

Stronger Places, Stronger Lives

Building Healthy, Inclusive Neighborhoods

RCD has long been about more than building housing.

The housing affordability crisis in the Bay Area has far reaching impact on the quality of life for residents who are low-income. A comprehensive approach that brings affordable housing and community development together builds both better outcomes for people and communities – from affordable rent to health, jobs, education, and more. RCD is committed to building stronger, healthier neighborhoods through our community development initiative, *Stronger Places, Stronger Lives*.

This initiative will build resident leadership and action, support real estate development that benefits the community's goals, and expand programs and policies that meet local need. It extends RCD's vision for our residents to the communities in which they live, in order to create lasting change that builds more complete and resilient communities.

This place making strategy relies on important collaborations that allow area residents to define and develop what will strengthen their neighborhoods in partnership with community organizations. The process is dynamic and long term, yet it will have an impact at both the individual and neighborhood level. It helps support low-income communities as they respond to opportunities and challenges.



5 strategies bring our expertise to the place making that is underway in Ashland

1 Community building and leadership development, a program to expand public participation, advocacy and dialogue in the Ashland community

In collaboration with community members, we are creating opportunities for residents to develop their leadership skills, engage politically, and participate in neighborhood beautification projects that will leave an imprint on the area.

2 Employment and economic development, a strategy to close the gap – in access to technical assistance, capital, and commercial space – that prevents low-income individuals from becoming small business owners and contributing to the community's social and economic revitalization

RCD, in partnership with Alameda County and Mandela MarketPlace, is working with the community to create a café and market hall that features healthy food and provides kiosks for local entrepreneurs to launch their businesses.

3 Community investment and land-use planning to attract and revitalize Ashland's housing, commercial corridor and aging infrastructure

RCD is an active partner in two neighborhood collaborations – Ashland Cherryland Rising and the Ashland Cherryland Healthy Communities Collaborative – that involve nonprofit and government partners working together to plan and implement solutions for improving Ashland's quality of life.

4 Early childhood and parent education programs to support parents with resources and activities to increase their child's development and literacy

We have transformed the community space at Ashland Place into a pop-up venue for implementing education programs.

5 Promote community health to ensure that residents are part of the network of local health clinics and resources for healthy living, healthy food and prevention strategies

RCD is partnering with Alameda County Public Health and Tiburcio Vasquez to dedicate resources and implement programs to address the physical and mental health disparities in Ashland. We are building the capacity of Ashland residents to act as community based health and nutrition educators who work with families to address social and economic barriers to living healthy lives.



Ashland is the first place we identified for *Stronger Places, Stronger Lives*. The model here is already informing our work in other communities. This collaborative work to build healthier, more inclusive communities is a key strategy in addressing issues of livability in the Bay Area.

Through community wide voter registration efforts we were able to increase registered voters in Ashland by 10%; 2.5 times as many people voted as in the 2014 election.

Ashland, building a future based on a rich history

Ashland, a small community in unincorporated Alameda County between San Leandro and Hayward, is one of the Bay Area's few remaining affordable communities. It is centrally located to all the regional job centers and has great transit and highway access. Ashland is densely populated – over 64% of residents live in multifamily housing – and employment is concentrated in retail, education, and the health and home care industries.

Ashland and neighboring Cherryland are important gateway communities for immigrant families from Mexico, Central America and the Middle East, as well as families displaced by rising rents in Oakland and other nearby cities. Often viewed by residents as a temporary stop, rather than a hometown, the area is described in official documents as an unhealthy, poor community with social indicators that are well below average for Alameda County.



LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERS

Alameda County Community Development Agency, District Four Office, Public Health Department, and Sheriffs' Office

Alameda County Community Food Bank

Deputy Sheriffs' Activities League

Eden Housing

First Five Alameda County

Hayward Area Recreation District

Mandela MarketPlace

Mercy Housing

REACH Ashland Youth Center

Tandem Partners in Early Learning

Tiburcio Vasquez Health Clinic

Ashland residents and community stakeholders, however, are working together to reverse negative trends. We are looking for ways to leverage the community's many assets, which include the entrepreneurial spirit of new and long-time residents, a newly developed full-service youth center, subsidized affordable housing, convenient transit access, and a commitment of resources from community and government partners. RCD is part of this community based effort to create a healthy, inclusive Ashland community that remains affordable and welcoming for current and future residents, businesses, and community groups.

In Ashland, we are piloting a model focused on place making and community building. We are bringing together residents and local organizations to design, shape, and implement strategies that boost local economic development and entrepreneurship, civic engagement, and improve access to education, healthy food, and affordable housing. Through investments in both people and place we believe these mutually reinforcing activities and investments will spur positive community change for residents.

What are the Characteristics of a Healthy, Inclusive Neighborhood?

Here's our vision for a great neighborhood:



RCD is committed to helping shape great neighborhoods

As developers and owners of more than 50 affordable housing developments in 20 cities in the East Bay, we believe we can have greater impact for people beyond an affordable apartment. We are using our experience in urban planning and real estate development, social services, community organizing, and asset management to create greater connection and increase resources of all kinds. The result will be healthier, more sustainable families and neighborhoods.

"I love being involved in my community and being able to contribute in any capacity. I believe that the work you are doing is a benefit to not only Ashland Place residents, but to the entire Ashland community. In addition to having stable housing, resources like parent education, job placement help, and access to child development resources are key elements for Ashland community residents so they will be able to maintain stability in their lives. I look forward to working on neighborhood improvement projects as well as being involved with community engagement projects."

KATRINA H., ASHLAND PLACE RESIDENT

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