

VISION PLAN FOR A SAFE AND HEALTHY WATTS

MARCH 2015

Watts Regional School Safety Collaborative

PREPARED BY ADVANCEMENT PROJECT

The Vision Plan for a Safe and Healthy Watts was authored by Urban Peace, a program of Advancement Project. Advancement Project is a public policy change organization rooted in the civil rights movement. The Urban Peace Program works with communities across California and the United States to understand and decrease community violence. For more information, contact Virginia Lee at vlee@advanceproj.org or wattssafety@gmail.com.

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Housing Authority of the City of L.A.	Watts Towers Arts Center
L.A. County Department of Public Health	Watts United
Los Angeles Police Department	We Care Outreach Ministries
Los Angeles Unified School District	Watts residents

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I. Introduction

The Watts community of Los Angeles has struggled for many decades with high levels of violence. While significant strides have been made to reach a level of public safety that is allowing more positive changes to take root over the last five years, most recent community assessments reveal that safety is still a concern.

Over the past four years, the Urban Peace program at Advancement Project has conducted several comprehensive assessments of the health and safety needs of the community. Community violence and the fear of violence serve as barriers for Watts residents to engage in safe physical activity. Parents and children reported feeling unsafe walking or biking in their neighborhood. Children and youth in the Watts neighborhood were continually harassed, bullied, and recruited by gangs as they walked the few blocks from home to school, crossing largely invisible, but rigidly enforced, gang-controlled boundaries. Local parks and recreational facilities were deemed unsafe and often claimed by local gangs, leaving the few recreational spaces for low-income families to engage in physical activity unused. In addition, the community infrastructure, such as high vehicle speeds, broken sidewalks, and lack of crosswalks, posed a safety challenge to children and families. The addition of these barriers add up to poor health outcomes that disproportionately affect low-income residents in Watts.

The Vision Plan for a Safe and Healthy Watts developed by the Watts Regional School Safety Collaborative (WRSSC) seeks to bring greater alignment across sectors to adopt a collective set of priorities to achieve safety and safe routes. Safety strategies aim to improve school attendance, reduce crime committed by and against young people, and increase physical activity, improving the lives of approximately 7,000 school-age children and youth living in Watts.

The innovative element of this Vision Plan is that it expands beyond the traditional Safe Routes to School model to include an intentional focus on violence reduction and prevention. The plan adopts a more holistic, public health approach that includes both the goals of community safety and active living. Traditionally, physical activity advocates do not think about or know how to address issues of violence. Community safety practitioners do not think about physical activity, and public health experts have only recently begun intentional work around violence prevention. The Vision Plan urges sectors to break out of their silos to promote integration of environmental design, safety, and the promotion of healthy behavior. Not only do stakeholders have to learn a new way of thinking about the problem, but they have to develop the cultural competency to work with the residents and youth who are impacted by violence and poor health outcomes.

REACHING A SAFETY THRESHOLD

The decades-long history of high crime and gang entrenchment stems back to the 1960s and is reflected in today's community. Due to high unemployment rates and lack of economic support, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, youth began to express their anger and frustration through the formation of street gangs.¹ The streets gangs that formed in Watts and its surrounding neighborhoods went on to become some of Los Angeles' most notorious gangs including the Crips and Bloods. Between 1990 and 1994, LAPD reported over 150 gang-related homicides in Watts.²

Watts has reached a turning point. Since 2011, the Community Safety Partnership – consisting of the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) and the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles (HACLA) – has been instrumental in:

- Reducing violent crime by more than 50% in the three Watts housing developments
- Notable decreases in youth gang membership and activity
- Residents reporting improved sense of safety and well-being when traveling to stores and parks
- Plummeting homicide rates within Watts housing developments.

The implementation of the Community Safety Partnership and a community-based violence reduction strategy is transforming Watts into a place that is becoming safer for children, families, and residents to become more active in their community. Now that the Watts community has been able to establish a basic level of safety, prevention efforts can effectively take root.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL / SAFE PASSAGE IN WATTS

Over the past few decades, the Safe Routes to School (SRTS) movement has worked to advance the health and well-being of youth and communities through increasing the number of students walking and bicycling to and from school. Supported by federal, state, and municipal funding and implementation efforts, SRTS programs and projects aim to address the environmental and social barriers to walking and biking to school as a strategy to improve student and community-wide public health outcomes.

In communities with isolated populations and/or entrenched violence dynamics, implementation of Safe Routes to School programs could benefit from incorporating other

¹ Peralta, Stacy. Documentary: Made in America. 2008

² Costa Vargas, Joao. Catching Hell in the City of Los Angeles Life Meanings of Blackness in South Central Los Angeles. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

strategies and programs. In Watts, over the last several years community leaders have pushed for greater involvement of schools and increased violence reduction efforts such as Safe Passage, a violence reduction and prevention model that creates safe environments for children when walking and biking to and from school.³



A resident-led walking club from the Nickerson Gardens public housing development

³ Advancement Project. Best and Promising Practices to Address Violence and Personal Safety in Safe Routes to School Programs. March 2015.

II. A Comprehensive Vision for Watts

Existing violence dynamics are what most often prevent a community from building the cohesion necessary to reduce violence; moreover, gang dynamics reinforce other negative community conditions that then further sustain violence. When a community is unsafe, residents are less likely to participate in community activities and processes, including ones that help develop solutions to reduce violence. In order to get children to and from school safely, a comprehensive approach is needed to fully address the underlying root causes of violence.

Therefore, the Vision Plan outlines a mission-aligned set of community priorities to address public safety and active living, mining for opportunities to leverage existing assets and develop new resources.

PURPOSE OF THE VISION PLAN

The purpose of this document is to serve as a guide for future programs and investments to support health and safety in the Watts community of Los Angeles. The Vision Plan provides social context regarding conditions that Watts' residents encounter on a daily basis. It also provides policy implications and recommendations outlining how agencies can support a safe and healthy Watts community. The Vision Plan includes a focus on getting children to and from school safely (i.e., Safe Routes to School), and includes recommendations on programs as well as infrastructure needs.

Developed by the Watts Regional School Safety Collaborative, the Vision Plan represents community-driven priorities resulting from a community stakeholder action planning process and findings from comprehensive assessments conducted over the past several years.

THE AUDIENCE FOR THE VISION PLAN

The primary audiences for the Vision Plan are Watts' policy and systems leaders as well as citywide jurisdiction partners whose efforts have an impact on health, active living, education, and community safety policies in South Los Angeles, and specifically Watts. Agency partners who intend to work in Watts should consider the information from this Plan during funding allocation processes and grant application development.

City agencies and community partners (listed below) that provide programming or are involved in enhancing and modifying the physical infrastructure of the Watts community should review the Watts Regional School Safety Collaborative Action Plan section of the Vision Plan (page 31).

- Bureau of Sanitation (Department of Public Works)
- Bureau of Street Lighting (Department of Public Works)
- Bureau of Street Services (Department of Public Works)
- Department of Building and Safety
- Department of City Planning
- Department of Cultural Affairs
- Department of Neighborhood Empowerment
- Department of Recreation and Parks
- Department on Disability
- Economic and Workforce Development
- Gang Reduction and Youth Development
- Green Dot Public Schools
- Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
- Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
- Los Angeles Fire Department
- Los Angeles Police Department
- Los Angeles School Police Department
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Partnership for Los Angeles Schools

THE NEED TO INTEGRATE SAFETY

Extensive efforts have been made to achieve a threshold of basic safety and transform the culture of violence in Watts. However, local gangs continue to be prevalent throughout Watts, specifically around public spaces, schools, and main thoroughfares. Despite this, the level of violence has significantly decreased, resulting in more residents feeling safe and becoming more engaged with their community. This Vision Plan supports efforts to implement a comprehensive violence reduction strategy to establish a threshold of safety and maximize the impact of mobility and physical activity efforts.

