



The Coffelt Case



A case study of the Coffelt-Lamoreaux
public housing redevelopment HIA

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“considering health in a redevelopment is a ‘game changer’”

Why a Health Impact Assessment for Public Housing?

A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) aims to make the health impacts of public decisions explicit. The International Association of Impact Assessment and the World Health Organization define HIA as “a combination of procedures, methods and tools that systematically judges the potential, and sometimes unintended, effects of a policy, plan, program or project on the health of a population and the distribution of those effects within the population” (Quigley, et al., 2006; World Health Organization, 2013). The redevelopment of public housing units, especially those that have outlived their useful lifespan, has the potential to directly or indirectly (positively or negatively) impact health outcomes of the residents in a significant manner. These residents tend to be among the lowest income household in the service area and “the projects” are often the housing of last resort. A Health Impact Assessment can help to identify the health-related issues associated with the surrounding neighborhood (which in many cases mirrors the demographics and conditions of the projects themselves), as well as the redevelopment of the physical plant itself, and generate recommendations that could mitigate their impact and potentially improve the health of the residents and the neighborhood as a whole.

In the case of the Coffelt-Lamoreaux public housing redevelopment process several key outcomes make the case for conducting an HIA for public housing.

1. The HIA uncovered the severity of the impact current conditions of this public housing were having on the health of residents, a staggering revelation to the Housing Authority of Maricopa County.
2. Because the HIA afforded practical and implementable, evidence-based recommendations that directly fed the design process, it was well received by the housing authority and the developer’s team. The evidence-based recommendations can be used to leverage funding supplemental to the traditional funding sources that are typically accessed by the Housing Authority.
3. The HIA process left residents feeling empowered, being fully engaged as action researchers and decision-makers. The empowerment directly resulted in the community’s buy-in on the proposed plans and ensured continued involvement and leadership.
4. The results of the HIA brought together an unprecedented meeting of several city and county departments that had been identified as potential partners for implementation of the recommendations. Various task forces and committees were formed collaboratively to ensure continuation of the work.
5. The HIA has generated enthusiasm and passion in the funding community with several funders stepping forth to support the implementation of recommendations designed to improve the conditions of this public housing.

Project Introduction and Background

The Coffelt-Lamoreaux Public Housing Project (Coffelt) is the oldest operational project in the Housing Authority of Maricopa County’s (HAMC) portfolio. At the time it was developed in 1953 it was located outside the Phoenix city boundaries in a largely agricultural area. The rapid growth of Phoenix resulted in the annexation of the property in 1959 by the City of Phoenix, although, the streets were not annexed into the city street plan. Over the past 50 years, the neighborhood has been encroached upon by industrial and commercial land uses, creating an island of public housing. The Coffelt public housing site extends from 19th Avenue on the East to the I-17 on the West, and Buckeye Road on the North to the Durango Curve on the South. The freeway and large arterial streets bounding the property further exacerbate its separation from adjacent neighborhoods.

South of the neighborhood is Hamilton Elementary School, part of the Murphy Elementary School District. Three quarters of the school's children come from the Coffelt Neighborhood. Hamilton School also houses a medical clinic that is available to the immediate community. The school has a full-size baseball diamond, a basketball court and a football field.

The debate over the future of “the projects” began at least in 2006. There were conflicting opinions which ranged from complete demolition and relocation of residents, to demolition with new construction adding density on site, to the current plan which calls for redevelopment of the existing 296 units and the area surrounding the Coffelt-Lamoreaux Public Housing complex.

