

# Healthier Communities Through Redevelopment

Rebuilding Neighborhoods for  
Better Nutrition and Active Living







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Photo: Lydia Daniller

# Introduction

**The built environment – the physical structures that make up the areas where we live, work, travel, and play – has a profound effect on our health.**

Neighborhoods with the poorest health outcomes often lack full-service grocery stores that stock fresh fruits and vegetables. They also tend to have inadequate public transportation, limited access to open space, higher crime rates, and inferior air quality due to nearby industry and freeways.

These neighborhoods tend to be home to a disproportionate number of low-income people of color, and the conditions put residents at higher risk for preventable diseases such as obesity, diabetes, asthma, heart disease, cancer, and stroke. To address these persistent health inequities, public health leaders and community advocates are increasingly calling for changes to the built environment: safer streets; more parks and green spaces; greater recreation opportunities; better grocery stores; compact, transit-oriented housing; and mixed-income, mixed-use communities. Public health departments and community advocates have many technical tools and resources to support such neighborhood improvement efforts, but they often lack the necessary funding, jurisdiction, and land-use planning and real estate development expertise to fully realize these goals.

Redevelopment agencies – government entities charged with revitalizing blighted areas – have the legal authority, financing tools, and expertise to reinvigorate neighborhoods designated as redevelopment areas. However, despite the fact that residents of these areas tend to suffer from high rates of chronic disease, redevelopment law does not require redevelopment agencies to consider health when determining how to rebuild these neighborhoods. Without an explicit charge to address broader health outcomes, critical opportunities to improve the built environment for health often get overlooked. When public health advocates bring their expertise and perspective to the redevelopment process, they can help ensure that revitalization efforts promote community health.

This guide is created for public health department staff, advocates, and community-based organizations that want to partner effectively with redevelopment agencies to improve health in the most vulnerable communities. It provides a broad overview of the framework, tools, and general practices of redevelopment, although the process works somewhat differently in every state and can even vary by city.

Redevelopment tools include the ability to buy and sell property, acquire property through eminent domain, and establish tax increment financing (TIF), which is a unique financing mechanism that can generate significant funding for neighborhood improvement projects.





# What Is Redevelopment?

**Redevelopment starts with the premise that some urban areas experience *blight*, a set of entrenched physical and economic conditions that prevent the realization of an area's potential.**

The legal definition of blight includes public health risks like unsafe or unhealthy buildings and the presence of hazardous waste. In some states, the definition includes lack of access to services such as grocery stores and pharmacies.

Redevelopment agencies create plans to revitalize neighborhoods using special financing tools, incentives, and land acquisition powers that are available only in redevelopment areas. These tools include the ability to establish *tax increment financing* (TIF), a unique bond financing tool that can pay for neighborhood improvement projects, and the power to acquire property through *eminent domain*.

Because redevelopment powers are granted by state constitutions and laws, they vary across the country. In some states, state agencies carry out redevelopment, while other states create local agencies or administer redevelopment powers through existing municipalities. Redevelopment agencies are typically governed by a board of elected or appointed officials. An additional network of city departments (such as planning, economic development, public works, and transportation) and neighborhood-based organizations also contribute to improving redevelopment areas.

The history of abuse of eminent domain powers has led many communities to distrust redevelopment agencies. As part of the so-called slum clearance and urban renewal programs of the 1950s and 1960s, government agencies took large swaths of private property. These programs were ostensibly for the public good but demolished entire neighborhoods and communities. Since then, nearly all redevelopment agencies have enacted reforms to limit the use of eminent domain and increase opportunities for community participation and oversight. (See page 12 for more on recent restrictions on the use of eminent domain.) With an awareness of this history and a respect for the importance of community involvement, health advocates can learn to harness the unique tools of redevelopment to achieve community health goals.

Redevelopment agencies plan and finance a range of physical improvement and economic development projects, from upgrading streets to creating new retail, housing, and recreation facilities. Not all states have an official redevelopment agency, and such agencies may go by different names. For the purposes of this guide, we will use the term *redemption agency*.



Photo: Brew127 at Flickr

# How Redevelopment Can Build Healthier Communities

Redevelopment agencies plan and finance a range of physical improvement and economic development projects, from enhancing street safety to creating space for retail, housing, and recreation. Redevelopment tools can be used to fund a range of activities that promote community health, including:



## Healthy food access

**Increasing access to healthy food** by supporting grocery store development, “corner store conversion” (making healthier options available at convenience stores), farmers’ markets, community gardens, and local food producers and distributors.



## Physical activity

**Building or improving community amenities** such as parks, trails, and recreation centers.

**Improving streets and sidewalks** to make them more attractive and safer for pedestrians and bicyclists, and to encourage walking and physical activity.



