THE STOCKTON HOUSING INNOVATION FUND DESIGN PROCESS:
Community-Centered from the Start

JSI

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INTRODUCTION

In Summer 2022, the Chan Zuckerberg Initiative (CZI) awarded the San Joaquin Community Foundation a grant to design a community-driven housing fund—what would become the Stockton Housing Innovation Fund (SHIF). This fund would:

» **Be community designed and community driven.** The SHIF design process, priority setting, and decision-making processes centered residents' and community-based organizations' perspectives and voices;

» **Seek high-leverage, innovative impactful solutions** to improve housing and homelessness outcomes in the greater Stockton area. This meant funding crucial activities for which there aren't other sources of funding, or providing seed funding to promising but still novel solutions; and

» **Create a transparent, trusted venue** to pool, manage, and align funds from varied sources in order to put together **comprehensive, sustainable solutions.**

Fundraising for the SHIF would happen simultaneously with the design process, so the exact amount that would be available for grants to the community was unknown. However, the expectation was that the amounts would be modest (particularly in the first years) and not sufficient for large-scale or capital-intensive projects. Community-driven grantmaking is an emerging concept without firmly established practices or developmental steps. This brief shares details and insights from the SHIF design-team process with the intention to provide a record for local purposes and an example for other initiatives pursuing similar objectives and processes.

BACKGROUND

San Joaquin County is experiencing a severe housing crisis. Residents at every income level face extremely high housing cost burdens, while an influx of Bay Area workers continues to drive vacancies down and costs up. The median home price in Stockton increased by 9.4% between December 2020 and June 2021, to $496,403—one of the largest increases by percentage in the entire nation.[1] Even before COVID-19, a third of County renters were spending more than half their income on housing--well above the State average. People of color are disproportionately represented among renters–a recent assessment shows that 55.6% of county residents own their homes but 77% of Black and 54% of Latinx residents are renters.[2] The problem has become so acute in Stockton, that the California Department of General Services has solicited requests for proposals to build affordable housing on 110 acres at the county fairgrounds in southeast Stockton. Addressing housing issues, and the underlying inequities, is highly complex and there is no single intervention, organization, or sector that has all the answers.

[1] https://www.credible.com/blog/data-insights/home-prices-surged-in-2021-cities-largest-jump/
[2] https://www.sjcog.org/DocumentCenter/View/6879/SJCOG-Enterprise-Displacement-Study?bidId=

THE CORE TEAM

Development of the SHIF began with engagement of the Reinvent South Stockton Coalition (RSSC) to facilitate an inclusive design team process. RSSC holds a great deal of trust and strong relationships in the Stockton community. RSSC partnered with JSI Research and Training Institute (JSI) to support project design, management, and facilitation. JSI has been a key player in multi-sector collaboratives that advance health equity across the state, and they've played a major role in developing locally governed Wellness Funds as a critical component of the California Accountable Communities for Health Initiative (CACHI). RSSC and JSI developed a nine-month design team process (February - November 2022) structured around three phases.

DESIGN PROCESS

Phase 1: Recruitment

As the design process began, it was important to have a nimble, diverse, and outcome-oriented team to shape the SHIF. The core team recruited nine individuals (Figure 1) with diverse lived experience and expertise on housing in Stockton to be responsible for:

» **Establishing key principles and criteria for SHIF;**
» **Developing policies, procedures, and governance structures** for grantmaking and fundraising that ensure that SHIF decisions center resident needs, strategic priorities, and transparency to the community;
» Gathering input and perspective on Stockton community needs, **incorporating resident input** into formalized decision-making processes.

