



# Community Report

June 2019





# acknowledgements

## Land Acknowledgement

The Portland metropolitan area, where the study area and Portland State University are based, covers traditional and ancestral homelands of indigenous peoples: the Multnomah, Kathlamet, Clackamas, Tumwater, Watlala bands of the Chinook, the Tualatin Kalapuya and many other indigenous nations of the Columbia River.<sup>1</sup>

SAFE (Supporting Access for Everyone) Planning is a team of six Masters in Urban and Regional Planning candidates at Portland State University. This document summarizes our team's capstone project for the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT), with additional guidance from the Portland Bureau of Emergency Management (PBEM). The project would not have been possible without community partners in the Parkrose and Argay neighborhoods in Portland. Their contributions and warm welcome into their communities are deeply appreciated. The community partners are as follows:

- Latino Network
- Wat Buddhatham Aram Laotian Temple
- Neighborhood Emergency Team
- Parkrose High School
- Xtra Years of Zest

## Portland State University

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**Note:** all photos were taken by SAFE Planning unless otherwise noted.

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## Alaula's Story, part I

Three days after the major earthquake occurred in Portland, Alaula was isolated in her two bedroom home with her two daughters. Although no one in the family had major injuries, the first two days were especially challenging because they did not have the essential supplies, such as food and water, to safely remain in their home.

Alaula knew she had to stay strong for her daughters as she prepared them to go search for more food and water as well as ensure their health and safety. The WinCo store was the first place she thought of to find supplies, but she realized that the freeways had collapsed, isolating her neighborhood of Parkrose-Argay. Alaula then thought of going to the Buddhist temple which she visited every weekend with her daughters.





01

# community resilience



# the problem

In the 2-30 days after a major earthquake, neighborhoods might look very different, but people will still have the same needs such as accessing food and clean water, dealing with sewage, and connecting with their communities. SAFE Planning's mission for this project is to help the Parkrose and Argay communities navigate across their neighborhoods during the period after an earthquake, known as the "recovery phase". During this time, gas and electric-powered vehicles will not be readily available. Walking and rolling - on a bike, in a mobility device like a walk or wheelchair, or with a stroller - are useful and efficient ways of moving people, resources, and information. Walking and rolling are more dependable ways for people to get around because they do not require fuel. The Ready Streets project creates the opportunity to examine how a resilient neighborhood-level transportation network, centered on walking and rolling, could help neighborhoods recover after a major disaster. SAFE Planning approaches this problem in two different ways:

1. identifying key destinations within the community and how people will get there after a disaster
2. examining the role of the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT) in improving access to those key destinations by walking and rolling

# our purpose

This summary report is intended for our community partners and leaders to aid in spreading the information we learned over the course of this project to their communities. This report can also serve as a resource for other community-based organizations who would like to be involved in future neighborhood-level transportation resiliency work and to potentially partner with PBOT. Ready Streets is intended to serve as a starting point for PBOT's efforts in

neighborhood-level transportation resiliency and the agency will need the guidance and wisdom of our key community partners to support access for everyone - this is only the beginning.

Through this project, SAFE Planning conducted extensive community engagement within the community, examined and researched current conditions in Parkrose/Argay, and assessed the natural hazards the neighborhood might be at risk to. Equity goals were a pillar of the Ready Streets project, with a priority placed on transportation access for people of color and people with limited English proficiency (LEP).

**Community-level resilience** is the repeated ability for a community to withstand external, unexpected disasters.

Community resilience is defined as "the sustained ability of a community to withstand and recover from adversity." Examples of community-level resilience include a variety of factors that range from individual-level actions and support, intrapersonal connections, partnerships, community services, and the support of government.<sup>2</sup>





