



**LESSONS LEARNED AND FUTURE OPTIONS**

**CORE Assessment Report**

**SEPTEMBER 2014**

## Lessons Learned and Future Options: CORE Assessment Report

### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

*Many thanks to the CORE Stakeholders who voluntarily contributed time, expertise and good will to the assessment process.*

#### Interview Participants

Bill Kennedy, CORE Steering Committee; Managing Attorney Legal Services of Northern California

Chris Benner, CORE Steering Committee/Workgroup Professor UC Davis Community Development, Executive Committee UC Davis Center for Regional Change

Clarence Williams, Former CORE participant; President, California Capital Financial Development Corp.

Colin Bailey, Former CORE Steering Committee Chair, Former Staff Attorney Legal Services of Northern California, Executive Director, Environmental Justice Coalition for Water

Constance Slider, Former CORE Program Director

Jon Ellison, CORE Steering Committee/Workgroup, Former Board President Environmental Council Sacramento (ECOS)

Katie Valenzuela, Former Regional Equity Coordinator, CORE; Senior Program Manager Ubuntu Green

Ken Cross, Former SHA Board President; CEO, Sacramento Habitat for Humanity

Kendra Bridges, Former Land Use Policy Director, CORE

Mona Tawatao, Former CORE Steering Committee/Workgroup, Former SHA Board Member, Former Counsel Legal Services of Northern California; Senior Litigator Western Center On Law & Poverty

Shamus Roller, Former Executive Director Sacramento Housing Coalition; Current Executive Director Housing California

#### Planning Team

*CORE:* Charles Mason, Ubuntu Green; Mindy Romero, UC Davis Center for Regional Change; Terry Preston, WALKS Sacramento

*SHA Board Members:* Cathy Creswell, former CA Dept of Housing and Community Development; Chris Jensen, Resources for Independent Living; Tyrone Buckley, CA Rural Legal Assistance Foundation

#### Prepared by



**CONVERGE**  
CONSULTING, RESEARCH & TRAINING

[WWW.CONVERGECRT.COM](http://WWW.CONVERGECRT.COM)

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## Table of Contents

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Executive Summary .....	2
Key Events Timeline.....	3
Introduction & Background .....	4
Process, Methods & Limitations.....	4
The Development of CORE.....	5
Before CORE: The Historical Roots and Policy Landscape .....	5
The Birth of CORE .....	7
Mission: Coordinating Regional Equity Allies.....	8
Early Schisms, Strengths and Successes.....	9
As CORE Matures, Challenges Emerge Alongside Successes.....	11
CORE Work Groups Mobilize.....	11
Academic Research and Community Advocacy: A Powerful Partnership.....	12
Convening and Capacity Building .....	13
CORE’s Coming of Age: Conflict and Crisis.....	14
Early Schisms: Scope, Identity, and Tactics .....	15
Governance, Decision Making and Participation .....	17
Conflicts of Interest.....	18
Confusing Membership and Roles.....	20
Structural Inequities in Power Dynamics Related to Race, Gender and Age.....	22
Crisis at CORE: Tension Boils Over .....	23
Addressing Equity in the Sacramento Region: Lessons Learned .....	24
Current Status: The Need Still Exists .....	25
Where Do We Go From Here? Stakeholder Recommendations for the Future of CORE .....	27
Capacity and Conditions for Success Recommended by Stakeholders .....	27
Stakeholder Commitments and Interest .....	28
Stakeholders to Engage.....	28
Stakeholders Opinions on Possible Paths to Reinventing CORE.....	29
Consultant Reflections and Recommendations .....	31
Appendix I: CORE Stakeholder Interview Guide .....	35
Resources Consulted.....	36

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Coalition on Regional Equity (CORE) offered the Sacramento region a unique approach to bringing diverse constituencies together to influence public policy and regional planning to achieve improvements in the health and built environment of lower income communities and communities of color. Through advocacy, education and civic leadership, CORE focused on the linkage between health and the built environment, and how factors such as land use, transportation and food access shape communities. Participants represent social justice and environmental advocates, academics, civil rights groups, labor, social service providers, faith-based communities and health professionals.

The Sacramento Housing Alliance (SHA) served as the non-profit organizational sponsor for CORE. In that role, SHA provided staffing, office space, fiscal management, coordination and leadership. A Steering Committee comprised primarily of organizational partners guided the work. Since its founding in 2007, CORE raised awareness of how the built environment impacts community health, built capacity and relationships, mobilized community leadership, leveraged resources and influenced land use decisions. Despite these accomplishments, the group also encountered a variety of challenges in working collaboratively.

The momentum of enthusiasm and trusting relationships propelled the group forward in the early years despite the CORE concept and vision not being fully understood or embraced by all participants. When leadership and staffing transitions at SHA occurred in 2011, conflict increased. Without a strategic plan or clearly defined membership and governance structure, CORE struggled to resolve decisions related to project scope and tactics, participation, staffing, funding and communications. Moreover, relationship dynamics related to power, race and gender arose. Near the end of 2012, tensions boiled over, participation dwindled and eventually most of the group's activities ground to a halt.

A small group comprised of CORE participants and SHA board members formed a planning team to examine possibilities for CORE's future, in particular the idea of establishing CORE as an independent non-profit organization. This report is one result of their efforts. In confidential interviews with key stakeholders, lessons learned and the feasibility of various future scenarios were explored. The outcome of these discussions points to several conclusions. CORE served a valuable coordinating function for organizations aligned with the vision for regional equity and its loss is detrimental to achieving this goal. Yet, the way forward is not clear.

The establishment of an independent non-profit entity to carry on this work would require capacities that currently are not evident. To successfully rebuild CORE, it will require time, a champion and facilitative leadership, funding, clearly defined roles and decision making agreements, a shared vision and a strategic plan, and engagement of former and new participants. Stakeholders need to decide if they have the energy and stamina to re-launch CORE, potentially with a new name and more narrow geographic focus. If not, it is hoped our community will learn from the past and carry those lessons forward into other endeavors.

## KEY EVENTS TIMELINE

2002 - 2006	<p>Policy Link proposes regional advocacy approach and provides strategies</p> <p>Steinberg Assembly Bill 680</p> <p>Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) Blueprint project</p> <p>Sacramento Valley Organizing Committee (SVOC) dissipates</p> <p>UC Davis Center for Regional Change (UCD CRC) established</p> <p>Informal discussions and meetings on regional equity issues</p>
2007	<p>Inclusionary Housing Alliance achieves Extremely Low-Income Housing Ordinance</p> <p>SHA hires Executive Director Shamus Roller</p> <p>The California Endowment (TCE) funds CORE</p> <p>CORE Steering Committee formed</p> <p>Patrick Johnson serves as CORE's first Regional Equity Coordinator</p> <p>AGENA issue galvanizes Steering Committee</p>
2008	<p>SCORECARD developed (Sacramento Coalition on Regional Equity Collaborative Assessment of Regional Dynamics)</p> <p>PolicyLink Regional Equity Summit: New Orleans</p> <p>Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (SB 375, Steinberg)</p>
2009	<p>Constance Slider hired as Regional Equity Coordinator</p> <p>First CORE Convening (Sierra Health Foundation)</p> <p>Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute (BCLI) developed</p> <p>CORE Steering Committee membership document drafted</p>
2010	<p>Issue workgroups formed</p> <p>Second CORE Convening (Sierra II)</p> <p>Sustainable Communities Strategy Campaign</p> <p>Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) Update with SACOG</p>
2011	<p>PolicyLink Regional Equity Summit: Detroit</p> <p>First BCLI Institute</p> <p>Gameliel training, Capital Region Organizing Project (CROP) concept</p> <p>Steering Committee members' undisclosed meeting with CORE funder</p> <p>SHA Executive Director transition, Constance's departure</p>
2012	<p>Katie Valenzuela hired as Regional Equity Coordinator</p> <p>Ongoing miscommunication among board, staff and Steering Committee</p> <p>Crisis: CORE Convening (Sierra II)</p> <p>100% program staff turnover</p>
2013	<p>Departure of SHA Executive Director Bob Erlenbusch</p> <p>CORE/SHA Planning Committee formed</p>
2014	<p>SHA hires new Executive Director Darryl Rutherford</p> <p>Converge CRT hired to conduct assessment and provide recommendations</p> <p>CORE Stakeholder interviews; Report finalized and circulated with stakeholders</p> <p>Next?</p>

## **INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND**

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The Coalition on Regional Equity (CORE) began as a concept in the early 2000s and flourished throughout the decade. CORE grew out of a successful alliance among Sacramento area housing, environmental, transportation and public health advocates who worked together to pass progressive, inclusionary housing ordinances. With a planning grant from The California Endowment (TCE), the Sacramento Housing Alliance (SHA) became the project sponsor and convened community partners to participate. The Coalition brought diverse constituencies together to advocate for fair and equitable regional development for low income people and communities of color.

Despite loosely defined membership, expectations and goals, CORE achieved a series of successes since its inception in 2007. In recent years, a wide range of changes and challenges stressed the function of the group and resulted in escalating conflict between SHA leadership and CORE participants, declining participation and a pause in key activities. In 2013, after the departure of SHA's staff and executive director, it was time to step back, reflect and consider next steps. CORE participants and members of the Sacramento Housing Alliance (SHA) Board formed a planning team to address concerns about CORE and its future.

The planning team focused on building trusting relationships and working together to identify how to establish an independent organization to promote equity in the Sacramento region. They reached general agreement to support CORE becoming an independent entity with SHA participating as a partner. Yet how to achieve this transition was unclear. In January 2014, the group contracted with Converge CRT to help assess stakeholder interest and provide recommendations.

One goal was to discover if the will and interest to re-invigorate and sustain CORE exists among key stakeholders. And if not, what can be learned from the experience? At the very least, it seemed critical to capture the achievements and challenges from this innovative collaborative effort. What successes need to be celebrated and what missteps might be avoided in future collaborative efforts? Answers to these questions will not only benefit regional equity supporters in the Sacramento area, they also may provide valuable insight to others engaged in collective impact work. The resulting report helps tell the story of CORE and documents the lessons learned in this chapter of addressing equity issues in the Sacramento region. Stakeholders are invited to reflect on the successes of CORE, understand the diversity of perspectives, heal and repair damaged relationships, and inform future collaborative efforts with the lessons learned.

