



# Redefining Resilience

Developing leadership for sustainability;  
Building community power for health equity in  
Central Texas

2021 HCA Summit: A Hill Country Conservation Reunion  
September 30, 2021 at Jester King Brewery

**GAVA's mission: to organize and mobilize community power for health equity:**

**We reduce barriers to health while increasing institutional capacity to respond to the people most impacted by historic inequities.**

**Our vision: a future in which a person's neighborhood, income, race, ethnicity, primary language, and/or immigration status no longer serve as predictors of health outcomes.**

**We address systemic health inequities in the following ways:**

- Increase access to physical activity and improved nutrition**
- Build community power**
- Foster permanency (neighborhood stability)**

# How we address health equity:

## **Increase access to physical activity and improved nutrition**

- Organize to build partnerships that provide healthy programming
- Organize to connect neighborhood leaders to resources
- Organize for a healthier built environment that supports improved nutrition and active lives

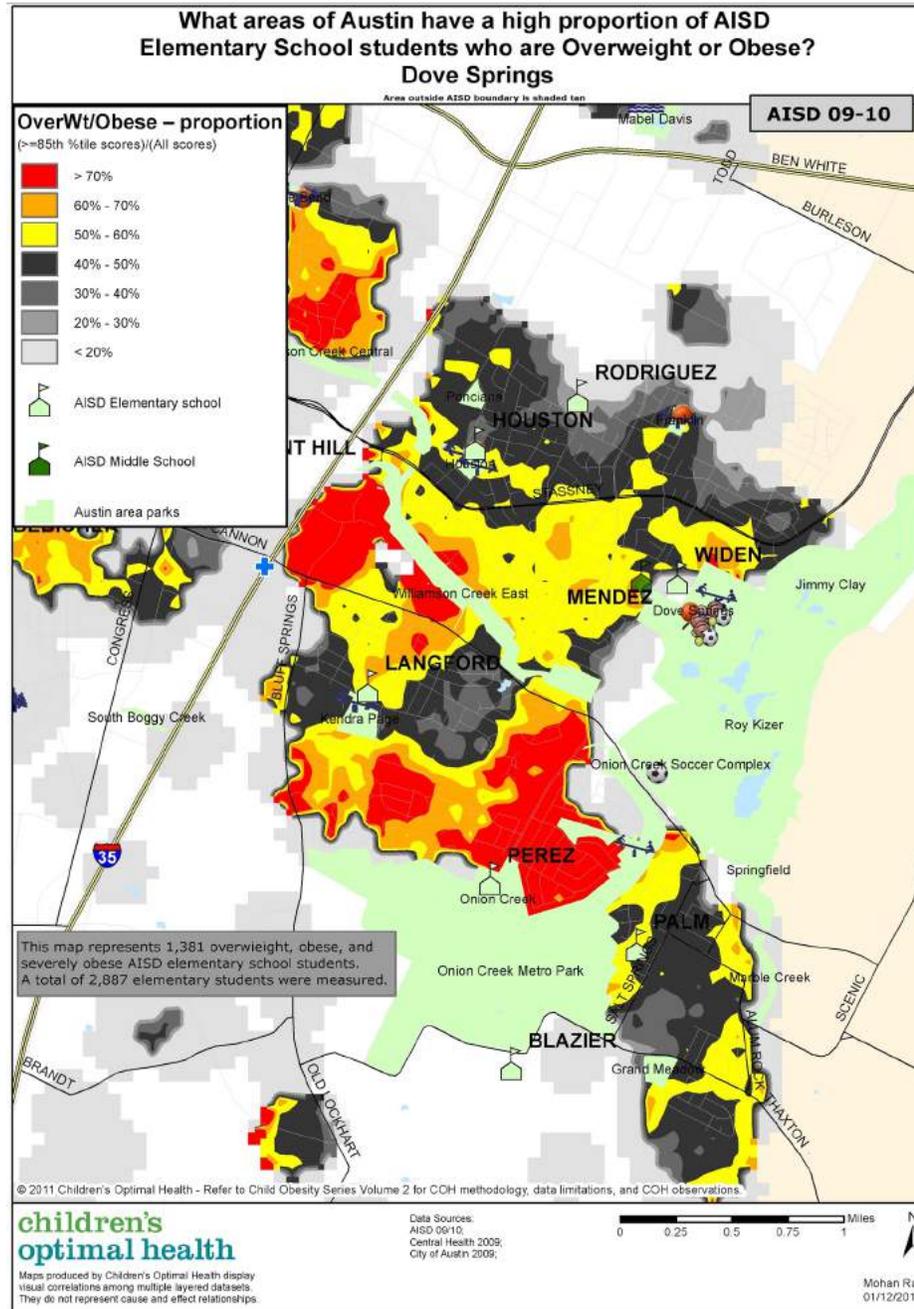
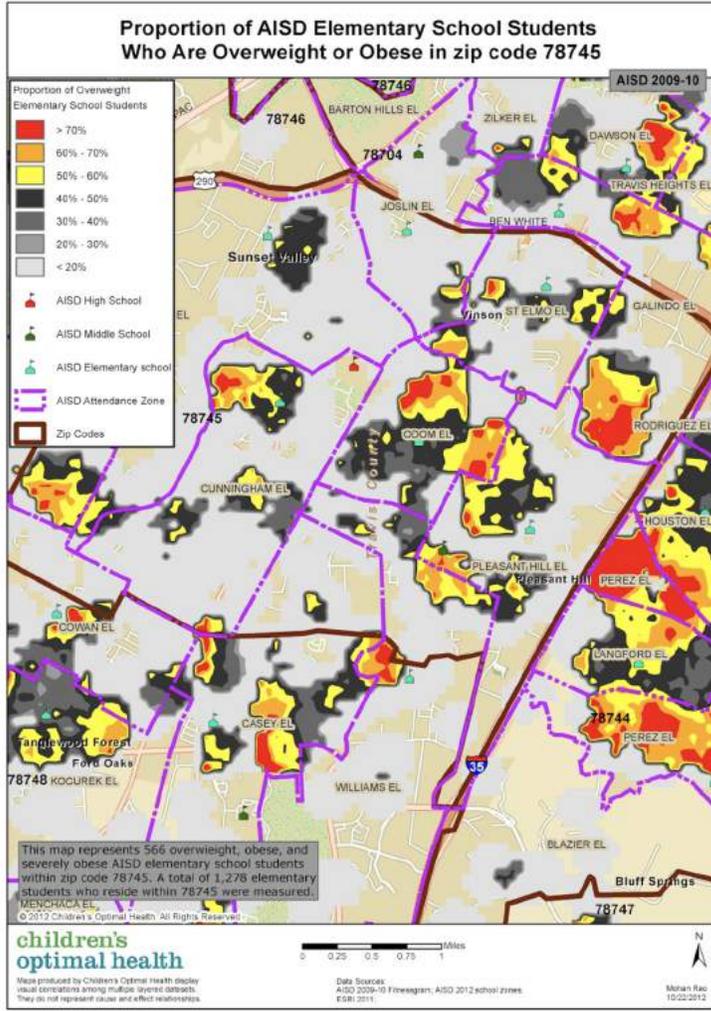
## **Build community power**

