Key Elements of Engaging, Building and Sustaining Partnerships in South Atlanta for the Environment (SAFE) Coalition

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ECO-Action

The SAFE project is made possible through a US EPA CARE funding agreement
SAFE
Community Action for a Renewed Environment
The Reality of Building and Maintaining Partnerships: South Atlanta for the Environment (SAFE) Coalition’s Experience

- Outline
  - 1.0 Introduction and Context
  - 2.0 Tapping Unto Existing Structure and Relationships
  - 3.0 Tools and Methods: MOU; CARE Project Sustainability Checklist; Establishing Teams; Change Agent Training; and Neighborhood Project
  - 4.0 Engaging Industry- Finding what works
  - 5.0 Gains/Results of Sustained Partnerships
  - 6.0 Lessons Learned
  - 7.0 Conclusion & Q/A
Neighborhood Planning Unit V:
A Mile from the Capitol, but a World Away
Economic Profile

- Economic decline ensued after the construction of Interstates 75/85 and 20; businesses relocated to the northern suburbs; NPU-V’s economic infrastructure has yet to recover.
- As a result, 1,296 properties are vacant, the equivalent of 42% of total properties (Oct. 2006).
- Currently, 66% of residents earn less than 25,000/year.
- According to the 1990-2000 U.S Census, NPU-V’s unemployment rate was 20%; recent (unofficial) data shows a similar rate.
- 29% of household headed by a single parent.
Accountable Communities Healthy Together

- Funded through the National Center for Minority Health and Disparities
- CBPR which proposed to reduce health disparities within NPU-V
- Four Initiatives, one of which was the Photovoice project
- Photovoice evolved into the Dirty Truth Campaign
Dirty Truth Campaign

Dirty Truth Campaign is a grassroots organization based in NPU-V, which advocates for:

- Demolition or rehabilitation of NPU-V’s nuisance properties
- Affordable permanent housing for our most vulnerable residents
- A community free of excessive trash and blight
- For more information go to www.dirtytruth.org
ECO-Action

- ECO-Action facilitates the Grassroots Environmental Network & provides training in community organizing, capacity building, and leadership development, which helps ensure sustainability
- The work is based on the intersection of three things:
  - Threats to human health
  - Environmental degradation
  - Social injustice

The Mission: **Promoting a safe and healthy environment by helping Georgia communities organize to confront environmental health threats**
South Atlanta for the Environment-SAFE-is a community based partnership, spearheaded primarily by Environmental Community Action (ECO-Action), The Dirty Truth Campaign and Georgia State University.

This two-year funding agreement was awarded to ECO-Action by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency.
SAFE's Strategic Plan

From the beginning, SAFE has worked toward the goal of sustainability. A vital component is collaboration among:

- Academic institutions
- Community-based organizations
- Municipal, County, State, and Federal government agencies
- The faith community
- Local businesses
Planning for Sustainability and Accountability of SAFE Community-Based Partnerships
SAFE
South Atlanta For the Environment

[Map of South Atlanta showing neighborhoods and streets]
What is SAFE (South Atlanta for the Environment) Coalition?

- a community-based environmental health collaborative of residents, community-based organizations, neighborhood groups, governmental agencies, businesses and other stakeholders in Neighborhood Planning Unit-V (NPU-V)

- funded by the Federal Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) through its CARE (Community Action for a Renewed Environment) program through a cooperative agreement with Environmental Community Action Inc. (ECO-Action)

- Convened and facilitated by ECO-Action (www.eco-act.org) in collaboration with other partners (www.dirtytruth.org).
What is the Purpose of SAFE?

- SAFE is about sowing the **seeds of hope** and using the **power of collaboration** for environmental health protection in NPU-V.
- Facilitate inter-generational learning and youth development for social and environmental health justice.
7 Milestones

- Develop a community based environmental health collaborative
- Conduct a multimedia environmental health assessment
- Design and implement a leadership training institute
- Establish environmental priorities
- Develop an environmental risk reduction plan
- Share lessons learned with other communities
- Ensure the sustainability of SAFE beyond the current funding source

End Outcomes
- A sustained collaborative with the ability to prevent and reduce environmental health exposures
- Improved physical and psychological health status
- A just and livable environment
How do We Work Together?

