YES
Nature to Neighborhoods

2015–2019
Strategic Visioning Process
VISION
Richmond youth, adults, and families lead healthy, connected lives; motivate change in their neighborhoods; and inspire a safe, thriving community.

MISSION
In partnership with nature, YES nurtures leaders who champion the wellbeing of our community.

VALUES
Inclusion · Intentionality · Effective Communication · Integrity · Holistic

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In 1999 YES was founded to provide eye-opening enrichment opportunities to under resourced youth living in Richmond’s flatlands. Due to challenging community conditions, both quality out-of-school-time programming and safe exposure to the outdoors were inaccessible for many children and their families.

For the past 16 years YES has created bridges—to the natural world, to oneself, within and between families—so that youth and the adults in their lives can bring transformative experiences in nature back to their homes and neighborhoods. Modeling positive relationships, creating easy and affordable access to the outdoors, and honoring the diverse backgrounds and voices of our participants has allowed YES to create programs tailored to people of different ages and cultures—a richness that defines this beautiful city we call home.

Over the past five years we have deepened our impact by offering year-round leadership programming for the youth and adults who arrive to YES through our Summer and Family Camp entry points. However, there is still a gap for those youth and families who only attend camp one to two times during the year, and have little contact with the organization beyond these experiences.
Inspired by Executive Director Eric Aaholm’s visit to the Fiver Foundation in New York, YES embarked on a strategic visioning process in 2014. As a result of this process our staff, board, and stakeholders re-imagined and aligned our path forward for the next four years. We began by grounding ourselves in the strengths, challenges, and opportunities of the Richmond community. We celebrated our accomplishments to date, and were inspired to take our work to the next level, by developing a research-backed theory of change and a set of three strategic priorities that rest at the heart of our “leadership pathways” approach.

Looking ahead we are committed to continuing to evolve our work so that it addresses the needs of our participants and the institutions that serve them. Our 2015 strategic plan sets out to do just this. We understand that becoming a strong, effective leader doesn’t happen overnight. The path to leadership is a progression—shaped by exposure, safe risk-taking, and service to one’s community—not to mention learning and stumbling alongside peers and role models whose love and support is genuine.

We are pleased to present the key findings and milestones set through this strategic visioning process and invite you to join us on our journey.

Eric Aaholm
Executive Director

Brooke Harris
Board Chair
Richmond Conditions

“When you live in the city, sometimes everything seems hard, even the steps you take as you walk down the sidewalk. The concrete is hard. When you look around and you can actually see that there is nature in the city, it takes that hardness out.” —YES participant

Access to nature and green space provides children with a myriad of cognitive, emotional, and physical benefits. Richmond enjoys more miles of shoreline than any other Bay Area city and has several regional parks accessible by foot and public transportation.

Over 50% of residents in Central and North Richmond report that they, or someone they know, was the victim of a violent crime.

52% of Richmond children are obese or overweight.

Studies suggest green public settings encourage social interaction among both youth and adults, which may increase social trust, decrease crime, and increase perceptions of community safety.

27% of Richmond youth have asthma.

More than 90% of YES Family Camp participants report feeling more comfortable and positive around others from diverse backgrounds after their experience at camp.

87% of low-income West County youth need out-of-school opportunities.

YES aims to grow its programming to provide more out-of-school-time opportunities to the young people who want and deserve it.

“When you live in the city, sometimes everything seems hard, even the steps you take as you walk down the sidewalk. The concrete is hard. When you look around and you can actually see that there is nature in the city, it takes that hardness out.” —YES participant
Our Accomplishments

Our plans for the future stand firmly on our successes to date.
1999  Diane Mintz, YES's founder, sends 81 Richmond youth to a weeklong summer camp.

2004  First YES Family Camp launched with Coronado and Verde Elementary students and families.

2006  Camp partners expanded. More than 300 youth and 400 family members served annually.

2007  Agency hires first Executive Director and opens an office in the heart of Richmond.

2009  First strategic plan completed to improve identity, strengthen relationships, and expand community partnerships.

2010  Camp-to-Community (C2C) program started to provide year-round leadership for YES teens.

2012  Wellness Program initiated with adults from Central and North Richmond.

2013  YES starts the North Richmond Network with core community partners and serves as the backbone agency.

2014  Agency changes logo and alters name from Youth Enrichment Strategies to YES Nature to Neighborhoods.

2015  YES sends its 5000th youth to Summer Camp and 1000th family to Family Camp.

Theory of Change, new website, fundraising plan, and strategic plan completed with a focus on developing a leadership pipeline for Richmond youth and adults.
“I’ve developed a leadership role in just about everything I’ve done since joining YES. I am able to speak in front of people with more confidence than I ever had before and take more initiative on my own.”

