



# Healthy Environments Partnership/ Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation Detroit Youth Photovoice Project Final Report



## **Executive Summary**

This report grew out of the work of the Healthy Environments Partnerships' *Detroit Youth Photovoice Project* and is intended as a resource for community leaders and local decision and policy makers. The *Detroit Youth Photovoice Project* involved 24 high-school aged youth representing Detroit's eastside, southwest, and northwest communities. The focus of this project was to engage youth in using photography to document neighborhood conditions that impact risk for cardiovascular disease. The recommendations contained in this report were presented to Detroit decision and policy makers at the *Detroit Youth Photovoice Project* Policy Maker Roundtable that convened on March 28, 2007.

This report contains an overview of the *Detroit Youth Photovoice Project*, the process by which the youth were recruited, the training the youth received, as well as the findings that resulted from their work. The report also discusses dissemination of project findings, the youth's recommendations for decision and policy makers, and the evaluation findings.

The 24 youth who participated in this process greatly enjoyed the opportunity to learn the photovoice process, to use the photovoice process to document conditions in their neighborhood, to communicate their findings, and to serve as catalysts for change related to issues that affect heart health for residents of our city.

## **Background**

The Healthy Environments Partnership (HEP) is a collaboration between community-based organizations (Brightmoor Community Center, Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation, Friends of Parkside, and Rebuilding Communities Incorporated), health service providers (Detroit Department of Health and Wellness Promotion, Henry Ford Health System), a community member, and researchers based in academic institutions (University of Michigan School of Public Health) working together since 2000. The HEP uses a community-based participatory research (CBPR) process to understand how the social environment and physical/built environment influence risk factors for heart disease in eastside, northwest and southwest Detroit, and to create healthier environments. In 2005 the Community Approaches to Cardiovascular Health (HEP-CATCH) project began. HEP-CATCH is a 3-year community assessment and planning effort to work with residents, community organizations, and community leaders to identify potential intervention strategies to promote heart health among residents in the three Detroit communities. The *Detroit Youth Photovoice Project*, a collaboration between the HEP and the Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation (DHDC), a HEP partner organization, represents one component of the HEP-CATCH planning effort.

## **Photovoice Process**

Photovoice is a process that blends a grassroots approach to photography and social action. The goals of the photovoice process are to record and reflect a community's strengths and problems; to promote dialogue about important issues using group discussion and photographs; and, to engage policymakers in identifying community and policy level actions to be taken to enhance identified strengths or eliminate identified problems.

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**Detroit Youth Photovoice Project**

*Selection Process*

In the summer of 2006, 24 youth aged 14-18, from the eastside, northwest and southwest Detroit were recruited to participate in the HEP-CATCH *Detroit Youth Photovoice Project* to document neighborhood factors that affect risk of cardiovascular health disparities in the city. The project was originally designed as a summer, six week full-time community assessment but due to the level of interest from the youth the project continued for nearly a year.

Interested youth were selected through a process which included an application and a panel interview. Over 60 youth applied and were interviewed for the 24 available spots. The youth selected not only met all qualifications, they also impressed the panel as having a strong work ethic and genuine interest in maintaining and improving their neighborhood environment and promoting community health.

*Training and Orientation*

The 24 Photovoice youth began their involvement in the project in mid July 2006. In the initial two weeks the youth were involved in orientation and training activities. These included an introduction to the Photovoice process, photography techniques, public health topics (e.g. air quality, environmental health, chronic disease), and effective communication.

Participants received training in photographic techniques from two volunteer, professional photographers with an interest in community advocacy issues. Both professionals worked with the youth on two separate occasions focusing on the basics of photography and techniques for capturing the ideas the youth wanted to communicate through pictures. The youth also received public health training related to cardiovascular health disparities. Each session lasted 1-2 hours. The purpose was to increase awareness among the youth related to these issues.