## **PROCESS, METHODS & LIMITATIONS**

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The planning team worked with Converge CRT to develop a question guide (see Appendix I) and identify critical stakeholders to participate in confidential interviews to share their experience, reflections and advice. The selected stakeholders represented former CORE Steering Committee members and participants, former SHA staff, and former and current SHA board members. Between February and March, 2014, Converge principal Deb Marois conducted eleven confidential interviews with key stakeholders to:

- Collect wisdom and lessons learned from CORE, including successes and challenges
- Assess possibilities for the future of CORE, including the feasibility of establishing CORE as an independent, self-governing entity, and
- Recommend next steps.

Interview transcriptions were analyzed for common themes and unique ideas. Quotes from stakeholders appear without name attribution to respect confidentiality. Additionally, background documents such as CORE Steering Committee and Work Group notes, funding proposals and outreach materials were reviewed. Meetings were also held with the CORE Planning Team and SHA's new Executive Director. Taken together, this information shaped the CORE story and recommendations for next steps. It is important to note that participation in this assessment was limited to a relatively small sample, based on what was feasible to accomplish with available resources. While the selected participants represent critical actors in CORE's development and a diverse range of perspectives, there are many other stakeholders who have not contributed to this assessment.

Multiple perspectives were incorporated to form a cohesive narrative that illuminates key events and conflicts. There are sometimes conflicting or contradicting viewpoints held by various participants about the same event. Additionally, some individuals were unaware of some events at the time of occurrence and only learned about them after the fact. Every attempt has been made to be accurate in the timeline, but there may be errors due to faulty recall or lack of documentation. Some participants were notably cautious in their responses, due to sensitivities related to the high level of past conflict. Though nearly two years have passed and most people have "moved on," sadness, disappointment, hurt feelings, and "trauma" are still very present in the emotional landscape. These challenging emotions live alongside feelings of excitement, hopefulness, commitment and pride in the accomplishments achieved through CORE.

## **THE DEVELOPMENT OF CORE**

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### ***BEFORE CORE: THE HISTORICAL ROOTS AND POLICY LANDSCAPE***

Stakeholders trace the history of CORE to several local and national efforts that intersected and aligned at the turn of the millennium. PolicyLink, a national think tank with support from the Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities, reframed thinking about how to address long-standing inequities for low-income and communities of color in key areas such as housing, transportation, the economy, education, health, and environment. They called for a regional approach, arguing that solutions to community challenges such as sprawl, pollution, and unemployment were beyond the sphere of local jurisdictions and often a result of State and Federal policies that affected social and economic conditions across geographic and political boundaries. They also put forth the notion that all boats rise or fall together – that the fate of the poor and middle class, businesses and workers, and urban and suburban residents were inextricably linked in a regional cluster rather than traditional political jurisdictions.

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*“The emergence of the region—rather than the city— as the dominant economic and social geographic unit, as well as the decentralization of urban growth, has led advocates for social change to think and act regionally. This “community based regionalism” is premised on the understanding that the future of low-income communities is tied to broader regional, social, political, and economic factors; and that improving the well-being of low-income neighborhoods requires an understanding of the regional context and taking action beyond a neighborhood or community level.” (PolicyLink, 2002)*

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PolicyLink proposed a range of strategies to address inequity at multiple levels, focusing on concepts of smart growth, land use decisions, and building broad-based regional alliances. Participants worked together on a wide ranging issues from the lack of affordable housing or poor school quality and transportation to preserving open space and reducing traffic congestion. “People don't live their lives by artificial political or geographic boundaries. Issues such as clean air, food, land use, transportation cross the boundaries of cities and counties,” explained one CORE stakeholder.

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*“Regionalism came about because of our perverse tax structure. Every area has to have its own auto mall. There is \$360 per capita tax revenue generated in Roseville versus \$36 a year in South Sacramento. That's a difference of a factor of 10 yet we're all in one economy. You would need to drive to South Sacramento to shop to turn things around. ”*

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As these ideas took shape on a national level, local social justice advocates and policy makers began to put theory into practice. Tax revenue sharing was one tool proposed for gaining more regional equity. In 2002, California State legislator Darrell Steinberg attempted to address the fiscalization of land use and unhealthy competition for sales tax revenue among jurisdictions within a region by sponsoring Assembly Bill 680. The bill proposed a pilot program to test revenue sharing, support smart growth principals and increase equity in the Sacramento region, but did not pass.

That same year, smart growth, housing and social justice advocates tried to engage and insert equity into the Blueprint regional planning process sponsored by Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG). SACOG held three sessions focused on equity. But as one CORE Stakeholder recalls, “The key lessons from that effort were that equity advocates were constantly playing catch-up. It was SACOG's table and scenarios and regional equity supporters could barely keep up.” CORE grew “out of the need for proactive organizations who could mobilize around an agenda rather than responding to the agenda of other people.” To help fill this niche, the Sacramento Valley Organizing Committee (SVOC) worked to train grassroots leaders and address community problems by promoting neighborhood safety, affordable housing, quality education and job training. However, according to several CORE stakeholders, though SVOC was once a strong Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) affiliate, its effectiveness dwindled in 2005

due to “internal issues.” This left a major void in Sacramento’s capacity for community organizing. Some visionaries believed CORE could fill this function.

### ***THE BIRTH OF CORE***

What eventually became known as CORE began as an unfunded concept to create a “big umbrella” for smart growth and social justice proponents. Bill Kennedy, Managing Attorney at Legal Services of Northern California (LSNC) and former SHA Board Member Bill Powers initiated discussions with local advocacy groups representing diverse interests from housing to transportation and the environment. Over time, the dialogue led to a growing consensus about goals for equitable community development and land use including such concepts as compact, mixed-use, transit-oriented development. With SHA as the lead organization, this constituency successfully worked together to pass the nation’s first Extremely Low Income (ELI) housing ordinance in Sacramento. The victories achieved by this *Inclusionary Housing Alliance* gave birth to CORE in 2007 when LSNC’s Bill Kennedy and SHA’s executive director Ethan Evans persuaded The California Endowment (TCE) to invest in the idea and formalize the work.

Events moved quickly in the beginning, building excitement and momentum among the members of the CORE Steering Committee. Key stakeholders central to CORE’s formation attended PolicyLink’s Regional Equity Summit in New Orleans in 2008. This experience built relationships, inspired the founders and helped create momentum for change.

Also in 2008, a major policy change affecting community development occurred in California. The Sustainable Communities and Climate Protection Act (SB 375, Steinberg) was signed into law to support the state’s climate action goals to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions. Among other provisions, the new law required Metropolitan Planning Organizations (MPOs) to assume an expanded role in regional planning and for the first time, required coordinated planning for land use, transportation and housing. This changed the landscape of regional planning and substantially influenced CORE’s future direction and work.

This same year, LSNC’s staff attorney and CORE participant Colin Bailey became the lead counsel for the Avondale Glen Elder Neighborhood Association (AGENA). AGENA opposed Sacramento Natural Gas Storage (SNGS) application for a new gas storage facility to be built beneath this southeast Sacramento neighborhood, which is predominately populated by people of African-American, Latino and Asian ethnic backgrounds. The untested concept for the gas storage facility presented significant public health and safety risks to a community that is a product of historic redlining. Consequently, the case provided a race equity/race conscious frame on land use and a galvanizing issue for CORE. As one interviewee explained, “It was a classic case of environmental discrimination; a land-use case that presented a risk to health in a low-income community of color.”

As the Neighborhood Association co-chair, resident Constance Slider served as AGENA’s representative in the law suit. She was a young, African-American organizer who had had studied political science and worked for Sacramento labor campaigns and the Obama campaign. SHA hired Constance to serve as CORE’s regional equity coordinator in 2009 and she brought the environmental justice work of the AGENA case with her. According to several stakeholders,

it was understood that the work on the case would continue and it became the adopted work of CORE through Colin's and Constance's leadership. During these early days, staff and the Steering Committee were able to begin the work of coordinating constituents to be a united voice and achieve many successes.

#### MISSION: COORDINATING REGIONAL EQUITY ALLIES

Most interview participants describe CORE's original purpose similarly. "At the start, the purpose was to build a strong coalition to take on regional issues related to the built environment, particularly for low income and communities of color," recalls one CORE stakeholder. "It was also to help organizations get out of their silos and connect issues such as housing and job access to regional planning and land use."

CORE staff would ensure coordination between member constituencies and create some infrastructure to facilitate strategies that focused on land use, transportation, and regional funding. CORE provided strategic input and issue framing for 29 jurisdictions, stayed in touch with constituencies and highlight opportunities. Funding allowed SHA to hire staff, make space available, convene people and keep the conversation going. A Steering Committee was established to guide the work and later, issue Work Groups were added. While participation in the coalition was fluid, organizations central to CORE's formation included:

- Sacramento Housing Alliance (SHA)
- Legal Services of Northern California (LSNC)
- UC Davis Center for Regional Change (CRC)
- Environmental Council of Sacramento (ECOS)
- Mutual Housing California (formerly, Sacramento-Yolo Mutual Housing Association)
- California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation (CRLA)

Later, more than 70 organizations became involved in CORE to varying degrees. Participants included groups working on a wide range of issues such as affordable housing, environment, walkable communities and alternative transportation, public health, clean air, civil rights, and labor. Some joined the effort by participating in the CORE Steering Committee, Work Groups or the Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute (BCLI), for example:

- Ubuntu Green
- WALKSacramento
- Habitat for Humanity
- Sol Collective
- Chicano Consortium
- California Capital Financial Development Corp.
- Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment (ACCE)
- Health Education Council
- Public Advocates
- Climate Plan
- Food Banks

As explained by several stakeholders, CORE’s primary strategy involved targeting regional decision making bodies to achieve shared goals. “The concept was that social justice and advocacy groups with similar goals and different perspectives or motivations for wanting the same thing would work together for equitable land use,” says one. CORE served as an umbrella organization to provide a singular identity yet participating organizations could speak from many perspectives toward a similar goal of equity, environmental justice, and good housing and transportation policy. As one CORE stakeholder observed:

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*“Organizations get tunnel vision and silos but we have more in common than we realize. We were divided and conquered by the powers that be. There was a trend of population growth chewing the valley and creating more sprawling suburbs. We knew not everyone would buy-into every issue. They may support but not engage or maybe not do the heavy lifting. It would be okay to not engage. We were working together under the umbrella of regionalism.”*

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Some believed it was critical to avoid “speaking with a single voice” because it would have created one target. With multiple organizations presenting similar arguments but using different language that focused on the same outcome, opponents had less ability to “divide and conquer” or buy off individual organizations with small concessions on large development and land use projects. This flexibility meant that, “It was never important for everyone to show up for every issue. There was an underlying commitment to the principles and it was a package of mixed-income housing, smaller carbon footprint, infill development, and transit-oriented development.”

