



# NENu: Neighborhood Capacity Building through Community, Public Agencies and University Partnerships

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## ***Title of Project:***

NENu: Neighborhood Capacity Building through Community, Public Agencies and University Partnerships

## ***Grade Level/Setting:***

Higher Education

## ***Brief Project Description:***

A continuing partnership between the City and County of San Francisco's Neighborhood Empowerment Network and the Institute for Civic and Community Engagement (ICCE) at SF State called NENu, involves multiple projects that engage students in service to San Francisco neighborhoods and non-profit organizations. The goal of this long-term project is to build neighborhood capacity and develop neighborhood leaders to address critical issues defined by residents living in San Francisco neighborhoods.

One of the initiatives under the NENu Neighborhood Resilience Project is the **Alliance for Strong Inclusive Neighborhoods (ASIN)**, which brings together a wide variety of neighborhood stakeholders to identify and prioritize common challenges, set goals, mobilize available resources, and implement strategies for change. Working together, neighborhoods will create a network of agencies and individuals who can bring about positive change for local communities.

## ***Brief Project Introduction:***

**The Alliance for Strong Inclusive Neighborhoods (ASIN)** is a geographically focused, five year initiative that is taking a project approach to supporting a community as it develops the capacity to achieve the highest level of resiliency and social capital. Initially, ASIN is working in District 11 in San Francisco which entails four neighborhoods [Excelsior, Crocker Amazon, Outer Mission and the OMI (Oceanview-Merced-Ingleside)] and the Polk Street Corridor which extends to District 2, 3 and 6. Eventually, ASIN methods will be utilized in all of San Francisco's many neighborhoods.

In the first year, this project did a thorough analysis of the community assets, conducted numerous stakeholder interviews, developed short-term projects with agencies in District 11 and provided funding to faculty for CSL course integration, and worked very closely with several city departments, the District 11 Supervisor's office, and two neighborhood coalitions to coordinate action.

## ***Methods***

ASIN's method employs asset-based community development approaches coupled with an emphasis on civic engagement. The key to neighborhood renewal is to increase the power and effectiveness of stakeholders by identifying assets and creating connections. Asset-based community development method embraces the traditions of community organizing, economic development, and neighborhood planning by:

