



Yesler Terrace Seattle, Washington

Executive Summary

This site profile is part of a series that spotlights mixed-income community transformations that emphasize health and wellness in their strategic interventions. The Mixed-Income Strategic Alliance produced these profiles to better understand the health implications of creating thriving and inclusive communities with a socioeconomically and racially diverse population. This site profile, which focuses on Yesler Terrace, was developed through interviews with local stakeholders as well as a review of publicly-available and internal documents.

Yesler Terrace is a mixed-income community in Seattle, Washington that is slated to have over 5,000 new and replacement units when complete. Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) received a Choice Neighborhoods implementation grant in 2012, and construction is still ongoing for much of the site, with acceleration in the years to come of privately developed market-rate housing on site.

The Yesler Terrace Choice Neighborhoods effort is guided by Yesler Terrace Guiding Principles: social equity, economic opportunity, environmental stewardship and sustainability, and one-for-one replacement housing. These principles undergird an overall redevelopment plan that calls for extensive community redevelopment in each of Choice Neighborhoods' three key focus areas of people, neighborhood, and housing. While the "People" portion of the Yesler plan is particularly focused on education, including deep partnerships with educational agencies and institutions at all levels, SHA's plan also focuses on health, with multiple strands of activities, ranging from construction that facilitates healthier respiratory functioning, to Community Health Workers, to resident-led clubs and activities aimed at healthier lifestyles.

Two strategies in particular are already having positive impacts at Yesler. First, Community Health Workers (CHW), employed early as part of the Choice Neighborhoods implementation plan, have made a notable impact on Yesler residents' lives through connecting residents to health services, assisting residents in signing up for health care, helping residents navigate the social service system, and acting as strong social supports. Second, the community building strategies at Yesler Terrace have led to a noticeable increase in resident leadership, resident self-sufficiency, and a sense of resident ownership and pride in the community. The creation and support of a new Community Builder position was a critical part in making and sustaining this shift.

Future mixed-income sites that seek to create equitable,

exceed the current number of very-low-income and low-income housing units at Yesler Terrace that serve public-housing-eligible residents and provide choice, options, site integration, and affordability in a dense and culturally and economically diverse community.

In 2012, SHA received a Choice Neighborhoods implementation grant that provided the funding necessary for redevelopment to begin. Staying true to its commitment to intensive community engagement, SHA collaborated with the CRC, the Yesler Community Council, and development partners to guide implementation of the grant, which runs through 2019.

Key Actors/Stakeholders

SHA's key partners for the Choice Neighborhoods Implementation grant include the Yesler Citizen Review Committee, the Yesler Terrace Community Council, NeighborCare Health, Seattle University, the City of Seattle, a number of local community organizations and nonprofits, and several national foundations. NeighborCare Health, a Seattle-based health care provider that focuses on serving low-income communities, was a key partner that implemented the Community Health Worker program (described below) at Yesler Terrace, hiring four Yesler Terrace residents as CHWs to better connect residents with primary care and health-related activities.

Funding

Core funding for Yesler's redevelopment has come from the Choice Neighborhoods implementation grant. In addition, significant funding for redevelopment and for the People and Neighborhood elements of the comprehensive plan have come from diverse public and private sector sources, and foundations such as JP Morgan Chase, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, Kresge Foundation, Seattle Foundation, and the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.²

Design & Implementation of Strategies

Conceptualization of Key Health Strategies

As SHA approached the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace, leaders took into account the lessons learned from previous HOPE VI redevelopment processes in Seattle, particularly from experience with the redevelopment of



the High Point, Rainier Vista, and New Holly communities. Understanding that high-quality, safe, and healthy housing for residents was a minimum starting point, SHA aimed to go “above and beyond the four walls” of the residential units and buildings to ensure that the original Yesler Terrace residents did not get left behind in the process of visioning and redevelopment.