Aim and Objectives

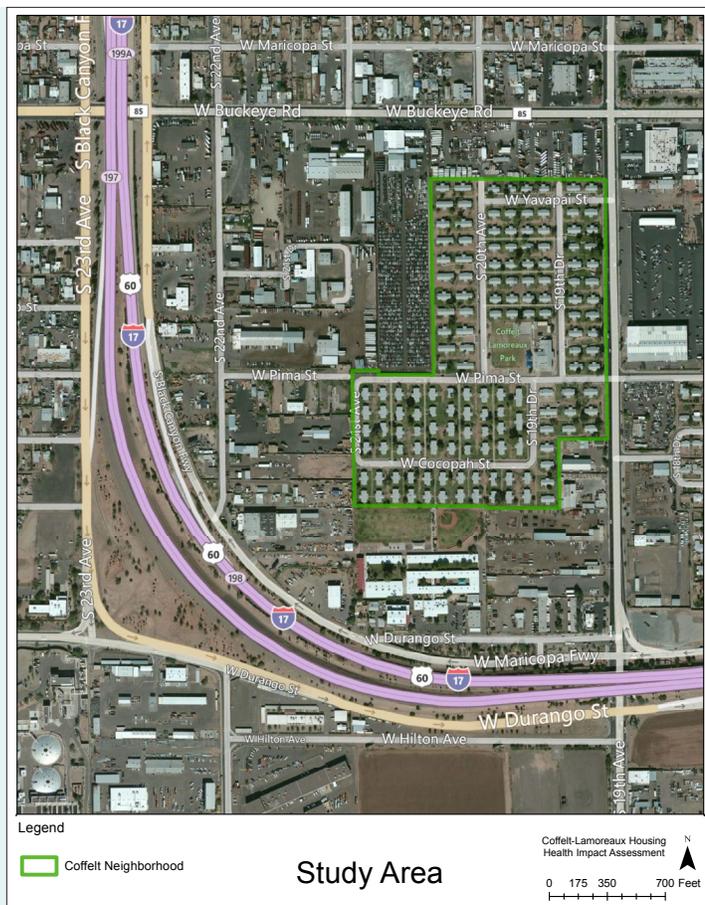
The decision to adopt the current redevelopment plan for Coffelt –Lamoreaux Public Housing had already been made when the health impact assessment was proposed. The objective in this case was to generate recommendations, engaging residents and other stakeholders, which would

1. minimize the negative health impacts of the redevelopment process
2. mitigate the negative impacts of existing conditions by informing the physical design of the redevelopment
3. maximize the potential health benefits for residents by informing the physical design and social structure of the community

Project Capacity

Context

The redevelopment was proposed for 296 residential units (148 duplexes), a community park (0.3 acres), two community center buildings and the HAMC property management offices.



Profile of residents

Occupancy	228 households
Median Household Income	\$9,985
Average Household size	3.52
Single parent families with children (female head of household)	70.6%
Children (individuals 18yrs and under)	58.1%
Percentage of individuals with disabilities	10.2%
Households with no vehicles (census tract data)	32.4%
Spanish speakers	66.3%
Spanish speakers with Low English Proficiency (census tract data)	44.5%

HIA TEAM

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Health Impact Assessment Consultant

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Al Brown
Environmental
Consultant

Michele Scanze
Health Data Expert

Wendoly Abrego
Designer (PRC) created visualizations
of the recommendations

Shawn Monk
GIS Analyst

PARTNERS / STAKEHOLDERS

Coffelt-Lamoreaux public housing residents	Participants and context experts
Housing Authority of Maricopa County	Property Owner
Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC), Phoenix/ Teresa Brice (Executive Director)	Health Impact Assessment Funder
Phoenix Revitalization Corporation (PRC)/ Eva Olivas (Executive Director)	Outreach and engagement support
Gorman & Company/ Brian Swanton (Arizona Market President)	Developer for Coffelt Housing
Health in Policy and Practice, Arizona (AZHIP2)	Technical Assistance for HIA
City of Phoenix-Streets Department	Technical Assistance for HIA
City of Phoenix-Parks and Recreation	Technical Assistance for HIA

Process/Methodology

The Coffelt HIA followed the standard steps of an HIA including screening, scoping, assessment, generating recommendations, reporting and creating a framework for monitoring and evaluation. Tools and methods specific to the Coffelt HIA are outlined below. Engaging the Coffelt community through every step of the HIA was integral to this process. Residents were involved in data collection, synthesis and recommendation development and facilitators at large group meetings ensured that residents’ voices were heard.

Screening and Scoping

The initiation of the project was a result of a conversation between a LISC staff member who had recently attended a HIA training and was also familiar with the plans for Coffelt and the director of HAMC. They discussed the interest, potential value and feasibility of conducting a HIA for the project. The director saw it as a good fit with her philosophy of using the redevelopment of a housing project as an opportunity to improve the whole neighborhood.

Community outreach

Outreach activities began as part of the scoping process to ensure a significant part of the Coffelt community would be engaged as part of the HIA. A local CDC (Phoenix Revitalization Corporation) embedded in this neighborhood took the lead in initiating this process. The team approached the property manager at Coffelt in an effort to contact residents to begin conversations about the HIA. After making little progress with this method, the outreach team began walking the property to encounter residents. Flyers about the HIA and a proposed community workshop were distributed to the property manager and handed directly to residents encountered on streets.

