



**PLACE MATTERS Design Lab Eight: A Concept Paper**  
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## **OVERVIEW & PURPOSE**

We are delighted you are joining us for this PLACE MATTERS Design Lab (DL) meeting. This meeting marks our eighth learning experience. We are convening in Alameda County to support their PLACE

### **Design Lab Eight: Meeting Goals**

1. Share and Enhance Team Logic Models
2. Share PLACE MATTERS Teams' progress, milestones achieved, completed activities, and future planned activities to address the Social Determinants of Health
3. Engage in teambuilding activities that support the continued development and implementation of county strategy plans
4. Learn about Alameda County's SDOH challenges/progress and how their lessons learned can be applied to other PLACE MATTERS sites
5. Convene and network with colleagues participating in PLACE MATTERS jurisdictions
6. Provide a safe place to brainstorm new and innovative approaches

MATTERS efforts and to learn from their efforts to impact health vis-à-vis policy changes impacting affordable housing, economic development, transportation, land use, education and incarceration. We are especially grateful for the Alameda County Team's willingness to host us and organize an exciting PLACE MATTERS tour.

For the benefit of all participants, and especially for new members of our national learning community, this concept paper provides a brief overview of the PLACE MATTERS initiative and context for the meeting in Oakland.

Building on all previous Design Lab concept papers (Concept Papers from DL1 to DL7 are available online: [www.commonhealthaction.org/pmdl](http://www.commonhealthaction.org/pmdl)), the contents herein are intended to: frame Design Lab 8, provide a brief overview of the PLACE MATTERS initiative for new Team members, and share our progress as a national movement. Similar to previous meetings, this Design Lab provides an opportunity for peer networking and collaborative learning across PLACE MATTERS communities through discussion and strategizing within and among your Teams. This meeting is especially important as Teams will share their progress on the development of their logic models and provide substantive feedback to their peers for refinement. We hope you find this *working meeting* productive and invite you to leverage your participation in PLACE MATTERS to enhance your efforts and to strengthen your capacity to improve the health and well-being of your community.

We invite learning community participants to arrive prepared to:

- share your Team's logic model describing how the specific social determinants of health identified will impact health status;
- learn about, participate in, and contribute to the national evaluation plan;
- engage in Team work, taking advantage of formal and informal opportunities to solidify Team activities;
- ready to orient and engage new Team members to support social determinants of health approaches and the specific goals of the Teams;
- receive and provide peer feedback on logic models; and
- seek opportunities to network with PLACE MATTERS sites to benefit your PLACE MATTERS work.

## **HOW PLACE MATTERS IN ALAMEDA COUNTY**

Oakland was incorporated as a town in 1852 and as a city in 1854. Shortly there after, it became a major railroad destination. In 1868 the Central Pacific railroad built the Oakland Long Wharf at the site that is now the Port of Oakland. The Port was originally developed to support the gold rush and to ship coastal redwoods from the Oakland hills to San Francisco. The Long Wharf became the terminus for the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869. As with most railroads, manufacturing enterprises began to crop up and thrive in the area surrounding the station and tracks. West Oakland, the neighborhood that is adjacent to the Port, flourished with an increase of businesses such as metals, canneries, bakeries, automobiles and eventually ship building.

Oakland experienced a huge population increase in 1906 as people displaced by the San Francisco earthquake and fire relocated to Oakland; but this increase paled in comparison to the boom in population that came during WWII as laborers, many of whom were African American, came from across the Country. Oakland was a major producer of ships and other war time goods.

The Oakland that we know today began soon after WWII ended. As the industry that moved in for war time production disappeared, so did the jobs. Despite the lack of jobs, the majority of those who moved to Oakland for work stayed. However, as the more affluent residents moved to the Oakland “hills” and the newly developing suburbs east of the hills, and the residents with less financial means stayed in the flatlands, or “flats,” – the vast socioeconomic disparities became very apparent. By the late 1960’s, Oakland’s working class population on average lived at or below the poverty level. Currently, according to the US Census Bureau, 16.2 percent of families and 19.4 percent of the population are below the poverty line, which includes 27.9 percent being under the age of 18 and 13.1 percent over 65. In addition to the increase in poverty, schools in the poorer areas deteriorated and storefronts closed.

As living conditions became more and more unbearable, the political and social climate became ripe for movements such as the Black Panther Party, which thrived under the leadership of Merritt College students Huey P. Newton and Bobby Seale. While Oakland continues to be characterized by high levels of civic engagement, the interests of residents in East and West Oakland – or the flats – are under-represented.

