

A photograph of a community planning session. A man with a mustache, wearing a plaid shirt, is seated at a table and pointing at a large aerial map of a city grid. The map has several yellow circular markers placed on it. A pair of red-handled scissors is on the table near the map. In the background, other people are partially visible, and there are various items on the table like a blue marker and a glass. A white text box is overlaid on the top half of the image.

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

LAUREN AHKIAM, PACOIMA BEAUTIFUL

Pacoima?



- Low-income, primarily immigrant, community in LA's industrial outer-ring suburbs
- Dense, transit dependent
- Not politically powerful
- Thus neglected planning & infrastructure
- Major health issues (pollution, lack of resources)
- But! Rich with invested residents and vernacular culture! And not currently threatened by displacement.



Pacoima Beautiful



- Founded in 1996 by 5 moms
- Member-driven environmental health and justice non-profit focused on education, advocacy and local leadership
- Funded by LA County Dept. of Public Health's RENEW Initiative with other grant/donor support



Caminos del Pueblo / Complete Streets

- **Goals:**

- Increase **equity** and encourage **activity** through community planning and improvement projects
- Work toward the physical, environmental, fiscal, spiritual **health** of our community

- **Mechanisms:**

- Create a **community vision** via People's Planning School
- Incorporate the vision into planned **infrastructure** investments like CRA/LA



Camino del Pueblo & Displacement?

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



Camino del Pueblo/Complete Streets Process

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



Community Priorities for Design Elements



- **Safety**

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

- **Quality of Life**

- Transit amenities
- Trees, maintenance
- Preserve local culture (murals, signage)

- **Health**

- Improving conditions promotes activity
- Land use concerns

People's Planning School Considerations



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

More Immediate Tools

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



More Difficult to Address



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

Opportunities for Change

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





Thank You!

LAUREN AHKIAM
PACOIMA BEAUTIFUL
LAHKIAM@PACOIMABEAUTIFUL.ORG