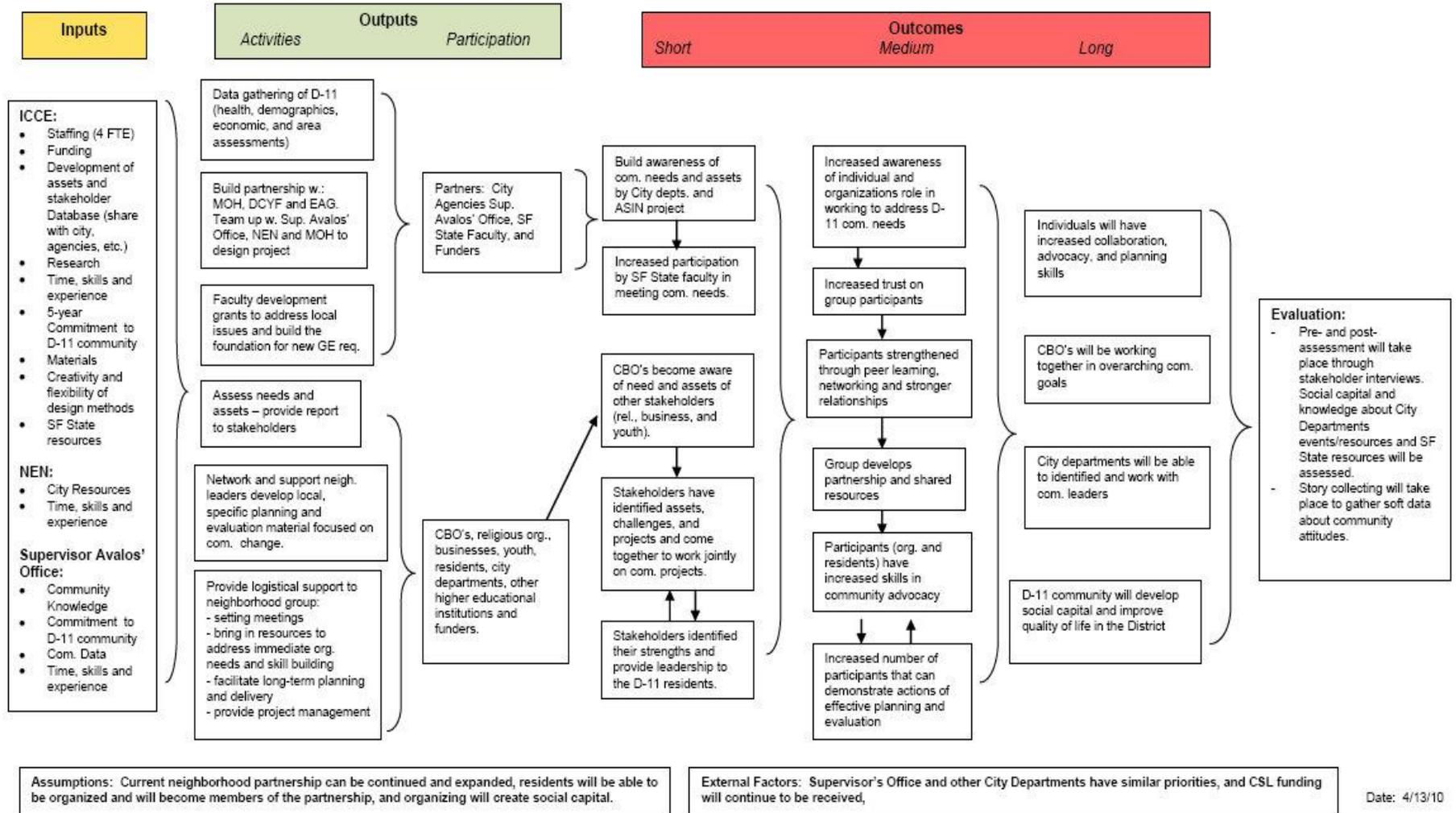
1. Identifying and utilizing existing community assets;
2. Building on the problem-solving capacities of local residents and organizations; and
3. Fostering relationships between and among local residents and neighborhood institutions.

Neutral conveners, including ICCE staff and SF State students, will be brought in to collaborate with neighborhood stakeholders to form a local coordinating structure to address locally-defined needs.

# Description of Service Learning Coursework:

## Program: D-11 ASIN Logic Model

**Situation:** The inevitability of a major earthquake occurring in San Francisco, and the lessons learned by the city of New Orleans in the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, have had strong implications on the central concept and approach of the NEN and the impetus for the ASIN project. Overall analysis of New Orleans' recovery shows a stark contrast in the quality and speed of recovery in its neighborhoods. A key factor was that pre-hurricane communities that have successfully recovered had a community supported network (i.e. a "neighborhood association") that was able to be re-purposed to support the community after the disaster as it moved from restoration to recovery. The ASIN project hopes to nurture the development of social capital (strong, inclusive, and resilient networks citywide) in neighborhoods that have the capacity to not only support and addresses day-to-day challenges, but that can also be reconstituted immediately after an earthquake or similar disaster, and provide the community with the stability and support it will most likely need. This capacity is best described as *Resiliency*. The D-11 neighborhood organizations and residents are not organized to work together if a major disaster occurs. Residents lack the skills to become involved in neighborhood programs and organizations lack the staffing to do outreach and engage all residents in neighborhood organizing efforts. The Alliance for Strong Inclusive Neighborhoods (ASIN) is a geographically focused initiative that is taking a project approach to supporting a community as it develops the capacity to achieve the highest level of resiliency and social capital.