## Air quality

**Limiting diesel truck traffic and idling** in residential neighborhoods to improve air quality.

**Limiting construction of housing and schools** near freeways or major thoroughfares; if not possible, employing building techniques and mechanical ventilation to mitigate air quality impacts.



## Violence prevention

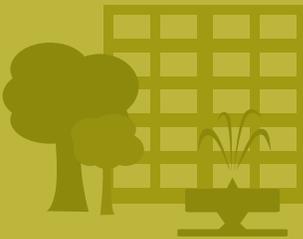
**Improving neighborhood safety** by eliminating or transforming vacant properties, creating community-based safety programs, promoting neighborhood cleanup efforts, and employing “crime prevention through environmental design” (CPTED) techniques.



## Better schools

Enabling young people to **safely walk and bike from their homes to school and after-school activities** by enhancing pedestrian safety through traffic calming, streetscape improvement, and other measures (often called “Safe Routes to School”).

**Creating joint use agreements between redevelopment agencies and schools** to support shared community use of facilities and enable redevelopment funds to improve school grounds.



## Neighborhood revitalization

**Facilitating real estate, affordable housing, and transit-oriented development** by acquiring land and assembling parcels, completing a portion of the development process, and incentivizing private development.

**Creating denser, more vibrant commercial districts** within easy walking and biking distance of residential areas and transit; supporting the health of local businesses and helping to attract new goods and services to meet community needs.



## Environmental quality and sustainability

**Creating environments free of toxic contamination** by redeveloping brownfields, establishing buffers and bio-filters around sources of pollution, setting up sustainable building requirements, improving access to transit, and reducing other neighborhood contaminants.

**Improving community infrastructure** by upgrading water systems, drainage, and other utilities to provide service that saves energy, improves performance, and reduces environmental impacts.

To ensure that redevelopment plans incorporate community health goals, public health and community advocates need to get involved in the redevelopment process, learn from one another, and work together. Opportunities for engagement are discussed later in this guide.



Photo: Lydia Daniller

# How Redevelopment Works

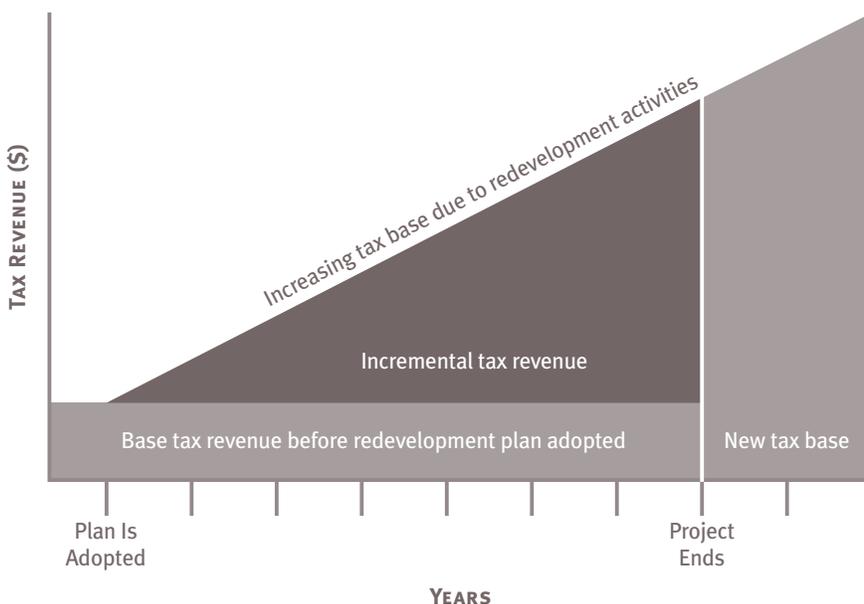
## How is redevelopment funded?

Redevelopment agencies issue bonds to pay for major projects in redevelopment areas. They repay this debt through tax increment financing (TIF). TIF allows redevelopment agencies to collect a portion of the increased tax revenues that result from redevelopment activities and the increased tax valuation as properties are sold. Redevelopment agencies must use these funds to implement the redevelopment plan by, for example, acquiring land, providing loans or grants, building community amenities, and improving infrastructure. Some redevelopment agencies issue bonds and repay them over time with increased tax revenue, while others only use TIF funds as they are generated (known as “pay as you go”). Redevelopment agency budgets and income streams are separate from those of the city or state.

## Limitations of tax increment financing

Usually TIF funds can only go toward physical improvements and cannot be used to fund maintenance and operation costs (aside from redevelopment agency administrative costs). They cannot pay for existing city services like trash collection. States may enact more stringent requirements. For example, all projects that utilize TIF in Chicago are now required to include environmentally friendly features. A minimum of 20 percent of California’s TIF funds and 30 percent of Oregon’s TIF funds must be dedicated to the development of affordable housing (called the *affordable housing set-aside*). In North Carolina, TIF-funded projects outside central business districts cannot devote more than 20 percent of their square footage to commercial uses.