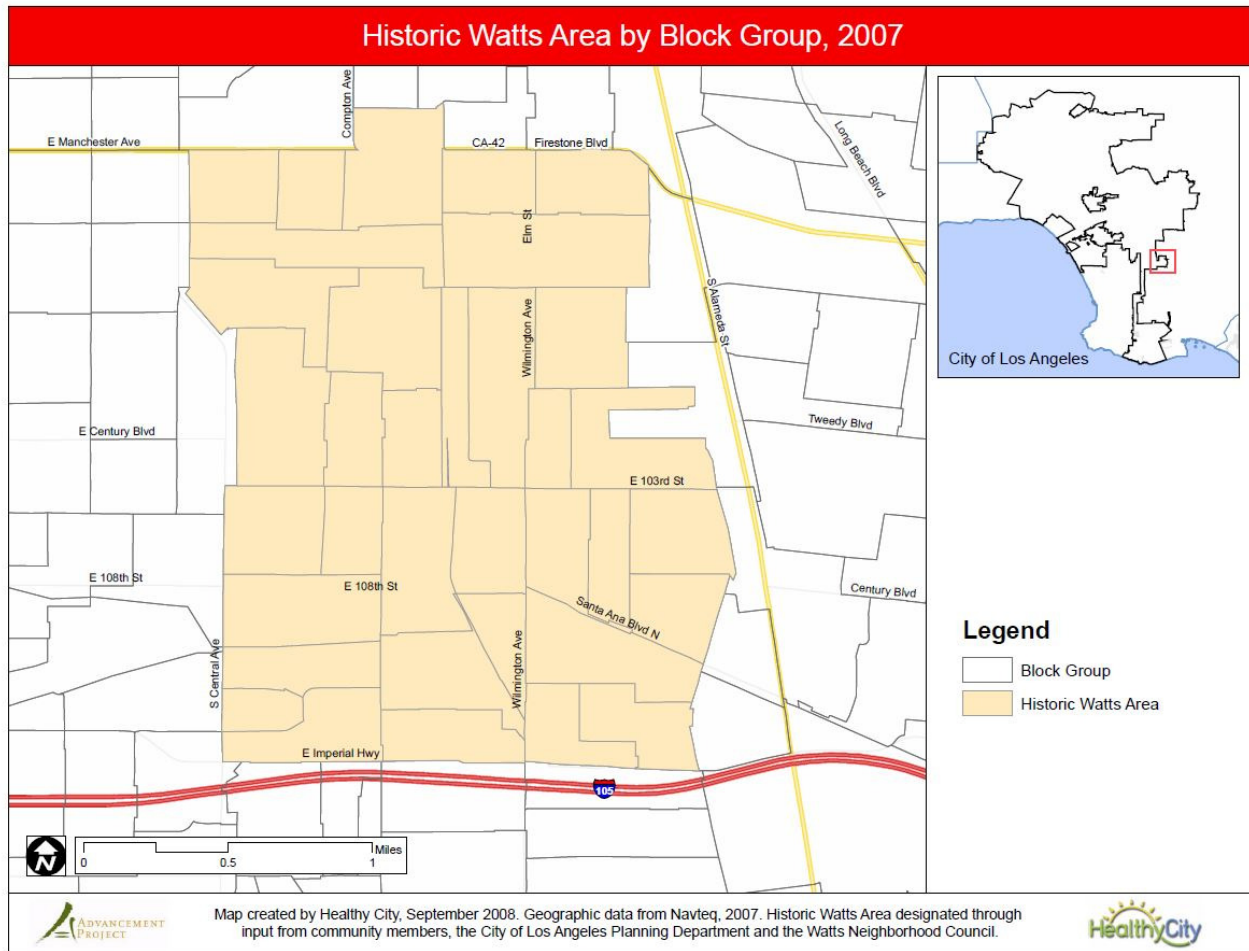
III. The Need: Findings from Safety Assessments

The use of data was fundamental to the development of the Vision Plan. The Urban Peace Program at Advancement Project has conducted several assessments, including surveys, stakeholder interviews, community mapping sessions, walk audits, and focus groups involving participants such as school administrators, teachers, law enforcement, community organizations, residents, and youth. The following section highlights key findings and background from research and assessments.



GEOGRAPHY

Watts is a neighborhood in the City of Los Angeles in the South Los Angeles region of Los Angeles County. Although there is no clear consensus among city departments and community residents about the borders of historic Watts, the most commonly cited boundaries are Manchester/Firestone Boulevards to the north, Imperial Highway to the south, Mona Boulevard to the east, and Central Avenue to the west. The neighboring communities are unincorporated Los Angeles County communities of Florence-Firestone and Willowbrook, the Los Angeles neighborhood of Green Meadows, and the cities of Lynwood and South Gate.



DEMOGRAPHICS

With over 30,000 residents, Watts is a predominantly Latino and African American community of low-income and working-class families with a large concentration of youth under the age of 18. The neighborhood has a combination of new and longtime residents, some of which have lived in the area for generations, while others have been in the community for less than five years. Some lifelong residents describe Watts as a tight-knit, familial community where everyone knows one another. Other residents do not consider Watts to be a community, but rather a set of divided neighborhoods, and at times a hostile place to live in. According to research conducted by Advancement Project, the consensus among residents was that Watts and its surrounding areas are largely unsafe and violent. Violence permeates all community institutions from schools to parks and is a constant factor in the everyday lives of its residents.

In a 10 year timeframe, the Latino population has grown tremendously in South Los Angeles, tilting the demographics of the area and highlighting the need for culturally competent

services that reflect such change. In fact, from 2000 to 2010, the Latino population has increased from 61% to 70% in the Watts community (See Table 1). The African American population has witnessed negative growth.

Population percentage in Watts, by Race/Ethnicity

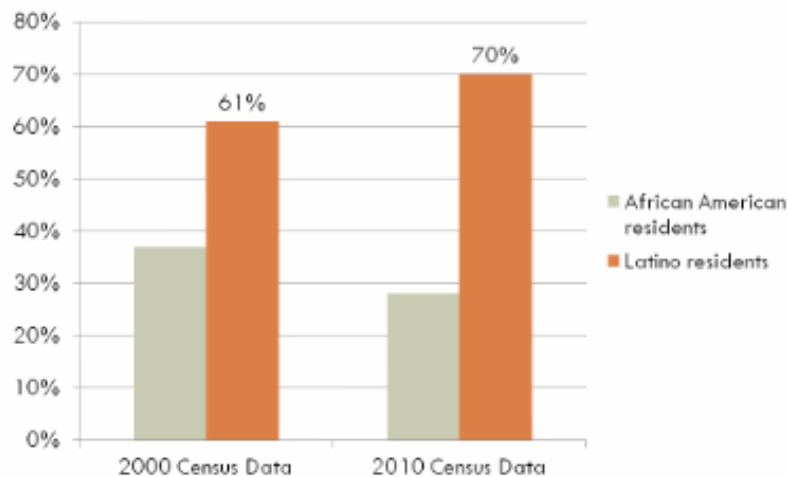


Table 1: Population of Watts

More specifically, the three major housing developments in Watts – Jordan Downs, Nickerson Gardens, and Imperial Courts – have all seen at least a 60% Latino population increase in the past 10 years. The majority of residents in these developments are mostly under the age of 40, with over 50% of residents falling between the ages of 6-13 or 21-40. Young and multigenerational families make up the majority of resident households.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

A once unincorporated suburb, by 1926, Watts residents voted to join the City of Los Angeles to reflect its expanding population. To meet the growing demand for affordable housing due to the influx of workers in Watts and in the rest of the City, HACLA built three housing developments between 1953 and 1955 in Watts: Jordan Downs⁴, Imperial Courts, and Nickerson Gardens. The developments were intended to be low-cost, transitional housing for families to reside in as they saved money to purchase their own homes or moved on to more permanent housing. Los Angeles experienced changing residential settlement patterns after World War II, including Whites resisting integration and leaving the neighborhood, and Mexicans and Mexican-Americans moving to parts of the City that were previously off-limits to

⁴ The original phase of the Jordan Downs housing development was built in 1944 as war worker housing, and the second half was subsequently built in the 50's.

them. Watts experienced a decrease in diversity as it became increasingly African American, constituting 95% of the population by 1958. Since then, the demographics of Watts have again shifted tremendously.

The 1960s were a time of racial discord and tension between Whites and African Americans in Watts and heightened political consciousness among African Americans. Following the decline in industrial jobs and increased economic and social stressors, many in the Watts community felt an increasing sense of isolation. These challenges – coupled with tense relations with law enforcement – sparked the 1965 Watts Riots, which resulted in \$40 million in property damages and left 34 people dead.⁵ Law enforcement and public officials were unable to quell the crowds of teens and young adults who engaged in looting, fighting, and vandalism during the six days of civil unrest. The National Guard was called in to provide reinforcement and restore law and order. In the end, 4,000 residents were arrested, and over 1,000 residents and 100 law enforcement officials were injured. As a result of the Watts Riots, many non-African American residents and middle class African Americans left the area.

Like the rest of South Los Angeles during the late 1970s and 1980s, Watts dealt with an increase in unemployment and poverty that followed the decline of the manufacturing industry in the region. In his book, *Postmodern Geographies*, UCLA's Ed Soja states that 74,000 regional high-paying jobs were lost from 1978 to 1982 alone. Additionally, one of South Los Angeles' key mediating institutions – organized labor – was decimated. Unemployment and living wages went up and down precipitously. With the failure of the formal economy, the underground economy began to rise. Reclaiming a jobs base and institutional base continues to be a major challenge and barrier in Watts.

With few options for employment and the arrival of crack cocaine in Watts, the resulting rise in drug sales and drug use led to an increase in crime and gang activity and the accelerating deterioration of the community. Between 1990 and 1994, LAPD reported over 150 gang-related homicides in Watts.⁶ In response to the high level of gang violence in Watts, community activists, including former gang members, led an effort to stop gang violence by organizing rival gangs to sign a peace agreement known as the Watts Truce in 1992. The truce established peace between the rival gangs in each of the three public housing developments in Watts and is memorialized in a mural at Nickerson Gardens.

Community leaders in the Watts area have had a number of successes and setbacks in addressing some of their community's most entrenched problems. After years of mistrust and

⁵ Schiesl, Martin, and Mark M. Dodge. *City of Promise: Race and Historical Change in Los Angeles*. California: Regina Books, 2006.