## **Description of Service Learning Coursework:**

### **Polk Street Corridor Resiliency Project Spring 2010 – Department of Urban Studies and Planning / URBS 680**

#### **Description:**

Over the last few years a coalition of San Francisco City Agencies and Academic Institutions has been analyzing the relationship of community resiliency<sup>1</sup> and recovery from major natural disasters. A key outcome of this analysis is that an accelerated recovery from an event is possible if communities are well organized with high levels of social capital<sup>2</sup> in place in advance of the catastrophe.

A dialogue has started within the Polk Street Corridor community about its resilience capacity in the face of a major earthquake, as well as other hazards (large and small). An outcome of this dialogue has been to explore launching a formal capacity development process at the community level with the intention of ensuring the highest level of resiliency at the individual, organizational and cultural level within the entire Polk St. corridor.

The model being considered is a derivative of the "Strong Community Initiative" in San Jose which created geographically oriented "councils" or "workgroups" which was comprised of traditional community stakeholders (community & merchant associations, non-profits, faith based orgs) and key service delivery agencies (Police, Public Works, Recreation and Parks, Economic Development).

The goal of the Polk St. Corridor community is to create councils and have them convene on a regular basis and create a platform that would:

- 1) Offer a routine convening space for key stakeholders to meet and build stronger working relationships
- 2) Allow for better organized / cross sector response to short and long term issues
- 3) Ultimately develop and sustain key working relationships that can be leveraged to help rebuild the community after a major natural disaster.

#### **Goals for URBS 680 students:**

As part of the preliminary phase of this long-term project, your team will work to achieve the following goals:

- 1) To collect data from various sources within the Polk Street community in order to create a "snapshot" / "profile" of the area including historical, demographic, physical/structural and current conditions;
- 2) To identify issues that are presently impeding or promoting the development of convening groups and overall community growth;
- 3) To recognize best practices and provide recommendations for addressing the identified issues in order to move forward with convening stakeholder "councils" and begin a local problem solving initiative.

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<sup>1</sup> For purposes of this project, resilience is defined as "a multi-dimensional construct defined as the capacity of individuals, families, communities, systems and institutions to anticipate, withstand and/or judiciously engage with catastrophic events and/or experiences, actively making meaning out of adversity, with the goal of maintaining 'normal' function without fundamentally losing their identity" (Tufts University, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> Often defined as the web of "social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance, and trustworthiness" (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003), where social networks represent the connections between individuals, groups, and organizations. Social capital is seen, by many, as vital to the capacity of resilient communities because it creates a sense of community and an emotional connection to the community, known as "place attachment" (Norris & Stevens, 2007).

## **Structure and Timeline:**

The project is organized into three areas/teams:

- Upper Polk
- Middle Polk
- Lower Polk

Keeping in mind that the project will be completed within the SF State Spring academic calendar; the project will begin on the week of February 15 and will end on or by the week of May 17. Please see "Preliminary Project Timeline and Milestones" attachment at end of the document.

## **Requirements and Final Products:**

### Asset Mapping

Asset mapping will be required in order to create a "snapshot" or profile of the local community. Asset mapping comes from an "asset-based" approach to community development, and refers to a range of approaches that work from the principle that a community can be built only by focusing on the strengths and capacities of the citizens and associations that call a neighborhood or community "home"<sup>3</sup>.

There are two levels of assets to be considered for this project:

- 1) "Skills and Capacities" of stakeholders. For this level you will be conducting interviews with local stakeholders including residents, merchants, educators, advocates, etc. The interviews should be conversational, but guided by a set of questions (these will be provided to you). The data from the interviews should be transcribed and the findings will inform your analysis of local issues and stakeholder/community capacities.
- 2) "Associations, Institutions and Commerce" present in a community. These can be any local places through which local people come together to pursue common goals as well as physical locales including government, storefronts, hospitals, academic institutions, and human service agencies and buildings. For this level you will be canvassing the community and noting all of the assets that exist. The association and institution data should be organized on an excel spreadsheet and should inform your analysis regarding gaps in services and types of representation of the community.