Lines of social class, race/ethnicity, and income are still easily drawn between the hills and the flatlands. The East and West Oakland population is majority low-income people of color. It is in these neighborhoods that we see the most severe inequities in income, housing, health, education, exposure to pollutants, and contact with the criminal justice systems, especially when compared to the “hills,” where the population is mainly Caucasian and affluent. Crime and violence are also concentrated in East and West Oakland and have reached such epidemic proportions that Oakland is ranked among the most dangerous cities in the nation. Crime and workforce development issues are often cited as conditions that have inhibited economic growth in Oakland. Additionally, residents in the flatlands are facing extreme threats of displacement. Recent policies seem to favor improving Oakland by forcing the poor to move out. In recent years, home and rental prices in San Francisco have displaced even high-income earners to the flats, particularly West Oakland, to buy homes. This neighborhood is easily accessible to San Francisco by car, subway, and bus, and the lovely Victorian homes, though sometimes deeply in need of repair, are attractive to this market. Likewise, zoning changes and other policies promoting the development of new residential neighborhoods along the waterfront have been forcing out jobs and cheaper housing. Many residents find that—in the neighborhood of their birth—they can no longer afford the rents and real estate prices are out of reach.

The many inequitable social conditions facing residents in the flats contribute to severe health inequities. For instance, compared to a white child in the Oakland Hills, an African American born in West Oakland can expect to die almost 15 years earlier.

The Alameda County PLACE MATTERS Team is working to create and implement a policy agenda for addressing the inequitable social conditions that contribute to health inequities in Oakland. Specifically, we aim to develop, support, and implement policies that promote the equitable distribution of the social goods that are prerequisites for improved health outcomes. As a first step in the process for creating such a local policy agenda, the Team will complete a needs assessment focused on six policy areas: economic development, education, housing, land use, transportation, and incarceration. The needs assessment consists of baseline indicators for each policy area, a literature review of the links between the each policy area and health, and an initial review of possible policy-level interventions. The Team plans to use the needs assessment to help set policy priorities.

A central component of the Team's strategy for implementing the local policy agenda is fostering partnerships with organizations that build the capacity of community residents, specifically residents impacted by health inequities. The Alameda County PLACE MATTERS team believes that achieving health equity will require elimination of the existing power imbalances. Increased civic engagement among low income people of color not only improves the likelihood that policies will benefit their communities, but also to increase community cohesion, which is in turn associated with levels of violence.

Although in the beginning stages of creating and implementing a local policy agenda, the Alameda County Team has already encountered some challenges. For instance, since crime is the largest and most contentious topic in Oakland politics, one challenge is understanding and effectively communicating the links between the various issues in a policy agenda that are seemingly unrelated to crime, such as transportation or housing, to decreasing crime rates. Additionally, as the Team addresses housing issues, members face the challenge of supporting community improvements without displacing current residents.

### **PLACE MATTERS FRAMEWORK**

**PLACE MATTERS is a national initiative of the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, Health Policy Institute (HPI) designed to improve the health of participating communities by addressing social conditions that lead to poor health.**

The Joint Center Health Policy Institute (HPI) approach to reducing/eliminating health disparities involves identifying the complex underlying causes of health disparities and defining strategies to address these root causes. A growing body of research clearly supports the notion that interventions targeting social determinants of health can indeed modify patterns of health, illness, and health disparities. Systematic and evidence-based translation of this knowledge into policy and practice remains limited. Targeting upstream causes of health and measuring the indicators associated with social determinants of health are at the heart of our PLACE MATTERS work. ***Over a period of three to five years, PLACE MATTERS participants should be able to demonstrate and document progress, as well as the reasons for progress, toward redressing the social conditions associated with health inequities—and thereby toward reducing health disparities.***

With generous funding provided by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, the PLACE MATTERS initiative attempts to address this gap. If successful, the outcomes of the participating Teams will provide evidence-based support for addressing social determinants of health. Adding to the knowledge base in this arena is critical so we can inform public health practice across the nation.