⁶ Costa Vargas, Joao. *Catching Hell in the City of Los Angeles Life Meanings of Blackness in South Central Los Angeles*. Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006.

animosity between the community and law enforcement, community activists formed a coalition with law enforcement, community-based organizations, city departments, and elected officials in 2006 called the Watts Gang Task Force (WGTF). WGTF has served as a conduit of communication and collaboration primarily between the public housing developments and LAPD. City officials credited the task force with being an integral part of the 50% reduction in homicides from 2006 to 2007.⁷ Moreover, since the implementation of relationship-based policing⁸ by the Community Safety Partnership in 2011, violent crimes have decreased precipitously and arrests have gone down by 50%. Residents have stated that they feel safer and are starting to trust police officers who have become a part of the community's day-to-day landscape.⁹

Parents and students in Watts have organized around the issue of education reform and have led efforts to improve local schools. For years, local schools have endured budget cuts and neglect that have led to dilapidated buildings and gang-plagued schools, in addition to overcrowding and low test scores. In May of 2008, an incident that received media attention was a lunchtime melee involving 600 students at Alain Leroy Locke High School. LAPD officers responded in riot gear to diffuse the melee.¹⁰ Incidents such as this one, combined with one of the highest dropout rates in the district, propelled community leaders, parents, students, and teachers to demand that the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) allow Green Dot Public Schools to take control of Locke.¹¹ Community members were successful in this effort, and Locke is currently operated by Green Dot.

In the fall of 2007, parents and community leaders also voted in support of having four local elementary and middle schools join former Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa's school reform effort through the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools (PLAS), a unique collaboration between the City, a nonprofit, and LAUSD.¹²

Today, the community's dilapidated physical infrastructure ranges from poorly-kept roads and storefronts to vacant lots, and reflects the longstanding economic deprivation in the area. The lack of economic investment in the community extends to a general dearth of accessible resources in Watts, which residents continually cite as a significant challenge in their community. The major public institutions located in the area are six historically low-performing public schools. Very few civic and community-based organizations are physically located in

⁷ <http://articles.latimes.com/2007/sep/28/local/me-gangs28>

⁸ Relationship-based policing imagines a new way of operating for the police where their legitimacy in the community is built on procedural justice, authentic relationships with community members, and sustained commitment to improve the health and well-being of the community, not just a focus on crime statistics.

⁹ Advancement Project. A Report for the President's Task Force on 21st Century Policing: Relationship-Based Policing Achieving Safety in Watts. March 2015.

¹⁰ <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/may/13/local/me-locke16>

¹¹ <http://www.latimes.com/news/opinion/la-oe-foote20-2008may20,0,7214685.story>

¹² <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jul/01/local/me-partnership1>

Watts, with small churches being the most visible community resource for residents. Services in the area are primarily provided by community organizations located outside of Watts.

METHODOLOGY

Advancement Project has partnered with the Watts community to collect a variety of data, both qualitative and quantitative, to gain a strong understanding of the historical, political, and current dynamics (Table 2). Research efforts have sought to understand different elements of the community violence picture in Watts, including:

- Community history
- Neighborhood-level risk and protective factors for safety
- Gang violence dynamics
- Leadership capacity
- Stakeholder partnerships
- Student and resident safety

Year	Assessment	Purpose	Methodology
2010	Jordan Downs and Surrounding Area	To understand perceptions of gang activity and community safety and to assess the needs of Jordan Downs and the surrounding area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 205 resident surveys • 10 focus groups with youth, parents, school personnel, and community leadership • 13 key stakeholder interviews with public sector
2012	Bus Safety Assessment	To understand youth safety concerns near bus stops	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct observation
2012	Community Safety Partnership Assessment	To inform the creation of the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles and the Los Angeles Police Department's Community Safety Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 467 resident surveys • 22 focus groups with youth, parents, school personnel, and community leadership • 45 public sector stakeholder interviews
2012	Community-Engaged Mapping	To identify safety concerns and perceptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4 community-engaged mapping sessions with a total of 32 Jordan High School students

Year	Assessment	Purpose	Methodology
2013	Event and Outreach Survey	To understand how residents find out about events and the types of events that they would like to attend	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 90 surveys (49 English, 41 Spanish) with Watts residents
2013	Youth Safety Assessment	To understand school climate and safety issues in and around Jordan High School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 youth focus groups • 2 parent focus groups • 4 community engaged mapping sessions with 32 youth • A walkability assessment • 8 key leader interviews
2013	Watts Community Survey	To identify community needs and safety concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 127 surveys with predominantly Latino residents
2013-2014	Walkability	To identify safety concerns about the physical space in and around school, and school infrastructure near Jordan High School and Markham Middle School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 walkability assessments
2014	Watts Public Housing Resident Advisory Council (RAC) leadership	To gather information about RAC membership needs and priorities for leadership capacity development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 focus groups with RAC members in three public housing developments
2014	Safe Passage and Gang Intervention	To gather information on addressing the barriers to mobility for youth en route to school and access to recreational spaces.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 focus group with 9 male participants consisting of gang interventionists, Safe Passage workers, Watts Gang Taskforce members, including individuals working in the Watts housing developments

PUBLIC HOUSING FINDINGS

All three major public housing developments in Watts have significant African American populations (approximately 30-40%), but the majority of residents are Latino. The rapid shift in demographics has exacerbated tension and mistrust among African American and Latino residents.

Residents, particularly from multigenerational and inter-related families, speak of their strong sense of shared community. However, physical and cultural insularity increases social isolation among some residents. According to a 2012 assessment, new residents, many of whom were Latino, had a harder time developing strong community and social networks due to safety concerns. They rarely went outside and experienced trepidation in participating in community events. Intimidated and apprehensive, these socially isolated families sat on the sidelines and discouraged their children from participating in enrichment activities and other services. Cross-cultural relationship building is a critical strategy for reducing violence, increasing resident perceptions of safety, and reducing the influence of gangs in the housing developments.

COMMUNITY-BASED FINDINGS

In September 2013, the Urban Peace program along with partnering organizations held a community-wide forum. The Watts Community Forum was an attempt to gather valuable input from residents regarding pressing issues in the community and a means for residents to engage in dialogue with public agencies and other organizations that directly provide services to the community. Data from the surveys gathered at the forum revealed the following:

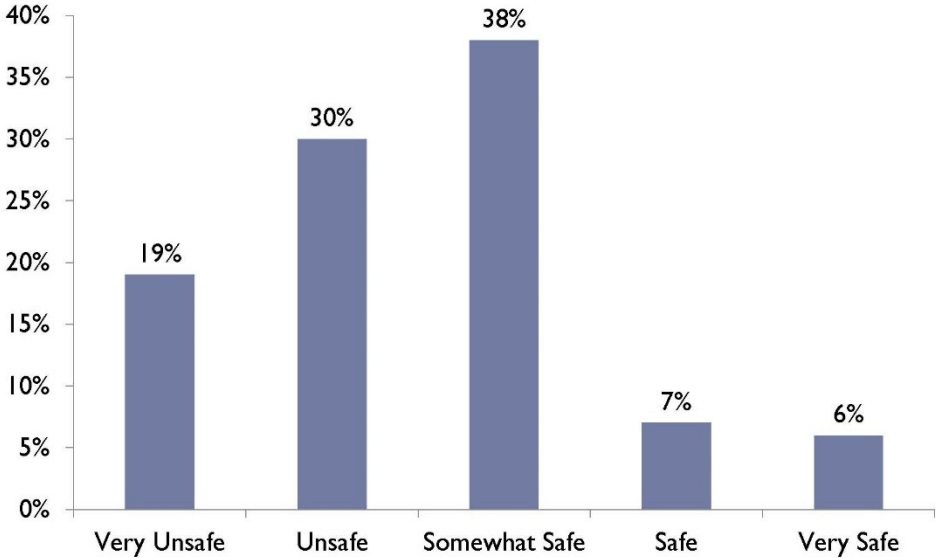
What are the 3 best things in your neighborhood for youth and families?			
Rank	Response	n	%
1	Schools	36	31%
2	Parks	32	28%
3	Programs	15	13%

Residents reported a greater need for security and surveillance, with 37% of the responses.

What 3 things are needed to improve conditions in your neighborhood and support youth and families?			
Rank	Response	n	%
1	More security	45	37%
2	End vandalism/Clean up	28	23%
3	Police	27	22%

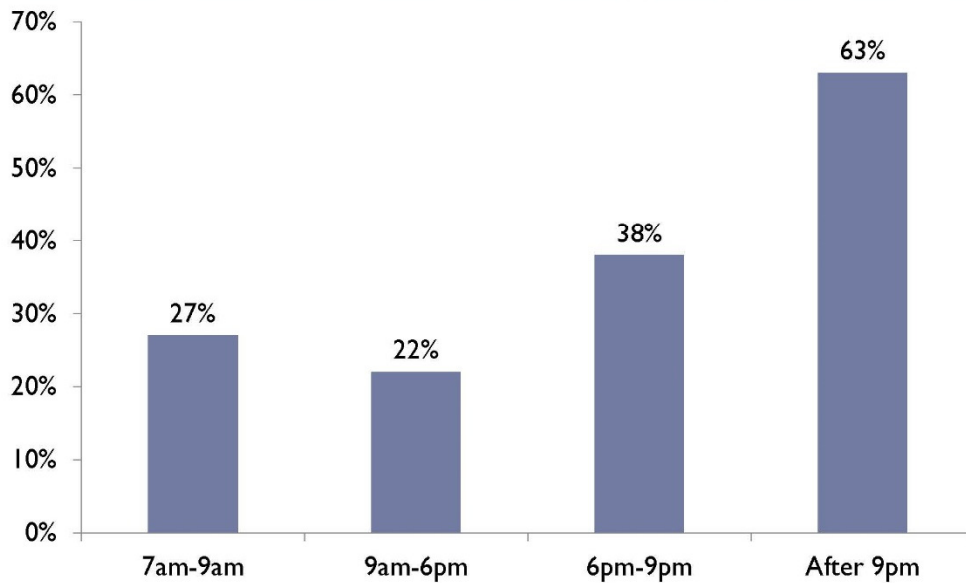
Overall, when asked how safe residents feel in their community, an overwhelming 87% reported not feeling safe. Only 13% of survey respondents reported reaching the perception threshold of "Safe" or "Very Safe."