Assessment

By definition, HIAs employ a mixed-method approach valuing both qualitative and quantitative research methods. Data used in the HIA is both qualitative and quantitative in nature and typically comes from a wide range of sources. Given that HIAs are specific to a particular project, plan or policy, the types of data used in a particular HIA will be determined by the parameters of that project, plan or policy. The qualitative data adds richness and depth to the quantitative parameters identified in the HIA, while the quantitative data validates and strengthens the qualitative input.

For the Coffelt HIA, several sources were identified for health, environmental and demographic data. Residents of Coffelt provided audit, survey and asset data that helped supplement the quantitative environmental and health data from various agencies to prioritize the needs of the community.

Environmental Data

By virtue of the geographic location of the Coffelt public housing, residents are routinely exposed to adverse environmental conditions that have potential negative impacts on their health. An environmental expert was hired as part of the HIA team to identify and understand the hazards and relative risks from involuntary exposures to these undesirable environmental conditions. Pollutants in the air we breathe or the water we drink, ingestion of soil and dust by children, and exposure to insects that may carry disease are some examples of undesirable environmental conditions. Potential health impacts of these environmental conditions include respiratory diseases, mosquito-borne disease, and gastrointestinal illnesses from flies and rodents.

The environmental summary provided existing data on air pollution and noise in the Coffelt area; known sources of air pollution and hazardous materials were correlated with sources of potential pollutants from industrial sites and the freeway surrounding Coffelt; and insight into the hazards of air pollution, noise, insects, rodents, unleashed dogs and hazardous materials were highlighted. Methods and practices to reduce exposure and risk from environmental hazards along with recommendations to mitigate or eliminate the negative impact of each environmental aspect were discussed.

Health Data

Mortality, chronic disease and asthma data provided by the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) and the Maricopa County Public Health Department (MCPHD) were collected to assess the current health conditions of Coffelt residents. This data was not available at the geographic level necessary for analysis and privacy laws prevented publication of that data, were it available. Thus extrapolations had to be made between available data at ZIP Code level and the Coffelt community. The school adjacent to the Coffelt community provided asthma data for children at Coffelt.

Community Data

Community Workshops

The community provided input on the Coffelt neighborhood and residents' issues related to healthy foods, active living, public transportation and neighborhood safety through two interactive community workshops. Both workshops held at the Coffelt community center, were conducted in dual languages – Spanish and English – to ensure inclusion of all residents. Sixty residents participated in the first workshop held on August 8th, 2013, while 44 residents participated in the second workshop on August 21st, 2013.

Residents were placed into small groups and provided with a large aerial map of the district and surrounding areas. Residents used colored labels to identify asset inventories related to healthy eating, active living, transportation, housing units and any other health-related concerns. At the first workshop the goal was to identify the assets, liabilities and desires; the goal of the second workshop was to allow residents to expand and elaborate on what they had identified providing reasoning and articulating details on how they envision the changes in their community.

Park and Street Audits

Two street segments with high pedestrian traffic in and around Coffelt were identified by residents. For each of these two segments, two residents volunteered to conduct the street audits. Many of the issues identified during street audits were also discussed at the community workshops. Four residents also completed park audits for two parks (two residents per park) in the community. The small park across the street from the school was also audited, but not used in the analysis because it is not accessible to the community. Both tools, developed by St. Luke's Health Initiatives, were provided in Spanish and English.



Health Survey

At the community workshops, health surveys were completed by residents. The purpose of the survey (St. Luke's Health Initiative, 2012) was to identify issues related to healthy eating, physical activity and access to public transportation. In all, 38 surveys were returned and it is referenced throughout the full HIA report.

Data analysis

Quantitative and qualitative analysis was conducted on the various sets of data and results were triangulated to establish validity of the findings. The recommendations were built on these findings with input from the steering committee.

Crafting the Recommendations

A team of residents and technical experts alongside the HIA team developed recommendations based on the data collected and the input of the residents. Technical experts were selected based on content area of the assessments. Two recommendation meetings were conducted to ensure thorough discussion of all issues. Recommendation development process was an iterative one and recommendations were prioritized primarily based on input by residents.

Reporting

A written report was generated elaborating on the methodology of the HIA, a summary of the existing conditions derived from the assessment process, potential impact of these conditions on health and a detailed list of evidence-based recommendations including rationales for each. The report included visual scenarios of the transformed physical environment of Coffelt upon implementation of some of the design recommendations.

