

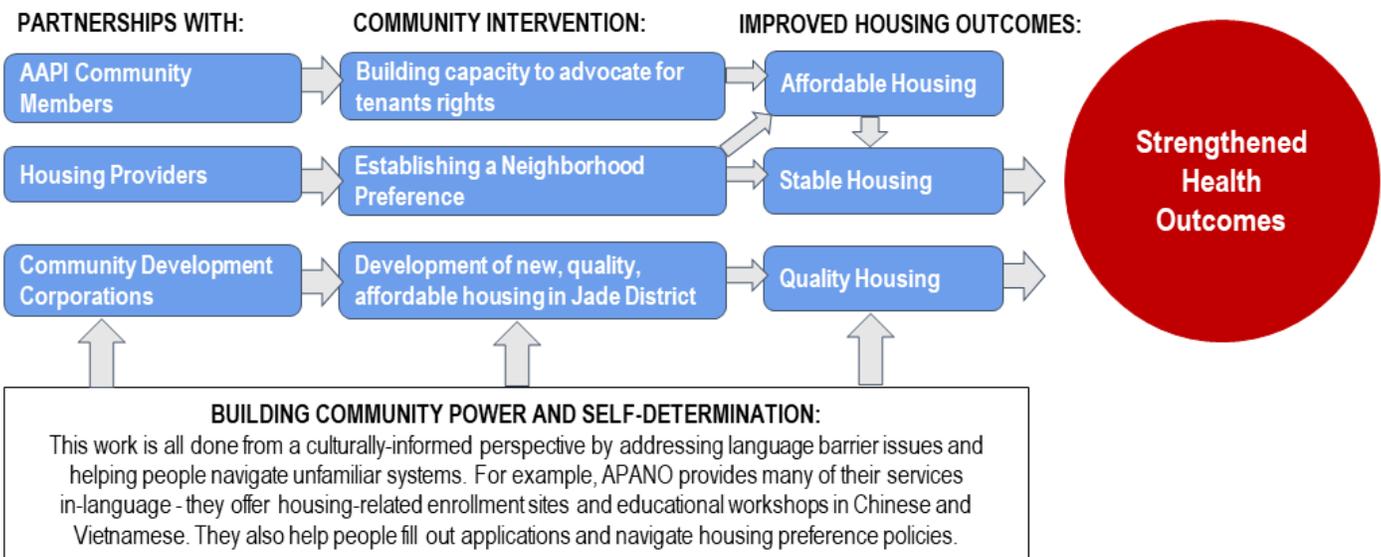
## Improving Housing Quality and Stability for Asian American and Pacific Islander Communities to Improve Health

Read how the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO) identified and addressed housing instability using a culturally-informed approach.

### Housing and Health

Poverty, education attainment, and access to health care are examples of social conditions that determine health outcomes. Housing quality, affordability, and instability can have direct positive or negative impacts on individuals and communities. Variations in these social determinants and others, as described in Healthy People 2020, explain why there are health disparities and why many people are not as healthy as they could be. Click the links to access Healthy People 2020 descriptive summaries and learn how [housing instability](#) and [quality of housing](#) affect health outcomes and health disparities.

### IMPROVING HOUSING & HEALTH FOR AAPI COMMUNITIES



When community based organizations partner with housing providers and community development corporations, they can facilitate deeper understanding and prioritization of low-income Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community housing needs. When communities face rent increases and undue eviction, community based organizations can build the community's capacity to advocate for tenant's rights and maintain affordable and stable housing. As a result, communities may experience better affordability, stability, and quality of housing, which ultimately supports improved health outcomes.

### The Local Asian American Pacific Islander Context

The [Jade District](#) in Southeast Portland is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the city. It is currently one of the main cultural, commercial, and population centers for Portland's AAPI community. Approximately 25% of Portland's 50,000+ AAPI population lives in or directly around the Jade District.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 71% of the Asian

<sup>1</sup> US Census, 2016 5-Year American Community Survey.

# COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

## Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon

American population in the Jade District is foreign-born<sup>2</sup> and 47% of the Asian American households in the Jade District have limited English proficiency.<sup>3</sup>

Focusing on racial and ethnic data by geographic location can tell a more complete story about where populations in need live and who they are. The Jade District's AAPI residents experience greater poverty and higher housing costs than residents in other Portland neighborhoods. The poverty rate for AAPIs in the Jade District is 25.5%, compared to 17.3% for the rest of the city<sup>4</sup> and median household income in the Jade District is 28% lower than the median household income in all of Portland.<sup>5</sup> Apartments in and around the Jade District are more expensive than for the city as a whole,<sup>6</sup> leaving Jade District renters more likely to be rent-burdened.