#### EARLY SCHISMS, STRENGTHS AND SUCCESSES

Though the CORE concept, mission and strategies were generally articulated there was not always shared understanding among key participants including CORE Steering Committee members, SHA Board members, SHA/CORE staff, and community partners. From the beginning, there were different ideas about the relationship between SHA and CORE, CORE’s role in community organizing to build power, SHA’s role as project sponsor and how CORE’s public identity would be articulated. Additionally, while the fluidity and lack of formal membership allowed CORE to be flexible, it also led to confusion among members about the work of staff, strategic direction and the usefulness of Steering Committee meetings. These issues were debated and remained unresolved throughout the life of the coalition, eventually growing into conflicts that hampered CORE’s effectiveness.

Despite these challenges, CORE stakeholders identified a range of strengths that enabled CORE to achieve steady and successful progress towards its mission including:

- A critical issue and clear need for which people cared passionately
- Potential to attract financial support for issue
- Diverse, well-connected and talented staff and participants
- Relationship-driven
- Ability to be flexible in implementation, to “make it up as we went along.”

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*"CORE is the most interesting and dynamic thing I've ever been a part of, it was way ahead of its time."*

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With few exceptions, most stakeholders indicate that CORE achieved substantive and tremendous progress. True to its mission, CORE developed what one stakeholder describes as “a unified body to pursue equity in the Sacramento region.” Over the course of about five years, the work resulted in:

- New relationships and increased capacity and diversity in community-based leadership, which influenced major land-use planning decisions in the Sacramento region;
- Research and educational materials that framed issues using an equity lens, including GIS (geographic information system) maps, white papers, and comment letters;
- Raised awareness of how the built environment and land-use decisions impact community health and well-being;
- Leveraged and mobilized resources of UC Davis, the region’s public research university;
- An unprecedented mobilization of partners and resources that produced award-winning, precedent setting gains on behalf of regional equity.

CORE engaged community members in new conversations and helped create a shift in attitudes and beliefs. People who didn’t back CORE at the beginning became supporters and were mobilized to take action. Stakeholders point to a range of activities where people “showed up” for the first time, sometimes in great numbers. Thinking back, one stakeholder says, “The Extremely Low Income housing win with the County of Sacramento was the pinnacle. Between 2007 and 2008, about 400 to 500 people turned out at each meeting.” CORE helped establish the most progressive housing element in the nation and the inclusionary housing ordinance created thousands of housing units that wouldn't have been built otherwise.

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*“We created a constituency that was very powerful through the 2000s. There was a string of significant victories. We demonstrated that standing between money and cities was an effective strategy and a regional approach works.”*

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Another victory at least half of those interviewed cite the award-winning AGENA natural gas storage case as one of CORE’s biggest victories; not only because it halted the development of a dangerous health risk, but because it activated constituencies and used the network of relationships to move groups to support the Neighborhood Association.

While most stakeholders count these efforts as substantial progress, one counters that with a few notable exceptions, most of CORE’s work resulted in “mild successes with less clear impact as opposed to creating real systemic change or building community power.”

During these early days, the economy sank into recession. Remarkably, CORE continued to receive grant funding during these lean times and the future looked bright. While the work of

CORE rallied stakeholders and satisfied board and funders for a time, unresolved issues of strategic direction and governance continued.

### *AS CORE MATURES, CHALLENGES EMERGE ALONGSIDE SUCCESSES*

CORE held its first public convening in 2009 at the Sierra Health Foundation where stakeholders shared their visions of the future and the role of regional equity. Building on this momentum, the Steering Committee created new issue focused work groups, developed tools in collaboration with academic institutions and built power through convenings and trainings. Activity moved at a fast pace and a majority of SHA staff and funds now focused on regional equity issues. A new tension was developing between the housing-focused goals of the board and the actual dedication of funds and staff time. This tension was exacerbated by a lack of communication and reporting structure among staff, Steering Committee and the SHA board. As one stakeholder remembers,

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*“Despite the challenges, there was so much potential, power building and it was exciting. There was strong momentum even though trouble was brewing.”*

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### CORE WORK GROUPS MOBILIZE

The establishment of workgroups in 2010 in response to SB375 is a frequently cited example of a CORE success. Considered the “real strength” of CORE, these dynamic, action-oriented groups focused on mobilizing new advocates for sustainable communities strategies, transportation equity and food access. “People cared, they were passionate and involved. It was a place to gather experts to focus on social justice issues.” Relationship building occurred with other community-based organizations as well as government agencies. The CORE workgroups became a hub for convening the talent within the constituency groups.

And the work had impact. During the two year Sustainable Communities Strategy (SCS) campaign, CORE developed a platform that was upheld in the Metropolitan Transportation Plan (MTP) update, led by SACOG. Says one stakeholder, “It was an effective roundtable for getting people together and collectively advocating for equity goals and building relationships with those in power.” Kendra Bridges, who first started work with CORE while a graduate student at UC Davis, coordinated the SCS workgroup, providing consistency and leadership. “She kept things on task, monitoring and did a good job keeping us together. That coordination is really valuable,” recalls one stakeholder.

One result of the Sustainable Communities Strategy workgroup is that, “We got in the door with statewide and national advocacy organizations through the work. Staff, SHA, and CORE members worked together on common goals. We were like a well-oiled advocacy machine dedicated to making sure equity was on the forefront.”

The Transportation Equity Workgroup also made headway on their work to impact the provision of transit services in the region. For the first time, housing and healthcare advocates joined environmentalists at transit meetings. Academics, health professionals and community-based

organizations referred studies about clean air, lung disease and transit and expanded the conversation beyond asthma to safety issues.

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*“We got a lot of new organizations who had never been involved in transportation or land-use advocacy. The network got new people to the table and moved the needle forward. We didn't get 30% of transportation to walking and biking, but we did get SACOG to take advocates more seriously. There was a more robust environmental justice analysis included in the plan.”*

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#### ACADEMIC RESEARCH AND COMMUNITY ADVOCACY: A POWERFUL PARTNERSHIP

CORE was central to creating a powerfully effective relationship between academics and community-based equity advocates. UC Davis Center for Regional Change (CRC) and the associated Community Development Graduate Group supported CORE's efforts from its inception. Center director Jonathan London and associate professor Chris Benner served as strategic advisors on CORE's Steering Committee, engaged students in research relevant to equity issues, and produced data useful to equity advocacy efforts.

The SCORECARD was one early project, spearheaded by SHA and CRC to produce a set of maps documenting inequality and paint a picture of regional equity. “GIS is really common now, but it was new in 2007,” recalls one stakeholder. Later, graduate classes were opened to community scholars and CORE staff to help build capacity and inform regional equity efforts. Class projects were tailored to CORE issues, for example:

- Community benefits agreements research as related to a new sports arena and entertainment complex proposed in Sacramento;
- A power analysis of transportation decision-making using a methodology developed by the Los Angeles Metro Alliance.

The partnership between CORE and UCD's CRC resulted in mutual benefits by leveraging each group's assets. “UC Davis started conversations but didn't have a vehicle for the work. We helped get them engaged in a legitimate way and vice versa,” explained one CORE stakeholder. In their role, university representatives achieved an “inside/outside” perspective and thus could act as “interpreters” to help institutional and grassroots community sectors learn about each other and navigate new working relationships.

One example of this mutually beneficial partnership occurred when SACOG was awarded a Housing and Urban Development (HUD) grant for additional regional planning. SACOG invited the CRC to serve on the Steering Committee due to their expertise in GIS and community-based mapping of social equity and environmental justice indicators. Accepting this invitation had the potential to create hard feelings with CORE partners who were not invited. Instead, partners developed an “inside/outside” strategy. CORE participants attended SACOG meetings to advocate, becoming “an integral and visible part of the process.” Meanwhile CRC built relationships with SACOG staff, helped conduct community consultations and developed appropriate measures for regional equity such as vulnerability indicators and an opportunity index.

## CONVENING AND CAPACITY BUILDING

Field trips, conferences and trainings were critical tools that engaged CORE participants in networking, learning and creating innovative strategies to apply in the Sacramento region. CORE hosted an annual convening in order to develop their common agenda and work plans. One stakeholder describes the convening as “regional equity in practice” and the place where everyone had a voice. “Everything that CORE became was driven by what happened at the convening from the working groups to BCLI,” another stakeholder says. The fluid nature of the group allowed issues to “bubble up” from the CORE constituency and be implemented relatively quickly.

The Boards and Commissions Leadership Institute (BCLI) is one critical success that resulted from the 2009 CORE annual convening. BCLI was a response to community input that added a program element not originally envisioned and was an insides/outside advocacy strategy. The goal was to “change the landscape of what folks look like who are decision-makers in this region,” explained one stakeholder. The program offered a series of panel discussions and trainings to help prepare emerging leaders for leadership positions by teaching the hard and soft skills necessary to succeed and enable people to “hit the ground running” when they joined a board or commission. Several stakeholders described the successful one-year launch of BCLI, from idea to implementation. CORE participants visited the Bay Area to better understand a leadership program pioneered by Urban Habitat, secured funding and recruited volunteer instructors and participants from the CORE network. In the first year, eight emerging leaders were appointed to boards and commissions not traditionally held by people from communities of color.