For that reason, planning and design of Yesler Terrace revitalization has been community-oriented since its origins. As mentioned previously, community input informed decisions around the use of physical space and the location of housing, and it helped shape the economic, education, social, and health priorities for the community. Early and continuing resident meetings and interviews surfaced community members' aspirations as well as fears and anxieties, and in particular contributed to decisions about how to impose the least amount of disruption to residents' lives. With the award of the Choice Neighborhoods funding, the CRC divided into three subcommittees to guide the three areas of focus: People, Neighborhood, and Housing. To further broaden the scope of input, SHA created a Policy and Program Manager position, a staff person tasked with gathering the various—and often disparate—perspectives and expect-

tations of different stakeholders. This thorough information-collection process led SHA to forge priorities that continue to guide redevelopment as Yesler nears the end of the term of the Choice Neighborhoods grant and SHA must plan for sustainability of the mixed-income community and for resident success. These priorities are:

as community gardens and fitness clubs, and involving partners such as the nearby Harborview Medical Center and NeighborCare Health. Since 2015, the Community Builder has continued to build trust with the residents of Yesler Terrace, focusing on listening to their needs and utilizing their insight to create a more socially cohesive community.

Health Strategies in the Neighborhood Domain

Key neighborhood strategies for Yesler Terrace site redevelopment involve comprehensive plans related to physical site design beyond the new units. Underlying these neighborhood-level strategies is the understanding that transportation and the built environment are tied directly to health outcomes for residents. The SHA and its partners adopted site design principles that promote positive health outcomes, and these affected many of the primary redevelopment design decisions, ranging from the street grid, to improved connectivity and walkability throughout the development, and to the efforts to ensure Yesler Terrace access to surrounding neighborhoods.

Health Strategies in the Housing Domain

Health-related strategies within Yesler Terrace's housing plan involve environmentally friendly, sustainable, and efficient building techniques for SHA buildings.⁵ Most notably, the Breathe Easy Program (described previously) includes features such as energy-efficient ventilation installments, assuring low-pile carpeting in units, and providing low off-gassing paint and cabinetry. Additionally, all units are accessible by wheelchair, and there are currently over 40 fully-accessible units among Yesler Terrace's redeveloped SHA-supported buildings.

Measurement, Evaluation, & Outcomes

Local leaders report benefits from both of the health/health-related strategies described above. For example, SHA officials believe that the CHW have had a major impact on Yesler residents' physical and mental well-being. In particular, the CHW facilitate residents' signing up for health insurance and for medical appointments, helping residents take advantage of increased access to services made possible by implementation of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). As a result of the CHW efforts, coupled with coverage under ACA, since 2014, more residents have reported seeing a health care provider for regular check-ups, with Harborview Medical Center and Swedish Medical Center as the primary locations for receiving care.⁶ The CHW have also helped break down the stigma of going to the doctor among immigrant populations in the community, an unanticipated but severe barrier to healthcare for many residents. CHW also encourage residents to break down doctor- and health-care-related stigma with their neighbors, acknowledging

that residents themselves are the best messengers to get positive messages about healthcare to their friends and neighborhoods—thus reducing or eliminating this barrier to care.

Similarly, SHA leaders report many positive benefits from their emphasis on community building—benefits that contribute to residents' overall healthy relationships and to their well-being. One sign of this is that, in the past, community-building efforts were solely led by the full-time Community Builder staff person. Today, that is much less true. The intensive community engagement that SHA promotes has led to a shift in many residents' thinking, according to SHA officials, with residents switching from "dependency mode" into a proactive mode where they initiate activities, host

community leaders who welcome their work [TJT* [coactive, wialing, goms, wnd oO(tlt)13(er 13(esiing))] TJT* [(iy) cealth cervices assolmeredidents e anto healr the peigegr belng carled tut ,or eere ravougle Ceasdng theioeds

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strating the importance of starting a community-driven planning and implementation process early and of maintaining and “institutionalizing” it in order to spark authentic community engagement. The early, intentional, and sustained support of the Citizen Review Committee, the Yesler Community Council, and Yesler Terrace residents who wished to participate in revitalization

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