



Cities & People

Resident-Led Change

Civic Engagement Strategies
for Building Healthy Communities



Civic Engagement Starters

- Civic engagement includes voting, participating in community meetings, providing public comment, engaging in delegations to decision makers, and serving on appointed boards, commissions, and committees.
- Some groups are underrepresented in the political process, which means they are not actively influencing decisions that impact their communities.
- The biggest gap in levels of participation in CA are by race, income, education, and home ownership.



The Plan

- Get to know each other.
- Talk about some key ideas in civic engagement and movement building.
- Think about how Santa Ana residents can be more influential in public decision making.
- Figure out where everyone fits in and where the gaps are.
- Wrap up.

Common Definitions

- Civic Engagement
- Movement Building
- Leadership Development
- Inside-Outside Strategy

Community Members

88% of local officials feel that community members have ample opportunity to participate in local government decision making. Only 54% of civic leaders agree.

According to civic leaders, the public decision-making process only rewards the most powerful groups:

82% say residents who don't belong to an organized group that can mobilize them are often left out of public decision making.

74% say local officials only pay attention to powerful interest groups.

YET:

68% say that public hearings and meetings are important venues for representing the interests of their organization and its members and clients.

At the same time, local officials are troubled by the particular strength of groups with a specific interest:

76% say public meetings are typically dominated by people with narrow agendas.

64% say public hearings attract complainers and professional citizens – they don't give voice to the real public.

Source: A 2012 study conducted by Public Agenda in partnership with the Institute for Local Government and the Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership. Funded by The James Irvine Foundation. 1,400 public officials and civic engagement organizational leaders were surveyed and interviewed.

Percent of leaders who say their organizations do each of the following either regularly, occasionally, or rarely or never:

	Regularly— main function %	Occasionally— we do it as needed %	Rarely or never %
Get the word out on public issues that affect your members or clients.	31	50	18
Invite local officials to events where they would meet your organization's members or clients.	31	45	23
Join commissions, advisory committees or task forces to advise local officials about your members' or clients' concerns.	23	37	39
Facilitate community conversations where your members or clients, other community residents and local officials discuss solutions to issues.	15	43	41
Collaborate with local officials to design or cosponsor activities that encourage public participation in local government decision making.	11	33	57
Work to ensure a large and broadly representative turnout at public meetings with local officials.	9	32	59
Conduct surveys and needs assessments to inform local government policy decisions.	5	29	66
Organize events such as rallies, protests, or in-person visits to local officials' offices.	8	21	70

Collaboration with Community-Based Organizations

Only a third of local officials collaborate with community-based organizations a lot.

Percent of local officials who say they use community-based organizations and the networks they have established:



Most specify using chambers of commerce, homeowner and business associations, churches, rotary clubs and environmental groups as helpful collaborators. Only 20 percent explicitly mention an organization that works with traditionally disenfranchised groups – groups that many officials say they find hard to reach such as immigrants, ethnic/racial minorities and low-income populations – as particularly helpful partners.

The Inside-Outside Strategy: **Advocate-Commissioners**

Inside Only Strategy

Relies on an insider “champion” to act on behalf of under-served communities, and hopes your champion will be willing and able to overcome opposition from other key decision makers or influencers (including staff members and constituents).

Inside Only Strategy

Relies on organizing community members for agitation and direct protest, and hopes insiders will react favorably to community demands.

Inside-Outside Strategy

Aims to alter longstanding power relationships that produce inequitable policies and programs in under-served communities.

Relies on collaborations between those working inside governance and those working outside in order to create a more “permeable” system.

Has as an ultimate goal that local leaders ARE the decision makers and that they are equipped to make good decisions with their communities.

