

Environmental Justice: Context-Sensitive Planning Grants

City Heights Walks to School

- **Grant Amount:** \$129,319
- **Grant Recipient:** San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG)
- **County:** San Diego

Project Area – The project is located in the community of City Heights, which is one of several communities in the Mid City area of San Diego.

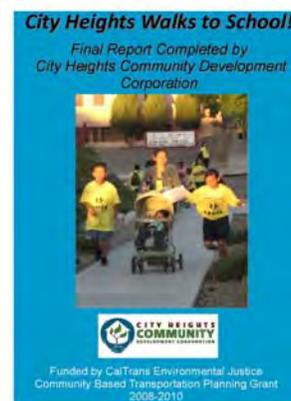
Project Focus – The community of City Heights is highly transit dependent and lacks adequate transportation options, and the need is present for more pedestrian friendly streets. Because of the lack of available funds and growing concern among residents, City Heights Community Development Corporation (CHCDC) has been advocating for additional pedestrian safety infrastructure, such as enhanced crosswalks and curb extensions to be built around existing schools and in conjunction with new school construction. It is estimated that over half of the children in City Heights walk to school. Twice as many children were injured by cars in Mid-City during the 1998-99 school year than in the City of San Diego as a whole.

Project Goals – The project proposes outreach to parents, children, officials, community stakeholders and residents to plan for safe routes to schools in City Heights. The creation and/or update to safe routes to schools maps for each school identified in the application with direct input from residents, parents and

school and city officials. In addition to the maps, a needs assessment will be completed for each school that identifies deficiencies, solutions and costs of implementing pedestrian safety improvements.

Community Outreach – Two types of surveys were offered during the City Heights Walks to School project. The first type of survey was a student tally, in which students inside classrooms were asked by their teachers how they arrived to school (i.e walk, family car, bike, carpool, school bus). The second survey was offered to all parents involved in workshops during the school neighborhood mapping meetings. The survey asked how far away the parents lived from the school, what barriers kept them from allowing their students to walk to school on their own, and how their children arrived to school and returned home.

Environmental Justice Community Involvement – The CHCDC Neighborhood Improvement and Resident Services Staff met regularly with the local neighborhood associations and officials to identify problems and focus areas to implement solutions.



Environmental Justice: Context-Sensitive Planning Grants

Project Outcome – The “City Heights Walks to School” project covers the elements of education, encouragement, enforcement and engineering into one community-wide program. The final outcome of the project was a collection of surveys and data relating to improving pedestrian safety and walkability in City Heights.

Challenges

- Much of what is needed to make it safe to walk to and from school is desperately lacking in City Heights: missing, cracked, uprooted, inconstant sidewalks and curb ramps as well as lack of public lighting.
- Many families walking with baby strollers and young children are forced to walk in the street on their way to school.

Successes

- Using *City Heights Walks to School's* deficiency maps to make key decisions towards infrastructure repairs in City Heights neighborhoods, the Crossroads Redevelopment Project Area Committee allocated half a million dollars towards repair of sidewalks in Marshall Elementary School attendance boundary, and the City Heights Redevelopment Project Area Committee allocated several million dollars towards repair and replacement of sidewalks in the Mary Lanyon Fay and Ibarra Elementary School's attendance boundaries.