Environmental Justice & Community Engagement

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Stormwater EJ Case Study: Gary, Indiana

Northwest Environmental Justice Center

Who is Willamette Partnership?

EJ Stormwater Case Study: Gary, Indiana

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Example of EJ in Practice

- At City scale
- Acknowledge disadvantaged neighborhoods get priority
- Give them a pot of money to address a specific issue
- Provide support for residents to inform without overburdening
- Residents guide location, purpose and design
- Infrastructure implemented by public sector
- Resident / City partnership for stewardship

Vacant to Vibrant Program

Funded by Great Lakes Protection Fund

Initiative led by Cleveland Botanic Garden

Local Leads to Implement

Supported Great Lakes cities

- Cleveland, OH
- Buffalo, NY
- Gary, IN

The Big Idea

Stormwater Pocket Parks on Vacant Lots

- Reduce street & property flooding
- Low design & installation costs
- Provide neighborhood amenities
- Reduce crime
- Community stewarded & maintained w/ support from the City

Gary, Indiana

Located 25 miles SE of Chicago on coast of Lake Michigan

- Heavy industry based economy (i.e.: steel plants)
- High crime rate (Top 3% in Indiana)
- Lots of Environmental Issues (Grand Calumet River)
- Under consent decree from USEPA for CSO events

Tribune reporter Casey Bukro dips his hand into oil-covered waters in Indiana harbor. (Compare with picture on page 8.)

Demographics

- ~70,000 residents
  - (178,320 at peak)
- 78% African American
- 27.1% of families in poverty

Local Project Team

- Led by Gary Sanitary District's Stormwater Management Team
- Support by
  - Alliance for the Great Lakes
  - Delta Institute
  - Boys & Girls Club
- Engineering Consulting Support

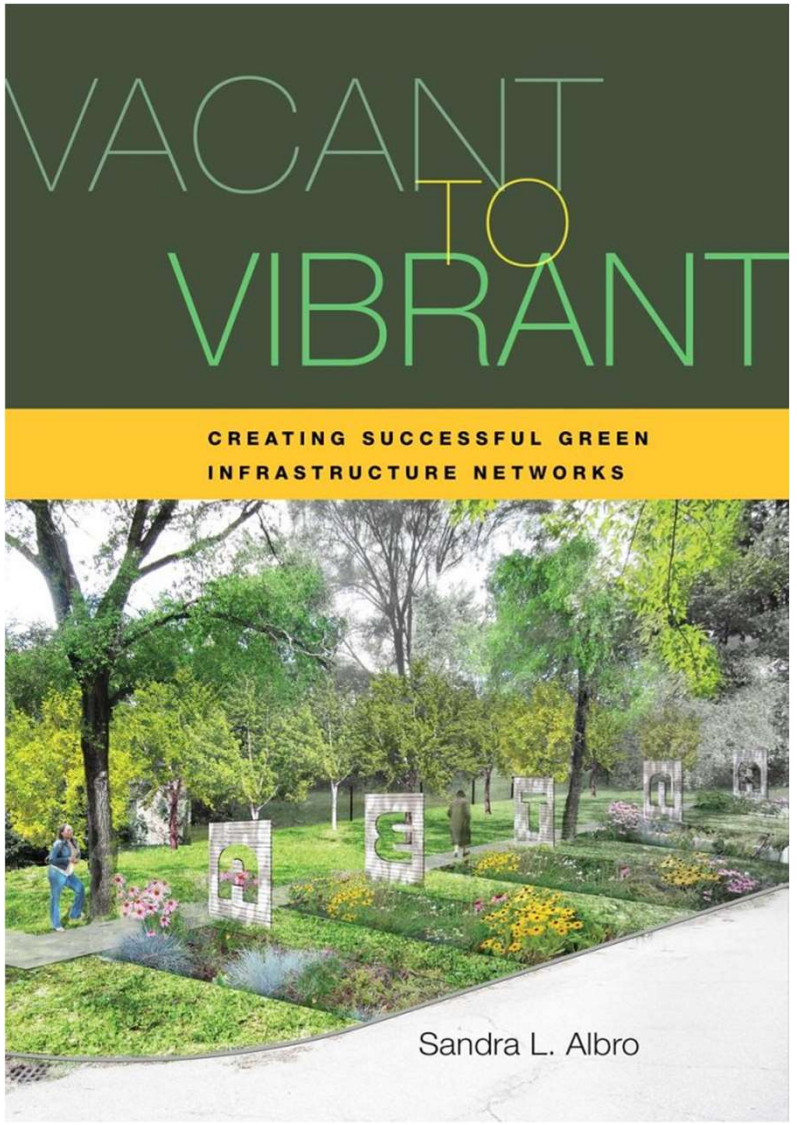
Engage Residents

Where is the need?