—C2C youth
In the first phase of our visioning process we developed a four-part graphic Theory of Change to represent YES’s pathways model. Each part of the graphic is described below and full images follow.

“The Journey” depicts the community conditions in Richmond, YES’s core beliefs, and demonstrates how participants can engage with YES along each pathway.

“The Destination” states YES’s vision for the community, our long-range outcomes, and the different ways we support residents to become leaders.

“Our Pedagogical Roots” showcases the foundational research that informs YES’s work, our organizational values, and the methods we use to engage our participants and effect change.

“Our Leadership Framework” is a unified logic model of all three pathways and the strategies we employ to build relationships, develop healthy leaders, and strengthen the community.
THE JOURNEY

In partnership with nature, YES nurtures leaders who champion the wellbeing of our community.

YES BELIEVES THAT:

- Time spent in nature - with opportunities to reflect, connect with others, and discover new possibilities - restores individuals to their essential selves.
- Children, youth, and the adults around them need and deserve opportunities to develop deep connections and supportive relationships with one another.
- Participants’ experiences in nature, and specifically at camp, contribute to building values that enrich their relationship when they return home to their urban environments.
THE DESTINATION
Richmond youth, adults, and families lead healthy, connected lives; motivate change in their neighborhoods; and inspire a safe, thriving community.

- YES participants have increased family and social relationships
- YES participants have increased economic self-sufficiency
- YES participants have increased contribution to the community

- Richmond has increased leadership capacity
- Community conditions are improved

YES SUPPORTS RESIDENTS TO BECOME LEADERS

- YES staff convenes community partners to collaborate around pressing needs
- YES C2C youth fulfill service projects that promote community wellness and improve the built environment
- YES Wellness Navigators support and pioneer local health and wellness initiatives in schools and their neighborhoods
- YES helps families engage with their schools to promote programs and policies that contribute to overall school climate and parent engagement
OUR PEDAGOGICAL ROOTS

Positive Youth Development
Young people need to experience safety, supportive relationships, meaningful participation, skill building, and community engagement to reach the indicators of healthy productive adulthood. The Youth Development Framework defines adulthood as economic self-sufficiency, healthy family and social connections, and contribution to one’s community.

Social Network Theory
Forming social networks within affinity groups may yield social support that helps us manage the demands of daily life and extend itself to social leverage where individuals “get ahead” through connection with community. Social signaling supports families to mirror those who are able to beat the odds.

Collective Impact Approach
Community change cannot be accomplished by any one organization alone. Community change yields greater possibility when a broad array of stakeholders commit to a common agenda.

Access to Nature
Access to nature contributes to humans’ ability to manage attention and stress, supports greater mental and physical health overall, and supports a greater sense of community. We continue to anchor all of our programming in a deep connection with the natural environment.
OUR LEADERSHIP FRAMEWORK

Richmond youth, adults, and families lead healthy, connected lives; motivate change in their neighborhoods; and inspire a safe, thriving community.

STRAATEGIES

Build Relationships
- Cross-cultural, peer, and cross-generational relationship building in nature and in neighborhoods
- Facilitated discovery experiences and ongoing activities with nature
- Training & skill-building focused on interpersonal development
- Regular interaction with peer role models, community leaders, and a range of community agencies
- Promotion and modeling of physical and emotional safety
- Formal and informal staff support

Develop Healthy Leaders
- Choice in activities, workshops, projects, and explorations
- Continually progressive opportunities to take on new roles and get out of one’s comfort zone
- Ongoing issue and skill-based workshops
- Peer leadership programming and opportunities, including a dedicated leadership retreat
- Integrated wellness curriculum
- Rituals for recognition and reflection
- Meaningful engagement and contribution in program planning
- Supportive employment opportunities

Strengthen Community
- Community-focused trainings, events, and workshops
- Introductions with resources - including local transportation, other service providers, etc.
- Regular day outings, partner, and school events
- Participation in and/for leadership of community-based projects, campaigns, and committees
- YES participants in collective impact efforts and serves as the backbone organization for the North Richmond Network

OUTCOMES

- 260 youth attend summer camp, 70% participate in cohort activities throughout the year
- 30 C2C youth participate during the school year with at least 16 participating in a leadership retreat
- 18-23 families (80-100 participants) attend each of four family camps during the school year
- At least 20 Wellness Navigators attend the four family camps during the year, and at least 15-20 participate in ongoing or new wellness and advocacy trainings
- At least 300 people attend YES’s annual Walk to Nature event
- At least 15 community and school partner agencies involved in North Richmond Network

