

Youth Participatory Action Research

**Positioning Students to take Action in Solving
Environmental Justice issues in their communities**



**HOW CAN
ENVIRONMENTAL
JUSTICE INITIATIVES
BE OWNED AND
IMPLEMENTED BY
KIDS?**



**BY WORKING
ALONGSIDE KIDS
INSTEAD OF JUST
TEACHING THEM**

GOING BEYOND EDUCATION

IMPACTS



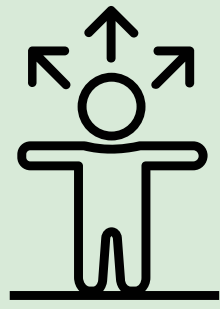
**Exposure and
Experience**



**Engagement and
Exchange**



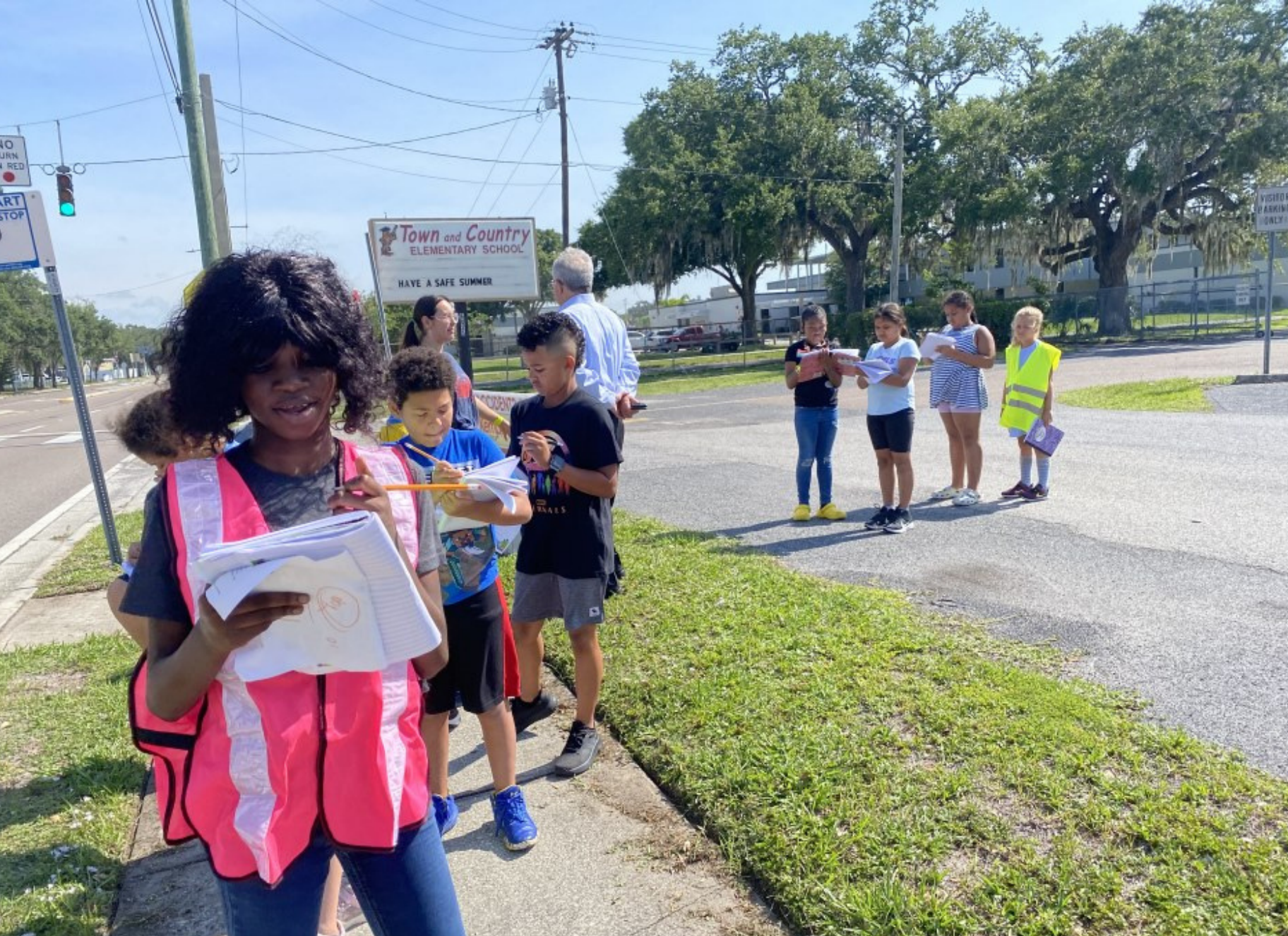
**Empowerment and
Embodiment**



EXPOSURE AND EXPERIENCE

Opening the doors to new possibilities and opportunities by exposing kids to experiences they have never had before and options they didn't know existed.





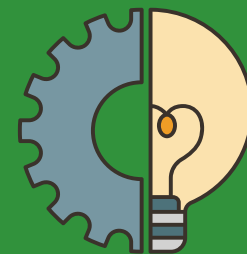
ENGAGEMENT AND EXCHANGE

Children are essential to decision making. It's our job to teach them the **how** and the **why** so that they can entrust us with the insight and solutions to making their lives, and their communities, better.



Offering Insights

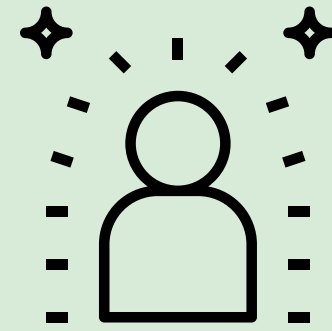
Kids know. They experience their communities in ways that can give us insight into what it is like to live there.



Providing Solutions

Just like they know what the problems are, they have the energy and creativity to want to work on solutions.

EMPOWERMENT AND EMBODIMENT



Allowing the kids the autonomy to not only telling us what's wrong, but letting them choose the actions they want to take to solve those issues creates the chance for them to embody what they've learned, and feel empowered enough to make a difference.



Ownership