02

parkrose & argay

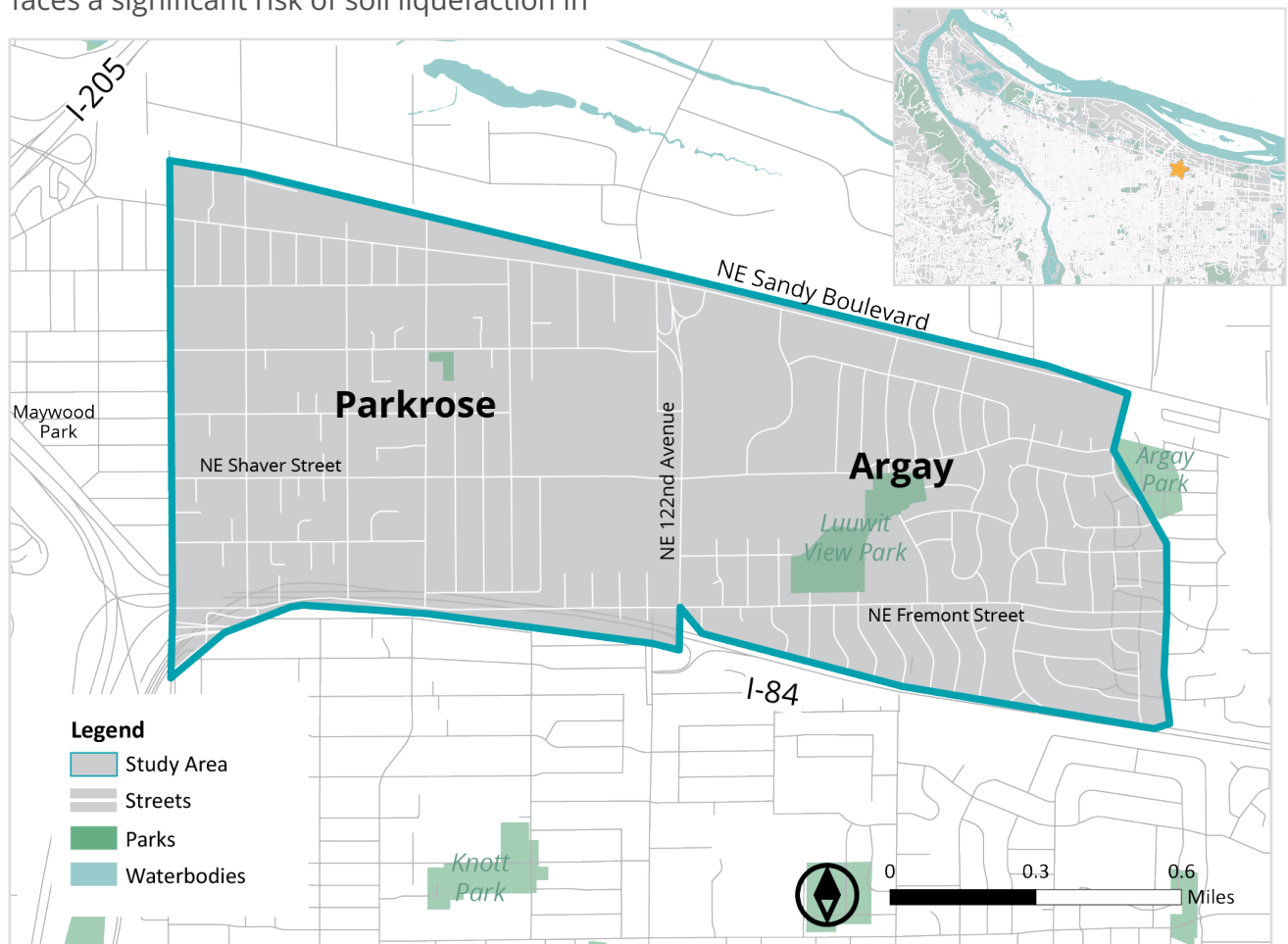


# neighborhood picture

The Ready Streets project looked at two neighborhoods in Portland; Argay Terrace (often shortened to Argay) and Parkrose, both located in Northeast Portland. These neighborhoods are primarily residential with some industrial uses located north of Sandy Boulevard. The Parkrose/Argay neighborhoods deserve special attention because they have historically been left out of investments by the City and have higher proportions of low-income communities and people of color compared to the rest of Portland.

The neighborhoods are at greater risk of being isolated from the rest of the city by natural disasters. The industrial area of the neighborhood (north of Sandy Boulevard) faces a significant risk of soil liquefaction in

the event of an earthquake. Soil liquefaction is a condition that sometimes happens after an earthquake where the ground loses strength and behaves like liquid. This could cause buildings and roads to sink and crack, making them unsafe to use. There is also a high likelihood that the I-84 and I-205 freeway bridges could collapse as a result of a 9.0 magnitude earthquake. This disruption, paired with other hazards, will create the need for a resilient way for people to move around these neighborhoods without access to automotive (gas and/or electric powered) transportation. The businesses, resources, and supplies located within the neighborhood itself will be even more crucial.



**Caption:** The above map displays the study area of Parkrose/ Argay neighborhoods, located in NE Portland. The small inset map in the upper right corner displays this neighborhood in proximity to the rest of Portland.