- Provide training, resources and support to develop strong community leaders
- Engage them civically to change the programs, policies, and processes that impact their communities' health
- Develop new and existing networks of community leaders and groups to address health inequities

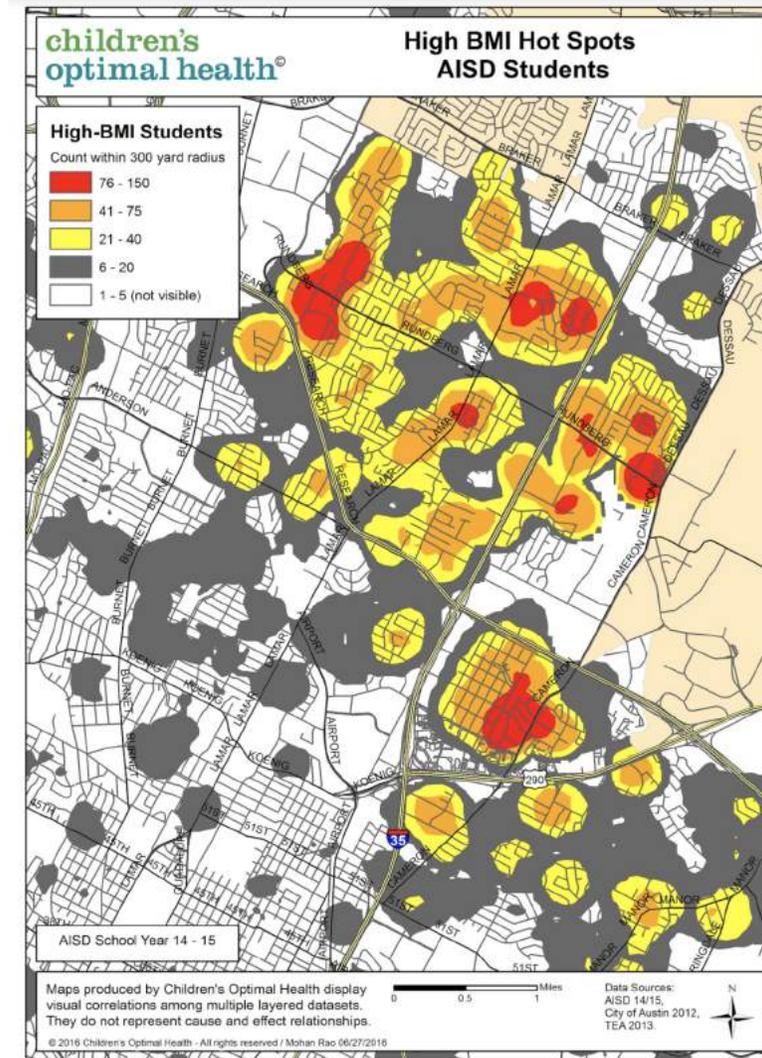
## **Foster permanency + neighborhood stability**

- Identify specific policies, tools, and programs that can mitigate cost of living and pressures from climate change that worsen displacement
- Build coalitions with other groups impacted by displacement and/or working toward solutions
- Foster partnerships and initiatives that support residents' economic mobility and opportunities to increase their incomes.

# GAVA began as a childhood obesity initiative...



South Austin ZIP code, 78745 became the second area of focus in 2014. In 2018, we expanded North!

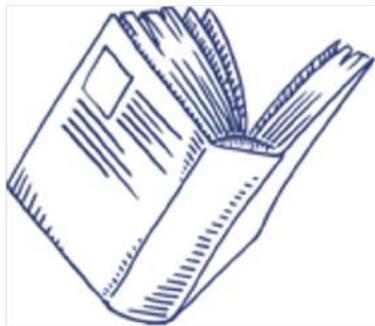


# How has **GAVA** supported residents in improving health?

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GAVA supported residents, neighbors, and partner organizations to lead and implement their own projects to address issues like:

## Coordinated School Health



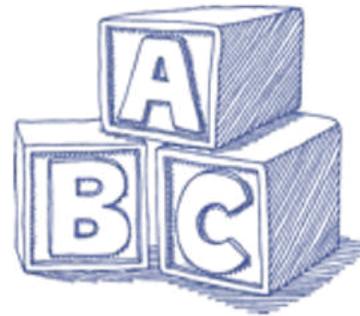
Increase physical activity offerings and healthy food options for your children and help make it easier for them to walk or bike to school

## Physical Activity



Improve infrastructure, lighting, play equipment and programmatic offerings in parks and green spaces

## Early Childhood



Increase physical activity, improved nutrition and healthy curricula in early childhood environments

## Food



Expand access to fresh fruits and vegetables and other healthy items through healthy corner stores, farm stands, and gardens.

## Community Safety



Addressing traffic calming, improving pedestrian infrastructure, and improving police-community relations

# From childhood obesity to Social Determinants of Health

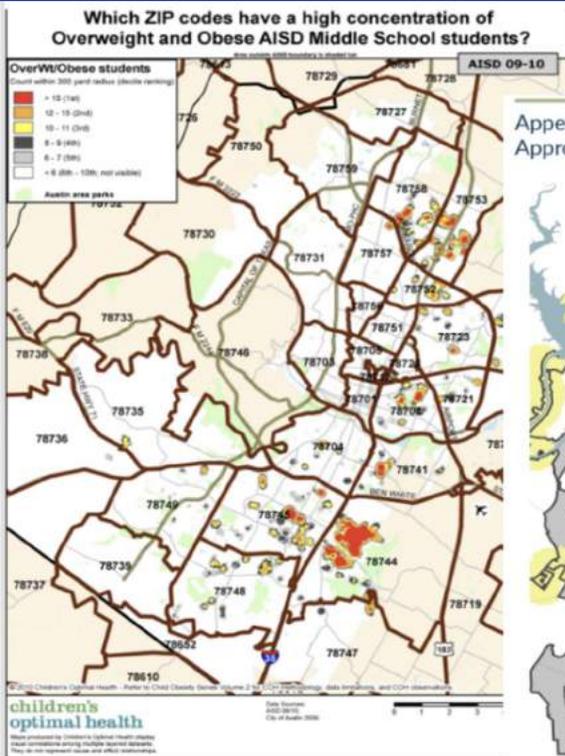
Social determinants of health are “the structural determinants and conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work and age.” They include factors like socioeconomic status, education, the physical environment, employment, and social support networks, as well as access to health care.