Increasing the likelihood the kids will take care of these projects after they're done



Personal Responsibility

Teaching them to care for themselves, their environment, and each other.



Action

Instilling confidence in their capabilities of immediate action and change.





Growing our Future Leaders



A Partnership between the
Tampa Heights Junior Civic
Association and Plan
Hillsborough



Plan
Hillsborough

This program had a robust and varied curriculum where the kids were taught land use principles, transportation strategies, civic engagement, and concepts of sustainability and equity.

The kids chose and worked on what **they** deemed to be the most pressing issues in their communities.

This provided a unique experience and curriculum at each location that reflected the needs and desires of their respective communities.



The kids were able to have a varied curriculum because of the diverse partners and "co-teachers" that participated in the program.

Consultants, developers, landscape architects, gardeners. and our local elected officials were some of our many perspectives and expertises that were brought to the program.





Land Use

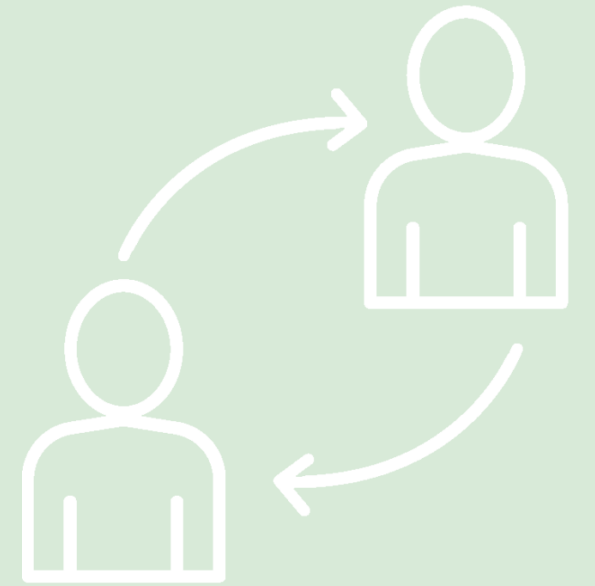


The kids learned about how we use land in different ways and the purpose of zoning. They learned about the color codes used for these different uses and put their knowledge to the test by coloring in aerials of their surrounding neighborhood. The kids then compared their colored in maps to see what they all agreed on and talk about patterns they noticed in their community.