Attendance at conferences and trainings allowed momentum to continue and build, while infusing new ideas into the work of CORE. Other pivotal convenings included PolicyLink’s 2011 Equity Summit in Detroit, which changed the hearts and minds of key SHA and CORE leaders. The following year, CORE joined forces with Housing California’s annual conference to sponsor an Equity Summit Pre-Conference. Several hundred people from across California attended, raising the level of exposure for CORE

Another key turning point occurred in 2011 when several CORE participants attended a training offered by the Gamaliel Foundation, a national organization that, “provides leadership training, helps build community organizations, and leads local and national social justice campaigns.” Gamaliel maintains that they are “the only national community organizing network that marries broad-based grassroots organizing campaigns with state-of-the-art regional opportunity research and policy development.” The Gamaliel training explored the concepts of building greater community capacity, which led CORE “to a second phase of power building,” says one stakeholder. After the training, CORE hosted a daylong session in Sacramento to bring these concepts to a wider audience. “Approximately 80 people representing 30 organizations attended to discuss what it means to build power, both as a methodology and a means to an end.” The question of whether CORE could fulfill this community organizing function resurfaced, contributing to philosophical differences that later exacerbated tensions over governance.

Through 2011, CORE participants continued to work together and achieve progress towards their

mission. However, by this time, significant challenges had begun to impact the group's functioning.

## **CORE'S COMING OF AGE: CONFLICT AND CRISIS**

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While many stakeholders noted that being diverse, flexible, relationship-driven and well-funded were CORE strengths, it's important to recognize that these very strengths also were a factor in the group's challenges. A cluster of inter-related dynamics contributed to an increasing level of conflict within CORE, which escalated in 2011 after a change in SHA's Executive Director and CORE Program Manager. These conflicts reached a tipping point at CORE's annual convening in October 2012. The primary challenges leading up to this crisis were:

- Philosophical differences and misunderstanding about CORE's vision, mission and strategies, which grew from the beginning including tensions over:
  - Integrating CORE with SHA or incubating it as a separate entity
  - CORE's role as a hub for policy advocacy or in community organizing
  - Project scope and strategic direction in choosing which issues CORE would address, such as food access and bank advocacy.
- Lack of clear governance structure and written agreements related to decision-making, member roles and responsibilities, work plan and timeline
  - Ill-defined membership and difficulty organizing on a regional basis
  - Struggle among staff, board, Steering Committee and constituents over how resources were controlled and directed, how staff were hired and directed
  - Insufficient communication about CORE with SHA Board, despite board members serving on the CORE Steering Committee and Work Groups and periodic reports by the Executive Director and staff
  - SHA Board involvement in the day-to-day activities of CORE
- Conflicts of interest over funds:
  - CORE Steering Committee lacked information on the use of funds, and excluded from decisions on use
  - Undisclosed and unapproved communication with primary funder regarding possible transfer of funds
- Transitions: Changing leadership, staff turnover and inconsistent participation
  - Mismatch in competencies necessary for collaboration and social justice work and the style/skills of key leaders
  - Declining participation of community partners
- Dynamics of institutionalized inequities in the structures of CORE and SHA, evidenced to some by the lack of diversity on the SHA Board
  - Generational differences
  - Conflicts that emerged from different perspectives related to race, gender and power

## *EARLY SCHISMS: SCOPE, IDENTITY, AND TACTICS*

From the beginning, some SHA Board members had concerns that the increased scope of CORE would detract from the organization's primary mission to address housing. Several stakeholders described a "split" among the SHA board, with a significant number not really understanding or buying into the CORE concept. CORE supporters argued that rather than drawing resources away from SHA's traditional issues, involvement in CORE was building capacity. They also maintained that SHA did have a broader focus, and pointed to long-time involvement in Community Reinvestment Act issues as one example. In the end, there was enough support from the 15-member board to move forward.

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*"Just because there is tension, doesn't mean it's a bad thing. SHA had never been just about housing. SHA has had a broad focus and played a strong role in bringing people together around issues. They were the right issues and there were enough people [on the SHA Board] to understand 'why CORE.'*

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However, while a few SHA Board members actively participated in CORE, the majority did not attend CORE events and remained disconnected from the mission. By some accounts, communication to the board about CORE activities was minimal and lacked structure.

Operationalizing the mission proved difficult at times, especially when staff and participants didn't always have a shared understanding of the concept and no strategic plan. While nearly all interviewees agree that CORE's mission remained fairly consistent over time, they also point to efforts to broaden the scope and change the structure.

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*"From theory to practice, there was an evolution. Leadership changes, emerging leaders, people come and go and there was a lot of drift. At the beginning it was a concept and idea and not a lot of structure."*

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Tension over the identity and autonomy of CORE arose over time, exacerbated by staff, board and Steering Committee turnover. Most interview participants agree that the original intention was that SHA would incubate CORE and that as it grew stronger and more successful, it would eventually spin-off as an independent entity. To this end, the group decided to create a separate identity for CORE, with a unique logo and webpage. However, while "CORE was not SHA, it was part of SHA's work, a project of SHA." Some believed it should remain that way. Several stakeholders point out that SHA assumed fiscal responsibility and "took the risk" associated with launching CORE. Moreover, some people were confused by the idea that a coalition would develop into a nonprofit organization. One stakeholder described CORE and SHA's identity issue:

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*“It's confusing when a single issue organization is the home for a broad issue organization. SHA focuses on housing. In an ideal world, it would be reverse. For example in the Bay Area there is a multi-issue organization with housing projects. That didn't exist in Sacramento. SHA is where it landed.”*

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Clarity in *how* CORE would achieve its goals is something nearly all stakeholders agree was lacking. There was a two-year planning grant without a strategic plan. There were no written governance or decision-making procedures for the Steering Committee. A membership document was developed early on, but it was not integrated into the ongoing work of CORE. While CORE's “dynamic evolving nature” allowed participants to capitalize on opportunities and achieve success, it also laid the groundwork for conflict.

Despite these concerns, SHA housed and hosted CORE, took on fiscal management, launched it and served as a catalyst to bring people together. Though there was a lot of conversation about governance, the structure remained informal. Several stakeholders recall not wanting to get “bogged down” and instead, chose to focus on the work. As the work progressed, the line between SHA and CORE functions blurred. As one CORE Stakeholder explained:

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*“It seemed like SHA was blending and absorbing CORE. CORE was always intended to be separate but the absorption was taking place. It was the nature of grants. The grants were for CORE but administered by SHA and benefited SHA. That's not bad; it's just what was happening.”*

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Another early split related to mission related to the question of the best tactics for achieving regional equity policy advancement. Specifically revolving around the question, “Should CORE be a community-organizing entity?” As CORE developed, participants recognized the real need for a power building organization in Sacramento. Some hoped that CORE could support community organizing and base-building to fill the gap left by SVOC. Yet, CORE didn't have that capacity. “CORE was a policy focused group, not door-to-door community organizing. They would participate, but wouldn't lead. The CORE Steering Committee and SHA board had decided that in the past,” recalls one stakeholder. Nonetheless, debate continued about whether CORE should be an advocacy entity or focus on providing technical assistance, facilitation and capacity building.

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*“One challenge is that in everyone's mind, it was something different.”*

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Several stakeholders say building community-based power to advance equity for land use was the original purpose. For some, this meant engaging residents to gain “feedback from the community that wasn't being gotten elsewhere, and ensure every voice was heard and able to

contribute to the conversation.” In this model, building power required involving community organizations with a membership base such as unions, churches, or neighborhood associations. But CORE had an “ill-defined membership structure” and most groups at the table were service providers and advocacy groups, not organizing groups. After the Gameliel, training about grassroots organizing around regional equity issues, the issue came to a head.

### ***GOVERNANCE, DECISION MAKING AND PARTICIPATION***

By far, almost all stakeholders agree that one of the biggest challenges faced by CORE was the lack of clear governance and membership structure. “Because the structure was always assumed and not delineated on paper, people had different understandings,” says one stakeholder. “There were no rules or procedures for approving things. The people in the room at the time agreed.” While this allowed people to focus on the work right away, it increasingly caused problems as more individuals and organizations became involved, staff and leadership changed and tough decisions arose. Several stakeholders described it as a process of “making it up as we went along,” while others characterized the governance and Steering Committee as “loose,” “murky,” and a “big mess.”

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*“The biggest challenge is that nothing was written down. There was no work plan. Charismatic individuals had established CORE but when new people cycled in, there was nothing to refer back to.”*

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In 2011, LSNC attorney Colin Bailey became chair of the CORE Steering Committee, some say stepping into a role no one else wanted in an attempt to bring more structure to meetings. His appointment, though somewhat sudden and unchallenged, was recorded in the meeting minutes. As chair, some perceived Colin as a hard worker who did a good job running meetings. Others disputed the process by which he became chair and resented his leadership. One stakeholder describes the shift that occurred in the group functioning:

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*“As if the CORE Steering Committee was a formal body with ways of adopting and approving efforts. The meetings changed. It was more formal than what anyone had agreed to. It was uncomfortable. There was a need to adopt a structure rather than use a process by default. It seemed innocuous, but highlighted the lack of process that wasn't evident before.”*

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Governance issues that previously were managed through trusting relationships became contentious once SHA’s Executive Director Shamus Roller left in 2011 and grew more so after a highly competitive and very public hiring process for his replacement. This change in SHA’s Executive Director and the eventual departure of Constance Slider and other key staff marked another increase in tension.

