Light the District

Community Report-Back on Action Kickoff for a Safe Community
November 2016
Albuquerque NM

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Background

We all want to be healthy but that can be hard if the right supports aren’t in place. We know that, for many community members, it can be hard to be physically active when places like streets, sidewalks, and parks aren’t easy, safe, and enjoyable to use.

Light the District is a project born out of the International District Healthy Communities Coalition’s (IDHCC) long-term commitment to strengthen communities’ capacity to sustain health and wellness through awareness, collaboration, commitment, and advocacy. The IDHCC continuously collaborates with partners such as those involved in Healthy Here (Presbyterian Center for Community Health, Bernalillo County Community Health Council, Mid-Region Council of Governments, and First Choice Community Healthcare) as well as other stakeholder organizations such as East Central Ministries, NewLifeHomes, Endorphin Power Company, and Sunrise Interfaith Church in projects related to increasing physical activity through strategies that address community safety. Several months ago we designed a plan that will quickly address issues about safety related to the built environment in the International District recognizing that modifications to road and infrastructure tend to be a more long-term, complex process. Poor lighting was identified as one of the biggest priorities for many residents of the area—and identified as a risk factor for crashes, pedestrian fatalities, and overall community safety.

Through support and funding from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as well as through the Spreading Community Accelerators through Learning and Evaluation (SCALE) initiative, IDHCC as a member of Healthy Here’s Active Living Workgroup began engaging stakeholders in the planning of an action-oriented approach to increase safety in the International District. We began by forming an Advisory Board that could offer guidance and expertise on the matter. This group was composed by people from organizations working on this issue, plus people who can control and change policy and provide resources (government representatives, funders, etc.). Also as part of this group there were people who direct the work from the perspective of their lived experience and lived in the neighborhood. This Advisory Board met on Thursday, August 11, 2016 at the Bernalillo County Office for Health and Social Services. Attendees shared what safety looks like to them, what their vision for the International District was, and what resources they brought to the table.

Our next step was to plan and conduct a community “action lab”. An action lab takes into consideration that complex problems, like improving Health Equity, by their nature are always changing and impossible to fully plan for; always have new data and new sources of data; and have multiple stakeholders continually adapting their approach (in isolation). But in spite of this (or because of this), we have to embrace a Bias Toward Action. The action lab model provides groups with tools to move from ideation to implementation (a “sprint”) of strategies to address a specific health equity topic area (see Figure 1).
Light the District focused its efforts on safety because we know that individuals are not going to be physically active if 1) they don’t have access to physical activity opportunities, and 2) they don’t feel safe walking around their neighborhood. The action lab was titled: **Action Kickoff for a Safe Community** and took place on Saturday, November 5th, 2016 at Van Buren Middle School in Albuquerque.
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**Action Kickoff for a Safe Community**

The kickoff event began with a welcoming activity lead by IDHCC staff, Bernadette Hardy of the South San Pedro neighborhood. Attendees were encouraged to say their name and who they represent (whether an organization or a neighborhood in the International District) and then put a sticker on a map of a location in the neighborhood that they “lived, worked, and/or played”.

Photo: purple “light posts” represent locations were Light the District has installed solar-powered light. Green “leafs” represent gardens installed by the IDHCC. Stars and smiley face stickers represent where folks in the room identified as where they “live, work, and/or play”.

Next, Tatiana Falcón Rodríguez, from Presbyterian Center for Community Health, introduced Light the District’s vision and purpose, as well as an overview of the action lab model. The vision of Light the District is that the International District is a safe and inviting place for everyone to walk, run, bike, dance or just play! The purpose of Light
the District is to *identify and implement actions that will help make the International District feel safer for people to be more active by April 4, 2017.*

Sharz Weeks from the Bernalillo County Community Health Council (BCCHC), shared findings of the “Inspiration Phase” which included data about health and social indicators in the International District. Then Enrique Cardiel, Facilitator of IDHCC, talked to the group about the history and complexity of the neighborhood, as well as the context for creating the Light the District project. Bernadette Hardy also shared with attendees one of the strategies devised by IDHCC which was the installation of solar-powered lights on private properties.

*Assessing Strength & Opportunities in the International District*

Focusing on strengths, the attendees were invited to be a part of an asset mapping of the community in a café-style format. There were five stations, each with a question for participants to discuss together and share answers on a flipchart.
Question 1: What makes the International District great? What makes you proud of the International District?

Question 2: Who are the natural leaders of the ID?
Question 3: What are some cultural and/or historical assets that best represent the ID?

Question 4: What are some services (public or private) that you think are assets in and for the ID community?
Question 5: What are some things in the ID that should be improved to increase safety?

![Image of written suggestions]

Designing Our Collective Aim & Planning for Action

Attendees collectively designed an aim for the 100 Days of Action.

Increase people walking in the International District by the end of the 100 Days of Action (April 4th, 2017)

The group then divided into three breakout workgroups that had assigned themes: built environment, community-building, and schools. In these breakout groups, participants discussed different strategies that addressed safety within these topic areas. By the end of the breakout session, participants had to pick three strategies out of all those discussed to present to the larger group.
I  Built Environment

This group came up with the following strategies:

I. Light survey – in association with crime maps: auditing areas considered “hotspots” for crime to identify the presence of lighting and status (e.g. working lights, non-working lights, damage, etc)

II. Scavenger hunt & social media campaign: a way to incorporate stakeholders in identifying issues with the built environment in the ID and areas of opportunities in the area

III. Pop-up built environment demo: creating a “parquito”, buffered bike lane, and/or related activity
2 Schools

This group focused on what’s already in place in community schools to build upon. Strategies that were identified included:

I. Outreach at Roadrunner Foodbank School stops (La Mesa, Van Buren)

II. Involve youth in developing social media tools for scavenger hunt and other events

III. VBMS is piloting Homework Diner in the school during the Spring and this space can be an opportunity for engagement and outreach
Community Building

This group identified strategies for community-building that would address lack of access to physical activity opportunities. Some strategies they identified:

I. Block party celebrating wellness walking trail
II. Lighting event (installation) at two sites where we can serve hot cocoa and marshmallows
III. Pop-up Zumba/yoga and/or self-defense classes throughout the community
Next Steps

Light the District is currently sending a call-out to stakeholders to become part of the planning committee for the 100 Days of Action for a Safe Community. The first planning meeting is set to occur on Thursday, December 8th, 2016 at 2:30pm; location to be determined. These planning meetings will take the plan that was developed at the action kick-off to narrow down some strategies, create steps for implementation, and to organize the partners involved.

If you are interested in being a part of Light the District’s 100 Days of Action for a Safe Community, please contact any of the members of the Design Team:

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