Exchanging Information and Educating Educators

- Noticed very few parks and greenspaces in the community besides the area next to their center
- When looking up buildings on Google Maps, students pointed out that a majority of the businesses were abandoned, run down, or vacant
- Mixture of housing types with multifamily and single family homes in the same area
- Various examples of industrial uses next to homes



The teachers for this portion included planners from the local Planning Agency, highschool students, and Graduate Urban Planning students



This starts to get us and the students thinking about what the "current" situation is and how that affects the quality of life



Neighborhood Walk



In order to start putting together what they have learned so far, the kids went for a short walk in their neighborhood to do an observational survey on what they witnessed.

The students wrote what forms of transportation they saw, what people, and talked about their senses: what they smelled, heard, and felt.





Engaging students within their neighborhoods



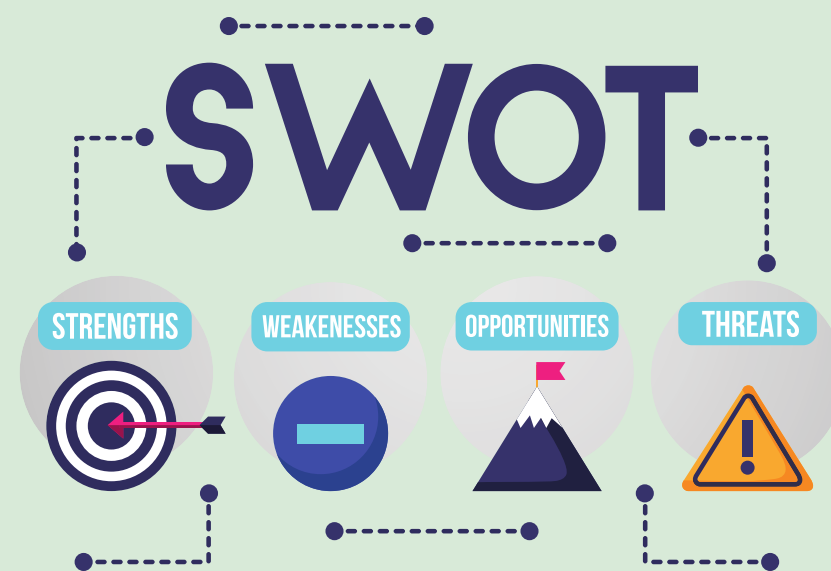
The kids used this activity to feel and understand their neighborhood directly. This helped to provide a tangible example in their comparisons and analyses.