## How Tax Increment Financing Works



A baseline level of tax revenue is established when the redevelopment plan is adopted. As redevelopment activities improve an area, new tax revenue is generated. The baseline amount continues to go to the municipality’s general fund as before, while the redevelopment agency keeps the difference (called the *increment*) to repay bonds or to fund the other activities outlined in the redevelopment plan. The redevelopment agency receives these tax increment funds throughout the life of the redevelopment area, which can range from 10 to 50 years. After that, all tax revenue reverts back to the general fund. (Some states have alternative names for TIF, such as *local infrastructure financing tool* and *revenue allocation district financing*.)

## What can redevelopment agencies do?

### Acquire, assemble, and sell land

Redevelopment agencies can purchase land, assemble small parcels into larger sites, develop properties with both public and private partners, and sell properties for others to develop. In most instances, the redevelopment agency is not the final developer for the site, but uses its funds as a catalyst to make land appealing to private investors and developers. The ability to assemble multiple parcels into larger sites is particularly important in older communities, where lot sizes tend to be small; full-service grocery stores, housing, and mixed-use developments generally require large tracts of land.

### Take land through eminent domain

In redevelopment areas, agencies have the power to appropriate land from private property owners in exchange for just compensation, which must reflect fair market value. This tool is very controversial, and most states have imposed limitations on its use. The use of eminent domain is generally considered a last resort after multiple attempts to purchase a property have failed. It typically is very costly and requires many years to complete the legal process.

### Limitations on eminent domain

Recent laws have reduced many states' eminent domain powers. Some states, including North Carolina, Minnesota, Georgia, and Pennsylvania, have amended their laws to prohibit the use of eminent domain to take nonblighted properties for general economic development. Other states limit its use on residential properties or require special approval by elected officials or citizen oversight groups. To find out more about your state's eminent domain laws, go to [www.nplanonline.org/nplan/products/takings\\_survey](http://www.nplanonline.org/nplan/products/takings_survey).



Photo: Ed Kohler at Flickr



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## One Nonprofit's Use of Eminent Domain

In the 1980s, the nonprofit Dudley Street Neighborhood Initiative (DSNI) in Boston created a community-driven master plan for the revitalization of the Roxbury/North Dorchester neighborhood, which had been plagued by illegal dumping, a devastating wave of arson fires, and overall disinvestment. In support of this community plan, and backed by a strong and strategically organized neighborhood organization, the Boston Redevelopment Authority granted DSNI the power

to use eminent domain to take ownership of vacant, privately held land. In the ensuing years, DSNI set up a community land trust to ensure long-term community control and transformed the vacant land into affordable housing, community centers, playgrounds, community gardens, an urban farm, and a greenhouse. This remains the only instance in the country of the use of eminent domain by a nonprofit organization. For more information, go to [www.dsni.org](http://www.dsni.org).

# The Controversial Legacy of Eminent Domain

Redevelopment emerged in the late 1940s in response to what were perceived as economically depressed and deteriorating areas. Believing they knew what was best for communities, redevelopment agencies used the power of eminent domain to demolish entire neighborhoods, including homes and commercial areas, places of worship, and community gathering places. Notorious examples include the Boston Redevelopment Area's leveling of the lively West End neighborhood, home to many immigrants, and the San Francisco Redevelopment Area's clearing of the vibrant Fillmore neighborhood, largely populated by African Americans. The ensuing public outcry led to new limitations on redevelopment powers and eminent domain in nearly every state.

In most places, citizen oversight is now required as part of the redevelopment process, and redevelopment focuses more on revitalizing existing communities than on replacing neighborhoods wholesale. However, many communities still vividly recall past abuses and are suspicious of redevelopment.

Despite these reforms, the possibility of overuse of eminent domain still exists. Redevelopment is therefore most effective when an active and internally organized community can articulate its needs and priorities, set realistic goals, and hold municipalities accountable.



## Other key redevelopment strategies

There are a number of ways that redevelopment agencies can require or incentivize desired development or land use patterns.

### Assembling incentive packages

Redevelopment agencies can provide coordinated information about the incentives that are available, simplify the approval process, and develop incentive packages to encourage private developers to accomplish neighborhood revitalization goals. For example, agencies have assembled incentive packages to encourage developing vacant lots, attracting grocery stores, and building affordable housing.

### Policy initiatives or requirements

Redevelopment agencies may establish requirements for projects that receive redevelopment funding. These can be negotiated on a project-by-project basis or put forward as a matter of general policy. Examples include local hiring and contracting goals, living wage requirements, affordable housing quotas, urban design standards, green building requirements and other development standards, arts contributions, streetscape improvements, park construction, and community amenities.

