation issues and the built environment in their neighborhood. Ultimately, the Oakland City Council took over *Revive Chinatown!* and received funding to realize many of the proposed solutions.

Impact

Early data showed the “scramble” reduced car-pedestrian incidents by as much as fifty percent. Moreover, what started as a campaign around pedestrian safety evolved into a campaign around economic development, community revitalization, and environmental justice. The health center exceeded traditional expectations of a health care organization and embodied the Community-Centered Health Home model by bridging the fields of public health and planning to create a safer, more vital Chinatown.