# community engagement

The goal of our community engagement process was to connect with people through their faith-based and community organizations to understand where they would need to go after a disaster and how they might get there. We also discussed their risk to earthquakes, their level of preparedness, and potential tools or programs that might help them in the event of an earthquake.

Parkrose/Argay had many diverse and engaged communities that wanted to create change for their friends and families. SAFE Planning was grateful to have made strong connections with the Spanish-speaking

and Lao-speaking communities, as well as high school students and older adults. Throughout the engagement process, SAFE Planning consulted with different organizations to gather project ideas and suggestions through informal focus groups, called “community conversations”, tabling at community events, presentations within the community, and a survey.



## Survey

The survey inquired about the community’s travel patterns and mode share, the accessibility of neighborhood amenities, and neighborhood demographics.



## Community Conversations

Ten to twenty-five participants were presented a scenario and asked key questions about neighborhood assets, support networks, and community resources that could aid in the recovery phase of a disaster.



## Tabling & Presentations

At tabling events and presentations, the team promoted the project survey and focused on the participatory mapping activity.



## Interviews

Interviews with key stakeholders connected the team with community organizations and helped direct engagement efforts.



“It’s these moments of going above and beyond that cultivate trust with our communities.”

- Toc, Teacher at Wat Buddhatham Aramm Laotian Buddhist Temple



**Caption:** The above image is a photograph of some of the SAFE Planning team at the Laotian temple in the Argay neighborhood with participants from the Lao Community Conversation

# community themes

Five common themes emerged from engagement efforts with community members. These themes address the types of changes and programs participants would like to see in their communities.



## Equitable Access to Resources

Emergency communications and education should be translated into other languages in order to make the information more accessible to the limited English proficiency (LEP) community. Public service providers should make a conscious effort to connect with these communities and find out what is important to them.



## Self-Sufficiency Through Education and Communication

Communities with less privilege, which are often communities of color in Portland, are less likely to have mainstream training for disaster preparedness. It is important to prioritize communicating disaster preparedness and recovery information for these communities. Community members generally prefer in-person as opposed to online information and LEP communities need information translated into their native language.



## Alternative Methods for Moving Goods and People

With limited access to fuel and motorized vehicles, human-powered methods of transport such as bikes, wheelbarrows, strollers, skateboards, and other modes could be used to bring supplies to community members after a disaster or to get people to gathering locations. Community members saw the need for different ways to move goods and people around.



## Knowing Neighborhood Assets and Partnership Opportunities

Community members saw that mapping physical and social assets in the community, such as open spaces, local schools, language skills, and church groups, could give them an idea of where to go and whom to contact after a disaster. Partnerships between service providers and prominent community organizations can give existing networks community capacity-building tools to respond to a disaster.



## Earthquake-Safe Infrastructure that can be used every day

Community members saw that prioritizing earthquake-safe infrastructure in transportation investments is a way to help prepare the community for a major disaster. Improvements to structures and facilities can benefit communities not only when a disaster strikes, but also day-to-day.



# community destinations

Community members also identified some key destinations they would prioritize going to after a disaster. Rossi Farms, Luuwit View Park, and other parks were identified as potential gathering spaces after an earthquake. WinCo Foods, and a number of other grocery stores including Hong Phat Market and Costco have essential resources, such as food, water, and equipment. Parkrose High School, Parkrose Middle School, and a number of religious institutions are important meeting spaces in the community and were seen as good places to gather and distribute supplies after an earthquake.

Social networks that are already established, such as those of the religious communities, can help build preparedness as well as respond to a disaster. There were many destinations located outside of our study area, which shows the lack of distinct geographical boundaries when thinking about neighborhoods. The “island effect” created by the neighborhood barriers of the freeways and Columbia River will isolate the neighborhood from some of these key destinations in the event of an earthquake.



**Caption:** Key Destinations and Major Intersections near Survey Respondents Homes



# 03

## next steps



# recommendations

This section presents actions we recommend to create a resilient, non-motorized transportation network in the Parkrose/Argay neighborhoods. These recommendations focus on the four key pieces we have identified that create resilience in a transportation network: resilient physical infrastructure, diverse uses

of the road network, increased capacity and capability of the community, and delegated local decision-making power. These key pieces directly address the needs and desires of the community and could be replicated in other communities across Portland.

## recommendation categories



### **Resilient Physical Infrastructure**

Resilient physical infrastructure is a key piece in the ability of the network to bounce back. A resilient physical infrastructure is seismically sound and built to mitigate the risks of the hazards that threaten it.