*All of the above information will be the basis for the final recommendation report.*

### Final Recommendation Report

We ask that your final report incorporate the following three areas:

- 1) Overview - Description of Goal of Project/Initiative
  - What is the basic purpose/vision of the project/initiative? Who will benefit from it?
  - What are the problems, needs and/or values that justify the project?
  - Who specifically experiences this problem or need and/or supports the value?
  - What data exists that validates your perception of the problem, need or value?
  - How will the problem, need or value change through this project?
  - How does this project help fulfill the stakeholder/stakeholder priorities and needs?
- 2) Background of the Community/Project/Initiative
  - Provide a narrative of the community/project/initiative
  - Timeline – provide timeline, when was this project/initiative implemented? Steps?
  - Stakeholder Profile
  - Snapshot of Polk St. (incorporate historical data/profile, as well as demographics)
  - Describe the regional breakdown of Polk St.

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<sup>3</sup> Kretzmann, John P. and McKnight, John L. Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets. Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research, Neighborhood Innovations Network, Northwestern University, 2040 Sheridan Road, Evanston, IL. 1993.

- Provide the list of questions (explain why these particular questions were chosen)

### 3) Outcomes – Key Highlights

#### Assessment of:

- Clear set of capacities and skills
- Clear set of stakeholder identified challenges and needs
- Clear set of solutions
- Level of individual/stakeholder roles & responsibilities (civic participation rates)
- Level of community cooperation (measure the development & effectiveness)
- Level of network development of outside partners (measure the development & effectiveness)
- Lessons learned...how will the results impact the constituents/community?
- Recommended next steps.

#### Community Presentation

The team will be expected to present an oral report to the Polk St. community regarding findings of this project. This presentation should incorporate the key ideas from your Final Recommendation Report and should be organized in a cohesive and fluid fashion. For this portion, each team will have to work together to determine how to present the information (format and layout, key findings, speaking points, etc.). Additional detail about the presentation will be provided in the near future.

## ***Polk Street Resiliency Project - Preliminary Project Timeline and Milestones***

- Week 4  
(Feb. 15-19, 2010)
- Orientation meeting; Define scope of work.
- Week 5  
(Feb. 22-26)
- Second meeting; brainstorm stakeholder questions and community profile info.
  - Create initial set of stakeholder questions to be submitted to Polk St. Steering Committee for review.
- Week 6  
(Mar. 1-5)
- Meeting with Polk St. Steering Committee
    - Provide feedback and approve stakeholder interview questions
    - Determine community profile data to be captured
    - Define boundaries of all three neighborhoods.
  - Email introduction to stakeholders
- Week 7-9  
(Mar. 8-12, 15-19 & 22-26)
- Formalize final interview questions
  - Interview outreach; calls and emails to stakeholders
  - Schedule and conduct interviews
  - Physical asset mapping
  - Continuous updates and communication via online meeting or in-person
- Week 10  
(Mar. 29-April 2)
- Spring Break – Students are welcome to continue mapping and interviewing
- Week 11  
(April 5-9)
- Continue interviews and physical mapping
  - Entire team re-groups to determine next steps; review interview response rate, interview transcription; physical mapping status.
  - Begin to review interviews and analyze trends and commonalities.
- Week 12-13  
(April 12-16 & 19-23)
- Wrap-up all interviews and mapping
  - Complete pending interview transcriptions
  - Begin to draft Final Recommendation Report
- Week 14-15  
(April 26-30 & May 3-7)
- Work to complete Final Recommendation Report by Friday May 7<sup>th</sup>, 2010
  - Submit final draft to Project Manager for review and feedback
  - Begin organizing Community Presentation; coordinate roles and responsibilities
  - Complete and deliver presentation for URBS course by May 4<sup>th</sup>
- Week 16  
(May 10-14)
- Incorporate feedback into report and complete final draft
  - Complete Community Presentation
  - Present findings to Polk St. Steering Committee on (TBD)
- Week 17  
(May 17-21, 2010)
- Submit Final Recommendation Report