Monitoring and Evaluation

A monitoring and evaluation plan was not created for the Coffelt HIA upon request by the Housing Authority. The Housing Authority is committed to taking on this element of the HIA process upon completion of the following:

1. Development of a phased plan for implementation
2. Acquisition and prioritization of funding based on recommendations
3. Development of the Community Council for residents to be involved in the monitoring and evaluation process

Cost of the HIA

The Health Impact Assessment cost approximately \$30,000 with two thirds of that amount going to the HIA project manager and the rest distributed between external consulting services and logistical expenses. In addition, in kind support for the technical advisor was provided through an Access to Housing and Economic Assistance for Development (AHEAD) grant to LISC Phoenix.

Summary of HIA Report Recommendations

Evidence-based recommendations resulted from engaging steering committee meetings including key partners/ stakeholders, residents of Coffelt and the HIA team. Key recommendations made within each of the following five categories are summarized below. While some of the issues and recommendations may be self-evident or readily apparent, the HIA process was used to surface the issues and put them on the table for discussion by all parties, not just the owner/developer. The recommendations also create a menu of opportunities that potential funders can use to determine where they can add value.

Health determinant	Summary of recommendations
Access to healthy food	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve existing healthy food options by providing incentives to the local grocery store for expanding their affordable and healthy food selection; introducing free shuttle bus service to larger supermarkets and food banks in the area. 2. Introduce new healthy food options such as developing a community garden, a school gardening program and establishing an on-site small grocery store.
Access to physical activity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve existing physical activity infrastructure by upgrading and repairing amenities at existing park and forging new partnerships with local agencies to support programming at the park. 2. Introduce new physical activity infrastructure by opening access to a nearby school Park using a joint use agreement, adding infrastructure to that park and adding programming that involves residents both young and old.
Access to safe streets and transportation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Implement a complete streets redesign for the city street adjacent to the housing property, specifically including a safe crosswalk for Coffelt residents; improvements and repairs to bus stops on this arterial street. 2. Implement repairs and improvements on streets within the property including repaving, widening sidewalks and ensuring ADA compliance.
Healthy and safe housing	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Improve existing housing units by enhancing climate and pollution control, mitigating noise, controlling and minimizing the rodent population, improving safety features around units and providing increased facilities such as additional bathrooms and washer and dryer units. 2. Improve site conditions by ensuring adequate lighting of community streets, improving landscaping and establishing a sustainable maintenance program involving residents, mitigating the impact of lead on-site, controlling the population of dogs and vermin, establishing a resident driven program for removing trash, increasing proximal parking and enhancing community safety by establishing residents driven programs.
Social cohesion and community well-being	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Establish a community Council to establish common goals, identify community issues, participate in community education programs and empower residents to advocate for changes in the community. 2. Implement changes in the physical and social environment of the community to build identity such as establishing a community gallery, creating an entrance sign and planning for regular community celebrations. 3. Establish a regular mode of communication between the Housing Authority, the developer and Coffelt residents to ensure transparency and clarity of redevelopment process.



Outcomes and Potential Impact of the HIA

Information generated by the HIA was shared with multiple audiences in order to effect change in various arenas. One approach was directed at the implementation of the recommendations for Coffelt. Equally important was the strategy to educate the broader community as to the use and value of the HIA process in public housing projects. The process of dissemination was undertaken both in written and verbal form.

Coffelt Outcomes

- The findings of the HIA, the recommendations and visual scenarios of design implications resultant from recommendations were presented to the Housing Authority of Maricopa County and the developer's team. The objective of this presentation was twofold:
 1. Receive buy-in for the very pragmatic and implementable recommendations that resulted from this HIA
 2. To assess feasibility by identifying partners and funding sources for implementation.Modifications to recommendations were also discussed as necessary in order to help create a document that could be used by the Housing Authority to attract funding sources.
- A similar presentation was made to the Coffelt community. The objective of this presentation was to ensure that the issues residents raised during the data collection process had been accurately represented. It was also critical to keep residents informed of next steps for continued participation and advocacy on their part.
- Printed and electronic copies of the final report were distributed to stakeholders and partners that were directly and indirectly engaged with this project. The director of the Housing Authority (Gloria Munoz), working with the office of the district supervisor (Mary Rose Wilcox), arranged an unprecedented meeting that brought together several city and county departments that have been identified as potential partners for implementation of the recommendations. Under the guidance of Ms. Munoz and supervisor Wilcox, the HIA recommendations and the developer's plan for Coffelt were presented to this large turnout. Meeting attendants included members from the City of Phoenix Streets department, City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation department, Maricopa County Public Health Department, county Environmental Services Department, county Animal Care and Control Services, the county Transportation Department and Arizona Department of Health Services. A brainstorming session ensued in which several city and county departments agreed to take this work forward by committing to be part of the implementation team. In the course of this meeting and several more task forces and committees were formed to ensure continuation of the work.