Trainers included University of Michigan - School of Public Health faculty and staff of local environmental health and environmental justice agencies. The youth received training and information from professionals in the following fields:

1. Air Quality – Tim Dvonch – U of M School of Public Health - Healthy Environments Partnership
2. Environmental Justice (toxic tour) – Donelle Wilkins -Detroiters Working for Environmental Justice
3. Cardiovascular Health Disparities in Detroit – Amy Schulz - U of M School of Public Health – Healthy Environments Partnership
4. Urban Gardening, - Ashley Atkinson – Greening of Detroit
5. Effectively Communicating with Policy Makers – Angie Reyes – Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation – Healthy Environments Partnership.
6. Camera Use and Photography Instruction – Stephen Boyle and [Jacob Montelongo "Monte" Martinez](#).
7. Use of photo editing software - Detroit Hispanic Development Corp. staff

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## *Taking Photographs*

The photograph-taking component of the *Youth Photovoice Project* included two phases. Youth initially spent time at DHDC where they received information and training. Following the training, the youth went on group outings to take photos in each community they represented. The group outings lasted 2-3 hours depending on the location. Youth were also asked to take additional photos in their neighborhoods outside of the group sessions.

Over the course of the six weeks, the Photovoice youth captured images of community strengths that promote heart health, as well as neighborhood conditions that serve as barriers to physical activity and/or healthy eating. Over 1,900 photos were taken in the six-week period. The photos were developed and the youth then selected two photos from each outing to present at the daily group discussion. The discussion format followed the Photovoice SHOWeD\* process as a means of capturing the purpose and photographic intent of each photo. \*SHOWeD is the process of root-cause questioning and discussion in which Photovoice group members are asked to reflect on the following questions related to their photographs: What do you **S**ee here? What is really **H**appening? How does this relate to **O**ur lives? **W**hy does this problem or strength exist? What can we **D**o about it?

## *Findings*

When assessing and grouping the photos, the Photovoice youth were able to identify what they concluded were priority areas in need of attention from Detroit decision and policy makers. Their photos and discussion resulted in four key issue areas:

1. Abandoned buildings and illegal dumping sites
2. Barriers to fresh foods/ food access
3. Improved air quality
4. Conditions of recreation spaces in the city

These categories were selected as most important because they were the issues most frequently documented in the youths' photographs.



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## Dissemination of Findings

At the end of the six-week project period, the youth organized a gallery presentation at Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation in southwest Detroit for their parents, community members, HEP Steering Committee members, and DHDC staff. The youth displayed selected photos and explained what they meant and why they were important to heart health. The event was well attended with 18 participants. The images the youth captured proved to be powerful and they were very excited about the outcome of the presentation.

Additional dissemination activities included participating in HEP-CATCH Town Hall meetings in eastside, northwest and southwest Detroit, and serving as members of the HEP – Intervention Planning Team (IPT), described below.



For the Photovoice Project extension period (September 2006 – April 2007) a subset of 12 of the original 24 youth were offered an opportunity to continue on with the Photovoice Project. The 12 were selected based on their expressed desire to continue, the quality of their work, their attendance in the summer program, and a demonstrated interest in the project. This smaller group met twice a month over the next several months. Youth were a part of the CATCH Town Hall meeting presentations in their respective areas of the city. The Town Hall meetings were conducted as part of the CATCH community assessment effort to disseminate HEP study findings, including Photovoice findings, and to solicit community input on strategies to improve heart health among Detroit residents. The youth presented and discussed the meaning of their photos at each of the Town Hall meetings. The HEP Steering Committee and community members who attended the Town Hall meetings were impressed with the quality of work and the level of involvement and passion of the youth.

After the series of Town Halls were completed, three of the youth were selected to participate as part of the CATCH Intervention Planning Team (IPT). The purpose of the IPT was to use information from the community assessment process – including the *Youth Photovoice Project* - to identify and recommend neighborhood level strategies to improve heart health within Detroit. The IPT provided an additional forum for the youth to present their findings.

