



Case Study #1

The ABCD of Clean Transportation Planning

PREPARE TO BUILD RELATIONSHIPS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

This case study focuses on the implementation of Asset-Based Community Development principles to foster local engagement and ownership in developing Clean Transportation Plan in a partnership between Clean Cities Georgia and communities in Jackson, Covington, and the Buford Highway Corridor.

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I support [Clean Cities Georgia](#), a nonprofit organization that works to reduce petroleum consumption in transportation, as a Community Engagement Liaison (CEL) with creating Clean Transportation Plans in environmental justice communities. As a part of their Clean Cities and Communities Energy and Equity Justice Initiative (EEJI), I chose three environmental justice communities to support in Georgia: Jackson, Covington, and the Buford Highway Corridor.

For each of these communities, I outlined certain indices to build a profile of how clean transportation could benefit them. Once I met with the communities, I used the principles of Asset-Based Community Development to have them engage on what makes their community special and why they live there.



Group of Jackson residents meeting to discuss how Jackson can benefit from clean energy initiatives
Credit: Charles Barlow

In these communities, it's easy to have them focus on and talk about the issues that they are facing, however, it's amazing to have them remind us of why they still live in the community and who they know and are connected to that can support them. This has also been great exercise for communities to think about the partnerships that they have and ones that they need to develop, so that they may tell their story for funding opportunities. It's always inspiring when you hear communities recite the many reasons why their community is worth saving.

LESSON LEARNED

"Communities will always come to you with what is wrong with their community, what needs they have, and the deficits. Initiating a process of Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) assists them in seeing what is good about their community, why they are still there, the relationships they have, and the power they collectively have to get things done."



Electric bike on display at the session led by Clean Cities Energy and Environmental Justice Initiative.
Credit: Charles Barlow

Principles in Action

- » *A1 - Power Dynamics:* Understand personal and institutional biases and power dynamics and actively consider how they impact your partnerships.
- » *A2 - History:* Acknowledge historical harms related to structural injustices and institutional relationships and advance solutions toward reparative justice.
- » *A3 - Participatory Research:* Get some training in a participatory research methodology (e.g. Participatory Action Research, Community-Based Participatory Research, Asset-Based Community Development).

I attended an Asset-Based Community Development (ABCD) short course presented by Georgia Tech, Serve-

Learn-Sustain (now known as the Center for Sustainable Communities Research and Education, SCoRE), and utilized the application of this process in real time with community members from Jackson, Georgia. I learned a lot from the information presented, in particular from the Identifying Community Assets tool, on how to connect on a different level with communities and the importance of having them to think through all of the amazing things about their communities and the assets that they already have. I began to think about how I could apply this process into my training as a Certified Diversity Trainer (CDT) and in my work with communities.

Months later, I began my contract with Clean Cities Georgia as a Community Engagement Liaison. These principles have worked well because they helped me to assist communities in making the connections necessary to move the needle on their Clean Transportation Plan (CTAP) by understanding their role in the planning process and giving them ownership over the plan. The communities have been able to connect us to local leaders and partnerships that align with the work, can champion for the funding opportunities, and “sign off” on the approvals needed. Through those community lead efforts and with our support, we were awarded funding for the CTAPs in two of our cities.

In addition, I was able to share this structure of work with a cohort of Clean Cities organizations that are paired with municipal city leaders and community members to build out CTAPs for their communities. Many had never heard of this process and several of them connected afterwards to learn more about how to utilize this in their engagement strategies.

Related Resources:

- [Introduction to Asset-Based Community Development \(ABCD\)](#)
- [Identifying Community Assets Tools](#)
- [Key Aspects of Asset-Based Community Development \(ABCD\)](#)
- [Clean energy group holds listening session in Jackson](#)