### Grantmaking

Many redevelopment agencies award grants to community-based organizations to conduct outreach and organizing or to help achieve goals outlined in the redevelopment plan. Depending on the state, funds may be available for nonprofit organizations to work on goals such as commercial-district revitalization, business technical assistance, and workforce development.



## Other Funding Sources

The most successful redevelopment agencies bring together funding from multiple sources in addition to TIF. Cities, states, banks, the federal government, and private philanthropic organizations all provide grants that are often available in redevelopment neighborhoods.

Typical funding sources available to cities include:

- Community Development Block Grants
- New Market Tax Credits
- Fees or assessments from special assessment districts, such as Business Improvement Districts or Community Benefit Districts
- Section 108 or other federal loan programs
- Industrial development bonds
- Federal Economic Development Administration (EDA) grants
- Brownfield or other environmental mitigation funds
- Youth, senior, and family funds established by municipal governments
- Affordable housing funds and tax credits
- Neighborhood improvement grants
- Federal and state transportation improvement funds
- Private philanthropy
- Neighborhood arts grants
- General fund dollars

For more information about these funding sources, see *Economic Development and Redevelopment: A Toolkit on Land Use and Health*, available at:

[www.changelabsolutions.org/healthy-planning/products/econ\\_dev\\_redev\\_toolkit](http://www.changelabsolutions.org/healthy-planning/products/econ_dev_redev_toolkit)



## Establishing and managing redevelopment areas

A neighborhood must be officially designated a “redevelopment area” to be eligible for redevelopment financing and other tools. State laws detail the steps required to establish redevelopment areas. Key components of this process include:

### Establishing the managing authority for the redevelopment area

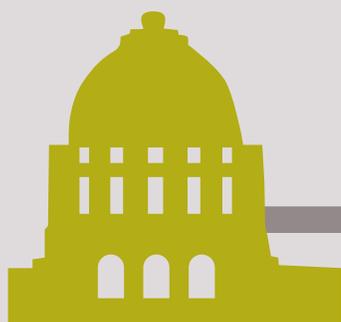
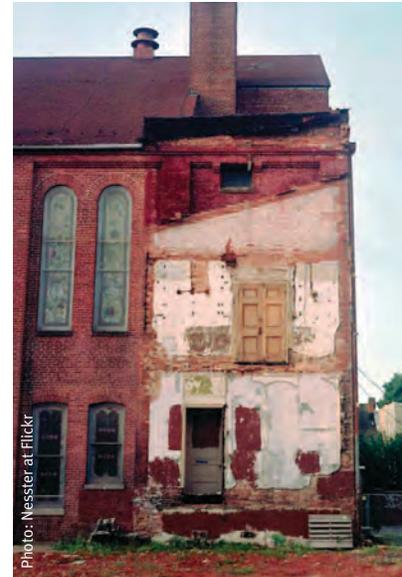
The agency responsible for creating and implementing redevelopment areas and funds varies by state. Most states only allow municipal governments to designate redevelopment areas. States such as California and Massachusetts establish formal redevelopment agencies, which are separate from local municipalities and govern the entire redevelopment process. Other states, such as Illinois, Georgia, and New York, allow for commissions or local authorities to implement and oversee redevelopment funds. Still others also require approval from all tax-collecting agencies (e.g., city, county, school district) in order to use tax increment financing.

### Demonstrating blight

*Blight* refers to a set of negative physical and economic conditions that threaten the health, welfare, and economic potential of an area; these conditions can include unsafe or unhealthy buildings, hazardous waste, lack of neighborhood retail, and high vacancy rates. Areas that lack access to basic amenities such as grocery stores, banks, and pharmacies may also be deemed blighted. The particular negative conditions that comprise each redevelopment area are extremely important, because the redevelopment project’s success will be measured by how much these conditions improve. In some states, the laws governing blight and redevelopment fall within a state’s health and safety codes. Some states also require local municipalities to prove that eliminating blight would not be possible without the use of redevelopment funds. This analysis is termed the “but-for” test and is required by 18 states. Iowa is the only state that does not require blight as a precondition for redevelopment.

### Designating a redevelopment area

The local government entity responsible for overseeing redevelopment work first establishes geographic boundaries of the redevelopment study area, which, if successful, will become the redevelopment project area. Some states, such as



Establish Managing Authority



Demonstrate Blight



Designate Area

California, have firm requirements for designating a redevelopment area (e.g., it must be in an urban area). Others, such as Alaska and Indiana, have requirements that are so broad that nearly any area could qualify.