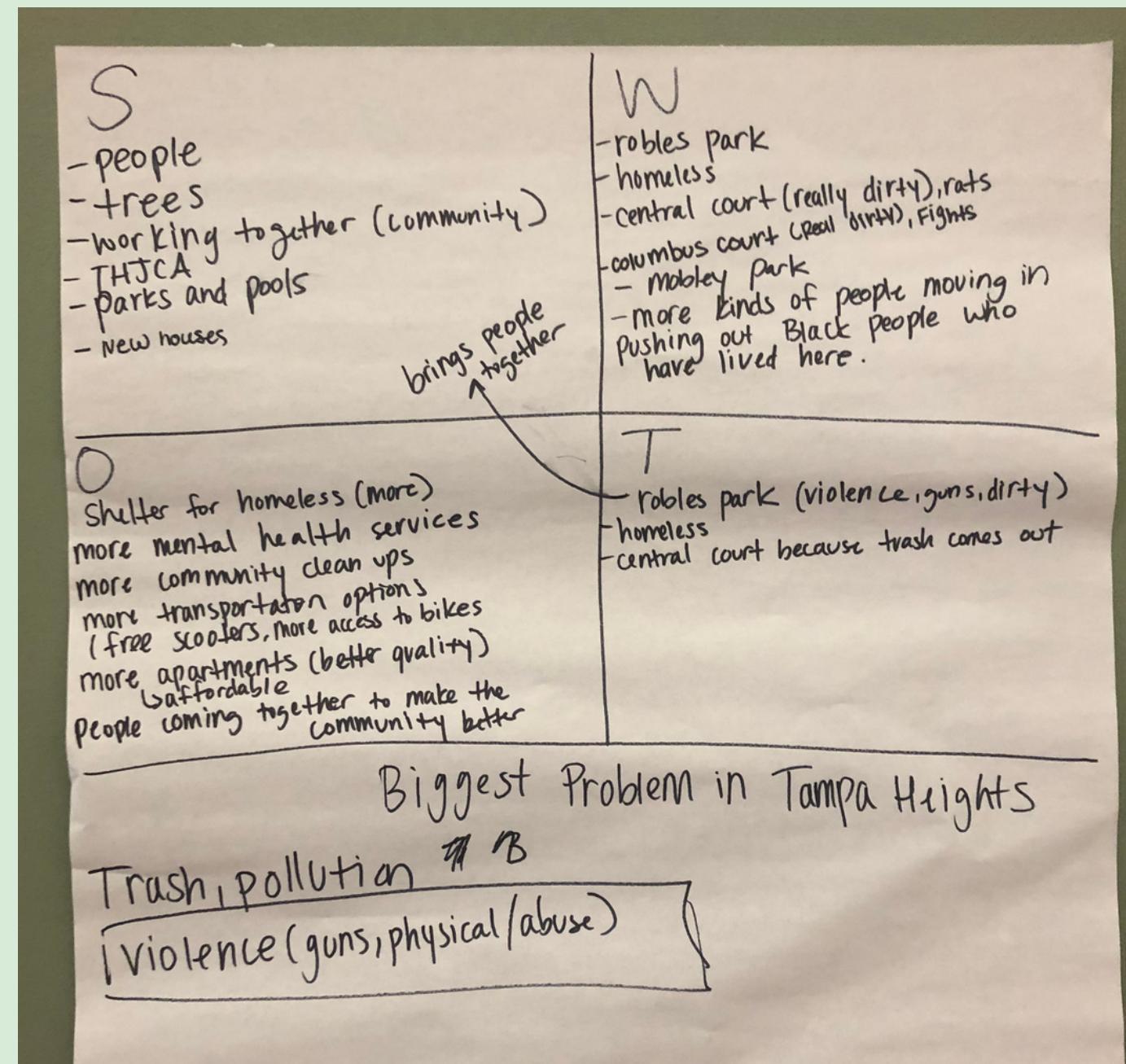
Empowerment through tools for Critical Thinking

THJCA Students Chose Violence as the number one issue facing their community.

- Strengths: People, Trees, Community, THJCA, parks, pools, new houses
- Weaknesses: Robles Park, Mobley Park, Central Court, Columbus Court, Gentrification, Homeless
- Opportunities: Services and Shelters for the homeless, mental health services, community events, affordable/accessibile apartments, more transportation options.
- Threats: Crime, Fights, Pollution/Littering, Gun Violence



Note: Although Robles Park was listed as a "weakness", some of the students mentioned that it also was a strength because it brought people together

