The West Side Environmental Justice Project:

Addressing issues in the Rose Park Community of North West Salt Lake City
The Project:

The goals of the West Side Environmental Justice Project have been to identify and reduce environmental concerns and issues in the Rose Park area. We aim to achieve this goal by forming community partnerships, performing environmental assessments, and gathering community input as a means to promote stronger environmental education and stewardship on the West side.

With this project, we have assembled a Community Action Committee of representatives from local governments, organizations, and communities to identify and prioritize environmental health threats to the Rose Park Community. Funded by the US EPA Environmental Justice Section and coordinated by the Utah Society for Environmental Education (USEE), the committee has worked together to design and execute a series of six stakeholder meetings to assess the levels of knowledge and interest among community residents regarding environmental issues.

The subsequent sections of this report summarize the information collected at the stakeholder meetings where residents were asked to identify environmental issues they felt were of immediate concern. It also reviews some of their suggestions for possible solutions and whom they feel should be involved in the process. Having analyzed the information collected, and in conjunction with the Community Action Committee, we plan to construct a three-year strategic plan which incorporates a practical means to reduce or eliminate environmental threats to the residents of the Rose Park community.
The Findings:

Environmental Issues Identified by Residents

As described, residents attending the stakeholder meetings were asked to identify environmental issues they feel are pertinent to their community. Additionally, participants were asked to envision possible solutions to these issues and name organizations which might be involved in their resolution. Respondents were prompted to identify as many issues as they perceived to be problematic within their community; the information collected varies greatly and is, thus, presented here in terms of frequencies alone. Also, perhaps due to language barriers and literacy issues, not all stakeholder meeting participants filled out worksheets individually. The findings presented below represent the responses of fifty individuals (noticeably fewer than the 67 in attendance over the course of six meetings).

Although responses varied widely, it was possible to arrange them into more general categories which better-represent the topics identified as priority issues among the groups than would, say, a long list of idiosyncratic concerns. The chart below shows how many of the fifty responses identified the issues of air quality, litter/trash, water, and pests (the most commonly noted environmental issues) as pertinent concerns. Later sections will discuss each of these matters briefly, noting specific issues reported among respondents and acknowledging concerns that didn’t appear with the frequency of those listed below.

Most Commonly Named Issues - General Categories

- Air Quality
- Litter/Trash
- Water
- Pests
**AIR QUALITY:**

Air quality issues were most commonly noted among our respondents as issues facing the Rose Park community today. In an area geographically and climatically prone to inversion, as is the Salt Lake Valley, this may not come as a big surprise. However, several respondents maintain that nearby refineries and vehicle emissions are largely contributing to the problem on a local level. Also reported with respect to air quality were bad smells associated with smoking and standing water.

Some suggest tighter emissions standards for local industry and programs that promote less driving as possible solutions to air quality concerns. Also commonly mentioned was the importance of education and awareness about air quality issues. This is to be achieved with the help of state and local governments, local businesses and schools, and residents alike.

**LITTER/TRASH:**

While this category does an excellent job of explaining itself, there was much more identified than simply garbage lying around in the streets (although this was a common response). Several respondents mentioned old cars and furniture cluttering yards in the community and improper disposal of medication, electronics, batteries, and other hazardous materials.

As you will come to notice, a very common solution proposed to most issues is education and awareness; issues relating to litter and trash offer no exception. Some residents suggest educating people as to where hazardous household materials may be disposed. Additionally, they believe some form of yard ordinance should be imposed and those who fail to maintain tidy yards be cited. Placement of more trash receptacles throughout the community was frequently suggested as means to minimize the problem with litter and trash in the area. Most respondents feel that this would require the joint effort of residents and city/community officials.

**WATER:**

While water quality was a concern to some respondents, more commonly noted were issues associated with standing water and the Jordan River. Many highlight disrepair in the gutter and drainage systems which lead to standing water in rain gutters throughout the community; this is thought, by residents, to contribute to the bad smells and problems with pests they encounter. Many also implied the need to establish river cleanup programs for the Jordan River. While these statements are typically vague, they recur several times throughout the responses of participants.

Those expressing such concerns in the stakeholder meetings believe it is up to the city to execute drainage system repair as means to minimize problems with standing water. With respect to the Jordan River, it is suggested that residents become involved with cleanup and become more educated about water contamination issues.
PESTS:

Pests were frequently cited as an environmental concern in the Rose Park area and, as briefly mentioned in the previous section, standing water is thought to contribute largely to the problem. Mosquitos represent the most commonly noted pest and many believe poor drainage systems and standing water are at least partly to blame.

Solutions to this problem seemed more difficult to define. Although drainage system repair and city/river cleanup were mentioned as potential fixes, respondents more commonly noted parties who should be involved in the resolution of this environmental concern: city programs, community council, and residents.

OTHER CONCERNS:

Finally, it is worth acknowledging some of the other concerns brought to our attention in the series of stakeholder meetings. Even though these concerns weren’t expressed by large numbers of participants in our project, they represent important concerns to Rose Park area residents.

**Food:** Twenty percent of participants expressed concern about their access to quality food and produce locally.

**Noise:** Noise pollution was also mentioned frequently and associated most with vehicular traffic and freeways in the area.

**Public Transportation:** Several participants noted the availability of public transportation as both a problem and a solution in the area. With fewer bus routes on the West side, residents are forced to commute on their own; however, increased bus routes might alleviate other concerns (air quality, access to food, etc.)
Demographics
As part of the stakeholder meetings, participants were asked to respond to basic demographic questions inquiring about his/her age, race/ethnicity, language(s) spoken, income, and education. Due to a minor change in the demographic form during the execution of stakeholder meetings, information on sex was only available for some participants and has further been omitted from the findings of this project. The following charts illustrate the characteristics of 67 participants as broken down by the aforementioned categories.
With respect to race/ethnicity, it should be noted that the category of “Pacific Islander” was made to include those who identified as either Samoan, Tongan, or Pacific Islander. The “other” category includes those responses that displayed low frequency such as Thai, Brazilian, and African-American respondents, or those identifying as “mixed race.”

In terms of language(s) spoken, those identifying as bi-lingual speak both English and either Spanish, Somali, or Tongan. The “other” category includes respondents that speak Thai, Portuguese, or are trilingual.
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