### Creating a redevelopment plan

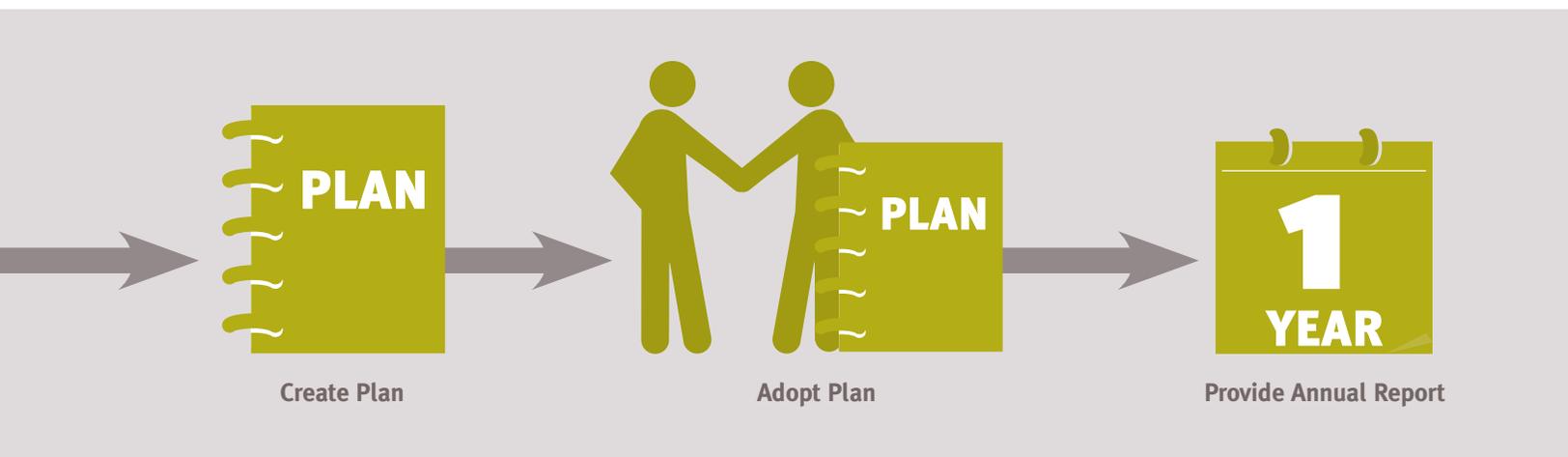
To receive the redevelopment area designation, the redevelopment agency must create a detailed plan for using funds, demonstrating how blight, as defined in the plan, will be eliminated. Plans typically describe new infrastructure improvements (such as improved streetscapes), community amenities, new housing, and commercial developments. They must also provide detailed budgets and estimated tax revenue. States require different degrees and methods of citizen participation. For example, California requires the formal establishment of citizen advisory committees to oversee all aspects of planning and implementation, while other states only require one public hearing. Plans also create a timeline for the termination of the redevelopment area, which can range from 10 to 50 years. Once the redevelopment area is terminated, the tax dollars revert back to the municipality.

### Adopting the redevelopment plan

Public hearings are often required before redevelopment plans can be adopted. Some states also require extensive environmental review processes. When these efforts are completed, the local jurisdiction adopts an ordinance to create the redevelopment plan and area.

### Reporting and updating

Most states require an annual report or periodic summary of the financing and accomplishments in the redevelopment area. Five-year plan updates and public hearings are often required to ensure that work is proceeding within the established time frame. These five-year updates provide an important opportunity for public health advocates to engage with redevelopment staff about healthy food and physical activity goals.





# How to Influence the Redevelopment Process

**Redevelopment agencies and their partners may not be aware of the vital role their decisions play in the health of people who live and work in redevelopment areas.**

This section details how local health departments and community health advocates can influence the redevelopment process to improve community health.

## What can local health departments do?

### Use data to advocate for community health goals<sup>1</sup>

Public health data can demonstrate the impact of proposed development projects, help redevelopment agencies prioritize those projects that have the greatest potential to improve community health, and (where appropriate) provide legitimacy and credibility to redevelopment goals.

### Inform policymakers about the connection between health inequities and the built environment.

Data may also help motivate local government representatives and elected officials to allocate staff time to this issue.

### Educate about best practices for improving community health.

Public health departments can educate redevelopment agencies, community advocates, and residents about elements of good neighborhood design that support community health and can provide successful examples of partnerships between redevelopment and public health.

### Ensure that redevelopment plans and five-year implementation plans incorporate public health goals.

Public health agencies can make formal comments on redevelopment plans and provide data to inform environmental impact reports (EIRs). When redevelopment plans include explicit community health goals, the redevelopment agency becomes responsible for implementing strategies to improve health, and advocates are better positioned to hold the agency accountable. The biggest challenge here may be convincing redevelopment staff that health improvements in the built environment can contribute to broad revitalization and economic investment. Addressing community health requires more hands-on work, staff involvement, and communication with community stakeholders. Public health advocates can act as liaisons between redevelopment staff and community members in developing these goals.