We work together with an understanding of **mutual respect** and **trust** that embody:

- Engaging, building and sustaining relationships
- Applying the elements of our MOU (i.e., mission, lessons from the geese) to our working relationships and decision making
- Using CARE Project Sustainability Checklist
- Working in teams that encourages participation and ownership of SAFE
- Accountability to self, NPU-V leadership, community, and funder (EPA)
SAFE’S MOU

- **Vision**: A Community free of environmental hazards, which promotes Health and Safety for All.

  **Mission**: To work together as a team to identify, reduce and prevent environmental health hazards in Neighborhood Planning Unit-V (NPU-V)
SAFE’s MOU.

- Adopt and apply CARE sustainability checklist (see www.epa.gov/care/) towards ensuring the sustainability of SAFE beyond the current funding cycle
- Key Elements of Sustaining SAFE Partnerships
How Did We Ensure Accountability and Sustainability?

**Accountability:** Doing what you say you are going to do - QAPP

**Sustainability:** In the context of EPA CARE project, sustainability means CARE projects whose community-based partnerships continue to improve the local environment after CARE funding ends.

- SAFE is **not** promising to deliver the people of NPU-V from environmental problems.
- SAFE is **believing in individual residents and our partners** to empower themselves to address environmental hazards/risks in NPU-V community and its surroundings.
- We all must demonstrate our passion and power to create pathway for environmental health protection in NPU-V community and its surroundings.
- Apply the CARE sustainability checklist appropriately (5 key elements)
- Honor the requirements/protocols of the Quality Assurance Protect Plan (QAPP) to ensure accountability.
- Facilitate transfer of learning by all but most especially among graduates of the ECO-Action’s Capacity Building and Leadership Training Institute (CBLTI)
- Participants of (CBLTI) will be required to develop a personalized support system
- Make SAFE a learning organization, in which people at all levels, individually and collectively, are continually increasing their capacity to get results they really care about (Karsh, R 1994)
Capacity Building and Leadership Training Institute

Purpose: Prepare change agents that will work in partnerships to improve environmental health of the NPU-V community and its surroundings after CARE funding ends

- Discover your motivation, attitude, skills and knowledge (MASK) in order to build capacity for social change in your community
- Deepen your understanding of the community building process in communities of color
- Learn how you can serve as a change agent in helping other people discover their motivation, attitude, skills and knowledge for making a difference
Capacity Building and Leadership Training Institute

- **Purpose Continued:**
  - Expand your knowledge of the relationship between environmental impact and human health
  - Increase your understanding of how to transfer your learning to others in order to make a difference in their communities
  - Create a support system to sustain your motivation for making a difference
  - Become part of a network of diverse individuals with a social change perspective

- **Methods:** Use of variety of methods
What is MASK?

- Motivation
- Attitude
- Skills
- Knowledge
- MASK functions to
  - Build support systems
  - Unmask individuals as community citizens who CAN make a positive difference in their environmental health
CARE
LOCAL PARTNERSHIPS. HEALTHY COMMUNITIES.

SAFE
Community Action for a Renewed Environment
...Serve as change agents for preventing and reducing environmental hazards through organizingollective action
Environmental Health Hazards in South Atlanta
SAFE Objectives
For Environmental Health Hazards

- Develop an inventory of environmental health concerns
- Provide community members with information on the potential health hazards posed by environmental problems
- Address concerns identified by community members and describe the public health implications of each one
Key Questions

- What concerns have been identified?
- What concerns has been assessed?
- What concerns are most likely to cause harm to people?
- What concerns are of greatest interest to community members?
NPU-V Residents’ Concerns

- Water quality
- Waste, trash, illegal dumping
- Tree preservation
- Brownfields
- Vacant properties
- Toxic mold (housing)
- Cancer
- Outdoor air pollution
- Drugs and crime
- Child safety
- Lack of recycling
- Abandoned buildings
Sources of Data for Assessment