How safe do you feel in your community?



More specifically, residents living in Watts reported feeling most unsafe between 6 pm - 9 pm (38%), while an even larger percentage indicated feeling unsafe after 9 pm (63%).

During which time period do you feel unsafe in your community?



Overall, the data gathered from residents attending the Watts Community Forum revealed a definite need for greater services and resources that addressed safety and crime. The level of overall perception of fear was high, specifically in the afternoon to late night hours.

An interesting relationship we noted is that the number of years that a resident lived in the community reflected his/her perception of fear and safety living in Watts. Residents living in Watts for less than 3 years indicated a slightly higher perception of feeling unsafe, as opposed to an established resident living there for more than 3 years.

Latino Resident Outreach

In a 2013, Latino respondents reported hearing about events mostly from fliers, community bulletin boards, and word of mouth of family and friends. The best way to reach out to the Watts Latino population is to utilize family and friend networks and identify appropriate venues that are frequented by residents to promote events and deliver culturally-appropriate information. Materials should also be available in both English and Spanish in order to reach monolingual Spanish-speaking residents.

Survey respondents expressed strong interest in attending festivals and holiday celebrations and events for youth and children. Cultural and holiday events can serve as safe spaces for residents, creating an opportunity not only for sharing information, but also for fostering social and community cohesion among residents of different backgrounds. Residents expressed interest in programs run specifically by the parks and recreation department, an important partner for engaging residents and providing culturally-appropriate programming for Latino adults and youth.

Lack of childcare and transportation, simply not hearing about the event, not feeling safe or welcome to attend, and not having a safe route to get to the event were cited as barriers to participating in community activities. Providing group transportation and childcare during events are strategies for increasing Latino participation. Safe Passage workers, gang interventionists, law enforcement, and businesses serving as safe havens are important partners to engage during event planning as they can support efforts to create safe passages along routes to the event.

SCHOOL-BASED FINDINGS

Jordan High School

Jordan High School is situated in the community of Watts, between three large public housing developments: Jordan Downs, Nickerson Garden and Imperial Courts. The Jordan Downs housing development encompasses most of the block where the school lies and borders the school on its west boundary. Jordan High School enrolls students from all of the housing developments in Watts, which has created problems as students cross rival gang territories. Jordan High School's majority of students are Latino, growing from 47% in 1990 to 74% in 2008. As of 2013, the Latino student body was over 82%.¹³

Qualitative findings from the Youth Safety Assessment of Jordan High School reveal that students feel the least safe during out-of-school hours, especially while walking to and from school. Safety issues prevalent outside campus often arise from gang activity in the adjacent housing projects.

Aside from lack of municipal services such as lighting, trash pickup, and other infrastructure deterioration surrounding the campus, the main safety concerns highlighted by all parties, but specifically students at Jordan High, are gang intimidation, recruitment, and drugs.

¹³ 2013-14 School Accountability Report Card Report (SARC) for Jordan Senior High School and 2012-2013 SARC for Animo College Preparatory Academy

Walking

Hot zone areas where students encounter safety issues to and from school include all of 103rd Street from Alameda Street to Wilmington Avenue; and small residential streets lining 103rd Street including Anzac Avenue, Juniper Street, and Grape Street. For example, small residential streets experience lots of gang recruitment, drugs, and crime. Issues raised during the walkability assessments and community-engaged mapping sessions for the Jordan High surrounding area included:

Crime and Violence

- Dangerous alleys that were dark, hard to see through, and filled with trash and belongings
- Large stray dogs, some in packs
- Vacant lots presenting hazards and enticing more dumping
- Homeless people on the surrounding streets of Jordan High School
- Intimidating presence of people gathering on side streets, in the projects and parking lots, or in front of buildings
- Students being assaulted or witnessing assaults
- Boys being exposed to more physical violence
- Girls facing constant harassment, such as men in cars pulling up to them and yelling at them
- Walking alone can make one more vulnerable, but walking in groups can attract the attention of gang members
- Poorly lit areas allow predators to hide and assault students

Walkability

- Small streets with speeding traffic (specifically 97th & 103rd)
- Cracked, broken, and/or blocked sidewalks
- Lack of marked crosswalks
- Parked cars blocking the view of traffic

Biking

Although there is a citywide momentum for creating a bike-friendly Los Angeles, there is insufficient investment in active transportation efforts specifically for the Watts community. Furthermore, mixed-mode commuting, involving two or more modes of transportation, is sometimes a challenge when traveling to and from Watts. Most major Metro buses are retrofitted to accommodate a maximum of two bicycles on the front-end bike rack. If bicycle riders are traveling in a large group and/or other bicycle riders are already using the bus, the

bus then becomes an unreliable resource for those relying on a mix of biking and public transit to reach their destinations in a timely fashion. Furthermore, bicycle commuters using the Metro rail in Watts have access to only a limited number of bike lockers and racks.

Bicycle riding is not a popular means of transportation among surveyed high school students. Youth report being victims of theft or attempted theft, and safe bike storage at school was noted as an issue. Youth also report bicycle-related incidents of victimization, intimidation, and bullying. Assessments also reveal concerns about the lack of bike lanes, poor road conditions (e.g., trash, broken glass, potholes, uneven surfaces, etc.), and reckless driving.

Public Transportation

There are a number of students who do not live in the immediate area of Jordan High School and need to use public transportation to travel to and from school. These students have access to three Metro bus lines: 117, 254, and 612. Metro bus 117 stops directly in front of Jordan High, and Metro bus 614 stops within a four minute walking distance from the school. While Metro bus 612 does not have a direct route to Jordan High, it serves as a shuttle bus for Watts and the surrounding Southeast cities including South Gate, Lynwood, and Walnut Park. The shuttle bus has connecting bus stops to major Metro Lines including buses 117 and 254 and the Metro Blue Line station at 103rd Street and Grandee Avenue. Jordan High students also have access to a LADOT DASH bus, which loops around the general Watts area via 103rd Street every 20 minutes.

The closest Metro rail station to Jordan High School is the 103rd St/Watts Towers stop along the Metro Blue Line. This station is located on 103rd Street and Grandee Avenue, adjacent to the Watts Towers. Through student focus groups and mapping sessions, it was revealed that some students needed to traverse the 110 freeway underpass and/or Blue Line train station tracks to get to school. Students described the area surrounding the Metro station as highly violent. They also reported that drug transactions and drug use occur near the station. The freeway underpass and tracks were highlighted as areas of concern among students who needed to walk through these areas to access connecting bus lines to Jordan High. The secluded and insular placement of the station, the surrounding industrial area, and the often faulty lighting infrastructure cause a sense of fear and lack of safety among students.

Safe Passage Programs

There is school and community support for building out an infrastructure for Safe Passage at Jordan High School. We Care Outreach Ministries, founded by Michael Cummings, helped provide the first Safe Passage program at Jordan High. The Safe Passage program serves to help students traverse hotly contested gang territory. Michael Cummings is uniquely positioned to provide Safe Passage services considering his leadership in the Jordan Downs community and his work in gang intervention.

In partnership with the WRSSC, We Care Ministries Outreach is working to strengthen and expand Jordan High School's Safe Passage to include Safe Havens. Safe Havens are businesses and community organizations that volunteer to serve as safe places where children can go and ask for help if under duress. If a child needs help, the Safe Haven will make a phone call to the appropriate agency and allow the child to stay on the premises until an adult can pick him/her up.

As of March 2015, eight safe havens have been established throughout Watts, including Harris Grocery Market, Jordan High School, M & T Donuts, Randy's Market, Shields for Families at the Jordan Downs Community Center, Watts Coffee House, Watts Century Latino Organization, and Weigand Elementary School.



A Safe Haven decal or banner is visibly placed in the front of each Safe Haven establishment.

The Watts community also has Safe Passage investment from the Mayor's office of Gang Reduction and Youth Development (GRYD). The GRYD Watts Regional Strategy is a resource that provides gang intervention, gang prevention, and youth programming. The GRYD office has provided trained Safe Passage Workers to work from 7 am to 9 am and 2 pm to 4 pm at several schools in the Watts Community. For the 2014-2015 school year, GRYD Safe Passage workers are located at Jordan High School; Markham Middle School; and 112th Street, 116th Street, and 92nd Street Elementary Schools.

In 2015, WRSSC plans to seek additional partnerships to develop more robust Safe Passage programs at several elementary, middle, and high schools throughout Watts.

V. An Approach to Transform Communities

This next section outlines a comprehensive framework for transforming high violence, gang-entrenched communities into communities that thrive. The framework is grounded in an asset-based, public health approach that fosters collaboration between non-traditional partners and community.