<sup>1</sup> Public health departments can lobby local governments to use health assessment tools such as the Healthy Development Measurement Tool ([www.thehdm.org/intro.php](http://www.thehdm.org/intro.php)) and Health Impact Assessment ([www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm](http://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/hia.htm)) to determine potential public health benefits or impacts of redevelopment efforts. Such tools also help communities advocate for including health needs in redevelopment plans and assist in evaluating the potential health impacts of a project or policy.

### **Encourage interagency partnerships to achieve neighborhood goals.**

Public health departments can build relationships with redevelopment staff, identify opportunities for collaboration, and communicate the benefits of working together. They can also encourage coordination among public health and planning departments, redevelopment agencies, and elected officials to facilitate implementation of community health priorities.

### **Investigate whether your state's definition of blight includes public health concerns.**

In some states, the very definition of blight includes public health considerations such as the absence of grocery stores. Advocates can use this information to build the case for greater public investment in remedying these causes of blight.

### **Encourage neighborhood stakeholders to join citizen oversight committees and public meetings.**

Because citizen oversight committees must approve proposed real estate projects in redevelopment areas, citizen committees have real power over project design and can negotiate community benefits. Public health advocates can conduct community outreach and education to ensure that local residents and businesses can fully participate.



## Redevelopment partners

Redevelopment agencies routinely collaborate with the private sector to spur new real estate development. But to revitalize communities, redevelopment must also work with other city agencies and nonprofit organizations. Partner agencies typically include:

- Planning
- Community Development
- Economic Development
- Mayor's office
- Elected officials
- Public Works
- Police/Justice
- Environment or Sustainability
- Transportation
- Parks and Recreation
- Public Utilities

Often, partnership is necessary for completing projects. Mixed-use developments, for example, typically require the involvement of the planning commission and departments of housing, economic development, public works, transportation, and other agencies during various stages of the project. Redevelopment agency staff and their resident advisory committees may also partner with staff from other agencies to coordinate efforts or develop solutions to specific neighborhood challenges, such as working with the police to address public safety issues or with traffic engineers to redesign a dangerous intersection. In addition, there are many citywide planning initiatives that play a role in shaping a redevelopment area, either through regulations or plans, or in prioritizing the use of other funding sources. These initiatives may include rezoning efforts, transit planning, design standards, and bike and pedestrian master plans.

# Engaging the Community

Community stakeholders who attend meetings are often English speakers with free time and email access. But their views may not always reflect the opinions of other residents, whose input is just as critical but is often missing. It is important to ensure participation from the most vulnerable and underrepresented residents and merchants.

To effectively engage communities, redevelopment agencies need to go far beyond what they are legally required to do. In many redevelopment neighborhoods, a network of community-based organizations (including community development corporations, community organizers, neighborhood councils, social justice groups, cultural organizations, immigrant advocacy groups, environmental groups, and merchant organizations) all solicit participation from residents and merchants. These groups have varying capacities to reach across barriers of culture, language, technology access, and community members' other priorities. Successful efforts bring diverse constituencies together and build consensus around desired improvements to the neighborhood.

At its heart, community engagement is about empowering people and offering community members a chance to participate in the transformation of a neighborhood to meet the community's needs. In addition to addressing logistical barriers, such as language challenges and childcare needs, residents may require extra support to become familiar with redevelopment processes. Organizers should structure meetings to ensure that participants' voices are heard.

Communities often need to make compromises and tough decisions to achieve their goals. For example, in the process of attracting a grocery store, there may be questions about whether the community should support stores that are not unionized, allow the sale of alcohol, or do not carry certain products that reflect local preferences. It takes time, engaged participation, and skilled facilitation to arrive at consensus on these divisive issues. Many times, hard work can result in creative win-win solutions. Communities that can communicate their positions on these issues in advance are better poised to achieve their goals than those raising questions at the last minute, after developers and retailers are already engaged.



Photo: Tim Wagner for PartnershipPH.org



Photo: Lydia Daniller

## What can community-based advocates do?

### Conduct outreach to underrepresented stakeholders.

Government-led citizen engagement is typically carried out through large public meetings, which may be only superficially inclusive. Community-based advocates should make efforts to engage with neighborhood stakeholders to promote a deeper level of participation and empowerment beyond these standard meetings. Advocates can tap into neighborhoods' existing networks of community-based organizations to ensure that all stakeholders have a voice in the process.

### Educate residents about best practices that improve community health.

Advocates can educate community members and community-based organizations about neighborhood design that supports community health (by organizing field trips to other successful redevelopment projects, for example). With this knowledge, community members will be better prepared to advocate for the most effective solutions and to hold redevelopment agencies accountable.

### Build community consensus and establish priorities.

Neighborhoods that work together to achieve consensus on top priorities are better positioned to ensure that those needs are incorporated in redevelopment plans. Community consensus also gives neighborhoods bargaining power in negotiations with private developers. Community support for projects reduces the risks and uncertainty developers face during the approval and environmental impact report (EIR) processes. When communities are fragmented, it becomes harder to secure essential support from elected officials and city agencies, and it may also be more difficult to prevent undesirable projects.