SHORT TERM & INTERMEDIATE OUTCOMES

Increased Connection
- Increased personal development
- Increased meaningful cross-cultural, peer family, intergenerational, and institutional relationships
- Increased sense of belonging
- Increased connection to nature

Increased Productivity
- Increased development of new skills, passions, knowledge, and perspectives
- Increased goal setting and achievement
- Improved healthy habits
- Increased agency and other stakeholder commitment to collective impact goals

Increased Navigation
- Increased awareness of community issues, resources, and ways to contribute
- Increased motivation to engage in community activities
- Increased ability to navigate healthy and unhealthy social pressures

LONG-TERM OUTCOMES

- YES participants have increased family and social relationships
- YES participants have increased economic self-sufficiency
- YES participants have increased contribution to the community
- Richmond has increased leadership capacity
- Community conditions are improved

RESEARCH BEHIND OUR PATHWAYS

All of the strategies and outcomes you see here are supported by the literature related to our pedagogical roots. For more information about the research, or to get a copy of the footnotes that accompany this document, please contact our offices.
Our 2015–2019 Strategic Priorities
Building on the work from our Theory of Change, YES staff and Board of Directors identified three core priority areas to focus our programming and organizational development over the next four years.

**#1 Refine Program Models**
YES realized an opportunity to consolidate its existing programming into a “leadership pathways” model to include: 1) a youth pathway that will create a pipeline between Summer Camp and Camp-to-Community programming; 2) an adult pathway that aligns Family Camp and Wellness programming; and 3) a community pathway where YES serves as the backbone for collaborative efforts to improve wellbeing. In the coming years YES will work to design curriculum and corresponding evaluations, increase participant retention and staff capacity, and build strategic partnerships in each pathway.

**#2 Increase Brand Visibility**
While YES has been highly successful at outreach with local community members, we identified a growing need to increase our brand visibility. We will do this by 1) formalizing our name change; 2) developing a communication plan and promotional materials to reach various stakeholders; 3) developing YES ambassadors; 4) strengthening social media platforms; and 5) promoting YES as a thought leader in the field.

**#3 Diversify Fund Development**
In order to adequately support the program refinement and brand development YES hopes to achieve, we recognize a need to grow our organizational budget 35% over the next four years. Our analysis of fund development opportunities concluded that YES has broad reaching opportunities to 1) increase its individual, foundation, and corporate donor base; 2) implement a relationship/client management system; and 3) leverage and expand the board for increased fund raising.

**An Idea to Study**
A long-term dream for YES is to establish a community facility, or a hub site. Ideally this would be a physical, freestanding building inside a park where YES would run its day-to-day operations. While this idea was considered in this strategic planning process, it was decided the programmatic components should take precedence for this planning period. However, YES sees a great potential upside to establishing a permanent, physical home in the Richmond community, and will launch an informal feasibility study into a hub site in the coming years.
By 2019, we will achieve the following bold goals:

**YOUTH PATHWAY**
- A minimum of 300 youth, ages 8-18, will be **ENROLLED** in YES’s youth pathway programming.
- 85% of these youth will be **RETAINED** in the pathway, year after year.
- On average, 14-18 year-olds in the pathway will experience **23 FULL DAYS IN NATURE** each year with YES and its partners and 8-13 year-olds will experience **8 FULL DAYS**.
- 50% of eligible C2C leadership program participants will **TRANSITION** into the “Fellowship Program” each year.
- 100% of C2C senior fellows will **GRADUATE HIGH SCHOOL** and 80% will **ATTEND COLLEGE OR ACQUIRE A MEANINGFUL JOB** that reflects career interests within one year of finishing the program.

**ADULT PATHWAY**
- The adult pathway will serve **100 FAMILIES EACH YEAR** (400 participants) of whom one third will be adults.
- 25% of the adults who attend Family Camp will participate in YES WELLNESS LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMING beyond the camp.
- 100% of Wellness Navigators will **SERVE IN A LEADERSHIP ROLE** at Family Camp.
- 50% of Wellness leadership program participants will **TRANSITION** into the “Fellowship Program” each year.
- 80% of Wellness fellows will **GRADUATE INTO A LEADERSHIP POSITION** with a partner agency or acquire a meaningful job that reflects career interests within three years of joining the program.

**COMMUNITY PATHWAY**
- The North Richmond Network (NRN) will be **FORMALLY RECOGNIZED AS A BEST PRACTICE COLLABORATIVE SITE TEAM MODEL** for Full Service Community Schools.
- The NRN will have a **CORE MEMBERSHIP** base of 15 agency providers and five community seats will be formally held by YES Wellness Navigators.
- Walk to Nature participation will **GROW BY 10%** every year.