ONGOING EFFORTS

City of Phoenix is assessing pedestrian traffic on 19th Ave., adjacent to the Coffelt public housing complex. Assessment may be followed by direct community engagement to ascertain the need for a HAWK light at the intersection of 19th Ave. and Pima street.

Gorman & Company is working through the planning process, continuing to have design meetings and construction phasing and resident relocation meetings. In conjunction with the Housing Authority, they are in the process of securing further financing for the project.

The **Arizona Community Foundation** has provided a grant to create a design for a multigenerational space intended for the Coffelt Park.

Presentations on this work have been proposed for various regional and national forums

- Healthy Communities conference
- ADOH state housing conference
- NAHRO conference
- NHC conference
- Arizona Planners Association Conference
- Community Investment Roundtable (Federal Reserve convened group in Phoenix)

Overall Lessons Learned

The Coffelt HIA was conducted with limited resources and, by necessity, executed in an intensely compressed timeframe. The goal was to ensure the HIA would be completed well in advance of the redevelopment's design phase so the HIA recommendations could directly inform the physical design. As a result, there were several lessons learned that apply not just to this HIA, but are challenges and issues for HIA practitioners in general to keep in mind.

HIAs at different levels

Optimally, an HIA is defined as an assessment that is conducted prior to the implementation of a project, plan or policy. The intention is for the HIA results to inform the decision on whether or not to implement the project, plan or policy. The Coffelt HIA however was sanctioned after the decision to redevelop had already been made. Several decisions are embedded in the process of redevelopment itself and the HIA was designed to inform these decisions. An analogy to this might be the disease prevention model, where prevention strategies can be implemented prior to the onset of the disease, but even after the onset of the disease, there are strategies that can be implemented to prevent rapid progression or complications of the disease.

Design and programmatic decisions that are customarily part of a redevelopment plan rarely consider health as a factor, much less use the broad definition of health typically captured by an HIA. At Coffelt, the health consequences of several design and programmatic decisions that seemed to have nothing to do with health were brought to the forefront through the HIA. Recommendations were generated to inform these decisions to minimize any negative impacts on the health of the community.

The Coffelt HIA revealed a number of ways a HIAs can be applied:

1. The Classic HIA – one in which the impact on health is assessed to inform the decision on whether or not to implement of the project, plan or policy
2. The Secondary HIA - one in which the impact on health is assessed to inform the decisions during the process of implementation of the project, plan or policy
3. A Collection of HIAs - a set of individual HIAs representing potential redevelopment projects that the PHA can use to assist in prioritizing activities and resources particularly when dealing with aging inventory.

Need for data

Having reliable sources of scientific data is critical to any health impact assessment. Data sources typically include the United States census and state, county or federal level health data. On occasion local CDCs or other nonprofits have neighborhood level data available, but this is few and far between. When HIAs are conducted in small areas, such as in the case of the Coffelt public housing complex, demographic and health data are difficult to access. Even if the data was available, HIPPA and other privacy laws prevent reporting at this fine-grained level to avoid identification of individuals. In the case of the Coffelt HIA, data had to be extrapolated, acquired and reported in creative ways to circumvent the obstacles presented by the small geographic location of the study.

An additional challenge presented by the lack of reliable data is the monitoring and evaluation step of the HIA. To successfully formulate and execute this step, health indicators need to be set up that can be tracked over a period of time. However, without consistent data, many of these indicators cannot be tracked, leaving the HIA incomplete.

A “just-do-it” approach

When using any assessment tool, methodological rigor must be held to a high standard. The HIA tool is no different. Clearly outlined steps, systematic documentation and methodical data tracking will ascertain the validity and reliability of the recommendations, while ensuring replicability of the process. Because an HIA process is multidisciplinary in nature, values public opinion, scientific data and expert opinion equally and triangulates qualitative and quantitative data into recommendations, it is both an art and a science. HIAs tend to be context specific and the scoping and assessment steps are often iterative in nature. While rigor is important, rigidity in methodology can impede the iterative and evolving nature inherent in an HIA process. Similarly, while documentation of process is critical, it must not impede the deep immersion required to produce comprehensive, substantive, evidence-based recommendations.

