



Facilitation Guide

Green Zones

Holistic Visioning for Neighborhood Transformation

This facilitation guide can be used to activate and engage communities in discussions and coordinating efforts related to the health of their neighborhoods. Every neighborhood has a specific need and priority based on environmental injustice impacting the community. We hope that through the collaborative discussions harvested in this workshop, community-led solutions, based on justice and sustainability, are identified to transform areas overburdened by pollution into healthy thriving neighborhoods.

Materials Needed

Health of a Neighborhood Exhibit Materials

- [“A ‘Forgotten History’ Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America”](#) NPR article (print)
- [“From Memphis to the White House, This Advocate Is Confronting Redlining and Environmental Injustice”](#) NRDC article (print)
- [“Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America”](#) Interactive map of redlined neighborhoods in the United States

Additional Materials

- Computer or iPad
- [EJ 101 Animation](#)
- [EJ 101 Animation Narrative](#)
- Poster paper
- Markers
- Tape

Facilitation Steps

A. Introduction: Who are we? Who's all here (name/neighborhood)? Goals for today [10 min]

B. What is a Green Zone? [15 min]

1. Have participants grab a chair and make a large group circle.
2. Take a moment to ground participants in the space, presenting the Green Zones framework and guiding principles:

Green Zones framework

The Green Zones Initiative uses a cumulative impacts framework, which considers the totality of pollution in a particular area in combination with other socioeconomic and health inequalities. Communities of color, indigenous communities, and low-income communities are those living on the frontlines of environmental pollution, and as a result, are disproportionately impacted by environmental injustice.

Green Zones are based on the fundamental principle that clean air and land are basic human rights, and should not be determined by income and race. A Green Zones campaign works to focus governmental (e.g. laws and regulations) and local business investments and resources into overburdened communities – or, communities designated as *Green Zones*.

Residents' voices are prioritized in the planning and organizing of a Green Zone. The vision, goals, and priorities for Green Zones are rooted in the voices of local residents, which outline the intersecting lived realities and relevant solutions outlined by residents. “Green Zone communities are models for what community-led transformation can look like”¹.

3. Prompt participants to turn to their left and discuss the following questions with their partner. Encourage them to consider neighborhoods in the city experiencing cumulative impacts that may benefit from a Green Zones campaign and program:
 - a. Do you live in an area experiencing cumulative impacts?
 - b. What is impacting this area?
 - c. Who lives in this area?
4. Have participants stand up. They will be doing a continuum exercise; this exercise is meant to get participants thinking about the intersections between environmental justice and social justice issues.
5. Explain that each corner of the room represents a different issue, those being: environmental justice, social justice, health justice, or economic justice. Prompt the question: Is a Green Zone more about environmental justice, social justice, health justice, or economic justice? Allow ~3 minutes for thinking and deciding.

¹ A California Environmental Justice Initiative, CEJA. California Green Zones: Common Roots and Core Principles. <https://calgreenzones.org/about-the-green-zones-initiative/common-roots-and-core-principles/>

6. Once everyone has selected their corner, instruct them to chat amongst themselves on *why* they chose their respective corner. Allow ~3 minutes for discussion.
7. Going corner by corner, have one spokesperson explain their corners *why*.
8. Wrap-up the exercise by explaining that a Green Zone incorporates *all* of these issue areas, because all of these issues intersect when considering the holistic health of a neighborhood.

C. Health of a Neighborhood Exhibition [40 min]

1. Take a moment to connect the intersections of redlining, land-use, and disproportionate environmental burdens:

Urban Redlining

Our zip-codes have a significant impact on our health. Environmental measures, such as nearby access to green spaces, air quality, proximity to highways, and traffic levels, all contribute to our overall quality of life; and these factors vary disproportionately among neighborhoods. In the United States, communities of color, indigenous communities, and low-income communities are more likely to have poorer air quality, live near industrial facilities, and be more heavily affected by climate emergencies. These disparities are not a failure of policy, it's a result of it.