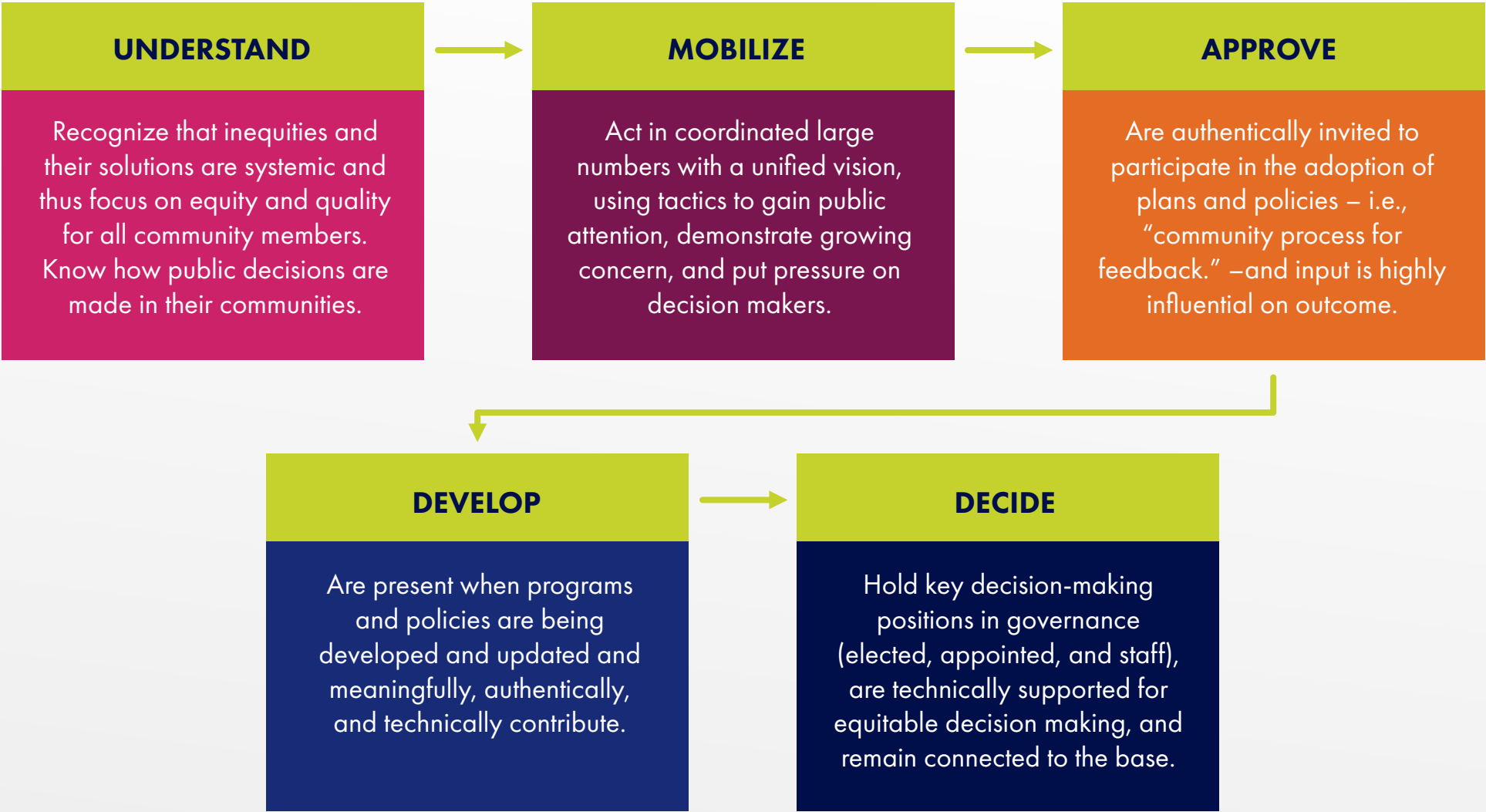
What's At Stake in Santa Ana?

We need to be continuously filling the pipeline of residents who have the capacity to (among other things):



- Work with other residents to develop coordinated strategies for influencing General Plan revisions, Energy and Climate Action Plan development, Regional Transportation Plans, Housing Elements, etc. –and for watchdogging implementation.
- Mobilize in large numbers to show the presence of an active, well-functioning movement.
- Interact thoughtfully with agency staff and commissioners and attend local commission meetings and track content.
- Make strategic comments at a public meetings, in delegation visits to decision makers, and to the media. Serve on appointed boards, commissions, and committees.
- Serve as elected officials for local, regional, state, or national government.

Civic Engagement/Movement Building Trajectory



Best and Emerging Best Practices

- Civic engagement capacity-building models work best when residents understand **multi-issue, cross-sector organizing** and work with **a variety of reform partners** for a coordinated inside-outside strategy. (So as not to be mistaken as for “narrow interests.”)
- Strong outcomes are more likely to be achieved when all stakeholders engage in a **coordinated strategy** (taking into account the civic engagement trajectory), and CBO’s need to devise the structure for insiders and residents to work together effectively –which may require some “field shift.”
- All parts of the pipeline for the trajectory must be **continuously renewing** in order to keep the model moving, and everyone should be working from the same “schematic.”
- Advocates are getting better at balancing collaboration with pressure, but we still have a lot to learn about **inside-outside mutual accountability**–which is “the long-term game.” Without addressing it, we can’t solve the problem of cooptation.



Cities & People

373 Hermann Street, San Francisco, CA, 94117

415/200-6753

www.citiesandpeople.com

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