From the Coffelt case it was clear that having a structured methodological framework was critical at the outset of the project, but during the process it was important to “roll with the punches”. The decisions regarding the types of data to collect, tools to use and analysis methods to employ, were constantly evolving. Informal data collection methods such as conversations on the street with Coffelt residents were as critical in informing the HIA as the data collected from surveys. The “just-do-it” approach of the Coffelt HIA, ensuing primarily from the limited timeframe, also resulted in creative problem-solving methods with regard to data collection and analysis that might have otherwise been eliminated in a highly structured/rigid methodology.

Another lesson learnt from the Coffelt HIA was that immersion in the process was paramount. The benefit of the “just-do-it” approach is the ability to stay embedded in the context, staying in the moment and dealing with the rigorous documentation of that process subsequently. This allows the HIA team to understand and absorb the social dynamics of the context and invest greater amounts of time and energy to pore over the data itself, leading to discoveries of hidden themes and issues. The lack of social cohesion in the Coffelt community was one such issue that emerged as a result of being immersed in the context during the HIA process. These types of discoveries ultimately add richness to the evidence that is used to frame the recommendations.

Team building

A key lesson learned during the Coffelt HIA was the importance of establishing a strong HIA team prior to commencement of the study. The multidisciplinary nature of the study inherently calls for experts in various disciplinary areas and skills to be part of the core team. Choosing team members that are proficient in their disciplines and skills, appreciate the premise of multidisciplinary work, understand the research component of the HIA process and are professional and prompt, are vital to the success of an HIA. As Brian Swanton pointed out, to the development team, the value of the HIA report was enhanced by the fact that it was written by someone with a background in architecture and environmental design, who could translate the findings of the HIA into design language.

Upon completion of the Coffelt HIA it was evident that it would be easier to conduct future HIAs if a local entity maintained a database of qualified content experts that can be assembled into a team on a case-by-case basis.

Need for HIA funding

An HIA is a powerful decision-making tool that analyzes and synthesizes primary and secondary health data through a rigorous scientific process that includes the community, resulting in evidence-based recommendations for the implementation of any plan, policy or project. While the HIA has this incredible potential, a notable challenge of HIA work has been finding reliable and consistent funding sources. Thus far several HIAs have been funded by foundations and charitable trusts, but consistent funding from multiple sources is required to institutionalize the HIA process in projects like the redevelopment public housing.

Additionally, being an emergent tool, there needs to be further research on HIAs including investigations into the effectiveness of the tool, the lessons learned and the value of the HIA to the various stakeholders. Consistent funding can increase the number of HIAs being conducted, which can effectively drive this research.

Value of the HIA

To assess the value of this HIA, interviews were conducted with 3 groups - key stakeholders, residents and potential funders. Each group was asked a series of questions specific to their role or interest.

INTERVIEWS

Gloria Munoz Housing Authority of Maricopa County	Teresa Brice LISC Phoenix	Kathleen Pechman National Bank of Arizona
Brian Swanton Gorman & Company	Suzanne Pfister St. Luke’s Health Initiatives	Jacky Alling & Keva Womble Arizona Community Foundation
Kerry Wilcoxon City of Phoenix Streets and Transportation Department	Palani Einstein Coffelt – Lamoreaux Public Housing Resident	Resident (anonymous) Coffelt – Lamoreaux Public Housing Resident

The semi-structured interviews were conducted via phone and included four broad areas of discussion:

- the value of this (or any) HIA to their role/organization;
- any new/interesting/surprising findings in the Coffelt HIA process;
- ways to take this forward in their own work/organization
- potential for using HIAs in another setting or institutionalizing HIAs.

The following discussion revolves around themes synthesized from these interviews.

A true participatory process

Participation has always been a central premise of HIA work. However the theoretical underpinnings of tools such as the HIA are often divorced from what happens in the real world. While in some participatory planning processes residents are involved, the involvement can be rather cursory and limited. In the HIA process residents are not merely part of a few meetings, but active researchers of their own community and empowered in the decision-making process.

The Housing Authority...

...noted that the depth of resident engagement through the HIA process was powerful in developing the relationships needed with the community for the Housing Authority to take this work forward. Ms. Munoz indicated that while the housing authority was aware of some issues impacting Coffelt, the intensity with which they were impacting the lives of residents was unknown. The elaborate engagement process afforded by the HIA kept residents passionately invested and helped solidify a prioritization plan for the department's resources.