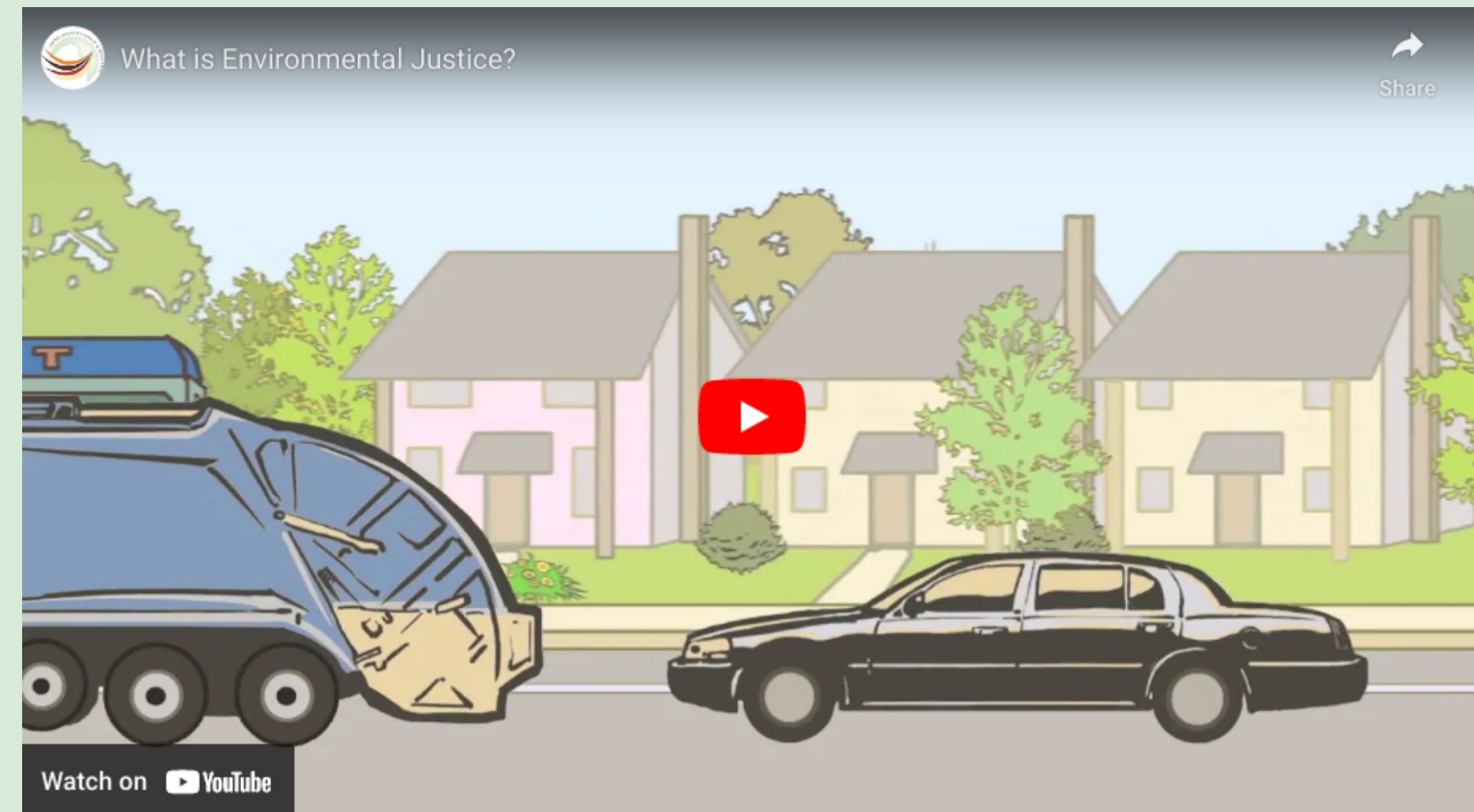


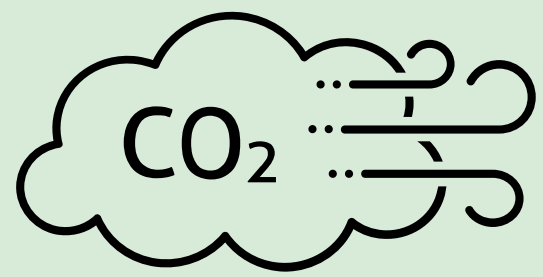
The SWOT provided the kids with a tool to be able to identify the issues in their community, select the number 1 issue, and work on problem solving.