### Negotiate community benefit agreements for better health outcomes.

A community benefit agreement (CBA) is a legally binding contract with a developer that sets out the tangible benefits a community will receive from a development project. These benefits might include the construction of parks, workforce development programs, or local hiring commitments. Other examples include living wage requirements, affordable housing quotas, urban design standards, green building requirements, arts contributions, streetscape improvements, and park construction. Advocates can negotiate directly with developers or persuade the redevelopment agency to negotiate a CBA with private developers in the redevelopment area. In general, the extent of the benefits depends on how much leverage the community has with the developer and how much profit the project will generate. The process of negotiating community benefits can become highly contentious, but developers may agree to certain conditions to gain support for their projects, especially in the face of strong community opinions.

Many different community groups may be affected by redevelopment activities, including:

- Community development corporations
- Faith-based groups
- Social justice organizations
- Youth development organizations
- Parks groups
- Schools and PTAs
- Merchant associations

## Participate in the formal redevelopment process.

Advocates can participate in the redevelopment process to ensure that community health concerns are incorporated into redevelopment plans, goals, and funding priorities. Specifically, stakeholders can:

- **Join citizen oversight committees.** Community advocates should be encouraged to participate in citizen oversight committees and advocate for measures that improve community health.
- **Attend public meetings and hearings.** Advocates can lobby for neighborhood improvements that benefit public health, and can make health impacts explicit during the planning and prioritization phases of the redevelopment process. They can also submit formal comments on redevelopment plans and environmental impact reports.
- **Build political support for redevelopment plans that provide public health benefits.** Advocates can use meetings, hearings, and conversations with elected officials to convey both the public health and the economic benefits of redevelopment plans. They can work within the redevelopment planning process to ensure that plans establish health goals, include policies like community benefit agreements, and link redevelopment land-use strategies to citywide health and sustainability plans (if applicable).
- **Consider conducting a health impact assessment (HIA).** This evaluation tool can help evaluate potential public health effects of a proposed plan.
- **Monitor progress and enforce accountability.** Communities can track progress and enforce accountability by monitoring public health outcomes and communicating progress to redevelopment agencies, elected officials, and the community at large.
- **Help implement neighborhood goals.** Community organizations and advocates can collaborate with redevelopment agencies to advance redevelopment plans by organizing community volunteers, developing new project ideas, raising philanthropic funds, and promoting best practices and community successes.