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*Photovoice Policy Maker Roundtable*

Although the youth had presented to various community members in the city, they had yet to have a formal audience with local decision and policy makers to present the Photovoice project findings. Beginning in January 2007 the youth began to plan to invite and host local policy makers at a Youth Photovoice Project Policy Roundtable. The youth were responsible for organizing their presentations and the event. One youth was selected by the group to present on each priority issue and photos were selected that depicted the issue being presented. Invitation letters were mailed to City, County and State officials inviting them to the event. On March 28, 2007 the *Youth Photovoice Project Policy Roundtable* was held.

At the Roundtable, the youth provided an overview of the Photovoice project, presented their findings and priority areas, discussed their recommendations related to each priority area, and asked policy makers to discuss policies that are already in place or are being developed to address the action items. The Roundtable was well attended by over 18 City Council members/staff, a Wayne County Commissioner, City of Detroit Department Director, and Directors of local community-based agencies.



*From left to right: Deídra Clements, Devonte Baskin, Taicia Hall, Janae Ashford, Amarrah Smith-Collins, Crystal Sims, Terica Robinson, Sicari Ware, Jonte Baskin, Derrick McIntosh, and Cindy Gamboa*

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**Photovoice recommendations:**

The following recommendations were presented to the local policy and decision makers at the *Detroit Youth Photovoice* Roundtable.

1. **More recreation centers** - The youth felt there was a need for more recreational programs and centers offering positive alternatives to “hanging out on the street”. They assumed this would benefit their communities by providing youth with constructive, heart healthy activities.



2. **Neighborhood clean up programs involving youth** - The youth suggested that policy makers allocate monies for youth to maintain parks and recreation sites. They felt this would assist in keeping our communities clean, as well as create job opportunities for youth.



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3. **Cleaner air practices** - Youth were concerned with the amount of air pollution created by excessive truck traffic and the waste incinerator. They questioned if we are being poisoned by the emissions from these sources.



4. **More fresh produce/ grocery stores in the city** - Youth felt they have limited access to fresh and healthy foods. They wanted to address the need for more grocery store chain supermarkets in the city.



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**Detroit Youth Photovoice Project Evaluation**

*Evaluation Design and Methods*

The evaluation of the Photovoice project was designed to assess the project's process and impact on the youth who participated. Youth participants completed a brief questionnaire at the beginning of the six week summer program and again during the last week of the summer program to assess changes over time in knowledge, skills, and sense of political efficacy. The youth also participated in two group discussions. The first group discussion was conducted at the end of the summer program, following the gallery presentation to parents, community members, HEP Steering Committee members, and DHDC staff. All of the Photovoice youth participated. The second group discussion was conducted in March 2007. A majority of the 12 youth who participated in the Photovoice Extension Period - which included participation in the Town Halls and Intervention Planning Team process - took part in the second group discussion. In these discussions, youth were asked to reflect on the Photovoice process (what went well, what might have been done differently) and perceived changes in their attitudes about cardiovascular health, their neighborhoods, and collaborative participation in advocating for community level change/their own needs. Project staff also conducted participant observation during key project activities throughout the six week summer program and the extension period to document the Youth Photovoice process.

*Evaluation Findings*

The pre- and post- questionnaire results indicated that over the six week summer program the participating youth reported increased:

- understanding of the things that promote heart health;
- understanding of how the Detroit environment affects heart health;
- ease in talking in front of groups; and
- confidence in their ability to explain to policy makers what its like to live in their community.

Through the group discussions we learned that after participating in the Youth Photovoice projects the participants felt better prepared to:

- interact with young people of different races/cultures/areas of the city;
- understand that youth from other areas of Detroit share similar experiences; and
- work as part of a group to advocate for change in their communities.