# How did **GAVA** get from obesity to climate resilience?

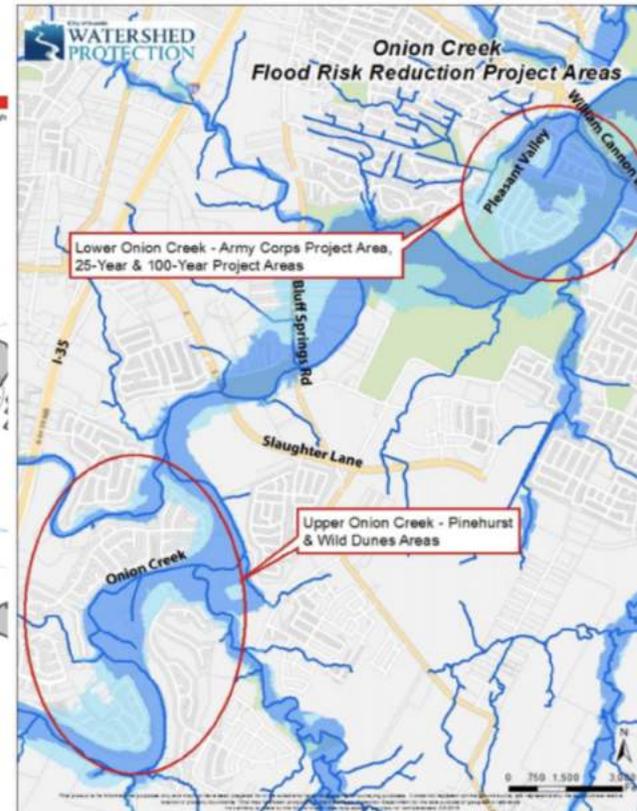
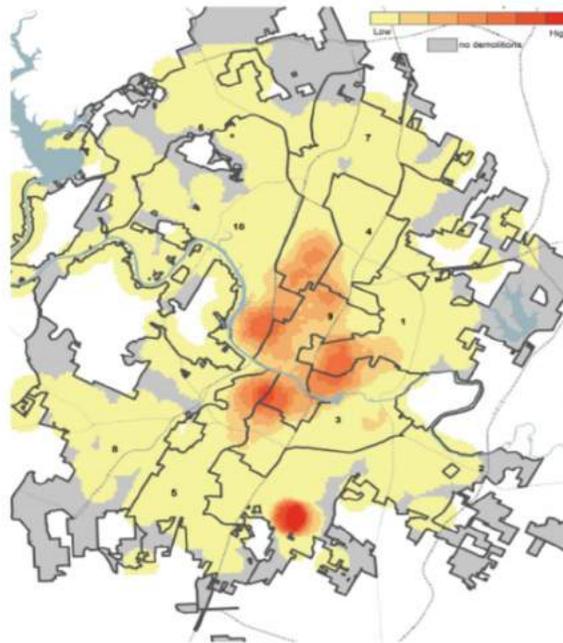
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GAVA neighborhoods are disproportionately impacted by chronic disease and other health disparities. These neighborhoods are also **downstream**.