The hiring process became a flashpoint, entangled with issues related to decision-making, roles, participation, and perceived power dynamics related to race. CORE's Steering Committee chair Colin Bailey was not selected for position. Instead, the board hired SHA's policy director Bob Erlenbusch who was fairly new to the Sacramento area and better known for work on hunger projects and homeless issues than housing policy. Most SHA staff and many CORE participants did not support this decision. Some believed the timing of the final selection meeting was manipulated so that CORE supporters on the SHA Board were unable to participate. Consequently, some characterized the decision as unfair and indicative of the power dynamics operating in a "good old boys" network. Others were unaware of the conflicts in hiring until much later and struggled to understand their observations of staff and board dynamics.

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*"There was a lot of gossiping and rumors. People started saying things about SHA. Former staff of SHA called board members racists."*

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Not long after Bob's hire, CORE Program Director Constance Slider left her position for reasons that were not fully explained to CORE leadership, furthering the rift. The SHA board struggled to balance their legal duty as employers with the Steering Committee's desire for transparency about staffing changes. While a few CORE Steering Committee members were involved in the hiring process for her replacement, others felt sidelined.

The approach and style of SHA's executive leadership compounded the tension. Almost all stakeholders reported challenges they attributed to a lack of collaboration and communication skills. Relationships were strained and because nothing was written down, SHA's executive leadership exercised great latitude in decision-making on behalf of CORE. The SHA Board and Executive Director informed the CORE Steering Committee that their role was advisory and all decisions needed to be cleared through the SHA board. This effort to limit CORE's autonomy was not well received by CORE participants. Confusion shifted to conflict.

In general, stakeholders described a stressful and frustrating internal working environment combined with difficulties that arose in external relationships with SHA's community partners. For example, key partners took offense when the Executive Director did not acknowledge their work in public statements or excluded them from grant applications. These omissions "fueled the idea that SHA did not care about CORE or the coalition's work," says one stakeholder. This lack of acknowledgement of program partners or program areas made the job of coalition building that much more difficult. Some participants became reluctant to engage with CORE. For those on the periphery, the situation seemed confusing. "People were leaving under suspicious circumstances. There was not the incentive to get involved. It doesn't take much to be occupied elsewhere."

### ***CONFLICTS OF INTEREST***

Most stakeholders believe that money, power and control were at the root CORE's conflicts. CORE's success and cutting edge issue area enabled the project to attract a great deal of financial support from philanthropic organizations. As a result, the economic benefit to SHA from CORE

gained importance over time. Funding for CORE became the majority of funds available to the organization. Inadequate reporting to staff and board, coupled with lack of strategic guidance, challenged the boards' ability to meet their legal fiduciary duties. Some stakeholders questioned how these new resources were directed. "SHA nearly doubled its staff in three years. None were solely working on CORE but the money was coming from CORE," says one. There were accusations that SHA was using CORE money for its own unrelated purposes. The lack of transparency and input on financial matters opened the door to misunderstanding and conflict as trust was already decreasing. Another stakeholder characterized growing community opinion as the belief that:

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*"SHA didn't want to pursue the work and just wanted CORE for the money. It was offensive; we were dedicated to the work."*

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In general, CORE Steering Committee members and participants wanted a voice in SHA decision-making that impacted CORE – such as the hiring of staff and the selection of issues CORE would organize around to address equity. Additionally, some wanted to shift CORE's membership to a dues paying structure. This proved difficult says one stakeholder because,

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*"You can't ask for money for membership if they don't get an authentic voice. The economic incentive for SHA helped create an implosion."*

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Two key events contributed to this dynamic. First, during the housing foreclosure and predatory lending crisis of 2011, a CORE partner suggested working on a strategy to hold banks accountable. The CORE Steering Committee debated the issue and for some, it seemed like a good fit. SHA had historically targeted some banks, including a US Bank branch in Oak Park. However, others were uncomfortable with this approach. SHA received a significant amount of funding from banks under the Community Reinvestment Act and did not want to jeopardize their relationships. SHA also had the responsibility for completing deliverables and reporting to the funder. Some SHA board members had concerns about their fiduciary duty and any possibility of jeopardizing the organization's 501(c)3 status if education and advocacy activities crossed the line into lobbying. But these points were perceived by some CORE participants as "an excuse for political differences about how to address equity," according to one stakeholder

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*"The SHA board is made up of affordable housing developers and whether it's real or perceived, they are dependent on certain funding. If CORE was an in-your-face community organizing group, the SHA Board was not comfortable with those politics and it was becoming controversial."*

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The SHA Board ultimately disallowed CORE from pursuing the bank strategy. Then, SHA leadership implemented a new policy that required board approval for all new CORE efforts and issues. The consequences of this decision reverberated throughout the group. Even though “most of the board didn’t know about it,” one stakeholder says, “The bank advocacy issue popped the magic bubble. CORE was a leap of faith for everyone involved and this work requires a little bit of magic.” Recalls another stakeholder:

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*“It was the biggest smack to CORE. The Steering Committee felt like [SHA was] a white paternal father saying you can't do this, we hold the money strings. This started an undercurrent: not only is the CORE Steering Committee not autonomous, they had to get approval from the SHA board before working on anything. This was not building equity or true authentic power. It made it difficult to recruit others, especially labor organizations.”*

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This accelerated the movement on the part of some CORE participants to create an autonomous organization with a focus on “power building” in the community. There were opportunities to partner with the Gamaliel Foundation, but this direction wasn’t supported by the SHA Board or even by everyone participating on the CORE Steering Committee. Despite this, two CORE leaders privately contacted the project’s funder in an attempt to separate CORE from SHA and redirect resources to establish an independent entity. Upon learning of this, some SHA Board members were “livid” and considered it a “disloyal” act. Several stakeholders indicated that this action was not viewed favorably by most participants in SHA or CORE. “It wasn’t the concept, it was the way they went about it,” says one stakeholder. Further compounding confusion, the CORE Steering Committee was not fully informed about these events until much later.

In an attempt to regain control of what seemed like a renegade environment to some, SHA leaders began to intervene in the day-to-day activities and program details of CORE. SHA instituted new administrative policies for how to accomplish the work, which some perceived as overly burdensome and unfair. “There was plenty of bad behavior on both sides,” says one stakeholder.

### ***CONFUSING MEMBERSHIP AND ROLES***

CORE also experienced a lack of clarity when it came to delineating membership and staff roles. “CORE had an ill-defined membership structure.” Staff drafted membership guidelines but “not everyone got behind it.” Part of the challenge was the different ideas about CORE’s mission and approach to the work. Some of the tension was between people who wanted to institute a more traditional, confrontational community organizing approach while others were more interested in policy advocacy characterized as “co-operative and conversational.” The approach influenced who became involved. “Most groups at the table were service providers and advocacy groups, not organizing groups.” Another stakeholder explains the different perspectives about community organizing and policy advocacy:

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*“There's not many organizations that do both under one umbrella. CRC wanted to partner with an organization that did organizing, not do it themselves. SHA is not a social service provider or organizing group. It's more of a policy organization to influence elected officials that defaults to members with large constituencies. CORE hadn't looked at what organizing would look like. At some point there were 72 organizations involved but not sure how many do organizing, there are very few out there.”*

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These differing approaches and understandings, combined with the lack of governance structure or formal membership agreements, made it difficult to attract consistent participation or even to reliably know who was a member. In turn, this created challenges when attempting to publicize members on the CORE website, sign comment letters or take other collective action. There was no process of vetting or voting on the Steering Committee. Individuals joined CORE but did not represent organizations with a constituency. Who exactly was CORE?

The role and expectations for members and staff also were not clear. Under the original concept, there was an expectation that CORE participants would contribute beyond attending meetings and sharing ideas. Some followed through, but “as time went on more work fell to staff.” This fueled growing resentment by some in the community that CORE was becoming staff-driven and SHA was “taking over.” Meanwhile, staff were “caught in the middle.” More involvement from CORE’s Steering Committee was not forthcoming however. Some wanted to avoid becoming embroiled in an “internal split” at SHA; others describe it as “energy draining.”

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*“It seemed like a big slog and never ending and it took too much time. From January to September it was the same conversation with different people.”*

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As the conflicts grew and the confusion over roles persisted, the dynamics of the CORE Steering Committee began to shift as well. Agendas were filled with discussions about governance and reports from work groups rather than working on thought pieces, visioning and engaging new participants. Newcomers entered the scene without a full understanding of the group’s mission and structure. Long-time members’ participation began to dwindle. Decisions never seemed to get made. Steering Committee participants progressively stopped attending, some determining that it wasn’t worth the time and making a conscious choice to spend their valuable time elsewhere.

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*“The Steering Committee was more talkers, professional show-er uppers. Not much doing. The meetings got tedious. The agendas, there was drift over time. The focus became more on structure and voice rather than the issues. As time went on, people left saying, ‘That's not what we came here for.’”*

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## ***STRUCTURAL INEQUITIES IN POWER DYNAMICS RELATED TO RACE, GENDER AND AGE***

Probably one of the most challenging aspects of the situation to describe are the race, gender and power dynamics that contributed to conflict, hurt feelings and damaged relationships within CORE.

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*“The racial tension is hard to talk about but important.”*

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The issue can generally be described as misunderstandings on the part of some participants of how traditional power structures combines with White privilege to create structuralized (or institutionalized) inequities based on race, gender and age. As told by most stakeholders, the SHA Board has historically been populated primarily by older White men who were perceived by some CORE stakeholders as lacking an in-depth understanding of institutional racism or gender issues. The irony is that CORE is an effort designed to address inequities that stem from these forces, yet is affected by and situated within these very same social conditions from which these inequities arise.

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*“They lacked the critical lens on society and an understanding of structural racism or how we interact with each other depends on power. There was no understanding of the root causes that play into racism and sexism or how to be a meaningful partner in social justice work, how important it is to have transparency and shared decision-making. SHA had a top-down understanding that was contradictory to what CORE was trying to do.”*

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At the center of the conflict for many CORE supporters was apparent lack of diversity on the SHA board. The majority of board members were older white males, albeit with long histories of progressive achievements on behalf of equity. Many CORE Steering Committee members maintained that with such a significant source of funding coming for CORE work, with its focus on social justice, the board should be more diverse in ethnicity, age and gender. Feelings were deeply hurt on both sides from what was perceived as an accusation by the board, and those of ongoing disenfranchisement among the Steering Committee.