Our strategies to achieve these outcomes are delineated on the following pages. Detailed staff and board work plans and timelines have been developed to align to this plan.
Priority #1: Refine Program Models
## Strategies to Refine Program Models

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<tr>
<th>OUR GOALS</th>
<th>OUR PLAN TO ACHIEVE THEM</th>
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</table>
| REFINE CURRICULUM FOR EACH PROGRAM PATHWAY                     | - **REFINE** existing curriculum to reflect distinct learning modules through which participants progress.  
- **DESIGN** an assessment to measure participant learning in each learning module. Learning modules will combine hard and soft skills that formalize leadership programming reflected in YES’s research.  
- **ALIGN** curriculum to youth development informed best practices and train all staff in youth development and evaluation practices.  
- **IDENTIFY** leadership and job placements (on boards, advisory panels, in partner agencies, etc.) for C2C and Wellness Program fellows.  
- **ELEVATE** the North Richmond Network design to have tiered levels of engagement training opportunities for participants to step into leadership roles. |
| BUILD EVALUATION TOOLS FOR EACH PROGRAM PATHWAY                | - **BUILD** assessment tools for the curriculum, and survey participants after each session.  
- **ESTABLISH** a leadership assessment tool to track participant growth, using a mix of interviews, focus groups, and surveys.  
- **ESTABLISH** an annual program review process, reflecting on the data and anecdotal learning to assess the strengths and opportunities of each program, and refine the goals for the subsequent year. |
| INCREASE STAFF CAPACITY                                        | - **HIRE** two full time staff to address the growth in the youth and adult program pathways.  
- **PROVIDE** staff with training, professional development opportunities, and competitive compensation benefits to maintain and grow a highly motivated and engaged team. |
### OUR GOALS

#### INCREASE PARTICIPANT ENGAGEMENT OPPORTUNITIES

- **CREATE** a “Fellowship Program” for youth and adult leaders who progress through the pathways. Fellowship opportunities will become increasingly complex (planning a community event, speaking on a community issues panel, writing an article for a local paper, etc.).

- **HOLD** “Camp Days” for Summer Camp youth at local regional parks and with existing camp partners during the academic year to ensure ongoing engagement with YES and sustained connection to the camp experience.

- **DRAW** the majority of youth from schools with the highest unduplicated count (i.e. highest need) in the school district.

#### DEVELOP STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

- **DEVELOP** a working model for the systems, structure, and positions of the North Richmond Network (NRN) under a Collective Impact model design.

- **IDENTIFY** five community “seats” for Wellness fellows on the NRN as a strategy to increase leadership roles for YES participants.

- **BUILD** relationships with service providers such as Outward Bound, Environmental Traveling Companions, and The Encampment to provide extended outdoor and social justice summer leadership programs, collaborate on event planning, or support resource sharing.

- **CREATE** a leadership retreat for highly engaged and interested Family Camp adult participants as a feeder for the Wellness Program in order to provide deeper engagement and continuity of services.

- **ESTABLISH** specific leadership placements for youth and adult participants to support base building from within the community. Maintain a minimum number of 30 active C2C youth and 20 active Wellness Navigators.

- **BUILD** relationships with employers to provide job placements to support leadership opportunities for participants.

- **UTILIZE** YES’s signature Walk to Nature event to develop strategic partnerships that support YES’s work as well as attract more services that support the Richmond community to embrace health and wellness practices.

### OUR PLAN TO ACHIEVE THEM
Priority #2: Increase Brand Visibility
## Strategies to Increase Brand Visibility

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<th>OUR GOALS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>FORMALIZE YES NAME CHANGE</strong></td>
<td>» <strong>PURSUE</strong> legal name change with IRS and update all corresponding agency materials.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DEVELOP COMMUNICATION PLAN &amp; PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS</strong></td>
<td>» <strong>DEVELOP</strong> a three-part communications plan to use verbal, printed, and social media to reach a variety of audiences including funders, participants, and partners.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>» <strong>ALIGN</strong> all existing and future promotional materials to YES identity kit.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>DEVELOP YES AMBASSADORS</strong></td>
<td>» <strong>TRAIN</strong> board members, volunteers, donors, staff and veteran participants to work with prospects and other connected stakeholders who should know about YES’s work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>» <strong>IDENTIFY</strong> opportunities for YES ambassadors to serve as spokespersons for YES, through community events, government meetings, partner agencies, etc.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>STRENGTHEN SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS</strong></td>
<td>» <strong>SEGMENT</strong> diverse stakeholder audiences on e-communication platform and increase distribution of quarterly e-newsletters and e-blasts.</td>
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<td>» <strong>TRAIN</strong> YES ambassadors to use social media to promote YES for outreach, engagement, and promotion.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>PROMOTE YES THOUGHT LEADERSHIP</strong></td>
<td>» <strong>COLLECT</strong> rigorous evaluation data from pilot programs to write white papers and demonstration projects to present at conferences.</td>
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<td>» <strong>IDENTIFY</strong> venues to publish work in nature, youth development and community engagement journals.</td>
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<td>» <strong>DEVELOP</strong> a “leader corner” on the YES blog and explore opportunities to guest publish on other blogs and social media platforms.</td>
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Priority #3: Diversify Fund Development