AN ASSET-BASED, MULTI-SECTOR APPROACH

When working with communities that have been historically isolated, agencies often use a needs-based approach that focuses on the problems and needs of the community and assumes public or private sector agencies will provide services to an area. When trying to achieve transformational changes, this approach is often ineffective as it treats the community as a client rather than a partner.

In contrast, an asset-based approach honors and mobilizes individual and community talents, skills, and assets; and promotes community-driven development rather than development driven by external agencies. Gang-entrenched neighborhoods, in particular, require special community expertise from stakeholders experiencing or witnessing the day-to-day violence. This asset-based approach fosters authentic partnerships by identifying and nurturing community strengths in ways that directly enhance public safety and health efforts.

Multi-sector collaboration is vital; without the support and buy-in of residents and organizations working in the area, policy and program efforts – no matter how remarkable – are ultimately unsustainable. Authentic engagement of diverse disciplines, sectors, and resident perspectives ensures the development of solutions that honor and nurture existing community assets and leadership. Successful implementation of violence reduction and prevention strategies centers on real community input and lasting engagement, community's ownership over the solutions, and intentional capacity building of community residents and stakeholders to sustain collaboration and momentum.

COMPREHENSIVE VIOLENCE REDUCTION STRATEGY

Urban Peace's Comprehensive Violence Reduction Strategy (CVRS) is a framework for communities working to improve safety in high-violence, gang-entrenched communities.¹⁴

The CVRS is an asset-based, public health approach to violence that links all the elements of violence reduction with community development, cultural transformation, multi-jurisdictional coordination, and accountability. Urban Peace's theory of change asserts that sustainable

¹⁴ Advancement Project. Comprehensive Violence Reduction Strategy: A Framework for Implementing the CVRS in your Neighborhood. April 2011.

violence reduction happens when community and government work together under a single, data-driven strategy; are accountable to each other; and invest in community-driven solutions. Furthermore, violence reduction leading to a basic level of safety is the first step toward community transformation, resulting in better health, educational, and economic outcomes.

Like other public health threats, violence is a symptom of many risk factors interacting at different levels within our social ecology; there is not one single factor that puts some individuals or communities at a higher risk than others, but a combination of them. Risk and protective factors exist at the individual, relationship, community, and societal levels. Within this ecological framework, preventing violent behavior or the likelihood of violent behavior is possible, but complex.¹⁵ CVRS promotes a wraparound solution that links to a larger, regional strategy.

Ten Root Conditions of Community-Level Violence

Understanding the community conditions that compound the community and individual level risk factors that sustain community violence is the ideal starting point for the development of any strategy. The 10 root conditions of community-level violence are as follows:

1. Lack of Targeted Suppression that Follows a Community Policing Model

2. Lack of Effective Reentry Services and Support

3. Family Isolation and Lack of At-Risk Services and Support Structures

4. Lack of Comprehensive Primary Prevention Infrastructure

5. Lack of Safe and Successful Schools

6. Lack of Community Economic Investment, Workforce Development, and Family Economic Success

7. Lack of Community Cohesion to Improve Public Safety

8. Inadequate Government Coordination and Accountability

9. High Rates of Gang Violence

10. Poor Access to Quality Health and Mental Health Care Services

¹⁵ <http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/overview/social-ecologicalmodel.html>

Five Key Elements to Community Violence Reduction

In order to combat the 10 root conditions fueling community violence, a sustainable violence reduction initiative must target five key service elements:

1. **Primary Prevention:** A primary prevention infrastructure includes safe and useable public spaces like parks and schools, quality affordable housing, quality early child care and education, access to public transportation, sports and recreation opportunities, and a strong service infrastructure that is accessible to all residents.
2. **Intervention:** Hard-core gang intervention professionals can negotiate with high-risk individuals and gangs to de-escalate tensions, arrange ceasefires, rumor control to reduce retaliatory shootings, and intervene in crisis.
3. **Targeted Suppression:** Implementing a problem solving, relationship-based policing model in high crime, urban neighborhoods is vital to creating the public trust and partnership necessary for reducing violence; as well as avoiding the overbroad suppression that leads to the targeting of an entire community, to disproportionate minority contact, and to strained community relations.
4. **Reentry:** The reintegration of formerly incarcerated and system-involved youth and adults requires coordination of the public sector, community based organizations, faith-based organizations and other stakeholders to keep this high-risk population from reoffending and helping them reintegrate into the fabric of the community.
5. **Equitable Distribution of Resources:** The government must concentrate its violence reduction resources to the highest need communities and provide a balanced investment that builds prevention, intervention and targeted suppression resources in the communities. Private investment, whether philanthropic or corporate, should also be leveraged to meet the scale and scope of the need in communities to reduce conditions that sustain violence.

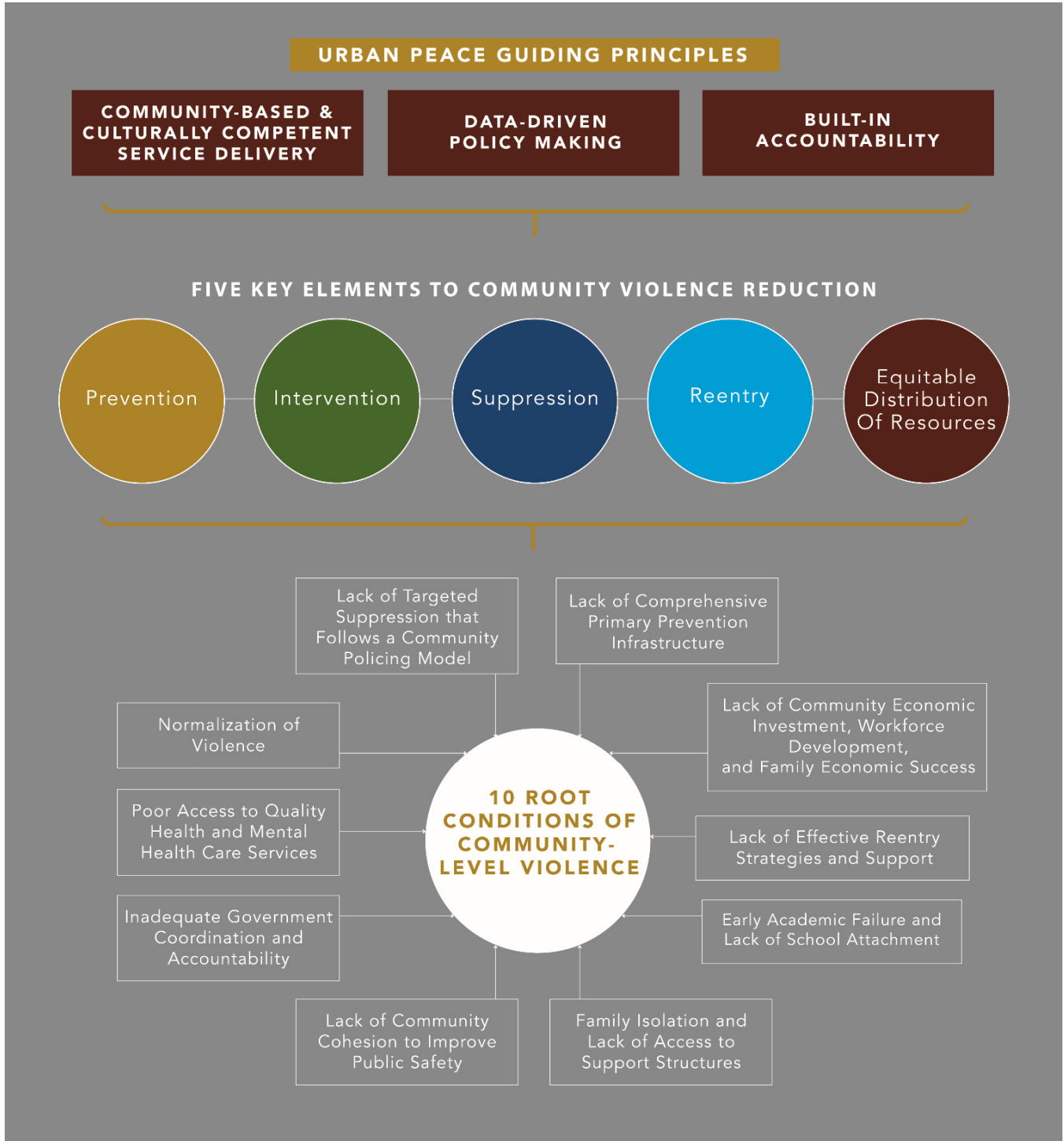
While the first four elements are familiar from other violence-reduction models, Equitable Distribution of Resources is unique and simply means that the other four service elements are equally available to all individuals and communities at-risk of violence and that these services are culturally competent, meeting the true needs of diverse families. This is particularly important in places, such as Watts, that have undergone rapid demographic shifts or where there are significant pockets of underserved and isolated segments of the community.

Three Guiding Principles

Within the CVRS, solutions pursued under each element must adhere to three fundamental guiding principles:

1. **Community-Based & Culturally Competent Service Delivery:** Families in high poverty, high violence areas are often isolated from a support infrastructure because of the lack of accessibility and availability of such services. Families face a multitude of challenges such as language barriers and unprotected legal status. Any initiative must be community based, honor the existing leadership and assets of the community, and must deliver culturally competent services.
2. **Data-Driven Policy Making:** Improved use of data and data sharing protocols across various public and community-based service providers lead to more effective and coordinated service delivery as well as the ability to track what works.
3. **Built-In Accountability:** Any initiative must have built in accountability measures that will ensure the initiative is regularly evaluated and that it is working. Both the public sector and the community must hold themselves accountable.

