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Neighborhood Resilience Initiative: Equipping Disadvantaged Communities in resource-poor neighborhoods to overcome climate consequences and thrive in a turbulent future

The SBCCOG is announcing its initiative to transform 2 to 4 disadvantaged communities (DACs) and their resource-poor neighborhoods into resilient, resource-independent places. The future is becoming more turbulent and challenging. This is the time for bold, transformative investments. The Neighborhood Resilience Initiative (NRI) is just that.

It will be especially relevant to DACs with an under-utilized public facility in their midst. The transformation of an existing building will be a symbol of the transformation of the neighborhood.

The Initiative consists of 4 innovations that will be planned for simultaneous implementation.

1. Multiple Program Scope

Government agencies typically operate in silos defined by missions focused on particular systems – housing, transportation, environmental protection, public utilities, etc. Interventions typically involve programs based on a single focus capable of producing only incremental change.

Disadvantaged, low resource communities are defined by comprehensive deficits.

- The “digital divide” is also accompanied by a “mobility divide,” “health care and education divides” and so forth.
- Multiple programs addressed together can capture the interactions between each which can amplify the impact. The whole will produce more than the sum of its parts.
- Implementing multiple programs simultaneously, the cost burden of deployment can be covered by multiple funding sources. The NRI will be anchored by what we call an *Access Center* and it will serve as the foundation for a neighborhood becoming threat-resilient and more independent.

The Access Center will be designed with the following components:

Digital Hub – Performs a dual function – 1) Access to destinations (jobs, services, resources) virtually, and 2) access to work force development and small business development provided through use of digital technology infrastructure and the training to use it. Planning for the Digital Hub is ongoing, funded by a CPUC LATA grant that will produce a “digital equity plan.”

LOCAL GOVERNMENTS IN ACTION

Carson El Segundo Gardena Hawthorne Hermosa Beach Inglewood Lawndale Lomita
Manhattan Beach Palos Verdes Estates Rancho Palos Verdes Redondo Beach Rolling Hills
Rolling Hills Estates Torrance Los Angeles District #15 Los Angeles County

Mobility Hub – Provides mobility options for reaching physical destinations in affordable, zero emission modes. Planning for Neighborhood Mobility Hubs will begin this fall with funding provided by Metro based on a REAP 2 grant that will also lead to Hub implementation and affordable housing policies.

Resilience Hub – Supplies resources for avoiding serious climate impacts and recovering from those that cannot be avoided, near and long term. The SBCCOG is requesting funding specifically for this component plus the facility development from the Strategic Growth Council

Micro grid – Delivers the reliable and affordable electricity that is required for the other 3 components to work.

Each of these components will be designed through a process involving local organizations, leaders and other interested parties in the form of a planning committee.

This design framework for an Access Center will guide community input.

Infrastructure	Programs
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Digital Hub	
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Mobility Hub	
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Resilience Hub	
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Micro grid	
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The neighborhood planning committee will make the decisions based on the needs of neighborhood residents and businesses.

2. Neighborhood Planning Committee

We will recruit local community anchors, leaders, small business and engaged residents to form a Planning Committee that will make the infrastructure and program decisions that define the Neighborhood Access Center. SBCCOG project personnel and consultants will support the Planning Committee.

The Planning Committee will help identify existing community facilities in or near the neighborhood such as libraries, schools, senior centers, technology centers, athletic clubs, and so forth. Those facilities will be necessary secondary locations that will complement the Access Center. There will be as many “touch points” in each neighborhood as feasible.

This process follows the guidelines established by the NTIA for advancing “digital equity” and which apply also to advancing mobility equity and community resilience.

3. Long Term Financial Sustainability

The NRI will solicit seed funding from government grants and possibly foundation investors for facility, infrastructure and program development plus 3 years of operations. The project planning committee will have those 3 years to incorporate as a CBO and adopt a business plan that will permanently sustain operations, infrastructure upgrades, and maintenance. Financial sustainability guarantees permanence which will be essential because the challenges will continue well into the future.

4. Self-Reliance

Destructive climate events caused by global heating are making the near future more challenging than ever before. That is an uncomfortable topic, often avoided because it is perceived by many as “doom and gloom.” In reality, it is impossible to prepare for that which is denied. Economic and social sustainability of the disadvantaged community requires that we identify and prepare for the worst.

Extreme weather events will affect everyone in some manner, but under-resourced communities always suffer early and most severely; and depend on the responsiveness of external agencies. Earthquake preparedness and recovery will also be included.

Resilience requires permanent systems for identifying the threats, preparing to mitigate the impacts, and recovering from the damage. Those functions cannot be entirely outsourced if neighborhoods are to meet the challenges and protect their residents and businesses from devastating losses and suffering.

The threats from extreme weather events are known at a regional scale. They include direct impacts such as more frequent, longer, and higher-temperature heat waves; fires; smoke; water shortages; torrential rain; floods; mud slides; and coastal erosion. The consequences, or indirect impacts, will include supply chain disruption; food insecurity; expensive and unreliable power supply; increased crime and violence; degraded service delivery in sectors like medical care, public health and mobility; and even outright institutional failure in some cases.

The sheer cost of extreme weather events in California and the U.S will eventually disrupt essential markets and threaten the economic viability of some necessary social programs, especially in DACs.

The consequences of global heating are occurring faster than anticipated. Given those predictable threats, immediate action to make transformative investments in disadvantaged communities living in resource-poor neighborhoods is urgently needed. The ability to be resilient and self-reliant will provide the best preparation for surviving the climate crisis.

Public investments that also attract private investments often gentrify neighborhoods. The SBCCOG’s NRI minimizes the chances of gentrification because the investment is designed to be owned by a neighborhood CBO and used to build wealth of neighborhood residents and businesses.

Next Steps

The SBCCOG is completing a Digital Equity Plan funded by the CPUC under its LATA program that will lead to a plan for the digital hub component of the Access Center. A plan for a neighborhood mobility hub and related housing will be produced beginning fall, 2023, funded by Metro from a REAP 2 grant through SCAG. That is an example of complementary funding leveraged from more narrowly focused programs.

The SBCCOG is searching for a suitable location and building in each of four areas with concentrations of “covered populations” listed as priorities in the federal fiber network expansion programs, such as the FFA and BEAD.

The SBCCOG will apply for government implementation programs in 2023-24 and is soliciting interest from philanthropic foundations.

The NRI can be used to revitalize commercial areas in resource-poor neighborhoods in cases where facilities can be developed in those contexts.

Finally, resource-poor areas are the top priority for these prototypes, however similar investments should eventually extend to working- and middle-class neighborhoods, probably requiring substantial private capital. The climate crisis affects everyone.