Building a Powerful Regional Equity Coalition to Deliver on Sustainable Communities

Belén Seara
Urban Habitat
October 15, 2012
www.urbanhabitat.org
SF Bay Area Region in Context

- 9 counties
- 101 cities
- 7 million residents
- 50% are people of color
- 2nd largest (population) in CA, 6th in U.S.
- In sum, more people and more fragmented than most regions
Frame: Regional Decision-Making

- Metropolitan Transportation Commission
  - Manages $200B in transportation funding

- Bay Area Air Quality Management District
  - Regulates sources of air pollution

- Association of Bay Area Governments
  - Coordinates housing and land-use policy

- Bay Area Conservation and Development Commission
  - Manages the water and marshes of the Bay

All governed by a board composed of locally elected officials
Low-income communities and communities of color \textbf{MUST} coordinate and act at the regional level in order to:

\begin{itemize}
\item Secure more funding for public transportation
\item Reduce pollution and improve public health
\item Build more affordable housing, especially in job-rich suburban communities
\item Create more jobs for the chronically unemployed and increase income mobility for the working poor
\end{itemize}
Sustaining a multi-issue coalition of single-issue organizations, especially if there is no clear campaign or policy to organize around.

Create and institutionalize a regional equity community:
- Bay Area Social Equity Caucus (1998) -- regular programming

Think regionally, but focus on place-based work:
- Richmond Equitable Development Initiative
- Great Communities Collaborative

Form ad hoc coalitions to work on specific policies and campaigns:
- SIX BIG WINS
1. Integrates in one planning process

   • Regional Transportation Plan ($225 billion over 25 years)
   • Land Use Plan (Regional Housing Needs Assessment)

2. Legislative goal is to reduce GHG emissions
6 Wins for Social Equity

- 30+ groups, including grassroots and faith-based organizing groups.
- Each Win has its own Win network, co-led by a grassroots and a policy organization.
- Overarching functions led by Coordinating Committee:
  - Alliance of Californians for Community Power
  - Breakthrough Communities
  - California WALKS
  - Genesis
  - Public Advocates
  - Regional Asthma Management and Prevention
  - Urban Habitat
SCS Decision Points

- **Getting a seat at the table**
  - Public Participation Plan, Title VI & EJ requirements
  - Elected officials

- **Setting decision-making criteria**
  - RTP goals, performance measures, and targets
  - One Bay Area Grant funding criteria

- **Allocations**
  - Prioritizing transportation needs
  - Re-visiting “committed”/grandfathered projects
  - Regional Housing Needs Allocation

- **Offering fair alternatives**
  - Scenario development (“Equity, Environment, & Jobs scenario”)

- **Assessing impacts**
  - Federally-required Title VI/ EJ equity analyses
Key Lessons

Meaningful community participation depends on:

1. **Resources** to build community capacity
2. The **structure of the decision-making process**
3. **Opportunities for deliberation** among members of communities
Key Lesson #1

1. **Resources** to build community capacity

- Participation can be a full-time job. Resource a trusted community group to do that job.
- A trusted community group can keep other stakeholders informed and help them decide how to prioritize their limited time.
- Resources also needed to help those other stakeholder groups to **build their capacity** to participate.
Key Lesson #2

2. Structure of the decision making process
   ▪ Planning should begin with needs, not projects.
   ▪ What decisions will be made at each stage, and why do they matter?
   ▪ Develop a range of alternatives at each stage and explain how well each one meets the needs
   ▪ How will the outcomes of one stage inform the process in the next, how will they affect the final outcomes?
Key Lesson #3

3. Opportunities for deliberation among communities

- Avoid isolated individuals responding in a vacuum to survey questions or proposed decisions
- Instead, a diverse group of community stakeholders needs a chance to take the blinders off and reach consensus about what they want
- Agencies must support this deliberation by providing the information and analysis that will help communities work through the issues
Challenges Moving Forward

**FUNDING:** More support needed for local organizations to engage in regional work

**LEADERSHIP:** Lack of equity advocates on regional decision-making bodies

**GEOGRAPHY:** How to include the voices of communities in the nine counties, especially in communities where there are no advocacy orgs or CBOs

**DEMOGRAPHICS:** Understanding the new “equity” narrative of movement, relocation, and displacement
Building a Powerful Regional Equity Coalition to Deliver on Sustainable Communities

Belén Seara
Land Use and Housing Director
Urban Habitat
October 15, 2012
www.urbanhabitat.org
The “Equity, Environment and Jobs Scenario”

- Fund the operation of more local transit service, and create a free youth bus pass.
- Allocate more affordable housing to high-opportunity areas near transit and jobs.
- Measure health impacts and equalize health outcomes.
- Use regional funds to reward cities that promote affordable housing and protect against displacement (One Bay Area Grant program).
Extra slides
Low-income households will be spending **over 84%** of their incomes on H+T.

35% of households in “communities of concern” will be at high risk of displacement.
Building Regional Leadership

25 Graduates
25 Seats Won
14 Recent Graduates

- Richmond Seats
  - Planning Commission
  - Economic Development Commission

- Oakland Seats
  - Planning Commission
  - Housing Authority

- San Francisco Seats
  - Citizens Committee on Community Development
  - Hunters Point Shipyard Citizen Advisory Committee

- Regional Seats
  - Metropolitan Transportation Commission Policy Advisory Council