Which vacant lots?

Which amenities?

- Partnered w/ local CBOs
- Held at Boys & Girls Club
- Dinner provided



Resident Planning Session

Planned Small Groups

5-10 residents per group

Expert facilitator per group

Each group looked over 1 or 2 neighborhoods

Large neighborhood maps w/ vacant lots highlighted

Photo Credit: Alliance for the Great Lakes

Guiding Questions

Where have you seen street flooding?

Where would you like to see reduced neighborhood crime?

First Output: Potential Streets & Intersections identified

How would you like to use a neighborhood pocket park?

Who should be involved in planning & maintaining the pocket park?

Second Output: 1-2 vacant sites per neighborhood for stormwater pocket parks

Sandra L. Albro

Inclusive Stormwater Planning Basics
Outreach & Workshop Planning

- **Start community engagement EARLY with VISIONING**
- Do your research as to learn where are the frontline communities
- Partner & fund CBO's/groups that already connect with them
- Handouts/reports in the language(s) of frontline community members

Inclusive Stormwater Planning Basics Workshop Facilitation

- Mix of large and small groups w/ lots of facilitators
- Move away from the Presentation and Feedback model
- Start with listening & end with listening
- Plan, record, respond (timely) to resident input/feedback

Great Additions to Include…

- Provide "good government" services as an added value
- Provide childcare, in-person translation services

Why this was a successful project

- Pot of money at the start to plan and implement
- Goal of focusing investments in hardest hit neighborhoods
- Remove barriers for resident participation
- Resident directed
- Addressed other issues besides water
- Clear roles/responsibilities at the start

What also helps…

Regulatory compliance driver/incentive/requirement

TCTAC - Northwest Environmental Justice Center

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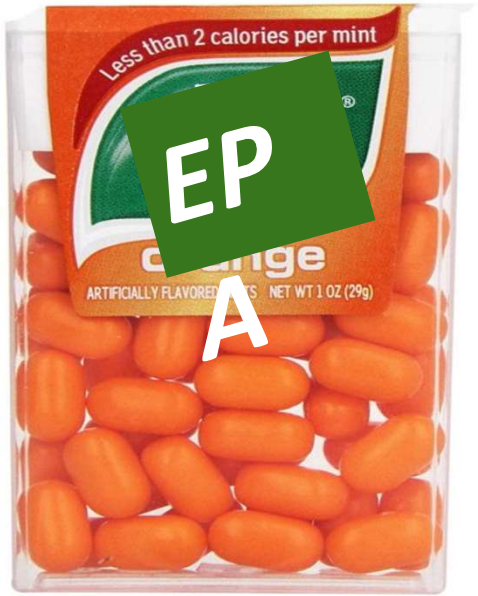
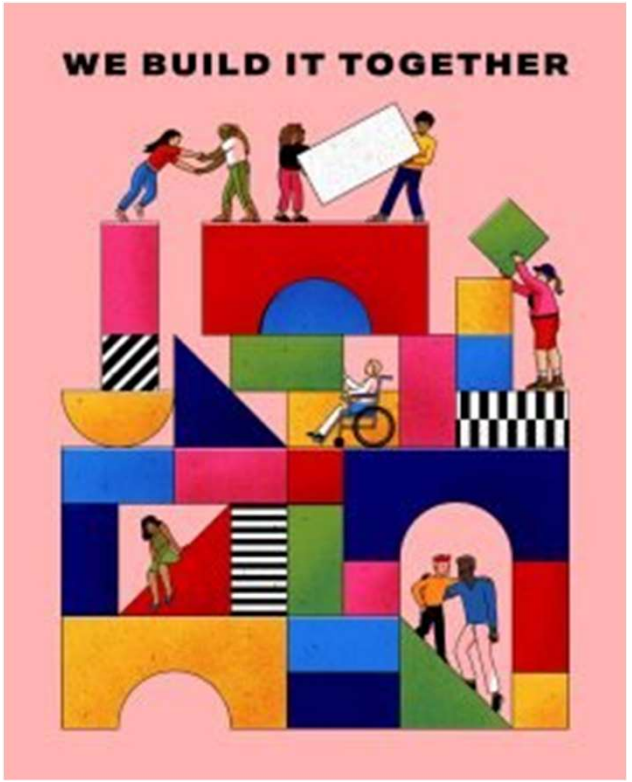
What's a TCTAC?