Design Team (DT) members were asked to commit 10-12 hours per month from April to October 2022 and attend 90% of all meetings during that time. Acknowledging that each member would be taking on this role in addition to work and family commitments, a $1,000 stipend was offered that could be given to either the individual or to the community based organization they represent.
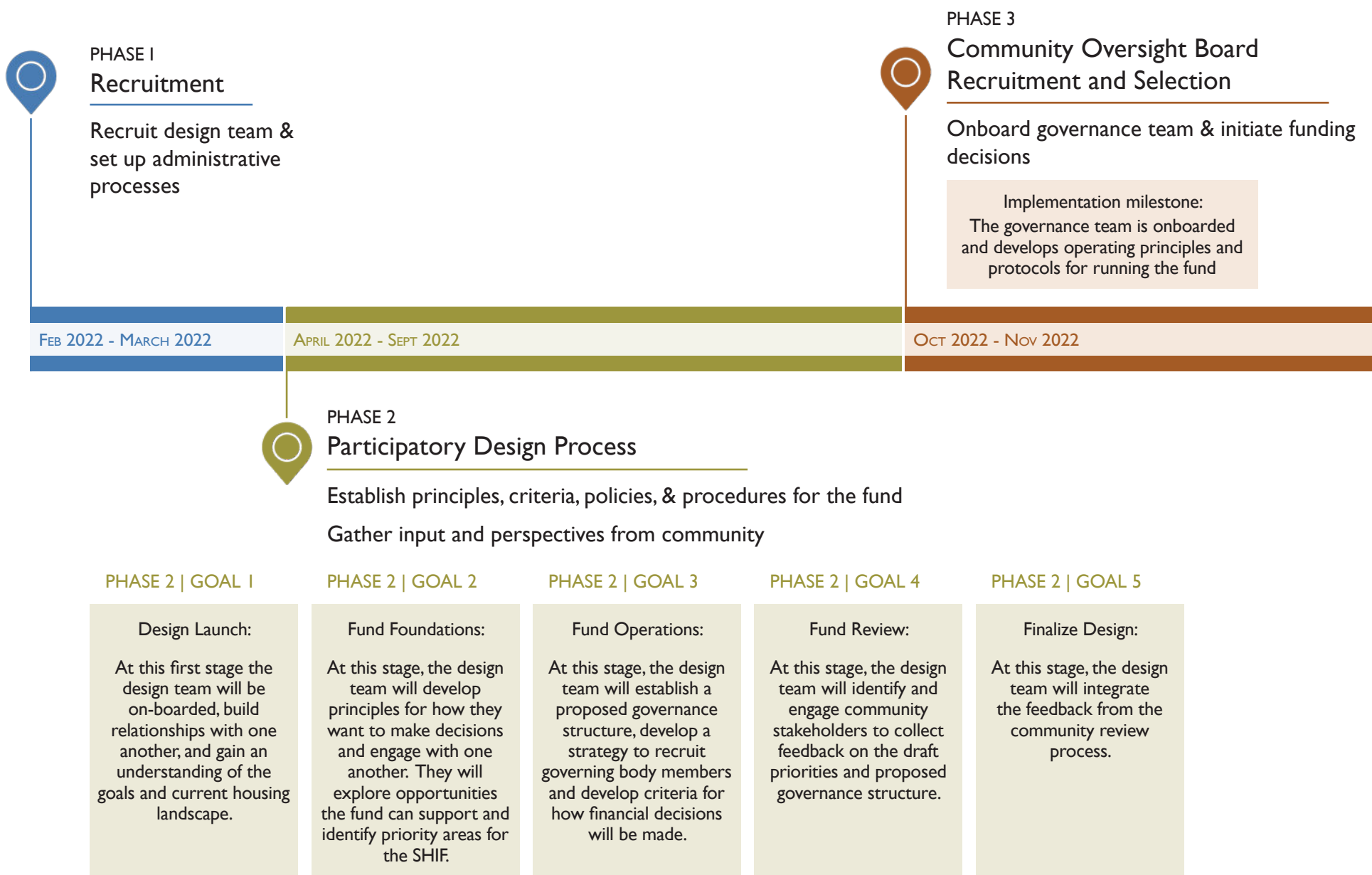
Phase 2: Participatory Design

The DT began by reviewing a draft design process and timeline prepared by RSSC and JSI. Based on feedback from the DT, the process, goals, and timeline were modified and finalized (see Figure 2). The team was also provided with initial information sharing systems: a shared Google folder, Jamboard for brainstorming, and an internal Google website that housed all documents, agendas, meeting minutes and team member contact information.

Figure 1: Design Team Members

Robert Brooke-Munoz, San Joaquin Fair Housing
Pandora Crowder, Conway Homes Resident Council
Carol Ornelas, Visionary Home Builders
Peter Ragsdale, Housing Authority of the County of San Joaquin
Anthony Robinson Jr., The Echo Chamber
Tammy Shaff, Dignity Health / St. Joseph's
Fred Sheil, STAND
Zonnie Thompson, Faith in the Valley
Kristine Williams, Enterprise Community Partners

Figure 2 : Design Team Process

PHASE 1
Recruitment

Recruit design team & set up administrative processes

PHASE 3
Community Oversight Board Recruitment and Selection

Onboard governance team & initiate funding decisions

Implementation milestone:
The governance team is onboarded and develops operating principles and protocols for running the fund

Feb 2022 - March 2022	April 2022 - Sept 2022	Oct 2022 - Nov 2022

PHASE 2
Participatory Design Process

Establish principles, criteria, policies, & procedures for the fund

Gather input and perspectives from community

PHASE 2 | GOAL 1	PHASE 2 | GOAL 2	PHASE 2 | GOAL 3	PHASE 2 | GOAL 4	PHASE 2 | GOAL 5
Design Launch: At this first stage the design team will be on-boarded, build relationships with one another, and gain an understanding of the goals and current housing landscape.	Fund Foundations: At this stage, the design team will develop principles for how they want to make decisions and engage with one another. They will explore opportunities the fund can support and identify priority areas for the SHIF.	Fund Operations: At this stage, the design team will establish a proposed governance structure, develop a strategy to recruit governing body members and develop criteria for how financial decisions will be made.	Fund Review: At this stage, the design team will identify and engage community stakeholders to collect feedback on the draft priorities and proposed governance structure.	Finalize Design: At this stage, the design team will integrate the feedback from the community review process.