For the developer...

...being able to engage residents and understanding their needs directly informed the architectural programming process. Having resident engagement early on and continuing it through the recommendation development process also meant having buy-in from residents, while being able to manage expectations. In fact Mr. Swanton, having witnessed the community workshops at Coffelt, was so impressed by the meaningful resident engagement that he was contemplating taking this process forward in his future work.

City of Phoenix...

...officials had similar ideas for continued work with the Coffelt community. Mr. Wilcoxon from the streets department confirmed that his department is currently evaluating pedestrian traffic on 19th Ave. as a result of the recommendation to install a HAWK light at Pima and 19th Ave. just outside the Coffelt premises. As part of this investigation, their hope is to engage residents in a manner similar to the HIA process.

Coffelt residents...

...both during the community engagement processes and in the individual interviews declared their ability to have a voice as the most empowering experience of the HIA process. One resident stated that this was the first time when she had voiced an opinion about her living conditions and felt she was actually heard when she saw it translated into a recommendation.

In addition to being heard by the powers that be, several residents commented that the HIA process helped them come together as a community so they could hear each other. Many were unaware that the same issues that they had been concerned with for years were also on the minds of others in their community. One resident interviewee also commented that in addition to being helpful, the engagement process was fun.

Potential funders...

...pointed to the community engagement component as the most valuable part of the HIA because it ensured that funding was directed to resources that would directly impact people's lives where they deemed it necessary.

In the case of the Coffelt HIA there was a strong consensus among stakeholders, residents and potential funders that had reviewed the report, that the community engagement piece was its strength. Residents provided input during community workshops and health surveys; conducted street and park audits; and were part of the expert panel while recommendations were being generated. There were many ways stakeholders viewed the engagement process as valuable.

HIA as a multi-disciplinary tool for collaborative planning

Many urban and regional planning processes tout a participatory approach and collaborative decision-making. The HIA tool truly makes this integral to the process by virtue of being multi-disciplinary in nature. Due to the complexity of issues typically emerging from an HIA, no one person doing the HIA is an expert in content, context, methodology or skill in all areas addressed by the HIA.

At the beginning, the Coffelt HIA brought together experts in planning, public health, environmental assessment, environment behavior studies, community outreach, community engagement, geographical information systems and the residents. As the issues impacting health at Coffelt were revealed during the assessment process, additional experts such as street engineers, landscape architects and epidemiologists were added to the steering committee to develop recommendations. Upon completion of the HIA, Gloria Munoz from the Housing Authority of Maricopa County made it her mission to distribute the HIA report to every possible department, at the city and county level that could be involved. Then with the help of District 5 County supervisor Mary Rose Wilcox she put together another set of partners to bring to the table for the implementation phase. As stated earlier, this turnout of city and county departments working together to solve the problems of one community was unprecedented.

Many of these agencies, such as the health and housing departments at the county level, had never worked together prior to this event. While this was surprising to some potential funders, it is not uncommon. The severity of the issues plaguing Coffelt housing had gone ignored for years until the HIA placed a spotlight on it. Ms. Munoz suggested that the human element brought forth by the HIA was particularly impactful in bringing everybody to the table.

HIA as a catalyst for community development

An HIA can be considered the first step of the community development process. As evident in the Coffelt HIA, the assessment process not only reveals the impact a particular plan, project or policy will have on a community, but also exposes current conditions that are impacting the health of the community. Typically the issues brought forth are complex and impossible to address instantly. Through the HIA process a phased plan can be developed to improve the community. With the HIA addressing issues ranging from the location of grocery stores and the selection of fruits and vegetables they carry to public transportation modes available to the community and the condition of bus stops, implementation of recommendations can have wide-ranging effects. Improvements in the community can draw greater economic interests to the area that stimulates more development, further enhancing the livability of the community.

If the redevelopment of Coffelt, based on the HIA recommendations, were to improve conditions on the site and surrounding streets, the likelihood is that a larger grocery store would want to come into this neighborhood, further enhancing the health of the community.

Brian Swanton, Gorman & Company

Ms. Munoz and Mr. Swanton agreed that in any public housing development the HIA process could be extremely beneficial in informing the redevelopment of the community. Ms. Munoz also indicated that HIAs should be part of neighborhood revitalization projects. Mr. Swanton suggested that the HIA process would be of particular value when larger public policy issues are involved, in large redevelopment projects like Coffelt and projects in which scale and complexity are significant. Mr. Wilcox added that while the HIA process can bring long-term improvements to a community, to keep residents engaged in their community, the easy victories need to come periodically as a reminder of success.