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*Evaluation Findings (cont.)*

Challenges encountered in implementing the Photovoice program that were identified through the evaluation include:

- coordinating across multiple areas of the city (e.g., transportation, youth's assumptions about youth from other parts of the city);
- logistics of getting photos processed, organized and catalogued; and
- assuring that the youth's perspectives were heard and valued throughout the Intervention Planning Team process.

Strengths and facilitating factors that emerged through the evaluation of the Photovoice program included:

- the diversity of HEP partner organizations involved in the Youth Photovoice program;
- the diversity of partners facilitated engagement of a diverse group of youth from varied neighborhoods throughout the city, provided widespread support and problem solving, and exposed youth to multiple dimensions of issues/neighborhoods;
- having a full-time youth coordinator; and leadership with experience working with youth.

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**Photovoice Dissemination Activities**

<b><u>Actions</u></b>	<b><u>Description</u></b>	<b><u>Youth Participants</u></b>	<b><u>Date to be Completed</u></b>
<b>1.</b> Presentation to City Council.	Youth were invited to present their recommendations for city programs and present their findings to a subcommittee of the Detroit City Council.	3-5 Youth	Fall 2007
<b>2.</b> Presentation to Wayne County Commission	Youth were invited to present their recommendations for city programs and present their findings to a Detroit City Council subcommittee.	3-5 Youth	Fall 2007
<b>3.</b> Vodcast on the University of Michigan School of Public Health Website	Vodcast features interviews with three Photovoice youth, the HEP Principal Investigator, the DHDC Executive Director, and the Photovoice youth coordinator.  <a href="http://www.umich.edu/news/index.html?videos#photovoice_sph">http://www.umich.edu/news/index.html?videos#photovoice_sph</a>	3 Youth	Completed in: July 2007
<b>4.</b> Publication in the University of Michigan's Findings Magazine	"Hope in the Click of a Camera", depicts how the photovoice project empowered the youth to make changes in their city.  <a href="http://www.sph.umich.edu/news_events/findings/fall07/features/two.htm">http://www.sph.umich.edu/news_events/findings/fall07/features/two.htm</a>	3-4 Youth	Completed in: Fall 2007
<b>5.</b> Appearance on Detroit City Councilperson Joann Watson's Comcast Cable Show	Photovoice youth, the Photovoice youth coordinator and the HEP community outreach coordinator we interviewed re the Detroit Youth Photovoice Project activities, related findings and recommendations.	3-5 Youth	Completed on: November 29, 2007
<b>6.</b> Poster presentation at the American Public Health Association Annual Meeting	Poster presentation which described the Detroit Youth Photovoice Project and related findings selected for presentation.	1 Youth	Completed on: November 4, 2007

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**Summary**

This report was developed to inform policy makers of findings of the *Detroit Youth Photovoice Project* that engaged high-school aged youth from different communities in Detroit to identify and work for community change to promote heart health. The dedicated youth who participated in this process greatly enjoyed the opportunity to communicate their ideas and participate in work to affect change related to cardiovascular health and other health disparities in Detroit. The Healthy Environments Partnership, through its work with the CATCH project will continue to draw on the Photovoice project and its related findings to raise awareness and work with the communities to implement strategies to improve heart health for Detroit residents.

**Detroit Youth Photovoice Participants**

*Northwest Detroit:*

*Evan Burney  
Deidra Clements  
Taícia Hill  
Cierra Nicholson  
Terica Robinson  
Crystal Sims  
Amarrah Smith  
L'Shae White*

*Eastside Detroit:*

*Janae Ashford  
Devonte Baskin  
Jonte Baskin  
Antoine Hill  
Derrick McIntosh  
Gaven O'Connor  
Chanavia Smith  
Brandy Watkins*

*Southwest Detroit:*

*Tomas Acosta  
Raquel Cavazos  
Manuel Colon  
Qaadir King  
Courail Pacely  
Jenifer Perteet  
Bianca Pritchett  
Erica Rodriguez*