### **Diversifying Uses of the Network**

A neighborhood-level resilient transportation network should include infrastructure for multiple modes, prioritizing walking and “rolling” activities such as biking and personal mobility devices.



### **Increasing Capacity and Capability of Community**

In order to be resilient, a transportation network needs to be able to recover to a useable state quickly. Having diversified uses and resilient infrastructure helps the network recover quickly, but a neighborhood also needs local people with decision making and leadership capacity to be invested in supporting recovery efforts.



### **Delegating Local Decision Making Power**

Actions like demographic analyses of neighborhoods and translating materials into other languages are needed to plan for a community, but strategies need to go deeper into transferring decision making, planning, and funding ability to the local level.

# priority route map



Recommended next steps for a more prepared future are accompanied by a map of recommended priority routes. The routes were determined based on:

- Equity principles focused on removing barriers for all community members
- Priority destinations expressed at community conversations and in surveys
- Hazard impacts including soil liquefaction and landslide risks
- Housing and other land use considerations
- Connections to emergency transportation routes
- Consultation with area experts such as PBOT Maintenance and Operations staff

The **Highest Priority** routes are chosen because they provide connections through the neighborhood but are not within the liquefaction zone, which will be a very hazardous area after a major earthquake.

**Secondary Priority** routes also provide connections throughout the neighborhood but did not meet certain considerations as strongly and have higher risk of soil liquefaction.



# partnerships

While these recommendations are mainly directed at our client, the Portland Bureau of Transportation (PBOT), most recommendations encourage PBOT to partner with, support, and, in some cases, hand over decision-making and spending control to community level leaders. SAFE Planning hopes that community partners will also use this document to work with PBOT to achieve the outcomes outlined by community members in our public involvement process.



**Caption:** This photograph depicts participants from the Community Conversation with Latino Network discussing a question.