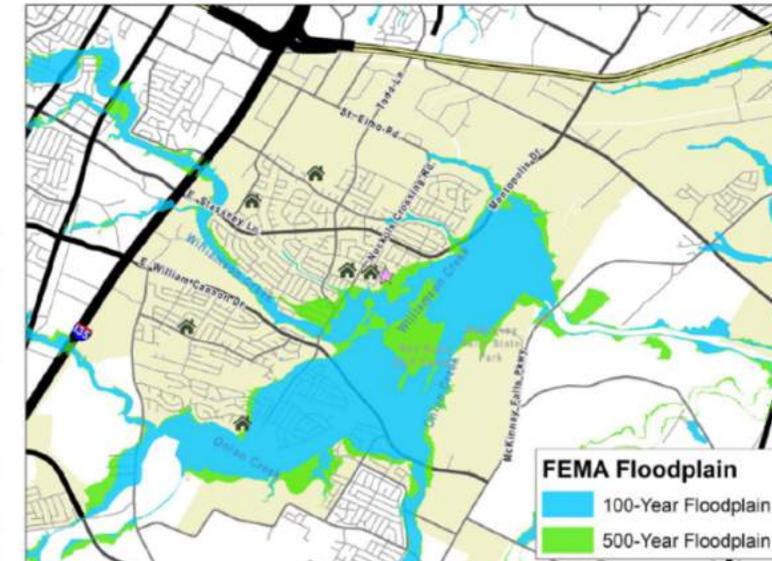
A map created by Children's Optimal Health overseeing which zip codes concentration of overweight/obesity among middle school students. (<http://www.cohtx.org/>)

Appendix A - Density Map of Property Locations for Approved Demolition Permits, FY08 to FY16



## Watershed

Onion Creek has an area of 344 square miles and its lower downstream portion runs through southeast Austin. The lower Onion Creek area is currently the City's highest priority for flood hazard mitigation. Williamson Creek's lower portion also runs through the southern edge of Dove Springs. Encroachment and alteration of natural waterways has resulted in eroding stream banks and threatened property.



# One on one meetings build relationships and surface issues

*You will never know what the problems are that you are trying to solve, until you start talking to people living them.*

As you document community input, and build relationships with community stakeholders, it is critical to develop **protocols and processes to support continuity as departments experience change and turnover**, and to keep folks in the loop.



# Community Engagement in GAVA neighborhoods

From the “Before-Times” — Five meetings in one!





**Redefining “Resilience”  
as Response + Responsibility**

**Redefining Sustainability:  
Taking care of our people, leveraging the  
collective power of our networks, and  
building leadership for the future**

**GAVA**  
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# Driving & Measuring Success Under Suboptimal Conditions

What does it mean for work to nurture us as much as provide the basics?  
**(Quality over productivity)**

How do we collectively set **realistic metrics that matter to the community** as much or more as they do to funders?

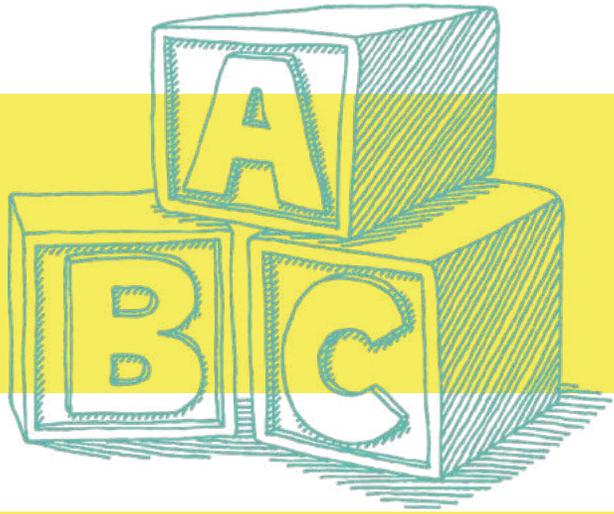
Recognize that people cannot maintain results when in crisis...**assess and equalize risk factors** for funders, payers, and stakeholders in the community in order to **adapt**.



**“Do something real. Do something local, however small.**

**And don’t diss the political systems, but understand their limitations.”**

**— Grace Lee Boggs**



## Shifting our framework of urgency to care and wellbeing: The “what” and the “how”

- Exercise
- Access to nature, outdoor play, greenspace
- Social Support - breaking isolation
- Sharing healthy food
- Mindfulness of exposure (screen time, news, etc)

While these were “upstream” or root cause interventions for childhood obesity, they are also mitigating practices for toxic stress and [allostatic load](#)

- Tapping into community knowledge
- Leaning into what’s there
- Creating space to reflect, celebrate, strategize



# Who benefits from the work that we do? Who gives strength to the work that you do?



- People from the community who set the metrics of these efforts and can evaluate success
- The partners who invest in your work
  - Organizational partners
  - Governmental partners
  - Philanthropic partners
  - Investors...
  - *Emerging leaders?*
- Who realizes the benefits / the full value of this work? short/long term



# Leadership is about leveraging networks!

...of all kinds!