Education on existing concepts and ideas



**What IS Environmental Justice
and How to UNDERSTAND it**



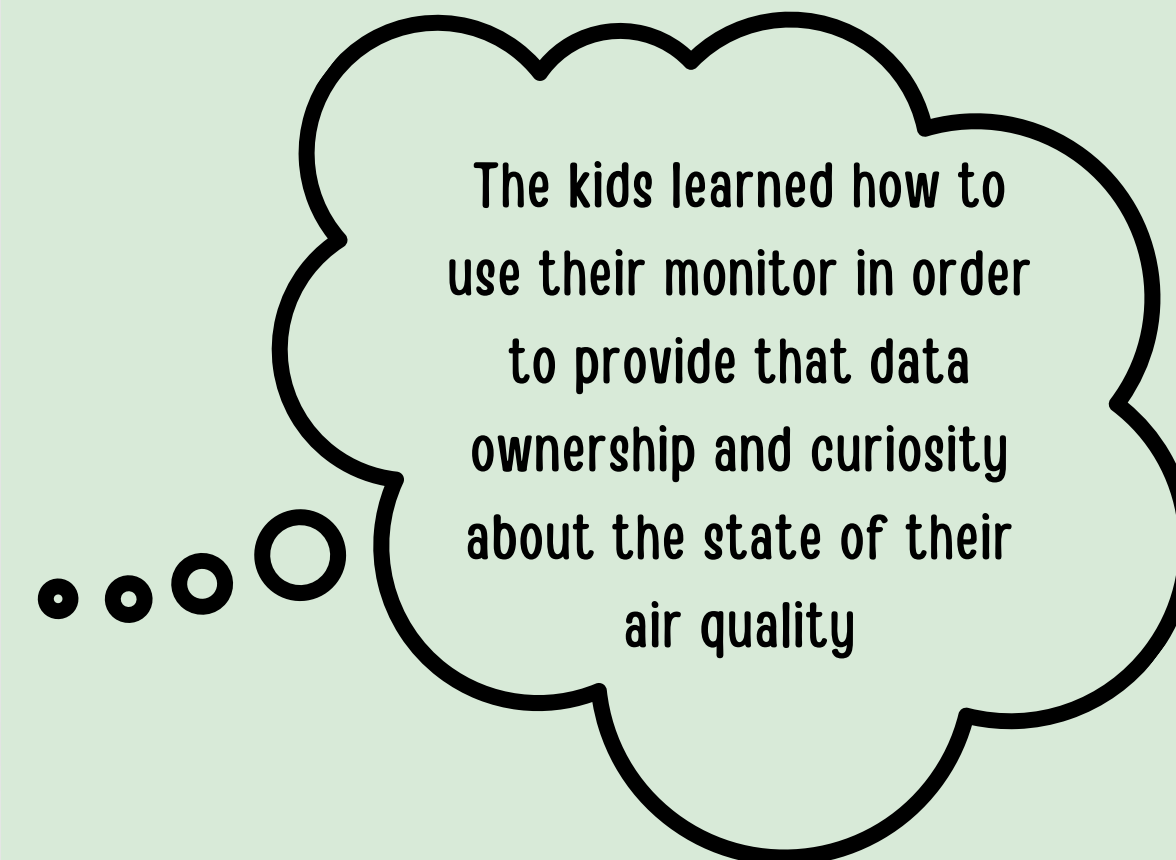


Bringing Environmental Justice to your backyard



The kids at THJCA got additional lessons on Environmental Justice by learning about Air Quality from USF researchers through the Transportation Planning Organization.

A monitor for their pilot study was placed at the center and the students learned about how the highway could impact their air quality and health.



The kids learned how to use their monitor in order to provide that data ownership and curiosity about the state of their air quality

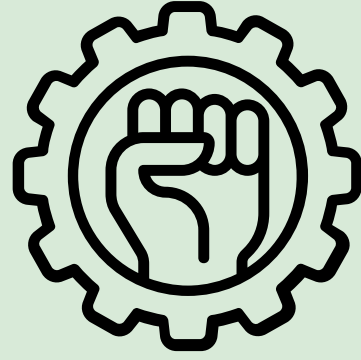
Exposure to possibilities

The students got to spend a day in downtown (less than 10 minutes away from their center).

