Health Impact Assessment of the Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan for a Community in Albany, Georgia

Introduction

The Center for Quality Growth and Regional Development (CQGRD) at Georgia Institute of Technology conducted a rapid inter-institutional Health Impact Assessment (HIA) jointly with the Georgia Department of Public Health (GADPH) to assess the health impacts of the redevelopment of a public housing project, Health Impact Assessment of the Choice Neighborhood Transformation Plan for a Community in Albany, Georgia. The Transformation Plan for Midtown Homes was developed by the Albany Housing Authority (AHA) through a grant provided by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) under the Choice Neighborhood Program.

Although health is specified as one of the components required by HUD for inclusion in the "People" section of the Transformation Plan, the HIA provides the AHA with additional data, resources, stakeholder input, and valuable recommendations, to consider health in a much more explicit way.

The HIA was particularly valuable as a supplement to the Transformation Plan since the study area population is characterized by a number of health factors such as the highest poverty rates, lowest home ownership rates, and lowest income. Additionally, the study area includes many vacant and poorly maintained properties, lack of green space, and offers limited healthy food sources.

Health Determinants Analyzed in this HIA

Vulnerable Populations and Associated Health Issues
- Income and Poverty
- Minority Status
- Access to Employment
- Access to Healthcare
- Significant Health Issues
- Obesity
- Low Birth Weight babies
- Affordable Housing
- Displacement and Development
- Health Effects of Housing Redevelopment
- Social Capital
- Property Values

Community Facilities
- Design Elements Influencing Housing Health
- Parks and Greenspace
- Trail Access
- Assets of Healthy Food
- Urban Agriculture
- School Facilities

Safety and Security
- Neighborhood typology and the Built Environment
- Transportation
- Neighborhood Impact of Density Metrics
- Enhanced Pedestrian Facilities

HIA Scoping

Regional Climate: Disease Rates in Study Area

Age and Gender Characteristics of the Albany CHN HIA Study Area

Housing Characteristics of the Albany CHN HIA Study Area

Healthcare Characteristics of the Albany CHN HIA Study Area

HIA Evaluation

How was the HIA undertaken with respect to time, place and population?
- Some process was effective in identifying project goals (the plan) and the process was engaging (C-ORP perspective) and helpful.
- Evidence of the process was not always clear.
- Engagement with stakeholders was not always inclusive and transparent.
- The process did not adequately incorporate feedback from the community.

How were recommendations formulated and prioritized?
- There were no measures to evaluate the community's input into the process.
- No formal community feedback process.
- The process did not adequately incorporate feedback from the community.

How and when were the recommendations delivered to decision makers?
- Results and recommendations delivered to decision-makers through discussions, presentations and formal reports.
- A formal change process conducted by CQGRD prior to the initiation of the HIA was seen as very suitable.

Did the HIA provide useful information to the policy-making process?
- The HIA was seen by Albany officials as a significant learning opportunity for the interactions between health and built environment.
- The HIA process also raised awareness within the local Department of Health as to the importance of the Choice Neighborhood concept and its potential implications for health.
- Recommendations could have been more fully developed to include all stakeholders (police, fire, health department, schools, etc.) and more opportunities to provide input and feedback.
- The HIA team should have had greater interaction with the local Department of Housing and Urban Development's program office and helped leverage federal funds.

The HIA helped reduce understanding of the negative impact of one-way streets on health and well-being, cost on community sustainability.
- The HIA helped prioritize a business case on public housing