

# Outreach and Oversight Committee members guide TCC implementation



## BACKGROUND

This case study spotlights how Fresno's Outreach and Oversight (O&O) Committee — an advisory body composed of residents and business owners that governs TCC grant implementation — has supported transparent, community-driven planning and fostered leadership development among residents. The committee is a core piece of the Transform Fresno Community Engagement Plan (see page 49).

*Interviews for this story were conducted in December 2019.*

O&O Committee quarterly meeting on June 12, 2019. Photo credit: UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation

**ARTIE PADILLA**, born and raised in Fresno, is a seasoned community leader. He founded the Every Neighborhood Partnership (ENP) — a nonprofit that runs youth, community, and economic development programs in over half of Fresno's 92 public elementary school districts. He is also involved in the Fresno Community Health Improvement Partnership (a local public health organization), Cradle to Career (an education and economic mobility initiative) and more.

Given his passion for improving his hometown, Padilla took part in the early community engagement process that shaped Transform Fresno's investment priorities and guided funds toward his neighborhood of Southwest Fresno. In his words, becoming more involved with TCC was a “no-brainer” given how its goals naturally fit in with his organization's work. Now, Padilla represents Southwest Fresno on the O&O Committee. As a long-term TCC participant, Padilla has seen firsthand the transformation already underway in the project area. “[The community engagement process] helped spark more civic engagement throughout the area, especially among folks that normally don't attend community meetings,” said Padilla.

Through his role on the O&O Committee, Padilla has deepened his learning about his community. Listening is a big part of his job on the committee, and he has heard from a number of community members about the legacy of poor local and regional planning decisions. “[I learned] how the city grew this way... why the freeway caused damage... and separated Southwest Fresno. So, that added a little more historical knowledge that I still use.”



Photo credit: UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation

To help repair this legacy, Padilla brings a holistic view of Fresno to his work on the O&O Committee and thinks critically about how to integrate community engagement efforts across multiple initiatives. “I'm trying to look at it from the residents' lens, from a business owner's lens... and how can we do it in a way that is efficient and respects everyone's time and capacity?” Padilla said. He sees TCC as building infrastructure that can help achieve this goal. It invites community members to participate in planning discussions about a variety of distinct but interrelated projects and transformative plans focused in a single neighborhood.

**“Community engagement anchors our TCC initiative and is building that civic infrastructure of community through involvement on a weekly, monthly basis of what's going on in their neighborhood... not just a hodgepodge of a meeting here or a meeting there.”**

ARTIE PADILLA



Photo credit: UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation

**JORDAN GUSTAFSON** grew up in Clovis, the neighboring city of Fresno, and moved to Downtown Fresno a few years before the TCC grant began. She chairs the Downtown Fresno Foundation, which is dedicated to economic development and revitalization within the City’s central business district. She is a member of the O&O Committee.

**“I’ve seen a lot of the positive impact of the community coming together and trust being restored. We’re committed to making sure Southwest Fresno is getting those funds.”**

JORDAN GUSTAFSON

The potential of the TCC funds for Downtown revitalization motivated Gustafson to attend the first TCC community meeting. Once there, she realized the projects being discussed could uplift community voices and reinvest in historically underserved areas.

After that first meeting, Gustafson was inspired to apply for a spot on the O&O Committee. As a member of the committee, she has gained insight into her community: “the top benefit is learning about my neighbors and how we can support each other and make Fresno as a whole better,” she said. She also developed crisis management and conflict resolution skills through facilitating conversations among residents with different priorities for funds. “People are very impassioned at these meetings. I’ve learned how to de-escalate tension when we’re having meetings with the entire community. It’s been an amazing lesson in empathy.”

The O&O Committee has helped to resolve conflict and address challenges that projects come up against during implementation. “When a project looks like it will fall through, we need to replace or fund another project that is going to benefit the exact people that the other project would.”

**BARBARA WILSON** has decades-long ties to the Fresno community, dating back to the early 1960s. Though her career took her to the Bay Area after she graduated from Edison High School, Wilson returned to Fresno in 2008 to care for her mother. She took on new roles in the community and regularly attends neighborhood meetings. Now, Wilson serves as a member of the O&O Committee.

Wilson was reading a newspaper when she came across an announcement for the first TCC Community Steering Committee meeting. She called friends to ask if they had heard about it and told them they should check it out. She hasn’t missed a TCC-related meeting since. “As a resident of the southwest side of Fresno, I’m excited for the program to improve lives through intentional redevelopment geared to the needs of the people living and working in Southwest Fresno.”

She says her motivation to get involved, and to stay involved, comes from her connection to Fresno as her home. “The opportunity to see redevelopment within my own district, community and how it would come together is exciting to me,” she said. “Most urban development projects happen to the community as opposed to happening for the community.... I want to ensure that the community engagement is thoughtful and intentional and those who live and work here today will still call it home after the redevelopment is complete.”



Photo credit: UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation

As a member of the O&O Committee, Wilson helps to resolve conflict among Transform Fresno partners and oversees project budgets, helping to adjust course when projects get off track, and working with the community and SGC staff alike to solve problems that arise. Through this experience, Wilson has developed a stronger network of Fresnoans who are involved in local redevelopment work, as well as gaining experience with leadership skills like conflict resolution.

**“The experience has allowed me to meet others who play an intimate role in the redevelopment process... [And] when partners weren’t getting along, we’ve had to step in and help resolve that issue. Now, they are working together.”**

BARBARA WILSON