THE CHART BELOW PROVIDES A COMPREHENSIVE LOOK AT THE CVRS' THREE GUIDING PRINCIPLES, FIVE ELEMENTS, AND 10 ROOT CONDITIONS OF VIOLENCE.



V. Taking Action to Improve School and Community Safety

OUTREACH AND ENGAGEMENT

Urban Peace and its partners conducted extensive outreach to build support for a coordinated effort to address the health and safety issues in Watts. While there are many agencies providing services in Watts, they often stay within their respective silos. Staff turnover also hinders relationship building between agencies and community, often resulting in the community feeling jaded and distrustful of public agencies. Additionally, outside academic and nonprofit organizations have come into Watts to implement temporary programs and initiatives that lack community input and design, leaving community members and local leaders disenchanted and cynical of new programs and initiatives coming into Watts.

Taking into account the history, demographics, and existing dynamics in the community, Urban Peace applied the CVRS principles in its outreach process to engage a wide variety of stakeholders. The section below provides a summary of the key processes and players. Advancement Project, Watts Century Latino Organization, and We Care Outreach Ministries engaged these partners over the course of a year.

Public Sector Agencies

Urban Peace staff met with local agencies to vet the idea of creating a new collaborative and the importance of their participation in community safety and health efforts. Benefits to the local agencies include greater understanding of community dynamics, building relationships with other local agencies, community-based organizations, service providers, residents, and local leadership. Public sector partners include schools, city government, law enforcement, and the housing authority.

Community-Based Organizations

Community-based organizations play an essential role in providing on-the-ground, culturally competent services and advocating for the health and safety of residents. WRSSC recognizes and values the existing community leadership in Watts and encourages local organizations and leaders to participate in the collaborative. WRSSC provides a space where community-based organizations can begin breaking down silos and engage in opportunities to improve collaboration and coordination as well as collectively advocate for policy and systems changes to improve community conditions in Watts.

Resident Advisory Committees

Due to the high number of residents, parents, and students living in public housing developments, reaching out to the Resident Advisory Councils (RAC) in each of the housing developments was essential. RACs consist of locally elected residents and contribute a unique voice to the conversation about solutions to improving community conditions and resident well-being. Urban Peace staff met with leaders in each of the RACs to discuss potential participation in the collaborative. Local leadership within the housing developments can be very influential in the broader Watts community.

Latino Residents

Between 1990 and 2000, the Latino population in Watts grew from 47% to 61%, and is currently around 70%.¹⁶ Many Latino residents are monolingual Spanish-speaking immigrants. Since 2011, Urban Peace has been partnering with Watts Century Latino Organization, an established organization in Watts, to implement a Latino Leadership Training Institute and build leadership skills among local Latino residents. By uplifting immigrant voices, this Institute aims to improve community safety and community health outcomes. Leveraging the Latino Leadership Training and emerging local Latino leaders was instrumental in bringing robust community participation to the collaborative. WRSSC is intentional in creating a space where monolingual Spanish speaking residents feel comfortable in attending. Translation support, bilingual facilitation, and childcare are provided at meetings, community assessments, and other activities so that monolingual Spanish speaking residents can meaningfully participate.

WATTS REGIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY COLLABORATIVE

In January 2014, Advancement Project, Watts Century Latino Organization, and We Care Outreach Ministries established the Watts Regional School Safety Collaborative to support the needs of community partners and public sector agencies working to address student and family safety. WRSSC's mission is to improve school and community safety in Watts through collective action.

The key partners mobilized community-based organizations, agency leaders, and community stakeholders to participate in the WRSSC in order to develop and implement a community-wide strategy, the Watts Regional School Safety Action Plan (Action Plan). The goal of developing the collaborative and subsequent action plan is to create an actionable strategy grounded in the CVRS framework and aimed to achieve sustainable health and safety outcomes.

¹⁶ Healthy City, Race/Ethnicity estimate by Census Block Group 1990, 2000, and 2008.

Collaborative meetings are convened monthly, where stakeholders come together to discuss school and community safety issues and actively engage in workgroup activities to advance the Action Plan. Over 25 public sector agencies, long-time community representatives, immigrant residents, elected official representatives, and parents and youth leaders participate in the collaborative.



Collaborative partners include:

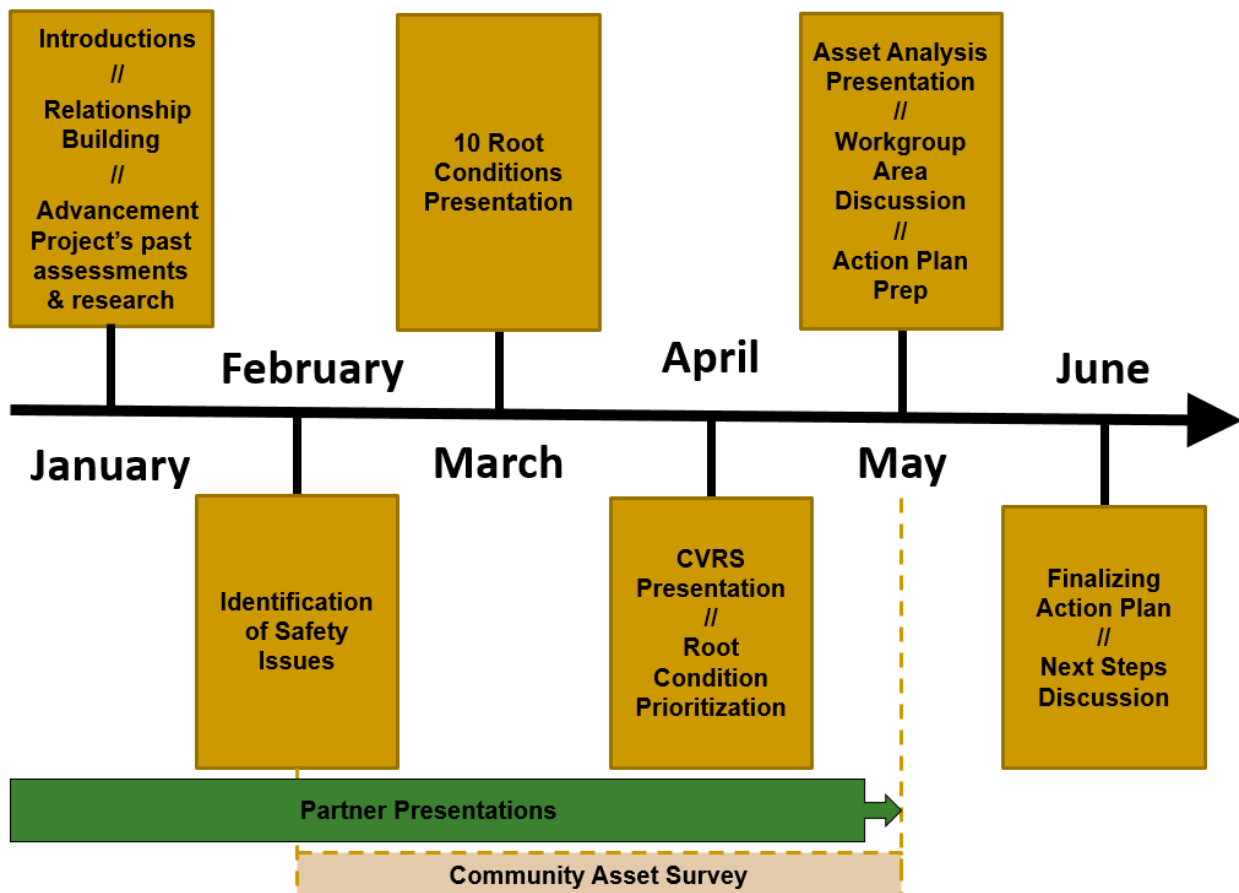
- Advancement Project
- Community Safety Partnership
- Los Angeles City Council District 15
- Green Dot Public Schools, including Ánimo College Preparatory Academy at Jordan Education Complex and Green Dot Community Engagement staff
- Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
- Los Angeles Police Department
- Los Angeles Unified School District
- Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, including Jordan High School Partnership Academy for the Art and PLAS Family and Community Engagement staff
- Safe Routes to School National Partnership
- Watts Century Latino Organization
- Watts Inspired Motion
- Watts Towers Arts Center
- Watts United
- We Care Outreach Ministries
- Residents of Watts

Summary of the Action Planning Process

In order to establish safe routes to school for children and youth of Watts, stakeholders must not only improve the physical environmental and transportation resources but intentionally address the gang dynamics and violence that have been entrenched in the area for several decades.

The WRSSC's approach to action planning bridges community members and agencies so that solutions can honor and nurture existing community assets and leadership. The successful implementation of the Action Plan centers on real community input and lasting engagement, and community ownership over the solutions. The partnerships formed between community members, community-based organizations, and public sector agencies during the action planning process built trust and a commitment to develop a safety infrastructure in and around the schools and broader community.

Starting in January 2014, the WRSSC launched a series of meetings to develop the Action Plan. As previously mentioned, the engagement and recruitment of community partners and agencies involved a year-long process, but the ground work was critical to ensure a successful six-month action planning process.