For some, the situation was quite simple. The struggle to control money and decisions was directly connected to the composition of the group. “There were some who wanted to break away who are primarily people of color. The governance of SHA's board was primarily White and that was that.” Described as “a dynamic growing group of young, people of color professionals,” CORE represented “new power” inclusive of ethnic and gender diversity, as well as a younger constituency. “There was a White executive director and board who undermined their authority. This looked bad,” says one stakeholder. “All the young vibrant staff who are people of color left and so you have to wonder if there weren't some elements of racism operating,” says another.

The reader should note that while most of SHA’s staff who left their positions were people of color, White staff also left.

The environment became increasingly tense as charges of racism were voiced and those on the receiving end became offended. Community gossip increased, calling into question SHA’s reputation and integrity. For some White stakeholders who work for social justice or have experienced inequities stemming from poverty, these accusations felt unfair and unjustified. The discussion lacked civility for those who felt personally attacked or slandered. Meanwhile, some CORE participants became frustrated by White leaders’ inability to distinguish the built-in privilege derived from race and gender from personal behavior. One stakeholder describes the difference between structural or institutionalized racism and an individual who is racist. The reader should note that the SHA is not now or previously “all White.” At the time, there were two people of color on the board. However, this quote is offered as a representation of the perception by some in the community which contributed to the conflict.

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*“There was only one person of color on the SHA board and she knew she was a token. It's a structural racist problem when an all-white board is making decisions about a program designed for communities of color. There was no accountability. The power rests all with the white people. They needed to address the structural governance problems which included a racist component. The SHA board heard this as being racist like in the KKK.”*

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Significant “generational differences” compounded issues of race and gender, contributing to the workplace challenges. Comprised predominantly of white men in their 50s and 60s, the SHA board contrasted sharply with relatively young age of CORE participants who tended to be in their 20s, 30s and early 40s. One stakeholder describes board members as representing, “The whole housing continuum, many who have been working in this arena for 10 to 40 years. They're a gray-haired group, passionate about the cause with a lot of depth and knowledge.” This 20 to 30 year spread between most CORE participants and the SHA Board shaped leadership styles, work place expectations and life experience.

### ***CRISIS AT CORE: TENSION BOILS OVER***

Conflict grew for over a year and resolution seemed slow to come. The CORE Steering Committee made multiple attempts to resolve issues regarding governance and the move to separate. Though there was a healthy dialogue with staff and SHA leadership, Steering Committee members generally continued to feel marginalized and frustrated by a perceived lack of action. The long-awaited governance discussion was finally agendaized to take place during CORE’s annual convening in October 2012, nearly a year after the departure of Constance Slider.

CORE Steering Committee members decided to open the session to all convening participants. CORE’s recently hired Regional Equity Coordinator Katie Valenzuela had worked hard to engage new people, many who elected to attend the governance discussion yet had little context

or background. Ben Burton from partner organization Sacramento Steps Forward had agreed to facilitate the session at a last minute request of SHA. However, he was not perceived as neutral towards SHA and CORE stakeholders were not consulted on this decision. Just before the session began, the expectations of CORE stakeholders for resolution were shattered when SHA's Executive Director informed participants that SHA board members and staff would not participate. At some point, the meeting "blew up" and according to one stakeholder, "Everything divided along racial lines." Another describes it as, "The most dysfunctional time." As community partners left the meeting, a common refrain directed toward staff was, "It's not you, it's them [SHA's Executive Director and Board]. We can't keep doing this."

After the "destructive meeting," the situation remained frustrating. "No one at SHA was acknowledging the problem or valuing the experience of community partners. There was a focus on defending," says one stakeholder. One by one SHA staff left their positions over the next two months; some fearing the loss of professional credibility and damaged reputations. Despite the silent motto to "keep the work moving forward, towards the end, our heart wasn't in it," recalls one. The departure of all key staff central to CORE's success marked another critical point. Six months later, Executive Director Bob Erlenbusch left his position.

Despite the strong emotions of participants and lack of real progress at the meeting, dedicated stakeholders continued to meet among themselves in preparation to meet with the SHA board. In these meetings, the stakeholders learned of various events reviewed here and became more aligned and focused on resolving the conflict and moving forward, if possible. Concurrently, the SHA board opened up to solutions beyond status quo, even considering spin-off to a 501(c)3 or similar "disaffiliation." This report is a result of meetings between CORE and SHA representatives with this goal and has evolved into taking a larger look at the issue, with a view to learning from the process and discovering possibilities to further regional equity advocacy.

## **ADDRESSING EQUITY IN THE SACRAMENTO REGION: LESSONS LEARNED**

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Stakeholders discussed a range of learning that occurred based on their experiences with CORE. By far, most say that it is critical to begin with clear ideas about roles and responsibilities and revisit the governance structure periodically. Even those who believe it's important to accomplish some work before spending time and effort on governance acknowledge the benefit of written memorandums of understanding, membership guidelines and clear expectations. Additionally, a written strategic plan with timelines is important for articulating and achieving shared goals.

Some believe the relationship between SHA and CORE participants could be more harmonious if there was more "shared power" and CORE was able to choose its structure and issue areas. Others point to the need for more communication with SHA board members about CORE activities. Upon reflecting on the differences over decision-making and control of budget, one stakeholder learned:

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*“You need to think hard about this upfront. If launching a new effort, be clear. Have a conscious check-in with your fiscal sponsor and ask, ‘Is this the right relationship?’ Set a clear timeline upfront for incubation, not after the fact.”*

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A key lesson for some is that there is real value associated with the "inside/outside" strategy of working with regional powerbrokers. “There is value in trying to build relationships but it only has impact when there is a strong outside game.” Policy advocacy is not enough – there needs to be community organizing efforts and “base building.” Some stakeholders strongly believe one lesson from CORE is the need for members to have “skin in the game” - an annual financial commitment that defines membership.

Some stakeholders say CORE achieved a lot of positive results but that tends to get lost amid the conflicts. For most, what stands out is the powerful and inspiring collaborative work that engaged people around a shared vision from the regional to state and national levels. People rallied to support a consensus on “civil rights, environment, transportation, public health - about what communities and urban planning should look like and the way the investment of public dollars should flow.” In retrospect, one stakeholder realizes that CORE was never really a coalition but rather a “collective impact network.”

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*“We didn't know it at the time but we were doing "collective impact" work. We are on the cutting edge of network. Bringing people together with the same long-term vision. It was never actually a coalition; it was a network at its best. In a coalition everyone is working around a shared agenda. There was never an "opt in" to sign on with CORE. In practice it was porous, inconsistent participation but we developed shared ideas and strategies.”*

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## **CURRENT STATUS: THE NEED STILL EXISTS**

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Despite the challenges, most stakeholders say that CORE continues to be an exciting idea with great potential. “It was a powerful way of making change. People can be very powerful when they put their minds together. We learned a lot of advocacy strategies by working with others.” Almost all stakeholders expressed sadness at the prospect that CORE might not continue.

Over the last year and a half, activity in CORE has slowed considerably while strong emotions cool off and the future is debated. The CORE Steering Committee has not met since February 2013. Important work was in process when CORE stalled, including the engagement of new partners from throughout the six-county geographic region such as regional food banks and "on the ground service providers" who understood the inter-related issues. Though the Work Groups continue, participation and coordination has lagged. While SHA rebuilds its staff, including hiring Executive Director Darryl Rutherford and a coordinator to staff the CORE workgroups, a

committed group of CORE participants and SHA Board members have kept the CORE flame alive through the process of preparing this report.

Meanwhile, a number of former CORE participants have dedicated time to establishing the Capitol Region Organizing Project (CROP) as an official Gamaliel affiliate. CROP is designed to fulfill the community organizing, power and base-building function stakeholders say is so needed in Sacramento. This is an advantage in terms of delineating the functions of research, education and policy advocacy from community-organizing. With both groups fully functioning, one vision is that CROP and CORE could complement each other's work and create synergy towards "moving the needle" on regional equity.

People are feeling the absence of CORE and its direction towards dissolution is a tremendous loss. The need for a "cross-constituency advocacy group" in the Sacramento region still exists. For example, SHA established the Coalition for Shared Prosperity to press for a community benefits agreement as a new sports and entertainment complex is built in the city of Sacramento. More troubling, the region is in danger of losing the gains made in inclusionary housing. Stakeholders also point to the need for more accountability in housing and transportation plans and warn more sprawl is on the horizon due to decisions that result from "backroom deals and local autonomy."

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*"There is no CORE, no political constituency. There is no one to call people, send analysis, and convene to provide advice about who to talk to. There is so little infrastructure at the grassroots. We need someone who can call, set appointments and remind people."*

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The issue of achieving regional equity in Sacramento remains a high priority. Consequently, there is still a need for people to break out of silos, network, collaborate, learn about issues, translate research, leverage nonprofit resources and develop a policy and action agenda for land use and transportation. Many of the same people are "still here" and "new, valuable people are involved." Several stakeholders say that while the work is happening, there is no large umbrella. "There is a network of organizations in Sacramento doing work but no center to hold it together."

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*"You need a broad umbrella for regional equity. Sustainability includes access to resources, jobs, and transportation; walkable. We have tremendous demographic changes taking place. There's a younger population moving to the cities and an older population that wants to stay and have access and interaction. This is the battleground for the future. Real estate prices, will it drive out indigenous populations? Will middle and low income people be able to stay? No one wants a two or three hour commute. It's a matter of educating. A lot of organizations would benefit from being involved with regional equity. A broader view is needed."*

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## **WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE? STAKEHOLDER RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE FUTURE OF CORE**

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Based on stakeholder interviews, no one clear path emerged as a recommended direction for the future of CORE. Often, stakeholders raised compelling questions and advised that these be answered before deciding whether to continue CORE. These questions focus on leadership, mission, governance, participation, staffing and funding. Another challenge to moving forward is that “No one feels empowered to make decisions.” Timeliness is also a consideration.

