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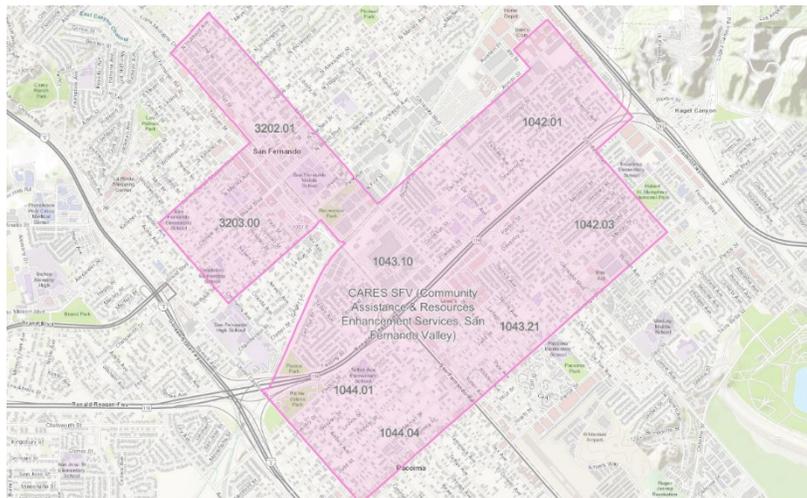
Northeast San Fernando Valley Residents Join Local Initiative to Help Plan a Healthier Community

By Sandra Trinidad

Community Assistance & Resources Enhancement Services, San Fernando Valley (also known as CARES SFV) is a Community Public Health Team serving parts of Pacoima and San Fernando. The census tracts serviced by the team run alongside the Pacoima Wash and Van Nuys Blvd. The area is an arid environment nestled around foothills that can be seen on the northern side of the communities. The area has predominately Spanish speaking community members and an African American community that has lived there for a long-time.

Earlier this year, the team launched a Community Advisory Committee to ensure the team’s efforts are community centered. The committee includes 8 community members as well as local business owners who live and work within the census tracts. Each member serves on the committee as a volunteer and agrees to participate on an annual basis. Meetings are held bi-monthly and facilitated by a member of the CARES SFV team. The committee provides input on activities and volunteer at CARES SFV community gatherings and outreach events.

We caught up with a few members of the committee who attended our last meeting to hear their thoughts on current priorities within their community. One member who lives in Pacoima stated that a few months ago, employment and food security were top community concerns. Since then, however, Immigration Customs Enforcement activity (ICE) has impacted multiple parts of Los Angeles County with large immigrant communities. She now sees immigration and mental health at the forefront of community concerns. Furthermore, she believes ICE activity is exacerbating unhealed trauma, pushing community members into isolation, and taking a health toll on families.



Census tracts served by the CARES SFV Community Public Health Team



Community members took note of local resources that mattered to them the most – whether it be a local grocery store or a nonprofit – and placed them on a map.

CARES SFV and their Community Advisory Committee are taking steps to best address these impacts in their service area. One step they’ve taken is launching a monthly food distribution and delivery to homes of residents requesting this type of support. The food deliveries are accompanied by bilingual flyers with information on resources. CARES SFV is also partnering with other agencies such as the YMCA of Metropolitan Los Angeles and Meet Each Need with Dignity (MEND) to provide additional support and linkages to care. Together they’ll continue working to ensure efforts are responding to community priorities as they evolve.