Redlining began in the 1930s, when neighborhoods were graded based on their perceived risk for home loan lending. Neighborhoods were graded in four categories: 1) Type A (best); Type B (still desirable); Type C (definitely declining), and Type D (hazardous). Neighborhoods classified as "hazardous" were outlined in red on maps and were denied access to mortgages and other economic opportunities. These neighborhoods were often inner-city areas with majority Black and immigrant communities. As a result, neighborhoods became segregated by race and class. Today, we see historical redlining continuing to affect communities; it's no accident that communities of color are living near smokestacks and freeway traffic. Post redlining policies, when zoning officials needed somewhere to put a new factory or build a new freeway, redlined neighborhoods were like a bullseye that was hit over and over again.

2. Set up three stations, one with a computer or iPad. At each of the two stations, place one of the printed texts: "[A 'Forgotten History' Of How The U.S. Government Segregated America](#)", "[From Memphis to the White House, This Advocate Is Confronting Redlining and Environmental Injustice](#)". At the computer station, open a webpage to "[Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America](#)".
 - a. Station #1: An interactive site that houses records of redlining practices dating back to the 1930s. Participants can explore records and maps that show the footprint of redlining on racial inequities throughout the nation today; "[Mapping Inequality: Redlining in New Deal America](#)".
 - b. Station #2: Understand how local, state, and federal governments justified and implemented discriminatory segregationist policies: "[A 'Forgotten History' Of How](#)

[The U.S. Government Segregated America](#)".

- c. Station #3: Connect disproportionate environmental consequences and burdens to land-use and redlining: "[From Memphis to the White House, This Advocate Is Confronting Redlining and Environmental Injustice](#)".
3. Assign participants to each station in pairs or small groups. Encourage them to read or play with the material at their station. Allow ~10 minutes for them to read and ponder at their station; encourage conversation.
4. Give participants a couple of minutes to summarize their resources for the larger group.
5. Going station by station, have participants share their learnings; guide the conversation to solidify the importance of each resource and how they fit among the others, through leading questions:
 - a. How do you see the intersections of race with neighborhood environmental burdens?
 - b. How does land-use impact the health of a neighborhood?
 - c. How could a Green Zones program alleviate some historical and/or present day burdens impacting redlined neighborhoods?

D. Our neighborhood [20 min]

1. Pass out a paper and marker to all participants. Encourage them to visualize their neighborhood and draw their block. Have them include sites that may be in a one mile radius of their home on the outskirts of the paper. Sites should include areas of environmental burden (e.g industrial sites, highways) and areas of environmental resilience (e.g schools, parks, mosques).
2. Explain that their neighborhood drawings are to illustrate what an overburdened community may look like, and how communities can identify areas to designate for a Green Zones campaign and program. Allow ~10 minutes for drawing and pondering.
3. Once participants have finished their neighborhood drawings, prompt them to share what areas of environmental burdens and resilience can be found near them, it is imperative to also consider racial and ethnic demographics in this discussion:
 - a. What specific environmental concerns do you have for your neighborhood?
 - b. What specific social concerns do you have for your neighborhood?
 - c. Does your neighborhood experience disproportionate environmental burdens? (i.e are there more than one environmental and/or systemic concern you have for your neighborhood?)
 - d. What does a healthy, thriving neighborhood look like to you?
 - e. What areas make your neighborhood great?
 - f. What resources would supplement the great areas of your neighborhood?
 - g. What resources does your neighborhood need to address the specific concerns you have?

Minneapolis Green Zones

Conversations similar to this one were held by local organizers and City staff at the

Minneapolis Green Zones Focus Group sessions, as well as through individual interviews with residents. These conversations were hosted in efforts to identify relevant community needs and concerns related to environmental justice and to spatially define the Green Zones boundaries. Community members identified North and South Minneapolis as the most overburdened communities, intersecting at various areas of environmental, social, economic, and racial disparities.

The concept and focus of a Green Zone is meant to be created and defined by residents, because of this, no two Green Zones are the exact same.