According to organizer Wanna Lei from the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), Jade District residents who are immigrants face many barriers when they seek affordable housing. "They don't know the laws, how to navigate the system, they don't know who to call, who to ask when they reach a dead end. These residents work long hours trying to make ends meet – many of them are working for low pay in restaurants. It's really difficult for them to save up enough money to pay a deposit for a unit. It's also really difficult for them to get credit. Especially for those working at restaurants where they are paid under the table, they can't build up a credit score, which makes finding a unit to rent difficult. Compounding that issue is they then have to find a co-signer for the lease."<sup>7</sup>

### Community Based Organization Addressing Housing



[Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon](#) (APANO) is a statewide, grassroots organization that unites Asians and Pacific Islanders in Oregon to achieve social justice. APANO uses their constituents' collective strengths to advance equity through empowering, organizing, and advocating with AAPI communities.

In 2011, Portland selected the Jade District as one of eight Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative (NPI) districts. APANO, the lead community-based agency for the Jade District under the NPI, takes a comprehensive approach towards helping the neighborhood develop without displacing the current neighborhood residents. APANO's multi-pronged approach seeks to improve residents' quality of life by increasing their power, improving their health, and improving their housing quality and affordability.

### Innovative, Culturally-Informed Approach

At the heart of APANO's work is their goal to build community power and self-determination among AAPI communities. To achieve this goal, APANO implements diverse strategies that are centered in community empowerment and reflect the [AANPHI Racial Equity Framework](#) strategies. APANO's coordinated strategies improve the quality, affordability, and stability of housing for the AAPI community living in the Jade District.

2 U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B05002.

3 U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Table B16002.

4 US Census, 2016 5-Year American Community Survey.

5 *ibid.*

6 *ibid.*

7 APANO, "Organizing Douglas Square: What We've Learned In Our Fight Against Displacement," APANO.org, May 12, 2016, <http://www.apano.org/blog/2016/05/12/organizing-douglas-square-fighting-displacement-and-lessons-learned/>.

# COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

## Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon

APANO builds the capacity of Jade District residents to advocate for change by organizing the tenants of specific buildings. Community organizing fosters interconnectedness and a sense of shared ownership among the building's residents, which help them unite against building owners who introduce changes that affect housing quality and affordability. For example, APANO organized tenants in the 29-unit [Douglas Square](#) apartment building and built their capacity to advocate for more modest increases to their rents after a new owner purchased the building and tried to drastically increase rents. The Douglas Square tenants were successful, which allowed many low-income residents to stay in their units. Through empowering the tenants to advocate for their rights, APANO fostered the tenants' sense of self-determination.

APANO engages community members through culturally specific strategies focused on housing policy and housing access. Culturally specific, in-language workshops connect Chinese- and Vietnamese-speaking AAPI Jade District residents to one another and housing information. Enrollment sites staffed by APANO employees who speak Chinese and Vietnamese are places where residents receive help completing housing applications and navigating housing preference policies. APANO's community engagement work demonstrates how building relationships among AAPI residents is an important step towards ***building a sense of shared ownership of their neighborhood.***

APANO uses the combined strategies of developing new affordable housing and working with providers of existing affordable housing to ensure that Jade District residents will have access to high-quality, affordable housing. APANO recently worked with a community development corporation to develop [Orchards of 82nd](#), a 48-unit building with one, two, and three bedroom units for low-income families. Developments like Orchards of 82nd increase the supply of safe, affordable, high-quality housing for low-income families. APANO works with local affordable housing providers to ensure that qualified neighborhood residents receive priority to stay in the neighborhood, despite a long list of qualified applicants who are interested in units. This strategy establishes a neighborhood preference for affordable and stable housing.

**"We experienced the whole winter with no heat in my son's bedroom. That was a really hard time... I heard about some people living in brand new apartments, affordable housing. I really wanted to find one like that. [Now] my quality of life is better [since moving into Orchards]. My sons feel really happy living here. I am feeling more peaceful... And I feel I have more time to make more delicious food for my children."**<sup>8</sup>

**- a resident who found affordable housing through APANO**

<sup>8</sup> Ambar Espinoza, "New affordable housing close to transit serves Portland's Jade District community," Metro News, April 24, 2019, <https://www.oregonmetro.gov/news/new-affordable-housing-close-transit-serves-portland-s-jade-district-community>.

# COMMUNITY HIGHLIGHTS

## Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon

### Lessons Learned

Based upon their experience impacting health through affordable housing and community planning, APANO has the following recommendations for community organizations who want to achieve similar goals:

- *Dig into the Data.* Disaggregating racial and ethnic groups by geographic location and class uncovers the complete story about populations in need and will help your organization learn where they live and who they are. For example, the poverty rate for AAPIs in the Jade District is 25.5%, compared to 17.3% for the rest of the city.<sup>9</sup>
- *Partner with Housing Providers and Community Development Corporations* to ensure community needs are understood and prioritized.
- *Empower Communities to Advocate for Themselves* to maintain affordable and stable housing in the face of possible rent increases and undue eviction. In-language, culturally tailored approaches are critical to providing accessible housing assistance and workshops, increasing community capacity to navigate housing systems and processes, and building capacity to advocate for tenants rights.

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<sup>9</sup> US Census, 2016 5-Year American Community Survey.