

# Climate planning and community engagement from the ground up



## BACKGROUND

This case study spotlights how TCC funding has supported deep community engagement work in the Northeast San Fernando Valley. Specifically, the case study looks at the work of three individuals who are funded by TCC to serve as resident leaders. Maria Madrigal, Sofia Maldonado, and Victor Sanchez have built on their past work with Pacoima Beautiful to help implement the Community Engagement Plan, detailed on page 42.

*Interviews for this story were conducted in March 2021.*

Pacoima Beautiful's Community Inspectors in the community, 2019. Photo credit: Pacoima Beautiful

**MARIA MADRIGAL** is a longtime Sun Valley resident turned resident leader. Maria has lived in the community for over 34 years and for the past three years she has been part of Pacoima Beautiful's Community Inspectors program. She joined the program to keep active during her retirement years and make a difference in her community. Through the program, Pacoima Beautiful recruits and equips residents to become community leaders and advocates for social change using a "train-the-trainer" model. Inspectors identify toxic sources of pollution, opportunities for beautification, and teach other community members. Inspectors played a critical role in the process for developing the TCC proposal.

**"I have gone through the solar roof process. Once the neighbors see [the solar roof], I can inform them about the program."**

MARIA MADRIGAL

Maria meets with other Community Inspectors once a week to discuss environmental issues in the community, engage in public service projects to raise environmental awareness, and develop leadership skills by creating and advocating for community-led solutions. As a response to COVID-19, Maria learned to use new technologies, such



Maria Madrigal at the weekly Community Inspectors meeting discussing community priorities, 2017. Photo credit: Pacoima Beautiful

as video and web conferencing, to master different ways to engage with residents. She is also learning about solar energy, the benefits of solar roofs, and how to qualify for the TCC-funded rooftop solar installations. Using her new skills and social networks, Maria is excited to assist with implementing Green Together's Community Engagement Plan and outreach for the Solar Roofs project.



Sofia Maldonado at the monthly food swap in 2019 where she'll be sharing about TCC. Photo credit: UCLA Luskin Center for Innovation

**“I explain the benefits of programs like solar training with other moms ... to encourage their children to take advantage of these trainings because it has benefited my son”**

SOFIA MALDONADO

**VICTOR SANCHEZ** is part of Pacoima Beautiful's Youth United Towards Environmental Protection (YUTEP) environmental club, launched in 2002. Students from local middle and high schools are recruited through student campus-based clubs to participate in the program. The youth meet weekly to increase awareness of environmental issues, participate in public service projects, develop leadership skills and prepare for college. As with the Community Inspectors program, participants in YUTEP become core leaders of the organization and community engagement efforts and will play a key role in Green Together's community outreach activities.

Victor joined the YUTEP in ninth grade. Now in high school, age 16, he has developed the confidence to speak at public meetings, organize, and lead community meetings and engagement efforts. By participating in paid internship opportunities such as the Future Rangers Program and certification courses like the California Naturalist training, Victor has decided to pursue a career in the sciences and hopes to design electric cars and to promote clean energy. He looks forward to new and rewarding opportunities to involve the community in TCC engagement efforts, making good connections, and seeing what the community can accomplish together.

**SOFIA MALDONADO** is another Community Inspector who will play a pivotal role in implementing Green Together's Community Engagement Plan. Maria has been working with Pacoima Beautiful since 2008, first as a volunteer and then as a paid Community Inspector. She emigrated from Mexico 32 years ago to Pacoima with her children. She became involved with Pacoima Beautiful as a single parent looking for resources to help her children succeed in school and stay out of gangs. Through her involvement with the organization, she became aware of environmental burdens her community faces and decided to continue to fight for the health of the community and her children.

Sofia is most proud of two projects she has been able to accomplish through her activism. The first is the installation of speed bumps near her home. The second is the installation of a traffic light near a local high school after witnessing a few accidents that put children in harm's way. She gathered over 500 signatures and went through what she describes as a long and difficult process to reach her goal of a new street light. Sofia is excited to put her leadership skills to use, continue knocking on doors, and sharing her family's firsthand experience about the economic benefits her son received in previous solar training efforts in the community, which will be replicated as part of Green Together's Solar Roofs project.



Victor Sanchez at John Francis High School during community engagement event, August 2019. Photo credit: Pacoima Beautiful

**“As an environmentalist, I like seeing my community contributing to resolve issues around climate and the environment. I like the community pride... We make projects our own and have a sense of community.”**

VICTOR SANCHEZ