

CAYUGA TERRACE, OCEANVIEW-MERCED- INGLESIDE (OMI), EXCELSIOR, CROCKER AMAZON, NEW MISSION TERRACE, AND OUTER MISSION

ENGAGED LEARNING ZONE PROJECT – PHASE I



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San Francisco's District 11 Neighborhoods: Cayuga Terrace, Oceanview-Merced-Ingleside (OMI), Excelsior, Crocker Amazon, New Mission Terrace, and Outer Mission

Executive Summary

Introduction

In 2009, SF State's Institute for Civic and Community Engagement (ICCE) and the City and County of San Francisco's Neighborhood Empowerment Network (NEN) launched a new partnership, called NEN University (NENU). NENU connects the resources of local higher education institutions with the NEN to address critical issues as defined by residents in San Francisco's diverse neighborhoods. After evaluating best practices in community sustainability nationwide, one of the first undertakings of NENU was to initiate an Engaged Learning Zone (ELZ)¹ project in District 11 in San Francisco covering six distinct neighborhoods: Cayuga Terrace; Oceanview-Merced-Ingleside (OMI); Excelsior; Crocker Amazon; New Mission Terrace; and Outer Mission.

Goals and Methods

The overarching goal of the ELZ is to determine whether building capacity of local networks can help San Francisco neighborhoods become more resilient. Overall analysis of the City of New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina shows a stark contrast in the quality and speed of recovery in its neighborhoods. Specifically, neighborhoods that had pre-existing community-supported networks (i.e. "neighborhood associations") were better able to re-purpose themselves and support their communities as they moved from restoration to recovery. These strong neighborhoods are also better able to address many other issues of local concern. District 11 was identified as a target for this project because of its diverse population and because a high percentage of families who live in its neighborhoods contain many vulnerable children and seniors. With strong support from San Francisco Supervisor John Avalos' office (D 11) and the Mayor's Office of Housing/Community Development Division (MOH/CDD), Phase I of the ELZ process consisted of analyzing neighborhood resources (assets), their needs, and aligning neighborhood projects with SF State Community Service Learning (CSL) students. A team of seven interviewers collected data for this report. Sampling techniques enabled the team to identify 368 prospective interviewees—156 neighborhood stakeholders and 212 stakeholders from the business community. This project is being conducted in three phases between 2011 and 2016 in four of D11's six neighborhoods.

Principal Findings

These findings suggest that there is a strong foundation for developing social capital in the D11 neighborhood, but that foundation needs to be nurtured as the neighborhood changes and continues to struggle with the impacts of the current financial crisis. Analysis indicates that there is a need for more effective communication strategies and leadership skills development in stakeholders, which would enhance collaborations. One important way neighborhood stakeholders, city agencies, and SF State can support the development of social capital is to ensure that neighborhood groups become more deliberate about outreach to non-English speaking populations, whether through translators, bilingual services, accessible print and online information (neighborhood newspapers, electronic newsletters, or websites), or by providing English language training and incentives for language diverse residents to participate. Neighborhood stakeholders said they benefitted in tangible ways from their relationship with SF State and its students—they were better able to understand neighborhood needs and to address those needs, and student(s) work facilitated cooperation between diverse groups, which helped build neighborhood capacity. Given these favorable viewpoints, we recommend developing more collaborative projects that involve students from higher education and neighborhood stakeholders.

¹ Engaged Learning Zone (ELZ) project was previously known as the Alliance for Strong Inclusive Neighborhoods (ASIN) project.