## PLACE MATTERS Unique emphases:

1. **engage communities of color with poor population health status;**
2. **support participants vis-à-vis a national learning community (supportive laboratory);**
3. **reduce/eliminate health inequities by addressing social determinants of health (i.e., actions should specifically address social issues at their roots, e.g., housing policies, etc.);**
4. **develop benchmarks and other means to monitor progress that demonstrates the effectiveness of addressing social determinants of health; and**
5. **document lessons learned and outcomes of addressing social determinants of health.**

Several heretofore unwritten assumptions about PLACE MATTERS philosophy and approach deserve exploration herein. Specifically, in addition to addressing social determinants of health, the initiative strives to impact public health practice and policy development by transcending the traditional silos of health and other sectors that impact community health and well-being. Critical sectors within a community operate in relative isolation of each other, and therefore miss opportunities to ‘create the conditions in which people can be healthy.’ Leveraging the Design Lab methodology, we exposed PLACE MATTERS Team members to expert speakers from a wide range of disciplines including community health, public health, transportation, affordable housing, public policy, and smart growth. Additionally, we have encouraged Teams to engage a variety of stakeholders from these and other sectors within their communities. In many ways, PLACE MATTERS is an experiment. The developers strived to provide a safe place for experimentation and cross-fertilization of ideas and testing of strategies.

## PLACE MATTERS PROGRESS, SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

Clearly, HPI and its partners have made a great deal of progress on this national effort. The national

### What are Social Determinants of Health?

Social conditions are major determinants of health. Social forces acting at a collective level shape individual biology, individual risk behaviors, environmental exposures, and access to resources that promote health. There is a graded relationship between social position and health status that affects people at all levels of the social hierarchy. While public health programs alone cannot ameliorate the social forces that are associated with poor health outcomes, developing a better understanding of the social determinants of health is critical to reducing health disparities among Washington State residents of differing socioeconomic position.

From *The Health of Washington State: The Social Determinants of Health*. 2002.

learning community consists of 16 PLACE MATTERS Teams responsible for designing and implementing strategies that address the **social determinants of health** impacting residents in 24 jurisdictions. To date, HPI/CHA designed and implemented a total of seven Design Labs. Thirteen of these Teams have participated in four Design Lab learning experiences (Reston, VA; Lisle, IL, New Orleans, and San Diego). With the addition of Baltimore, Prince Georges County, MD, and Washington, DC Teams, the entire cohort participated in three additional Design Labs (Albuquerque, Jackson, MS, and New Orleans). Numerous site visits and stakeholder meetings have been conducted, and HPI engaged PLACE MATTERS Team representatives in several national policy fora.

Throughout our collective learning journey, we have:

- convened in five PLACE MATTERS communities and toured three of these locales (New Orleans, Albuquerque, and the Mississippi Delta region);
- identified critical social determinants of health that must be addressed to improve population health;
- learned of and shared various models and approaches being tested across the US; and
- viewed through community tours, social determinants of health in action.

Additionally, each Team has a) identified at least two social determinants of health they seek to address; b) developed a strategy plan to guide action; c) convened local meetings to plan activities; and d) developed Team logic models.

### **PLACE MATTERS PROGRESS: REFINING IMPLEMENTATION AND CONSTRUCTING LOGIC MODELS**

Since the initiative's inception in 2006, participating PLACE MATTERS Teams laid critical groundwork for framing and defining Team plans. As we enter our 21<sup>st</sup> month of PLACE MATTERS activity, continuing our focus on implementation, we encourage all Teams to enhance the clarity of goals and the interventions and actions planned.

Design Lab eight builds upon all previous learning experiences and provides an opportunity for Teams to share their logic models. The designed meeting process will ensure that Team members provide peer feedback on all logic models. Additionally, representatives from CARTA will share progress on the evaluation of the national effort and solicit additional input from participants regarding the theory of change and proposed evaluation model. We are also delighted that several outstanding speakers and session facilitators will share their expertise with us regarding urban challenges related to affordable housing, economic development, living wages, working conditions, blight and redevelopment.

#### **Benefits of logic models:**

- Convey the fundamental purpose and underlying programmatic theory of an initiative
- Show why the initiative is important
- Show what will result from an initiative
- Depict the actions/causes expected to lead the desired results
- Become a common language and reference point for everyone involved
- Serve as the basis to determine whether planned actions are likely to lead to the desired results
- Find gaps in theory or logic of initiative or program
- Builds a shared understanding of what the effort is all about and how the parts work together
- Focuses attention of management on the most important connections between action and results
- Provides a way to involve and engage stakeholders in the design, processes and use of evaluation.



## PLACE MATTERS National Technical Assistance Team

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