### ***CAPACITY AND CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS RECOMMENDED BY STAKEHOLDERS***

Stakeholders outlined conditions they believe are necessary for CORE’s success and offered a range of recommendations as the future is considered. A majority were willing to contribute to reinventing CORE, though with widely varying commitments of time and energy. These conditions and commitments need to be carefully considered when selecting an option for the future. If CORE is to continue, whatever structure or form it takes, participants will need to address past conflict, revisit their vision and mission, collaboratively develop shared governance, engage community partners in the work and raise funds to support the effort. Keep in mind that some options were recommended by few or one stakeholder.

- Find a leader with vision and the ability to articulate it. A relationship-builder with integrity who can work effectively with all the different entities, connect and provide information. A leader who is passionate about CORE’s mission, fair respected, trusted, and even tempered. Not a “director” or “in-your-face” advocate. Listens but able to draw the line and say no.
- Obtain a commitment of funding (2 years) to rebuild infrastructure, employ staff.
- Establish a diverse, talented Steering Committee with selective and committed membership.
- Revisit the vision, mission, values, purpose and participation. Establish a governance structure, membership agreements and common understandings of how people will interact with each other.
- Resolve past conflicts, address racial dynamics, and acknowledge the enormous contributions of former staff.
- Engage a professional facilitator who is trusted, knows the community and understands power dynamics of social justice organizations yet is removed, not “too involved” and not a stakeholder.
- Employ 2-3 professional, diverse staff who can be the “glue” and serve as “connectors” to provide coordination, outreach and meet with constituencies to develop shared agendas. Need staff with content area knowledge to facilitate, conduct research and maintain BCLI.
- Get issues/project focused. Identify a concrete project that will excite people, ideally a place-based strategy with region-wide advocacy to engage community and demonstrate viability. Consider ways that rural and urban areas can work together so that CORE is less “Sacramento focused.” Don't spread too thin.
- Enhance communications and web presence. Clearly state how to become a member.

- Include a “member’s only” area for document share.
- Change the name as other groups are named CORE and the reputation of CORE in the Sacramento region is eroded.
- Diversify the SHA board. Recruit women and people of color from BCLI or regional colleges and universities.
- Develop new leadership in regional equity and build capacity among stakeholders to work collaboratively, plan strategically and understand how issues of race and ethnicity connect to inequity.

### *STAKEHOLDER COMMITMENTS AND INTEREST*

A number of stakeholders expressed deep support for CORE “whatever form it takes” along with willingness to:

- Invest time and energy to serve on a board or Steering Committee
- Explore joint grant opportunities.
- Continue in the workgroups
- Participate in a design meeting
- Prepare legal documents for nonprofit status.
- Assist with outreach, events, research and campaigns
- Identify diverse emerging leaders for BCLI

Others are currently involved with other projects and would support CORE from a distance. Several have strong doubts that CORE is viable and therefore would not be likely to invest time and energy.

### *STAKEHOLDERS TO ENGAGE*

For CORE to be viable, most stakeholders say the original groups that established the effort need to be involved and committed. However, rather than attempting to include “everyone,” efforts could focus on intentionally selected stakeholders who are invested in moving forward on regional equity. Additionally, one stakeholder advises that it’s important to engage people who have “the time to implement, they can’t just direct staff. They need capacity from organizations who will send staff who can take on tasks.” In addition to the “usual suspects,” stakeholders recommended engaging the following constituencies:

- Labor is an important constituency and ally for CORE. This includes the Labor Council and individual unions.
- County Offices of Education and SACOG at the Steering Committee level
- Food Banks from around the region
- Center for Immigrant Rights
- Funders such as Sierra Health Foundation and The California Endowment.

Many stakeholders discussed the type of leadership qualities necessary for success. Several different individuals were raised as possibilities; however, no clear consensus emerged. While these potential candidates all offered clear strengths, cautions also were raised. In particular,

several stakeholders emphasized the need for a leader with vision and unquestionable motives.

### ***STAKEHOLDERS OPINIONS ON POSSIBLE PATHS TO REINVENTING CORE***

Most stakeholders agreed the need for CORE still exists and many would like to see CORE revived. However, more than half expressed doubt about its viability and concerns about available energy, leadership and funding to move forward. Most were unsure how to proceed and were willing to entertain different scenarios. One reframed the issue entirely:

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*“The best chance of continuing is to get us on the same page at the same time instead of piecemeal advocacy and working under the broader rubric of regional equity. It doesn't matter if it's independent or under SHA, there needs to be more "client" or "community" control. There is a need to engage community and empower, not just have professional advocates. We need someone without an ax to grind.”*

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Few of those interviewed believed that establishing an independent nonprofit organization is feasible at this time. The support, time and effort required may not be available from key leaders and participants. Funding is a major concern, especially in the current competitive environment. One stakeholder questioned the alignment between a nonprofit structure and the goals of a coalition. “It sounds wrong for a coalition to be a separate organization.”

Several stakeholders maintain that at this point, CORE doesn't exist and there isn't a future. Some stakeholders believe the window of opportunity for CORE has passed. The momentum is gone and there is not a lot of confidence. Many key leaders are focused on other things and it would take too much work to revive it. Who has the time, money and energy? Letting it go would allow a “fresh start” and the space for other efforts such as CROP, the Coalition for Shared Prosperity and Design4Sacramento to gain traction. Additionally, CORE is a “liability,” associated with “racialized politics” and dysfunction that “left a bad taste in some people's mouths.”

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*“Not sure where the SHA board is or how much time individual board members would put in. The current environment is very challenging. There is so much on everyone's plates with decreasing funds and cutting back on providing services. It takes a lot of time and CORE is just one more thing on our plate. We just want to do the work not drama or politics.”*

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However, giving up on CORE risks continued backsliding on regional advancements in equitable land use and transportation planning. When discussing other possible future scenarios, some stakeholders envisioned a nonprofit fiscal sponsor for CORE. This entity would need a broad scope, alignment with CORE vision and goals, a compatible mission and no conflict of interest.

Additionally, CORE would need to have autonomy in decision making and control over resources. A range of strong and respected area nonprofits were submitted such as: Ubuntu Green, UCD CRC, Valley Vision, SACOG, LSNC, and Transform. However, for a variety of reasons, stakeholders raised concerns that these options were not feasible. For example, as part of the university system, the Center for Regional Change is unable to undertake advocacy. However, one stakeholder offered an idea to explore:

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*“There could be a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) between CORE Steering Committee organizations. They could go into a grant together and all contribute to a staff person, maybe housed at CRC. The job isn't about staff being advocates, it's about the staff facilitating organizations at the table to do advocacy. The staff have the coordination and educational role. That's one way to make it work with the CRC.”*

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Some stakeholders expressed that SHA could serve as CORE’s fiscal sponsor, distinct from being a project of SHA. This would avoid the hassles of establishing a nonprofit and draw upon the existing infrastructure of CORE participants, Steering Committee and Work Groups. However, past conflict would need to be resolved and it may prove challenging to re-engage participants and the support of funders. Several believe the relationship with SHA can be repaired and point to the new executive director and a more diverse board as positive signs. Others are skeptical and caution that past issues will continue to plague CORE if it remains under SHA’s sponsorship. One stakeholder suggested that SHA sponsor CORE for a specified time period, while a transition plan is developed and implemented. There is a very short window in which to do this cautions one stakeholder. One possible scenario:

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*“SHA should be the fiscal sponsor of CORE. Isolate the accounts. CORE is responsible for internal decision making. You could do this overnight with its own board and separate from the past. There is no future right now. Entities could negotiate about the future. The SHA board could assume fiduciary responsibility and essentially be a rubber stamp, similar to the Sacramento Homeless Organizing Committee, which SHA sponsors. This interim status could happen immediately and CORE could form its own board.”*

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According to stakeholders, if CORE remains affiliated with SHA, certain conditions would be necessary to increase the likelihood of success. “If the trust is not there, it will be a waste of time,” says one stakeholder. Other requirements include: CORE autonomy; a diversified board/staff at SHA and collaborative leadership with people of color; and capacity building around issues of power, race and organizational "de-biasing;" clear governance agreements, membership criteria, and a strategic plan/timeline; and funding. SHA could provide office space and initial staffing and support to develop a plan. One strategy could be to select a project to work on that could “bind and excite everyone.” “People won't come together to develop structure

but will to help the region.” However, the SHA board may not support this direction if the CORE mission seems too far afield from housing. Moreover, the SHA Board and CORE participants may not be energized for this option – there simply may be too much water under the bridge.

Some stakeholders suggested engaging more people in exploring the question of CORE’s future, especially to determine if there is the will, energy and leadership to “re-create” CORE. Other possible governance structures and models could be investigated such as: Kern Network for Children, Transform, Envision Utah, regional equity coalitions associated with PolicyLink and case studies in collective impact. A particularly well-suited example is the Partnership for Working Families, which has more than a dozen affiliates around the country including the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE) and Georgia Stand Up. PWF mobilizes broad-based regional campaigns that bring together labor and community interests to transform public policy and support economic growth for all. By widening participation, potential leadership or fiscal agents may be discovered. However, this requires additional investment of time and money and more research might not yield different results.

## **CONSULTANT REFLECTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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Collaboration is a required competency necessary for progress in regional equity. The conditions that create inequities typically are complex, “wicked problems” for which no single entity is responsible; nor does a single “right” solution exist. With any collaborative endeavor, conflict is a normal, predictable part of the process. As groups develop, they typically form and storm, norm and perform. CORE seems to have become derailed by the “storming” stage, which is marked by persistent uncertainty about the group’s purpose, difficult decision making, and power struggles among members. In order to normalize and move to high performance, questions surrounding leadership, roles, responsibilities, decision-making and structure must be answered. CORE is at a critical juncture – if these issues are not resolved, then adjourning is the default option.