Besides a fun day, the students spoke to City Hall on civic engagement and were able to see the differences between their community and the more invested-in downtown area.



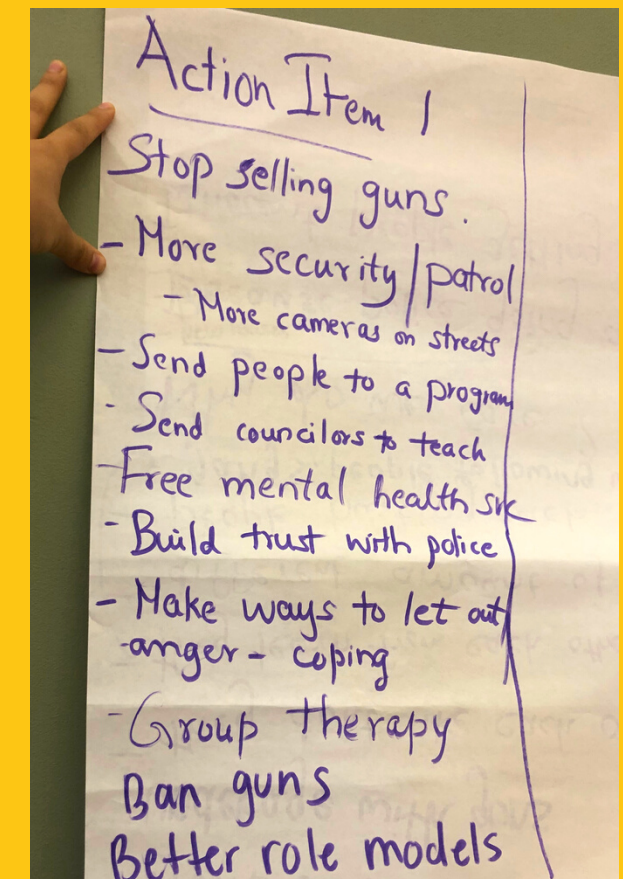
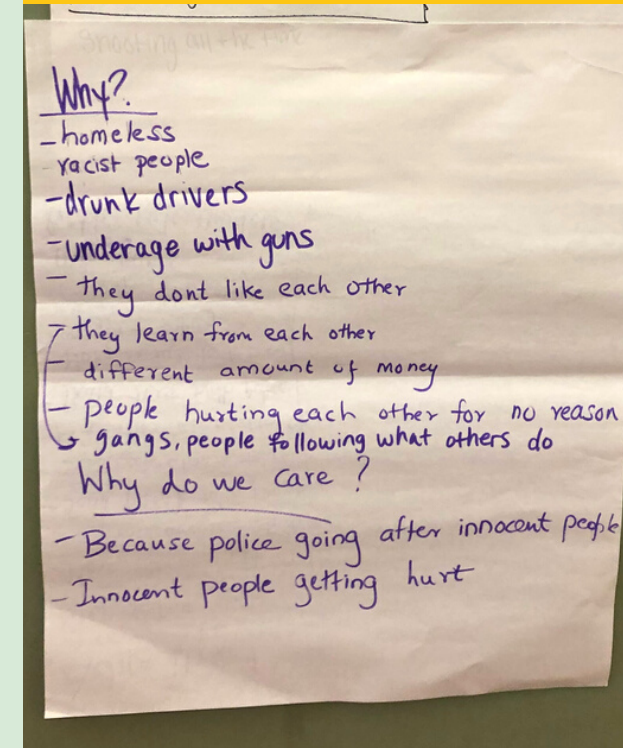
Embodiment through Action



Because these students noticed the vast amount of abandoned/vacant lots during their land use activity, we had a local developer come and get their ideas about redeveloping a parcel she owns in their neighborhood.



Because gun violence was a huge concern for the students, we worked together to come up with reasons why gun violence is prevalent and what could be done to help lessen this. Then the kids presented their ideas to a local elected official.



Creating Stewards of Justice: Now and Forever



THANK
YOU!