- USEPA Envirofacts
- Georgia EPD records
- Other government records
- Resident’s concerns
  - Listening sessions
  - Photovoice
  - Living room chats
Hazards

- Contaminated sites
  - Brownfields
  - RCRA
- Air pollutants
- Housing and built environment
Facilities with Regulated Land Activities Around CARE Communities in Atlanta, GA
Contaminated Sites

- **U.S. Plating**
  - Soil and groundwater contaminated with metals
- **Former Stewart Avenue Substation**
  - Soil contaminated with lead and PCBs
Brownfields

- 950 sites identified in City
- Potential environmental contamination
- Economic development
- Community development
University Avenue Site

- 30-acre unused site (Brownfields)
- Former trucking operation
- Lead, asbestos in abandoned buildings
- USTs, possible groundwater and soil contamination
University Avenue

- Tremendous redevelopment potential
- Annie E. Casey Foundation effort to improve community in concert with site plans
Air Quality

- **Sources**
  - Mobile (freeways)
  - Stationary
- **Monitoring data**
  - PM 2.5
  - Ozone
Facilities with Regulated Air Releases Around CARE Communities in Atlanta, GA

Legend
- Atlanta CARE
- TRI Facilities
Housing

- Lead paint
- Mold
- Injury hazards
- “Broken windows”
Quality Assurance and QAPP’s: Tools for Sustainability
Quality Assurance

- A program for the systematic monitoring and evaluation of the various aspects of a project, service, or facility to ensure that standards of quality are being met – Merriam-Webster
- Quality Assurance is a key factor in achieving sustainability in environmental efforts
Quality Assurance: A Tool for Sustainability

- Helps organizations maintain focus on goals
- Ensures projects adhere to timelines
- Provides a method for accountability
- Provides a framework with which to structure future steps after the project has ended
Quality Assurance Project Plans

- Required document for those receiving funding from the EPA
  - A QAPP is a written document that describes the quality assurance procedures, quality control specifications, and other technical activities that must be implemented to ensure that the results of the project or task to be performed will meet project specifications.
A QAPP GIVES YOUR PROJECT A WRITTEN PLAN FOR EVERY PHASE THAT SAYS:

- What you are going to do
- How you are going to do it
- What measures you will use
- How you will evaluate it
- What are you going to do if things aren’t going as planned
SAFE QAPP

- Adapted MAPP as a guideline
- Utilized “Milestone” framework to define quality objectives and criteria
- Adhered to MAPP protocols for internal and external evaluation
- Tailored community specific tools from the MAPP toolkit found on the NACCHO website
# SAFE 1st Quarter Progress

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### Building Coalition
- Ongoing

### Conduct Multimedia Assessment
- Ongoing

### Leadership Training Institute
- 6/6 and 6/20

### Neighborhood Sessions (5)
- 3/29 Summerhill
- 5/21 in Mechanicsville

### Listening Sessions
- Door to door outreach
- Public outreach
- Print media

**Color Key:**
- **= ongoing
- **= Planned/scheduled
- ■ = milestone completed
Challenges

- A QAPP is an extensive and complex document
  - It is time consuming
  - It requires “manpower” that smaller organizations may have trouble being able to spare

- It can be difficult to fit a community based project into the rigid constructs of a QAPP
  - More qualitative than quantitative (ie less numbers and more people)
  - It is difficult to truly measure concepts such as capacity building, community empowerment, and community mobilization within a grant period
Conclusions

- NPU-V residents’ participation in SAFE helped community members make the connection between the environment and health.
- We are committed to making sustainability a way of life for SAFE by making SAFE a learning organization.
- Residents’ concerns will be addressed, and information to help make decisions will be provided.
- Quality Assurance and a QAPP can provide a structure for evaluation and a framework for sustainability.
Contaminated Sites - Assessment

- What substances have been released into the environment?
- What are the potential pathways for human exposure?
- What are the toxic properties of the substances?
- Are health effects - long-term and short-term - likely to occur?