January meeting: The purpose of the first meeting was to build and strengthen relationships among key agencies in the Watts community that influence community and school safety. Several community-based organizations and public sector agencies came together and committed to going through a six-month process to develop an action plan to achieve community and school safety in Watts. Many of these community-based organizations and public sector agencies were already working together, but not all. This meeting focused on sharing each other's work and findings from past assessments of Watts, per the needs assessments identified above.

February meeting: The second meeting involved a group process to identify the nature of safety issues for students and parents in the Watts area. Partners engaged in discussions about the causes of violence in the Watts community and who were the most vulnerable as a result of this violence.

March meeting: Partners were introduced to the root conditions of community violence and engaged in the process of identifying conditions most relevant to Watts. The community-driven process allowed residents and community leaders to contribute their expertise, experience, and concerns about community violence, and served to validate stakeholders' own experiences.

April meeting: Partners discussed Urban Peace's Comprehensive Violence Reduction Strategy, and how each organization and individual fit into the framework. Partners also continued discussions about root conditions of violence and prioritized the conditions most relevant in Watts.

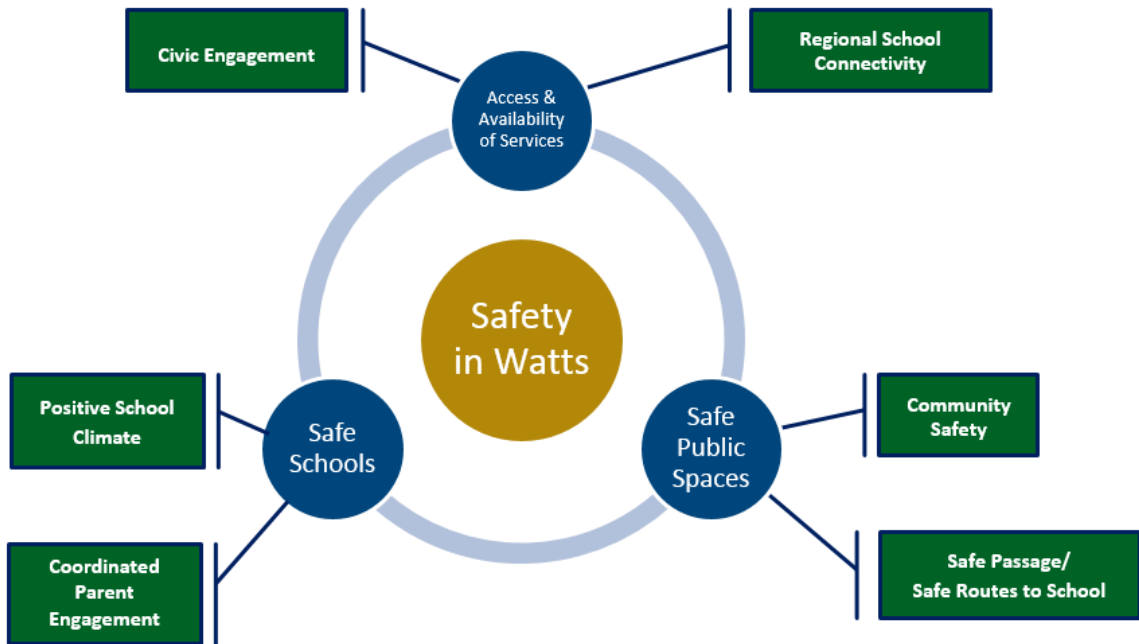
May meeting: Partners focused on the identification of community assets, and determined what each organization brought to a community and school safety agenda. An in-depth understanding of the root conditions and existing community assets enabled the partners to begin exploring viable strategies.

June meeting: The last meeting entailed the finalization of the Action Plan. Partners prioritized three work areas and developed proposed activities based on identified goals and strategies.

This inclusive and collaborative process strengthened stakeholders' resolve for action. Following the six-month action planning process, WRSSC partners agreed to continue the collaborative and moved into the implementation phase. Workgroups were formed to begin implementing aspects of the Action Plan. The final action plan is summarized in the following section.

WATTS REGIONAL SCHOOL SAFETY COLLABORATIVE ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan was developed by the WRSSC after a process of identifying and prioritizing issues of violence as they related to the 10 Root Conditions of Community Violence. This section outlines the three priority focus areas of the Action Plan in detail and how public sector agencies can get involved.



Glossary of Partners			
BOS	Bureau of Sanitation (Department of Public Works)	GRYD	Gang Reduction and Youth Development
BSL	Bureau of Street Lighting (Department of Public Works)	Green Dot	Green Dot Public Schools
BSS	Bureau of Street Services (Department of Public Works)	HACLA	Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles
COMM	Community stakeholders, including community-based organizations, local businesses, residents, parents, and youth	DPH	Los Angeles County Department of Public Health
DBS	Department of Building and Safety	Metro	Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority
DCP	Department of City Planning	LAFD	Los Angeles Fire Department
DCA	Department of Cultural Affairs	LAPD	Los Angeles Police Department
DONE	Department of Neighborhood Empowerment	LASPD	Los Angeles School Police Department
DRP	Department of Recreation and Parks	LAUSD	Los Angeles Unified School District
DOD	Department on Disability	PLAS	Partnership for Los Angeles Schools
EWDD	Economic and Workforce Development		

SAFE SCHOOLS

Goal 1: Positive School Climate Improve school conditions and accountability to foster positive learning, school pride, and a welcoming environment for all students, parents, and school personnel.			
Strategy	Short Term Activities	Long Term Activities	Partners
Provide safe environments for students during non-class hours, including lunchtime, recess, and before/after school hours.	<p>Conduct assessment to identify student safety concerns and hot spot areas.</p> <p>Identify barriers to parent volunteerism and develop strategies to address concerns.</p> <p>Foster better collaboration between parents and school staff to develop and implement a quality approach to supervision.</p> <p>Identify a staff lead to work with parents to recruit volunteers and implement a supervision schedule.</p> <p>Implement student-driven projects that build positive peer relationships.</p>	<p>Increase security in restrooms and other hot spots that are unsafe for students.</p> <p>Recruit and train parent volunteers and school staff to provide quality supervision during non-class hours.</p> <p>Train school staff on creating positive environments for students during non-class hours.</p> <p>Work with organizations such as Playworks to bring in coaches that can enhance and transform recess and out-of-school time experiences for students.</p>	COMM Green Dot LASPD LAUSD PLAS
Promote positive relationships among youth, school personnel, school, school police, and law enforcement.	<p>Establish protocols for effective communication between school personnel and families (e.g., feedback loops).</p> <p>Leverage program such as Summer BRIDGE to help incoming students assimilate into the school culture.</p>	<p>Conduct cultural competency trainings for school personnel.</p> <p>Implement training for law enforcement, school police, and school personnel to increase capacity and understanding of adolescent brain development in order to reduce disciplinary practices that push students into the juvenile justice system.</p> <p>Establish a school-wide mentoring/coaching program.</p>	COMM Green Dot LASPD LAUSD PLAS
Foster a restorative school culture	<p>Identify which schools are implementing restorative justice practices.</p> <p>Develop a focused school plan and timeline for creating a positive school climate.</p>	<p>Adopt restorative justice processes to address school misconduct.</p> <p>Hire a full-time restorative justice coordinator.</p>	COMM Green Dot LASPD LAUSD PLAS

Strategy	Short Term Activities	Long Term Activities	Partners
Foster a restorative school culture (continued)		<p>Train and empower youth to become leaders for restorative practices.</p> <p>Train and coach school staff on implementing restorative practices.</p> <p>Offer ongoing professional development for all staff, including non-teaching staff.</p>	

Goal 2: Coordinated Parent Engagement Increase the coordination of culturally competent parent engagement and leadership development.			
Strategy	Short Term Activities	Long Term Activities	Partners
Increase capacity of schools to meaningfully engage parents in school activities.	<p>Revisit and revise school policies and practices to overcome barriers to recruiting volunteers.</p> <p>Identify and promote volunteer opportunities with minimal parental burden.</p> <p>Increase parent involvement in school safety planning and implementation through education and trainings (e.g., Parents Rights).</p> <p>Convene parent engagement staff across Watts schools to share best practices and coordinate strategies.</p>	<p>Refine process for parents to easily engage and volunteer.</p> <p>Conduct school staff trainings on culturally competent parent engagement and organizing.</p> <p>Increase culturally competent staff at the Parent Centers and Parent Colleges.</p> <p>Advocate for increased funding for Parent Center and Parent Colleges to focus on bullying, gang issues, extended hours, and parent skills building.</p>	COMM Green Dot LAUSD PLAS

SAFE PUBLIC SPACES

Goal 1: Community Safety Reduce barriers to mobility and increase active living opportunities for students and their families.			
Strategy	Short Term Activities	Long Term Activities	Partners
Promote violence reduction strategies to enhance public safety.	<p>Work with the Community Safety Partnership to increase the number of officers on foot and bike patrols.</p> <p>Increase awareness of safety initiatives via social media and other communications mediums.</p> <p>Build partnerships with local groups such as the Watts Neighborhood Council to address community safety issues.</p>	<p>Build community cohesion and support for community safety through walking/biking events, assessments, community meetings, etc.</p> <p>Increase investments and resources for community safety initiatives (e.g., Safe Passage, gang interventionists, Community Safety Partnership, Summer Night Lights).</p>	COMM DCA DOD DONE DPH DRP EWDD Green Dot GRYD GRYD HACLA LAFD LASPD LAUSD Metro PLAS
Increase perception of safety by improving the built environment.	Utilize existing and new assessments to identify safety hot spots and problem intersections/areas near targeted schools.	Beautify the neighborhood by transforming vacant lots to safe active spaces, painting utility boxes and murals.	BOS BSL BSS COMM DBS DCP DOD HACLA

Goal 2: Safe Passage/Safe Routes to School

Encourage schools to adopt safe passage/safe routes to school efforts that ensure student safety while biking and walking.