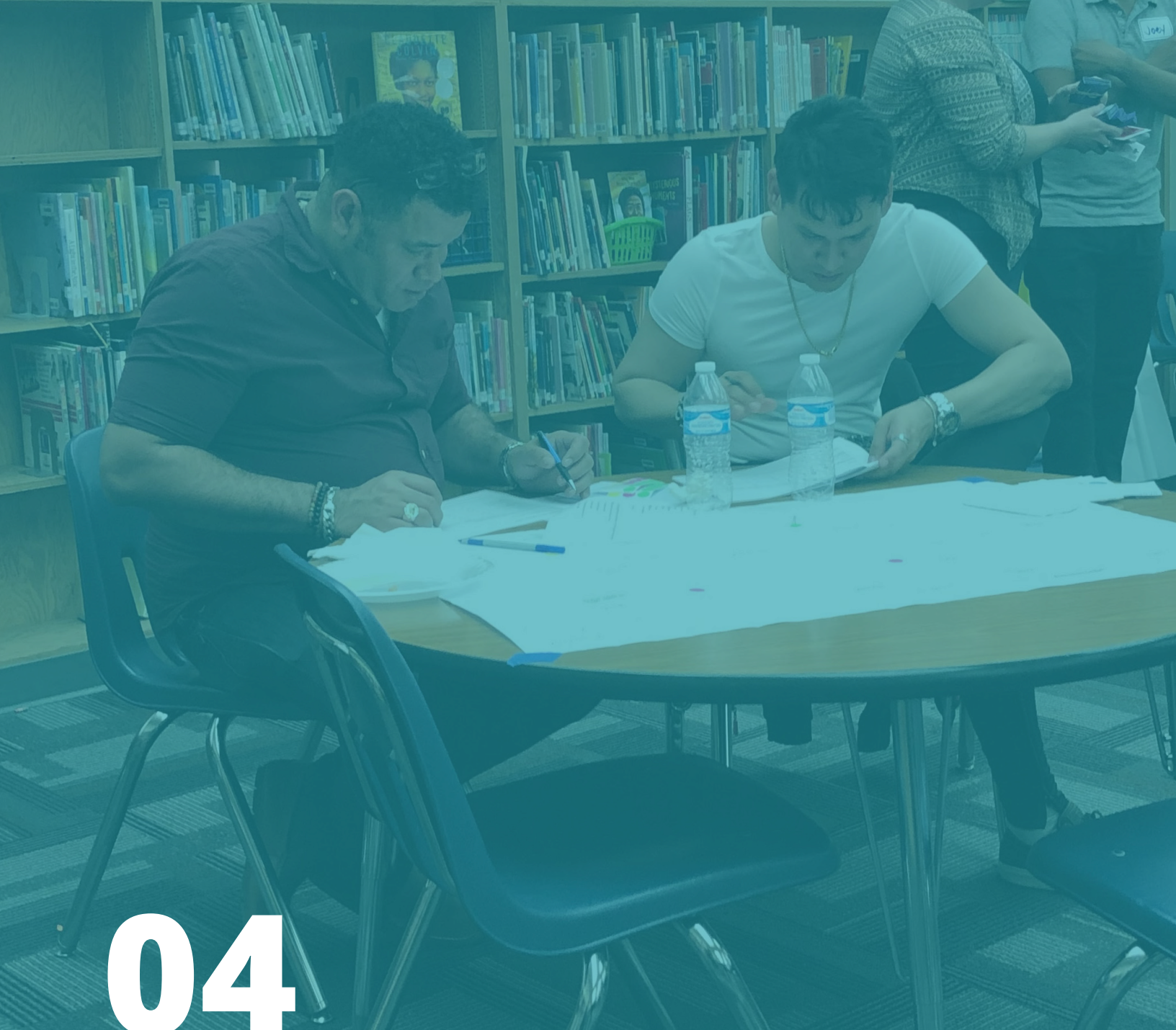
## what you can do

Currently, there are several online resources that can help people prepare for an earthquake or other possible disasters. The following topics are great resources to start with:

- NAACP Toolkit “In the Eye of the Storm”
- Basic Earthquake Emergency Communications Node Information
- Emergency Preparedness Toolkit for People with Disabilities
- Regional Disaster Preparedness Organization
- City of Portland Neighborhood Emergency Teams
- Prepare, Portland Bureau of Emergency Management
- Sign up for PublicAlerts

### A note on **equity and inclusion** in our recommendations

A person’s identity, meaning their age, race, gender, sexual orientation, ability, language ability, immigration status, or other demographic identifier should not determine their ability to access, use, or participate in planning for the transportation network or the resources it provides. We purposefully did not add in recommendations that call out equity because we believe equity should always be included as a central piece of every action and not as an afterthought or addendum.



# 04

## reflections



## rising up

While SAFE Planning made tremendous efforts to involve the community and reach out to hear voices not usually included in planning processes, we know there are still many voices in the Parkrose/Argay community that have not yet been heard. There is still much to explore in the connections between walking and rolling and disaster recovery. For this section, our team wants to acknowledge how this process and project could be improved in the future.

## achievements

The largest successes of the Ready Streets project were the connections our team made with the Spanish-speaking community and Lao-speaking community. Partnerships with great community organizations like Latino Network and the Wat Buddhatham Aram Temple laid a strong foundation for future collaboration with PBOT.



**Caption:** The photograph above depicts participants filling out surveys.

## opportunities

The short timeframe for the project limited how much we could engage with the community. There were groups that we did not have the time or the capacity to reach. One example is that Parkrose and Argay are home to a high concentration of Vietnamese-speakers - a key part of the community. Due to their war-torn immigration history, the Vietnamese-speaking community often needs longer to build trust with government entities.

Another example is our inability to connect with people with disabilities. People with disabilities could potentially face higher impacts from disasters. Despite initial research included in our Technical Report, we were unable to connect with anyone from the disability community in Portland. Much more work is needed to bring justice and resiliency to this community as a whole, and we advise that PBOT and community partners continue efforts to connect with groups traditionally underrepresented in disaster recovery planning.

During community conversations, participants requested resources or knowledge they could walk away with. Despite the focus of this project on engaging with the community and less so on educating, in some cases it was necessary to communicate earthquake risks. In the future, we advise striking a balance in public involvement efforts between educating and engaging.

## process

These are the methods that SAFE Planning used for the Ready Streets project to directly address the needs and desires of the community. In the future, this process could potentially be replicated in order to engage with other communities across Portland.