Ms. Pechman from National Bank of Arizona pointed out that the HIA process would be valuable for lending institutions providing pertinent information to a bank about a potential project. Specifically,

1. the potential health implications of the project
2. the significance of the project in the context of the neighborhood or community
3. the objective documentation of the conditions that fit the criteria for a CRA investment.

HIAs could be made a requirement for certain types of projects such as zoning requests for adaptive reuse.

Potential funding agency representative

A broader definition of health

In the HIA world, health has a much broader definition than the metrics that are typically assessed by public health professionals. While the fixed individual health indicators and behaviors provide the platform for assessing health of the community, social, economic and environmental factors such as access to affordable, healthy foods, access to regular, affordable, physical activity and proximity to a freeway also factor in determining the well-being of residents. At Coffelt, the HIA process revealed just how impactful the social and environmental health determinants are in the everyday lives of residents. All stakeholders interviewed here including residents agreed that being part of the HIA process helped them understand this shift and its relevance to their own lives.

Coffelt residents...

...commented that not having a source of affordable healthy food within a walkable distance from their residence inhibits their ability to make better food choices, yet there is little they can do to change those circumstances.

Ms. Munoz from the Housing Authority...

...emphasized that the social determinants of health must be considered and drive decisions around development, particularly if it involves low income communities.

Mr. Swanton from Gorman & Company...

...called the process of considering health in a redevelopment a “game changer”. While developers do not typically approach the design process from health perspective, he saw this approach as much more comprehensive and ultimately impactful in changing the lives people.

Potential funders...

... while embracing this broader definition of health, emphasized the need for more education on the relationship between health and housing, transportation and community development, both for HIA practitioners and funders. Opportunities to provide this type of education were identified and include potential presentations at the Grantmakers Forum, the CRA Roundtable, the Housing Alliance, Urban Land Institute, Valley Partnership and Greater Phoenix Leadership.

Shedding the light on inequity and other hidden issues

Another central premise of HIAs has been the issue of equity. An HIA is designed to assess the impact of a project, policy or plan on the whole population particularly addressing any inequalities that may impact disadvantaged or marginalized subgroups in the population.

The Coffelt HIA primarily addressed a disadvantaged population and recommendations were specifically geared to address such inequalities. A plethora of existing environmental issues and several emerging from the construction phase of the redevelopment were brought to light in the HIA. The recommendations primarily targeting design components of the redevelopment addressed each of these issues in an effort to mitigate the impact they would have on the health of the community. Ms. Munoz also made the observation that disparities in access to food, facilities and other resources for this community were made transparent through the HIA process.

Another issue that came to light through the HIA process was the sense of disempowerment in the community. With most residents working two to three jobs and concerns about safety keeping them indoors in the evening hours, there is little time and very few safe places to socialize. The lack of social cohesion in this community was brought forth during the HIA process and presented itself as a community health issue. Social cohesion helps build networks and friendships that provide access to material and emotional support including the ability for a community to take collective action. When this issue and mitigating recommendations were presented to Coffelt residents, there was a unanimous sense of empowerment. Both at the community check-in meeting and in individual interviews, residents commented that the HIA's recommendation to form a community council with the help of the local CDC is what would truly bring the community together in a way they had not been for years.

Mr. Wilcoxon shared that through the Coffelt HIA his department first learnt that streets within the Coffelt-Lamoreaux public housing complex were not city-owned. Though distressed because none of the upgrade and maintenance recommended by the HIA for the streets within Coffelt could be implemented by his department, he identified other action steps that could be initiated because the situation had been brought to the forefront.

Without the HIA, issues surrounding ownership of streets within the Coffelt site may never have come to the city's attention.

Mr. Wilcoxon, City of Phoenix Streets and Transportation Department

Conclusion

In spite of the many challenges that were uncovered during the Coffelt HIA, the recommendations made to help mitigate the impacts of the proposed redevelopment on the health of the community, were well received. Both the Housing Authority of Maricopa County and the developer perceived the HIA as a tool beneficial in informing the specifics of the redevelopment, but also as a catalyst for continued growth and progress of the community. The lessons learned from the Coffelt HIA add value and direction to HIA practitioners in this emergent practice, particularly to those focused on housing and community development related issues.

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