Fund Foundations

The DT began by developing five group agreements (Figure 3) and establishing that decision making would require a quorum of more than four members and at least 2/3 of those present vote in favor. The group then discussed three key questions:

» How can the SHIF focus its funding to have the greatest impact?
» How do we ensure that community priorities remain central to the SHIF?
» What information do you think you will need in order to make key decisions?

Based on the initial brainstorm, the DT workshopped the SHIF priorities and adopted the following:

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I really liked that everyone was expected to participate in all the conversations

DESIGN TEAM MEMBER REFLECTION

01 Develop the constituency and advocacy capacity for affordable housing.

Includes but is not limited to:

» Reduce process barriers for housing creation and policies to support unhoused Stocktonians
» Advance a community-centered housing agenda and build resident support for solutions
» Increase access for more local organizations and companies to the competitive funding landscape

02 Fund innovative (new to San Joaquin County, potentially replicable models), modestly priced solutions focused on:

» First-time homeownership
» Increasing supply of affordable housing
» Preventing displacement

03 Focus on racial equity outcomes:

» Explicitly address decades of discriminatory housing policy by empowering the most affected residents to shape current policy
» Support local CBOs that advance the interests of communities of color
» Remove systemic barriers that make it more difficult for groups of residents to access housing and supports

Figure 3: Group Norms & Agreements

Everyone participates
Step up, step back

We strive for understanding and innovation. There are no bad ideas or questions.

Disagreement can be healthy. If necessary, we'll have conversations between meetings to resolve conflicts.

What is said here, stays here. What is learned here will be shared.

We will center residents' and community-based organizations' perspectives and voices

Fund Operations

Once the fund foundation and priorities were drafted, the team discussed how the SHIF would be governed and set out the following:

» A Community Oversight Board (COB) made up of nine members would oversee the SHIF
» COB members would be selected based on a simple application process reviewed by DT members.
» At least 1/3 of COB members should be Stockton residents with lived experience as long-time renters, unhoused, resident in affordable or public housing, first home purchased in Stockton, and/or those who participate in grassroots housing advocacy initiatives.
» The COB should pursue a diversity of perspectives and experiences reflected by:
  • Knowledge of the community
  • Demographic diversity (age, race, gender, socioeconomic status, etc.)
  • Professional roles: philanthropy, housing developer, finance, grassroots housing organizations, health, city/county agencies.
» All decisions require a 2/3 majority of members

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The design team was intentional about inclusiveness

DESIGN TEAM MEMBER REFLECTION

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The process was very well organized

DESIGN TEAM MEMBER REFLECTION

Community Review

The SHIF Design Team developed a list of stakeholders with a connection to Stockton housing issues, and sought feedback on the draft priorities and how to effectively implement the new governance board. Major themes that came forth from the community included:

» The need for a streamlined process and specificity for applicants to make it as easy as possible
» The importance of lived experience, adequate representation, and diversity in the governance group

Community Centering Strategies

Centering community voice and power was a foundational intention of the SHIF design. At this point in the process, the DT reviewed research and examples to identify ways to operationalize that intention.[3,4,5,6] Five key questions and potential action steps (see Figure 4) were identified for ongoing review and revision once the COB was selected.

[3]https://learningforfunders.candid.org/content/takeaways/mechanics-of-participatory-grantmaking
[4]https://nonprofitquarterly.org/a-primer-for-participatory-grantmaking/
[5]https://justicefunders.org/resonance/stories-of-regenerative-philanthropy/
[6]Chan Zuckerberg Initiative internal Participatory Grantmaking Report, 5/22

Figure 4: Community Centering Strategies
Five Key Questions & Potential Action Steps

01 WHO IS SELECTED TO MAKE DECISIONS?

» Emphasize lived experience and non-affiliation among participants by setting a minimum number threshold for Community Advisory Board members.

» Provide staffing support for the Community Advisory Board from people who have lived experience, trust in the community, and experience facilitating community power-sharing.

02 HOW ARE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES COMPENSATED?

» Provide financial reimbursement, particularly for those whose do not have related professional roles. Allow COB members from well-resourced organizations to allocate their stipends back into the pool to support community representatives.