- Identify neighborhoods prioritizing equity and partnerships
- Conduct research on existing conditions including hazards analysis
- Engage with the community to understand their needs, capacity, and assets
- Create place-based recommendations for the community



**Caption:** The above photograph depicts participants of the Laotian event listening to a presentation.



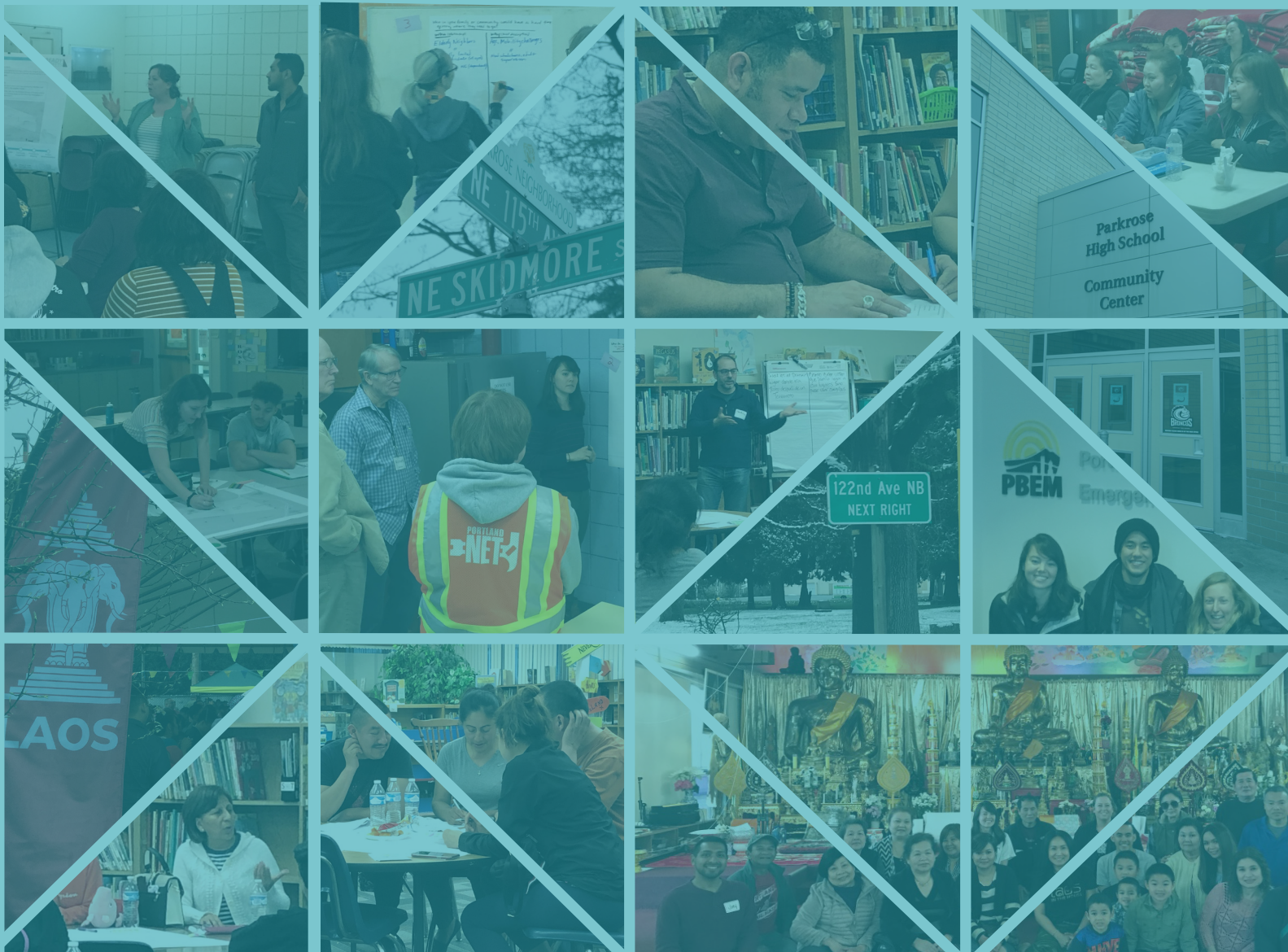


## Alaula's Story, part II

Alaula and her daughters had been members of the Wat Buddhatham Aram Laotian Buddhist temple in the Parkrose-Argay area for several years, typically traveling to the temple by bus and then walking. Now, two days after the earthquake, pavement in the street outside their house was broken and covered in debris. Alaula struggled to navigate around dangers, such as flooding from broken water pipes, forcing her to look for alternative ways to guide them to the temple safely.

Having seen information posted at her local bus stops about earthquake safety, Alaula had an idea about which areas of her neighborhood would be safer to cross through. She took her family down the streets she remembered from the map and saw that they had been closed to cars and that someone had cleared a path they could walk through that avoided the worst of the debris. The family finally reached the temple after their difficult journey. In addition to securing food and water, Alaula was happy to see some familiar faces who had also safely made their way to the temple. The group quickly formed a strong support system for one another. Alaula was glad that her family was safe with support from her religious community.





## end notes

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