Strategy	Short Term Activities	Long Term Activities	Partners
Promote walking and biking to school safely among schools in Watts.	<p>Organize youth and parents to become advocates for safe walking and biking to school.</p> <p>Collaborate with local businesses to participate in community safety initiatives and serve as safe havens.</p> <p>Create a Safe Passage/Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Taskforce at each elementary, middle, and high school to adopt and implement a robust SRTS action plan that addresses violence and safety concerns.</p>	<p>Advocate for investments to increase the number of trained Safe Passages workers and gang interventionists.</p> <p>Increase access to bicycles among students by implementing programs such as bike share.</p> <p>Engage Watts residents to advocate for increased funding for infrastructure and non-infrastructure improvements.</p> <p>Implement school trainings on safety and mobility initiatives in Watts schools.</p>	<p>COMM DCP DOD DRP Green Dot GRYD LAFD LAPD LASPD LASUD Metro PLAS</p>
Expand the citywide Safe Routes to School model to address intentional injuries.	<p>Establish partnerships with active transportation advocates and agencies to share promising practices and integrate violence reduction strategies into SRTS.¹⁷</p>	<p>Integrate violence reduction strategies such as Safe Passage workers, Safe Haven businesses, and community policing into funding opportunities for high violence, gang-entrenched communities.</p>	<p>COMM DOD Green Dot LASPD LAUSD Metro PLAS</p>

¹⁷ Advancement Project. Best and Promising Practices to Address Violence and Personal Safety in Safe Routes to School Programs. March 2015.

ACCESS AND AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES

Goal 1: Civic Engagement Encourage schools to adopt safe passage/safe routes to school efforts that ensure student safety while biking and walking. Enhance collaboration between public/private sectors and the community.			
Strategy	Short Term Activities	Long Term Activities	Partners
Empower hard-to-reach residents to access services and engage in civic and economic participation and decision making.	<p>Outreach to and recruit parent volunteers at each school to participate in school activities and processes.</p> <p>Work with trusted community organizations to organize residents.</p> <p>Conduct trainings to build capacity of Latino residents to engage in civic and economic participation and decision making.</p> <p>Recruit parent, youth, and school representatives from Watts-based elementary, middle, and high schools to participate in the Watts Regional School Safety Collaborative.</p> <p>Develop principles and practices for meaningful community engagement of residents in Watts.</p>	<p>Provide leadership training for youth to develop a pipeline for future elected officials.</p> <p>Encourage private/public sector to invest resources aimed at increasing civic and economic participation among residents.</p> <p>Train public sector agencies in multicultural practices and community engagement best practices.</p> <p>Host community events that celebrate cultural diversity and build relationships and trust among community members.</p>	DCA DONE COMM LAUSD PLAS Green Dot

Goal 2: Regional School Connectivity Strategy

Strengthen the coordination of services to improve student safety and well-being among schools located in Watts.

Strategy	Short Term Activities	Long Term Activities	Partners
<p>Strengthen coordination and collaboration across schools to implement school and community safety strategies.</p>	<p>Conduct a landscape analysis to identify existing school and community resources, needs and gaps in services and investments, barriers to accessing services, and the current state of collaboration and coordination among partners.</p> <p>Increase awareness about the shifting demographics and consider the transnational family experience when planning and implementing programs and policies.</p> <p>Coordinate a series of meetings between parents, students, and school personnel to increase understanding and foster collaboration.</p> <p>Promote the concept of community wellness centers.</p>	<p>Work with community-based organizations and public/private sector agencies to adopt “whole family” approaches aimed at bridging the cultural and generational gaps.</p> <p>Work with school personnel to adopt and implement strategies that include parents in key school policy and budget decisions that impact their children.</p> <p>Provide leadership training for parents and youth on advocating for budget and policy changes that create positive school climates.</p> <p>Host a community forum for Latino residents to increase awareness of existing services and resources for students.</p>	<p>COMM Green Dot LASPD LAUSD PLAS GRYD</p>

VI. Moving Forward

ACCOMPLISHMENTS

The creation of the Watts Regional School Safety Collaborative was a major success for the community and marked the start of a true partnership. WRSSC brought together school administrators, school staff, city government representatives, nonprofit leaders, law enforcement leadership, gang interventionists, Latino and African American residents, and other key stakeholders. Each participating stakeholder brought good leadership, great ideas, enthusiasm, and commitment. The final product delivered was a comprehensive Action Plan that addresses major concerns for youth safety. The plan includes areas of mobility, environmental factors, school safety, and systems-level factors that prevent youth and families from walking safely and freely in their community.

The action planning brought active civic engagement and participation from Watts residents, particularly the monolingual Spanish-speaking community. Often underrepresented in civic engagement groups, Latino resident participation was strategically sought out during the formation of the Collaborative in order for the group to adequately reflect the changing demographics of the Watts community.

Additionally, an increase in collaboration and awareness between partnering agencies has been seen since the inception of WRSSC. Networking and information sharing among partners at monthly meetings were outcomes of the collaborative-making process. With an increased understanding of the community assets available in Watts, collaborative partners have been able to synergistically connect bodies of work and create partnerships outside of WRSSC.



The Watts Regional School Safety Collaborative hosted a peace march to increase awareness about safe passages and safe havens for children walking to and from school in Watts.

BARRIERS AND CHALLENGES

Advancement Project's Urban Peace staff encountered several barriers and challenges during the formation of WRSSC and throughout the action planning process. However, these barriers and challenges can be seen as lessons learned for future consideration and/or replication.

Barriers include limited funding, stakeholder buy-in, language and cultural barriers, and capacity of agency and community-based organizational involvement.

Consistent funding continues to be a challenge for sustaining community safety initiatives in Watts. While WRSSC was fortunate to receive two years of funding in 2013 from the Department of Public Health's Healthy Eating Active Living grant, short-term funding is not sufficient in achieving community transformation. Ongoing, long-term resources and investments from public and private sectors are critical for supporting collaborative efforts and developing a sustainable infrastructure.

Stakeholder buy-in at the formation of the collaborative was seen as a challenge in creating a cohesive group of public sector, nonprofit, and resident stakeholders. Obtaining group buy-in is critical to the success of developing an action plan. The process involved key stakeholders in the decision-making process in hopes of reaching a broader consensus on the Collaborative's future.

Historically, collaboratives have been created in the past but have disbanded due to a lack of clarity of work, commitment, and lack of funding. Stakeholders participating in this Collaborative have been aware of this history in Watts, and as a result, have been cautious in participating with any high hopes toward the sustainability of a group. Key to success in building stakeholder buy-in is one-on-one engagement with stakeholders to understand their needs and discuss how collaboration can be valuable to their work. Collective participation, resources, and expertise are driving forces in the movement of the Collaborative. In addition, the idea that this is a stakeholder-led collaborative needed to be reinforced. By taking ownership of the Collaborative, stakeholders are able to keep each other accountable.

Another challenge is capacity. Agencies, community-based organizations, and residents were voluntarily coming together to develop the Action Plan, and at times, participation wavered due to other commitments. Extensive outreach and meetings outside of the regular meeting was crucial to ensure that Collaborative members were engaged, even when they could not attend a meeting.

Given the need for inclusion of community residents, most of whom are Spanish-speaking, in the Collaborative, Advancement Project's Urban Peace staff encountered language and cultural barriers. For the most part, some staff and other partners were able to act as bilingual translators during the Collaborative meetings. Although there was some Spanish-speaking

capacity among the Urban Peace staff, a designated professional translator with adequate equipment is needed for the sustainability and long term plans of the Collaborative.

PARTNERING WITH WRSSC

Community-based organizations, public sector agencies, and other community stakeholders can utilize the Watts Regional School Safety Collaborative as a platform for communication, opportunity, and continued relationship building.

As an open community collaborative, the WRSSC can provide updates on continued action items, upcoming events, and opportunities for agency and individual participation and contribution. Regular meetings allow for continued opportunities for relationship building and leveraging local assets and resources to meet individual agency goals, as well as collective goals. Agencies can also participate in this group to share their own upcoming events and invite potential partners whom they see naturally aligned with the mission and goals of the collaborative.

Through such contributions and interactions with the collaborative, agencies can become better informed and more involved in multi-sector collaboration, particularly through the participation in one of three workgroups: Safety in Schools; Community Safety; and Access and Availability of Services. The more agencies can interact and interface with the Collaborative, the more partnership and collaboration potential can occur. Together, we can achieve our vision of a healthy and safe community for all Watts residents.

If you would like more information or want to get involved in the Watts Regional School Safety Collaborative, please email WattsSafety@gmail.com.

NOTES