"Through this collaboration we can and are creating safer neighborhoods and schools for the community as a whole.”
—North Richmond Network partner
# Strategies to Diversify Fund Development

## Our Goals

### Grow Individual Donor Revenue

- **Establish** basic systems of prospect research, board engagement, data management, donor cultivation, direct solicitation, and lead grant/gift mechanism to prepare for annual campaign launch in 2016 and continue each subsequent year.

### Attract Additional Investors

- **Build** fund-development capacity through expanding staffing of YES development department, increasing board engagement in fundraising, and shifting Executive Director role to include more “ambassadorship” in the community of prospective funders.

- **Build** an annual prospect list of major donors, foundations, corporate, and government prospects to solicit each year. The list will include 30 names of each entity with the exception of government sources.

- **Invite** major funder to issue challenge grant of $100K to launch the yearly “annual campaign” and stimulate interest from individual donors and smaller foundations to provide matches.

### Implement New Systems & Tools for Donor & Constituent Tracking

- **Institutionalize** a Client Management System, such as Salesforce, to cultivate individual donors and manage their engagement.

- **Institutionalize** an annual prospect list of major donors, foundations, corporate, and government prospects to solicit each year. The list will include 30 names of each entity with the exception of government sources.

- **Develop** varied messaging strategies to use in donor cultivation.

- **Update** fundraising plan on a bi-annual basis to reflect changes in funding landscapes and strategies used to secure new revenue.

### Shift YES Board from Organizational Stewardship to Fund-Raising and Fund-Raising

- **Expand** board size incrementally from 8-15 people by 2019, and shift more from event fundraising to direct solicitation of gifts.

- **Generate** at least 10-15 prospects from each board member who they solicit during regular campaigns.

- **Provide** ongoing fundraising training and support.

- **Have** board members collectively host at least two house parties annually.
All great things happen through partnership. YES has been deeply enriched by the contributions of the following collaborators:

**Our beloved community including YES participants, volunteers, and donors.**

**YES BOARD OF DIRECTORS**
- Brooke Harris  BOARD CHAIR
- Shahad Wright  VICE CHAIR
- April Suwalsky  SECRETARY
- Gretchen Grani  TREASURER
- Zak Klein  MEMBER
- Christy Rocca  MEMBER
- Ann Higgins  MEMBER
- Alex Hooker  MEMBER

**YES STAFF**
- Eric Aaholm  EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
- Blanca Hernández  PROGRAM DIRECTOR
- Courteney Coolidge  DEVELOPMENT MANAGER
- Kelsey Radmilovic  CAMP-TO-COMMUNITY COORDINATOR
- Tana Monteiro  COMMUNITY WELLNESS COORDINATOR
- Zaira Sierra  CAMP PROGRAMS ASSISTANT
- Peter Flom  YOUTH ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST
- Claire McMurtry  GRANTS ADMINISTRATOR

**PRIMARY FUNDERS**
- The California Endowment
- Thomas J. Long Foundation
- Youth Outside
- Quest Foundation
- Irene S. Scully Foundation
- Dean & Margaret Lesher Foundation
- Kaiser Community Benefit

**PRIMARY COMMUNITY PARTNERS**
- East Bay Regional Park District
- YMCA of the East Bay
- City of Richmond
- Outward Bound California
- Contra Costa Health Services
- Pogo Park
- RYSE Center
- YES Camp Partners

**STRATEGIC PLAN CONSULTANTS**
- Be the Change Consulting
- Frances Tompkins  THEORY OF CHANGE CONSULTANT
- Holly Million  FUND DEVELOPMENT CONSULTANT
- Christine Wong Yap  STRATEGIC PLAN GRAPHIC DESIGNER
- Francesca Ling  THEORY OF CHANGE GRAPHIC DESIGNER