"We Build It Together" by Kim Nguyen for OBI x Fine Acts

Collaborative Center

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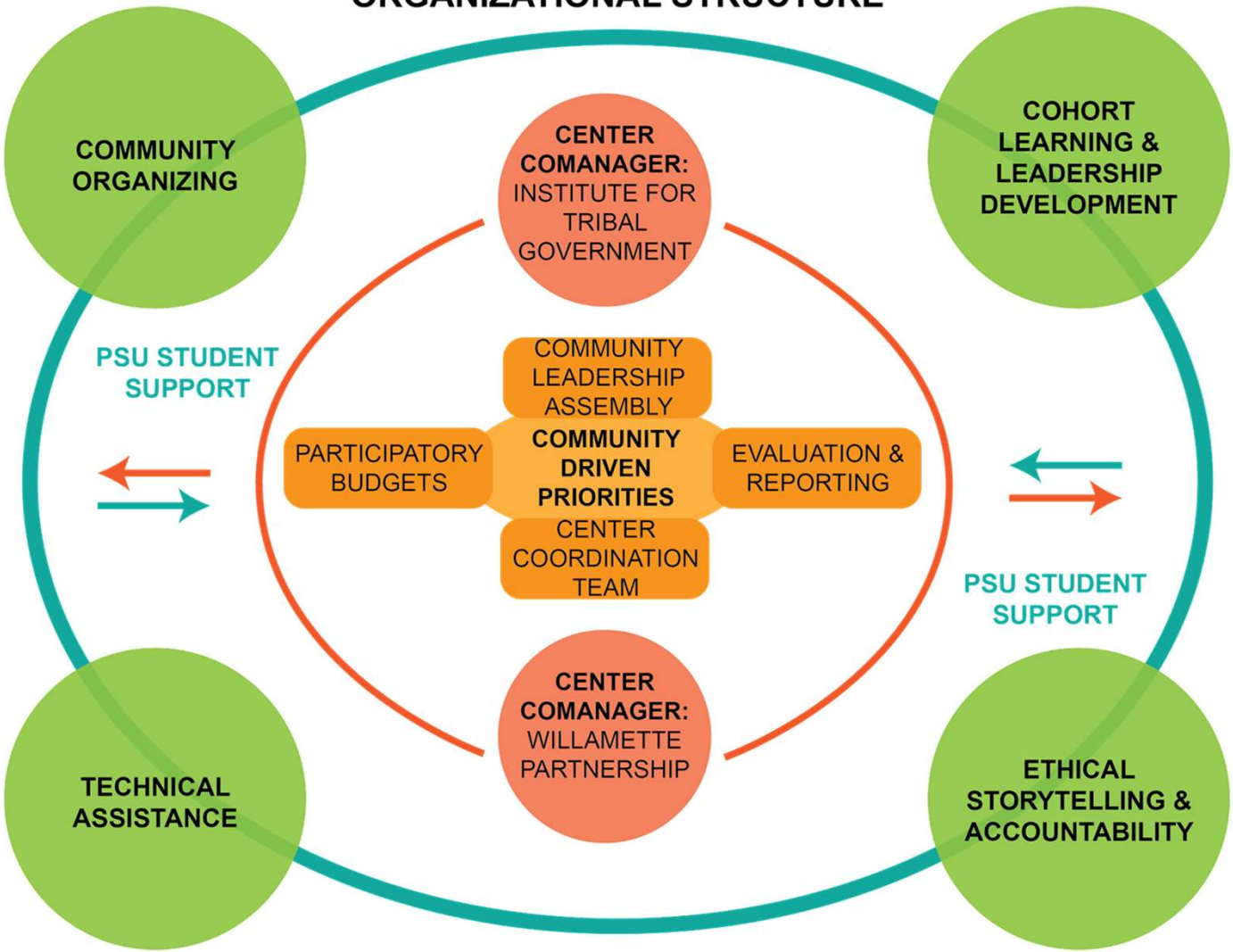
Portland State UNIVERSITY

RCAC www.rcac.org

- Alai Community Consulting
- Oregon Public Health Institute
- Verde
- Boise State University's Hazard and Climate Resilience Institute
- Kearns and West
- Linguava
- Community Engineering Corps
- Environmental Protection Network

Student walking at PSU's Native American Student and Community Center, credit to NashCo

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE



How can you be involved?

- Identify frontline communities and CBOs that serve them
- Connect those CBOs with the Environmental Justice Center
- Support & fund the capacity of those CBOs to engage with you

Please let the Tribes, EJ communities and leaders you work with know this is an available resource and we will be launching this summer!

You can sign up for our mailing list here to stay up to date: https://willamettepartnership.org/ej-tctac/

Thank You!
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