The consultant recommendations are a result of more than a year of engagement with the CORE Planning Team, the stakeholder interviews, and nearly 20 years working with collaborative groups on community development and health improvement projects. While these recommendations incorporate stakeholder feedback, the reader should keep in mind that the stakeholder interviews represent a critical yet limited sample of regional equity advocates. The recommendations also draw upon my research conducted for a master’s thesis that examines collaboration and conflict in community health partnerships in California.

In May 2013, a former CORE Steering Committee member and SHA board member contacted me to help the group resolve conflict and determine next steps. In July 2013, after meeting with the planning team, I developed a series of recommendations that could help participants better understand the current environment and the potential feasibility of undertaking a collaborative planning process to reestablish the coalition. At the time, SHA had engaged an interim Executive Director and it was unclear what commitment SHA or other stakeholders could make to the planning process in terms of time, energy, staffing, and financial support. The planning team

persevered over the next six months and the work to produce this report commenced in January 2014, the same time that Darryl Rutherford assumed the Executive Director position at SHA.

Now that initial stakeholder input has been collected, the present moment offers a choice – a “go/no go” milestone. Developing a recommendation is challenging because those interviewed are not in consensus about the path forward. Additionally, as time marches on, momentum is lost. Though the CORE planning team continues to meet on a monthly basis to rebuild relationships and explore options, competing priorities combined with a lack of urgency has resulted in slow progress. I’m concerned that the drive and synergy necessary to re-launch or “spin off” CORE is lacking. Although there exists a more thorough understanding of CORE’s history, successes and challenges, there are still some critical unknowns. Most glaringly, this includes whether there is commitment from a broader stakeholder group to re-launch CORE in some form; if funding can be secured to support further work; and whether the SHA board is willing to play a lead role. For these reasons, I do not recommend pursuing the establishment of a non-profit organization at this point.

Yet, the need for action on regional equity remains and many of the same players continue to work on these issues, though perhaps in more isolation and without an overarching vision or strategies. Based on the initial background shared by the planning team, I anticipated that I would recommend adjourning CORE. However, I was surprised to find that the majority of stakeholders interviewed supported the continuation of CORE in some form. Most highly valued the “umbrella” and coordinating function that CORE served. Additionally, the workgroups were generally well-functioning and making progress on a regional equity agenda. Finally, the relationship building, networking and learning component helped raise awareness of and make progress on regional land use, transportation, health, and equity issues. I recommend that these functions form the basis for moving forward.

Stakeholders overwhelmingly agree that certain foundational elements are needed for CORE to be successful in any form. These include: champions and facilitative leadership, engagement of new and returning stakeholders, organizational support, a shared vision and strategic plan, clear governance, funding and staffing. I concur. Within this, there are many variables that can only be decided by the participants themselves. If there is a future for CORE, it will be shaped by those who choose to participate. I believe there is enough interest to host a convening in which CORE stakeholders engage in dialogue and consensus decision making.

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*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.” ~ Margaret Mead*

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In collaborative endeavors, there are a few maxims that may seem cliché, but serve as sound guideposts. CORE participants are urged to remember that forward progress can be achieved with a relatively small group that can grow over time. However, a collaborative effort requires sustained, consistent participation of key partners. Another truism is “form follows function.” I

encourage stakeholders to concentrate on their collective vision and goals – what they want to create and do. Allow the organizational form for any future version of CORE to arise from this

Finally, I recommend that CORE participants use an asset-based approach for both organizational/community development and conflict resolution/prevention. At the organizational level, using principles of *Appreciative Inquiry* can help CORE participants imagine a new future based on its positive core. In an *asset based community development* approach, discovering the existing skills, talents, connections and other resources individual participants and their organizations bring is an essential first step. As assets are identified, connected, and used to implement solutions, social networks increase and new community norms emerge.

This requires the constant building and rebuilding of relationships so that new connections develop in ways that multiply their power and effectiveness. In my research on community health partnerships, participants reported that strong relationships create higher levels of trust and understanding, which helps reduce destructive conflict. Personal relationships built through repeated interaction helps people understand the basis for different perspectives and *why* there is conflict. Productive discussions allow divergent perspectives to be heard while focusing on larger vision or goals, discovering common ground, and clarifying expectations and roles. Well-managed meetings that foster an atmosphere of respect for different opinions and focus on getting something accomplished also helps minimize conflict.

Additional specific recommendations to consider:

- Share this report with the broader circle of CORE stakeholders, beginning with the SHA Board and former CORE participants, to stimulate dialogue and transform past conflicts. Use this report as a tool for learning, deepening understanding and healing. If there is enough interest among this broader network, host a convening (or series) with structured, facilitated dialogue to collectively decide next steps.
- Continue to pursue advances in regional equity/the CORE concept in some form. A key function is to coordinate existing resources to work together in a more effective fashion toward shared land use and transportation goals to improve health for all.
- Establish sound process that keeps desired outcomes as the focus.
- Using existing assets, initiate well-defined project(s) that clearly connect to a regional equity agenda.
- Apply for funding to support a collaborative planning process that is focused on making a collective impact on regional equity. Collaboration is expensive in terms of time and requires organizational support; however the results of collective action can have big payoffs. Engage an experienced, neutral facilitator to work with the group to resolve past conflict, develop a strategic plan and establish clear governance.
- For expediency and to complete a planning process, use SHA as CORE's non-profit fiscal sponsor at least in the short-term. Though several stakeholders have serious doubts about this option, at this time there does not seem to be another local organization positioned and willing to assume this role. The current Executive Director Darryl Rutherford appears ready and willing to undertake the task of rebuilding CORE. He has vision, drive and a deep understanding of community development. It would be a win-

win if relationships could be repaired and CORE could be re-established with SHA's support.

- Whatever organization serves as fiscal sponsor, require that funds be isolated in a designated account and establish a clear process for decision making that is adopted in a formal, written Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The MOU should include a process for assessing the fiscal sponsorship.
- If there is not sufficient interest in a collaborative planning process, then devote time and energy towards achieving regional equity goals through other existing mechanisms such as: UC Davis Center for Regional Change, the Coalition for Shared Prosperity, WALKSacramento's Design4Sacramento, and/or the Capital Region Organizing Project (CROP).
- Whatever becomes of CORE, SHA Board members are urged to adopt stakeholder recommendations such as diversifying SHA's board and staff and engaging in capacity building around issues of power and privilege, working collaboratively and strategic planning.

## **APPENDIX I: CORE STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEW GUIDE**

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- 1. Please describe your history and role with the Coalition on Regional Equity (CORE).**
- 2. What is the purpose of CORE? What is the group working together to achieve?**
- 3. What progress, if any, has been made towards the CORE vision and goals?**
- 4. Please share a story about a time that CORE was really successful and thriving organizationally.**
- 5. What limitations, barriers and challenges, if any, has CORE encountered?**
  - a. What challenges, if any, did *you personally* experience?
  - b. What has stood in the way of achieving greater success with CORE?
- 6. What are the greatest lessons learned from your experience with CORE?**
- 7. What do you think should happen with CORE now?**
  - a. How could this future version of CORE be achieved?
  - b. If not CORE, then what? What's the best vehicle for addressing issues of regional equity?
- 8. Currently, Sacramento Housing Alliance (SHA) is the fiscal sponsor for CORE, and has provided staffing, meeting space and other organizational infrastructure. THE SHA Board, in consultation with CORE participants, has agreed it is time to transition their role from sponsor to "member." The CORE Planning Team, comprised of CORE participants and SHA Board members, is interested in exploring the feasibility of launching CORE as its own "independent, self-governing entity." What are your thoughts about this idea?**
  - a. Please share any excitements, cautions or concerns.
  - b. What would it look like for CORE to be "its own independent, self-governing entity?"
  - c. What other organizational structure, if any, would you recommend for CORE?
- 9. What capacity is needed to ensure a successful future for CORE?**
  - a. Who are the critical stakeholders who need to be involved if CORE is to have a solid, successful future?
  - b. What commitments are you or your organization willing to make, if any, to ensure a future for CORE?
- 10. What additional recommendations or reflections would you like to share with the CORE Planning Team and SHA to inform this process?**

## RESOURCES CONSULTED

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AB 32 and SB 375 Legal Analysis Resources. Institute for Local Government. <http://www.ca-ilg.org/webinar/ab-32-and-sb-375-legal-analysis-resources>

The Basics of SB 375. Institute for Local Government. <http://www.ca-ilg.org/post/basics-sb-375>

*Bruce Tuckman's 1965 Forming Storming Norming Performing Team-Development Model.* (nd) <http://www.businessballs.com/tuckmanformingstormingnormingperforming.htm>

Coalition on Regional Equity <http://equitycoalition.org/>

Education Portal (nd). *Stages of Group Development: Forming, Storming, Norming, Performing & Adjourning.* <http://education-portal.com/academy/lesson/stages-of-group-development-forming-storming-forming-performing-adjourning.html#lesson>

Gamaliel Foundation, <http://www.gamaliel.org/AboutUs.aspx>

Marois, Deborah (2006). *Beyond Polarities: Collaboration and Conflict in Community Health Partnerships.* <http://comm-org.wisc.edu/papers2006/marois.htm>

Partnership for Working Families <http://www.forworkingfamilies.org>

*Promoting Regional Equity: A Framing Paper.* (2002) PolicyLink and The Funders' Network for Smart Growth and Livable Communities, p 6.

Sacramento Housing Alliance <http://www.sachousingalliance.org/programs/coalition-on-regional-equity/>

Sacramento Region Consortium Sustainable Communities Regional Planning Grant Program. SACOG. <http://www.sacog.org/sustainable/about/>

SB375 Overview, TransBay Blog, <http://transbayblog.com/sb375/>

Sustainable Communities. CA Air Resources Board. <http://www.arb.ca.gov/cc/sb375/sb375.htm>

*Victory: A Working-Class Neighborhood Defends Itself Against a Dangerous Gas Project — And Wins.* Altnet, August 12, 2012. <http://www.altnet.org/fracking/victory-working-class-neighborhood-defends-itself-against-dangerous-gas-project-and-wins>

Walking On Gas <http://www.walkingongas.com/>