» Value in-kind time contributions by tracking based on the standard "value of volunteer time" rate.

» Enhance recognition in the community by publicizing Governance Team participation and requiring that any time the SHIF COB is being represented publicly, a community representative is part of the team.

03 HOW ARE COMMUNITY REPRESENTATIVES PREPARED?

» Provide adequate orientation and training so that community participants are on an equal footing in terms of terminology and landscape.

» Create space for community representatives to connect and support each other.

04 WHAT DECISION-MAKING STRATEGIES SUPPORT COMMUNITY VOICE?

» Require consensus or supermajority to ensure community representatives' support is necessary for any decision.

» Incorporate anonymous scoring of applications into the review process, particularly in the early stages of development.

» Develop shared grant selection criteria that align with the Fund priorities so that both reviewers and applicants understand goals and intentions

05 WHAT SYSTEMS AND PROCESSES ARE IN PLACE TO MAXIMIZE COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION?

» Produce simple application and reporting requirements that are accessible in multiple languages and/or through 1:1 support when preparing materials.

» Provide regular public communications about decisions and opportunities for public feedback.

» Review community participation and power at regular intervals and encourage COB to develop more ways to engage the community in Fund activities

Phase 3: Community Oversight Board Recruitment & Selection

The Design team began the COB recruitment and onboarding process by setting parameters and expectations for applicants:

» Each member will serve a two-year term, with the ability to serve for up to six years total (3 terms).

» After each term, at minimum 1/3 of the members will "roll off" to ensure new perspectives and continuity of institutional knowledge (avoiding the majority of members leaving at once). The COB will determine a process for identifying continuing members.

» To prioritize community needs, at least 1/3 of the COB will consist of community representatives with lived experiences as long-time renters, being unhoused, residents in affordable or public housing, those who have purchased their first home in Stockton, and/or those who participate in grassroots housing advocacy initiatives.

» COB members will be awarded a $1,000 annual stipend, given either to individuals or to the community-based organizations that they represent. Organizations have the option to forgo the stipend or divert it to another community-based organization.

The Design Team identified key community leaders and communication channels and disseminated the call for applications widely to encourage a diverse group of applicants. Each applicant was required to answer:

» Background questions regarding their demographics (name, age, race/ethnicity, San Joaquin residency, etc.), lived experience related to housing challenges, and affiliations with community or government organizations in San Joaquin county; and

» Two short (5-6 sentences) open-ended questions about their "connection to Stockton and the issue of housing" and why they would be "a great candidate for the SHIF Community Oversight Board."

The DT reviewed 24 applicants. Each DT member voted for their top five. One tie was settled based on wanting to avoid two candidates representing the same organization. The DT decided, based on the quality of the candidates and not needing an odd number (given decisions would not be made by strict 51%+ majority), to select 10 COB members. A 2/3 majority of the DT approved the final slate of candidates (Figure 5); 80% of the selected members meet the "community representative" criteria. The COB is slated to start their first term in December 2022.

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> **The best part of the Design Team was working with a broad group of stakeholders who contributed a variety of perspectives to shaping SHIF**
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> *DESIGN TEAM MEMBER REFLECTION*

CONCLUSION

The Design Team process was successful in laying a foundation for the SHIF both in terms of priorities and on-going governance. The timeline was very short and meant that the group had to move quickly from identifying key issues, discussing options, to making decisions. RSSC and JSI tried to structure most meetings so that one element would be discussed and one would be finalized through a vote. The time crunch did mean that the DT was not able to get into extended discussions of conceptual questions or the current landscape of housing issues and opportunities, nor conduct a robust set of community vetting activities. The emphasis on centering community voice and power was maintained throughout through deliberate consideration at each stage. This is only the beginning of the work to implement the SHIF, and a similar spirit of participatory inquiry will be necessary to achieve meaningful impact on the greater Stockton community.

Figure 5: 2022-2024 Community Oversight Board Members

» **Pandora Crowder,** Conway Homes Resident Council, Housing Justice Coalition
» **Adam Cheshire**, San Joaquin Continuum of Care, San Joaquin County
» **Jose Dominguez**, Ready to Work, Workforce Development
» **Mary Elizabeth**, Delta-Sierra Group, Sierra Club
» **Arturo Flores**, STAND Affordable Housing
» **Katrina Alison Jaggears,** Stockton Resident
» **Jewelian Johnson**, Stockton Stands, Reinvent South Stockton
» **Brenda A. Medina Rabena**, Central Valley Low Income Housing
» **Carol Ornelas,** Visionary Home Builders Reinvent South Stockton
» **Nubyaan Scott**, Housing Justice Coalition