E. Community visioning [25 min]

1. Set up 3-4 stations, each with three large poster papers and markers. These stations will serve as the community visioning roundtables.
2. Assign participants to each station in pairs or small groups. Explain that guiding questions will be posed to prompt their collective discussions:
 - a. What dreams do you have for your neighborhood?
 - i. Allow ~5 minutes for pondering and discussion.
 1. Instruct them to write their collective thoughts and dreams on one of the three available poster papers.
 2. Have each station tape their dreams up on the wall near one another. Going station by station, encourage participants to do a brief gallery walk, noting the thoughts and dreams of their peers and neighbors.
 3. Send participants back to their stations for the next question.
 - b. What barriers may stand in the way of these dreams?
 - i. Allow ~5 minutes for pondering and discussion.
 1. Instruct them to write their collective thoughts and hesitations on one of the two available poster papers.
 2. Have each station tape their dreams up on the wall near one another. Going station by station, encourage participants to do a brief gallery walk, noting the thoughts and hesitations of their peers and neighbors.
 3. Send participants back to their stations for the last question.
 - c. What needs to happen or change for these dreams to overcome these barriers (e.g resources, programs, access to information, policy-makers)?
 - i. Allow ~5 minutes for pondering and discussion.
 1. Encourage them to think locally and system-wide.
 2. Instruct them to write their thoughts and hesitations on the last poster paper.
 3. Going station by station, encourage groups to share their solutions aloud. Guide the conversation to solidify the importance of each solution and how they fit the needs of each neighborhood.

F. Our Green Zones campaign [15 min]

1. Play the [EJ 101](#) animation video.
2. Reference the [EJ 101 Animation Narrative](#) to pull key scenes. Give participants a minute to sit and reflect. Use leading questions as needed:
 - a. What was threatening the neighborhood?
 - b. Were there people or communities who were not affected/burdened?
 - c. What brought people together?
3. Together, discuss the various actions and decisions (made by cities, neighbors, industries, etc.) that impact our communities, intentionally drawing parallels to our very own neighborhoods while referencing Our Neighborhood drawings:
 - a. How did land-use impact the health of the neighborhood in the animation?
 - b. Do you think the neighborhood in the animation would benefit from a Green Zones program?
 - c. Where did we see meaningful community involvement?
 - d. How can we interact with city officials or industries when it comes to EJ advocacy?
4. Explain that the coordinating efforts led by community members in the animation is a real example of what a Green Zones campaign may look like: community members coming together, addressing and discussing challenges, and developing an organizing plan to fight injustice, rooted in their own relevant solutions and alternatives – much like the dreams and solutions participants expressed in the previous activity.

G. Building consistent community organizing power [20 min]

1. Have participants grab a chair and make a large group circle.
2. Encourage participants to work together to complete a *where-when-who-what-why* assessment on community organizing, specifically organizing a Green Zones campaign for their neighborhoods/city:
 - a. Centering community focus and needs:
 - i. *Where* should organizing happen? (In the neighborhood? At the city office building?)
 - ii. *When* should we begin?
 - iii. *Who* is involved? (Communities?)
 - iv. *What* has happened that led us to organize? (Pollution? Land development? Natural disaster?)
 - v. *Why* is this related to Green Zones? (*Why* would a Green Zones program support our community?)
3. Building off of the questions answered and discussed above, continue developing strategies. Encourage participants to work together to continue strategizing, but now with a focus on understanding potential obstacles, engaging everyone impacted, and building power:
 - i. Where do we need to focus our community engagement to ensure everyone's voices are included in the goals/priorities we outline?
 - ii. What community centered education should be prepared to build momentum around our Green Zones campaign?

- iii. What do we still need to learn or understand in order to organize a successful Green Zones campaign? (What tools could support us? Interactive tools, Maps, Pollution reports?)
- iv. Who may oppose this campaign? (Preparing counter arguments)
- v. Why are these questions imperative to our organizing strategy?

H. Reflections & Closing [10 min]

1. Wrap-up; what did participants learn? What will they be sharing with community members? What remains unanswered?
2. Thank participants for their time and participation; we hope that they learned something new and are energized to continue conversations like today's.