



Creating Policy, Systems, Environmental Change: City of San Bernardino Success Story and Lessons Learned

Youth Driven Gardening Activities in the City of San Bernardino

Intervention Summary

The City of San Bernardino was found to have nearly 9 unhealthy food outlets (including fast food and convenience stores) for every healthy food retail outlet. Known as the Retail Food Environmental Index (RFEI Value), this is more than twice the RFEI Value average of the State of California at just over 4 to 1 and greater than the County of San Bernardino RFEI Value at almost 6 to 1. These findings were described in the *City of San Bernardino Environmental Scan: A Model for Building Communities that Support Healthy Eating and Active Living*, conducted by Healthy San Bernardino and published in 2011.

The Local Health Department Nutrition Program of San Bernardino County and City of San Bernardino Parks and Recreation Department partnered with the Latino Health Collaborative to host a youth group at Delmann Heights Community Center. Delmann Heights is located at 2969 North Flores Street, San Bernardino, CA 92407 and 68.4% of the population is <185% FPL (2009-13 ACS Data Set Source). The youth group conducted a Photovoice assessment of Delmann Heights. From the Photovoice assessment findings, the youth developed a list of policy, system, and environmental (PSE) changes they considered important to them at their community center. One of the PSE changes the youth group wanted was a garden at Delmann Heights. They prepared a Photovoice presentation showcasing their pictures and stories on poster boards. The youth group attended a Stakeholder Meeting and presented their action plan for a garden at Delmann Heights Community Center. During the planning stages, the types of fruits and vegetables that would be grown in the garden were selected.

The youth group decided on a vegetable garden geared at growing the ingredients for salsa including: tomatoes, jalapenos, onions, garlic, cilantro, and bell peppers.

According to the *City of San Bernardino Environmental Scan*, community gardens can help to make people more food secure as well as build “social capital” that improves social cohesion. Such gardens provide fresh produce, urban greening, and an opportunity for neighbors to get to know each other and improve their community. The youth group felt that having a garden was important to them because it would help to make Delmann Heights more attractive and inviting for people to come. They were also excited about using the ingredients to make food.

Many groups worked together to make the Delmann Heights garden a reality including leadership, community center staff, parents, and the youth. The leadership decided on the gardening equipment that would best fit the needs of Delmann Heights Community Center and purchased the equipment. They provided technical assistance and guidance as the youth planted the garden. Community Center staff participated in trainings in order to conduct PSE and food gardening activities and education with the youth. Staff also watered and cared for the garden between youth group meetings. Parents and caregivers assisted by bringing the youth to Delmann Heights each week for meetings. They also provided input and support for gardening and other PSE activities. The youth played an active role in advocating for the garden. They planted and cared for the garden in addition to participating in food garden activities and education conducted by trained staff.

Description of Barriers Encountered and Identified or Proposed Solutions

Several barriers were encountered during the development of the garden for the youth group. One of the biggest issues was the question as to whether or not the city would continue to own and operate the community center. Due to budgeting issues, it was unclear if the Delmann Heights Community Center would continue to be under the City of San Bernardino Parks and Recreation Department for the remainder of FFY2015. The City of San Bernardino filed for bankruptcy protection in 2012, which has hindered many services in the City.

Vandalism was also a problem at the Delmann Heights Community Center. Leadership was concerned that an outdoor garden would be damaged after hours when staff was not present. Additionally, it was intended that the youth group would care for the garden. As the group only meets weekly, properly watering and caring for the garden was an issue.

To address these barriers, leadership at Delmann Heights decided to create a mobile garden. Gardening containers (with wheels) were purchased to allow for easy movement of the garden from indoors to outdoors and vice versa; the mobile garden could also be easily transported to another site in the event that Delmann Heights Community Center was no longer under the City of San Bernardino. This also solved

the vandalism issue as the garden could be kept inside the community center at night to reduce the risk of damage. Additionally, the ability to store the mobile garden inside allowed for easy access for the staff to water and care for the garden between youth group meetings.

Future Directions/Sustainable Success

Short term goals include:

- Ongoing recruitment and youth engagement to continue the active youth group.
- Continuing to train staff/adult allies to conduct food garden activity and education with youth and community members.
- Recruit one additional qualifying community center to create or revitalize a food garden.
- Develop and sustain partnerships with organizations such as The Incredible Edible Community Garden and Master Gardeners to improve gardening activities.
- Collaborate with organizations and/or other entities to seek donations for supporting garden amenities.
- Continue to share best practices from successful policies, system and environmental changes. Sharing opportunities may include: CNAP meetings, San Bernardino Food Policy Advisory Council, and Healthy Cities/Communities meeting.

Long term goals include:

- Collaborate with the City of San Bernardino on the development of policies, systems, and environmental changes to support long-term implementation of community gardens. Strategies may include: Supporting the development of code amendments, zoning policies, garden rules (i.e. operations and use policies), and land-use agreements.
- Utilize Re-AIM evaluation findings in an effort to support the enhancement of individual garden sites.
- Utilize Re-AIM evaluation findings on multiple garden sites and synthesize data to identify themes and other trends that make for successful garden sites in San Bernardino County.

Contact information about this Narrative

Local Health Department Grant Name: San Bernardino County Public Health
Department

Grant #: 13-20512-03

Author's Name: Bobby Lou Moll, MS, RD

Phone: (909) 388-5656

Email: Bobby.Moll@dph.sbcounty.gov

This material was produced by the California Department of Public Health's Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Branch with funding from USDA SNAP-Ed, known in California as CalFresh. These institutions are equal opportunity providers and employers. CalFresh provides assistance to low-income households and can help buy nutritious food for better health. For CalFresh information, call 1-877-847-3663. For important nutrition information, visit www.CaChampionsForChange.net.