



## Baldwin Park, CA

▲ Community Example from Chapter 3 of “Lessons for Leaders:”  
*Lessons in Community Engagement for Equity*

### Community Background

In Baldwin Park, fast food establishments outnumber grocery stores seven to one. In addition, the city has been unable to attract any major grocery store chains, leaving residents, the vast majority of whom do not own an automobile, to use alternative outlets for their food shopping, such as convenience stores.

When the California Center for Public Health Advocacy (CCPHA) began its *Healthy Kids, Healthy Communities* (HKHC) initiative, the childhood obesity rate was 28 percent. Health disparities were high and exacerbated by low incomes and other factors (most residents were Hispanic, almost half were foreign born and 79 percent spoke a language other than English in the home).

In addition, there was a history of limited civic engagement, partially due to an “informed community engagement” approach (educational workshops, mailers and social media postings) for issues including safety, food access, school connectivity and walkability. This “informed” model aided compliance with regulations to inform residents and offer time for community input before adopting policy. However, it did little to aid meaningful engagement.

### Community Action

Through HKHC, the city and its partners, CCPHA and the Baldwin Park Unified School District, launched People on the Move (POTM). POTM is a multilingual, multicultural initiative aimed at strengthening resident leadership to create environments for children and their families that promote healthy eating and increased physical activity to reduce the prevalence of obesity and diabetes.

POTM resident leaders are now content experts who drive the momentum of every community strategy and adopted policy from inception to implementation. As a result, they are change agents for Baldwin Park, ensuring deep community engagement, resident expertise, positive relationships with decision makers and a path toward sustainable resident leadership. City Councilmember Marlen Garcia said, “The community engagement and input process designed by the HKHC project increased opportunities for working directly with residents on concrete projects.”

POTM leaders achieved multiple successes to address healthy eating. For example, they reviewed the food and beverage advertising practices in 16 food retail stores located near schools and conducted a corner store marketing survey. Leaders then worked with CCPHA and city officials to analyze the results. Most advertisements promoted beer, sweetened drinks, candy and chips. Furthermore, survey results revealed that 25 percent of storeowners and managers received payments from food companies to place these unhealthy foods at the front of the store.

To combat these barriers to healthy eating, POTM developed a “*Healthy Selection*” campaign and corner store conversion project to improve the food environment and make the healthy choice the easy choice by increasing healthy food offerings and labeling “healthy selection” products. In three short years, Baldwin Park partnered with 14 “Healthy Selection” retailers and the availability of fresh produce nearly doubled.