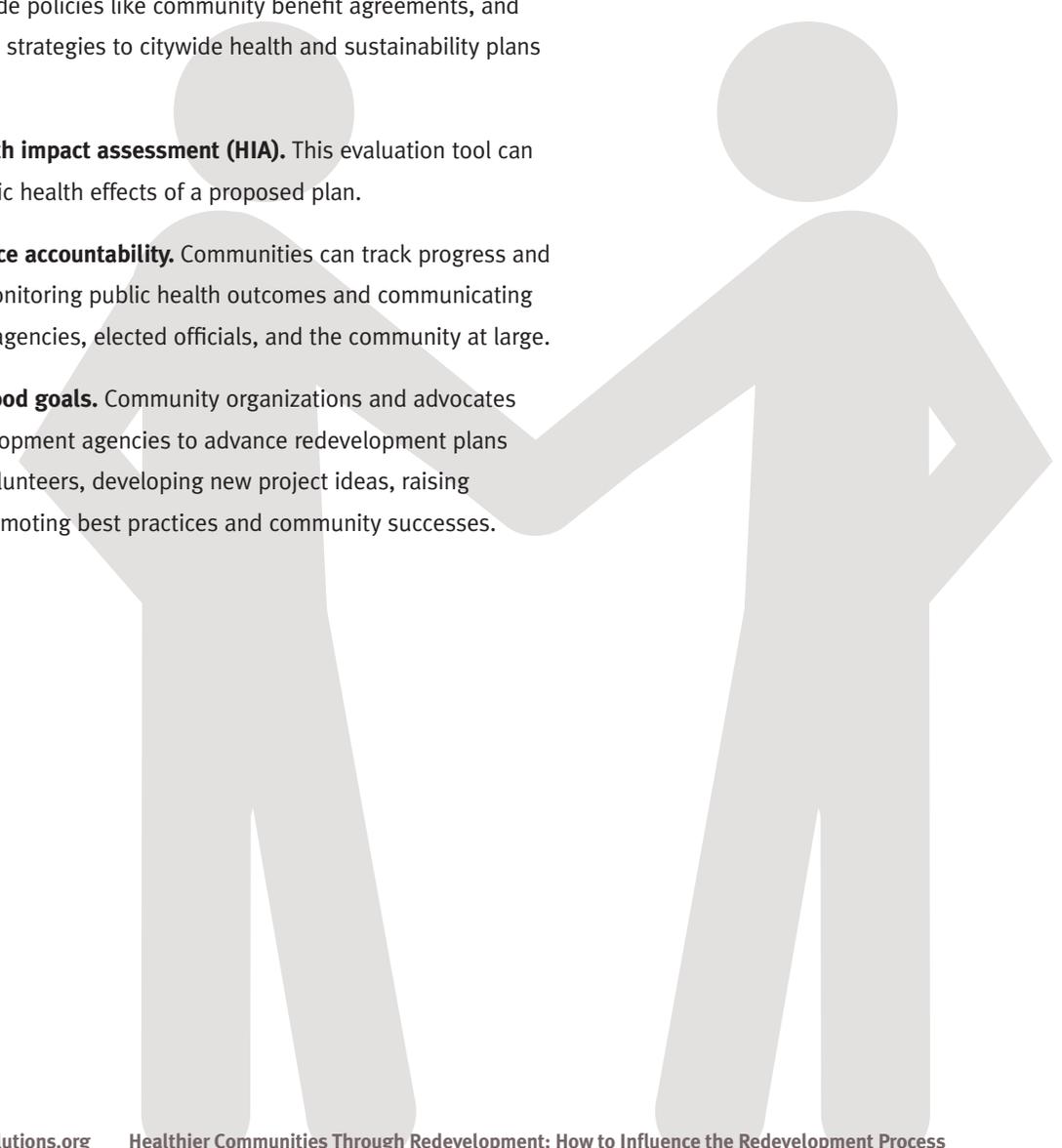




Photo: Lydia Demiller

## Conclusion

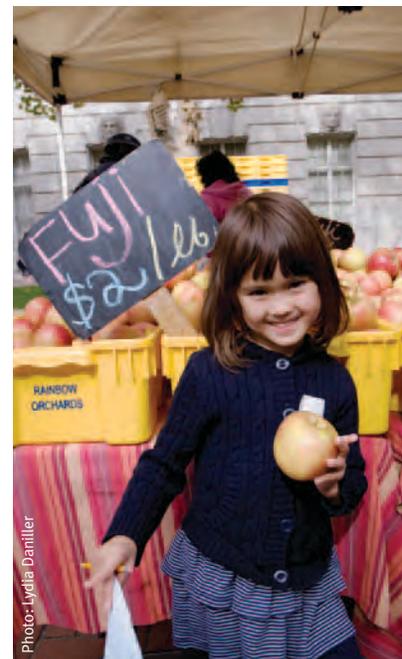
**Public health advocates are increasingly drawing connections between health and the built environment, calling for extensive and costly physical improvements to neighborhoods that lie beyond the typical sphere of public health departments' authority.**

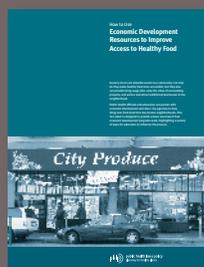
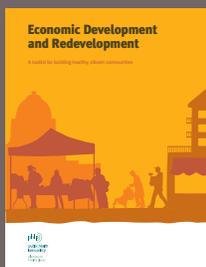
Redevelopment agencies are already transforming distressed communities using tools uniquely available to them, such as tax increment financing. But redevelopment agencies and their partners may not be aware of the vital role their neighborhood revitalization decisions can play in the physical health of local residents and workers.

Public health agencies and advocates can significantly improve community well-being by becoming part of redevelopment efforts and ensuring that redevelopment plans prioritize community health. There are many opportunities for public health departments and advocates to proactively educate other stakeholders about best practices, build consensus on priorities, and work with redevelopment agencies to ensure that health outcomes are included in redevelopment plans.

Redevelopment agencies are sometimes constrained by requirements or limitations on spending tax increment funds, as well as political and development pressures. Their controversial history means that the communities in which they work don't always support their endeavors. Partnering with public health and community health advocates can provide redevelopment agencies with more credibility, enabling them to build a greater network of support than they could achieve on their own.

To support sustained change, new and expanded collaborations between public health departments and redevelopment agencies are essential to ensure that neighborhood revitalization is designed to improve community health.





For more information on building new partnerships for healthier communities, see the redevelopment resources at [www.changelabsolutions.org](http://www.changelabsolutions.org).

*The National Policy & Legal Analysis Network to Prevent Childhood Obesity (NPLAN) is a project of ChangeLab Solutions. ChangeLab Solutions is a nonprofit organization that provides legal information on matters relating to public health. The legal information provided in this document does not constitute legal advice or legal representation. For legal advice, readers should consult a lawyer in their state.*

*ChangeLab Solutions formerly existed under the name Public Health Law & Policy (PHLP). Any references to PHLP in this publication should now be understood to refer to ChangeLab Solutions.*

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TO PREVENT CHILDHOOD OBESITY



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