



The Rail~Volution Podcast, Episode 47
The Community Knows What They Want
 with Duncan Hwang and Gauri Rajbaidya
 Host: Jeff Wood

This transcript is lightly edited and may contain transcription errors.

Welcome to the Rail~Volution podcast. Rail~Volution is a national learning network and annual conference focused on transit, related mobility investments and community development. The podcast is a chance to hear directly from a range of stakeholders and go deeper into what it takes to make communities better for people. Let's get started.

Hi, I'm Jeff Wood, Principal of The Overhead Wire and your host. This month on the Rail~Volution podcast, re joined by Duncan Hwang, Interim Co Director of the Asian Pacific Network of Oregon (APANO) and Gauri Rajbaidya architect and senior associate at SERA. They chat with us about community driven development in Portland's Jade District, and how it's connected to the rest of the region.

Duncan Hwang and Gauri Rajbaidya, Welcome to the podcast. Can you tell us a little bit about yourselves and we'll start with Duncan

Duncan Hwang (1m 52s): My name is Duncan Hwang, I am one of the the interim co-executive directors of APANO (he, his pronouns). I've been working with APANO about almost eight and a half years. And one of our programs is a place-based initiative called the Jade District, where the Orchards of 82nd is based. And we work to build community power, improve health outcomes and prevent involuntary displacement.

Gauri Rajbaidya (2m 17s): Great, thanks Duncan. I am Gauri Rajbaidya. As you mentioned, I am a senior project designer at SERA architects. So, senior associate there. Also besides doing architectural work and design work, I'm also heavily involved in the social, community development, social justice side of things. And because I am an Asian-American, I actually became a citizen only in 2016. So for me, that particular experience and the community, Asian American community, is very important for me. And rooting for them, working for them is very important. So on the side, I was very involved in all the community-based work, and that is what brought me to APANO. And I was involved in the APANO board since I think 2011, all the way leading up to the Jade District, the development of Orchards of 82nd. And then I stepped down to focus more on the affordable housing side of things.

Jeff Wood (3m 11s): And how did you all get involved in cities and being interested in the neighborhoods and all of those things that go along with that?

Duncan Hwang (3m 17s): Gosh, well, I found a job at the social justice organization, APANO the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon. And I found the job on idealist.Org, which never happens, but here I am. Traditionally we did community organizing and advocacy and leadership development. And then we just started to dabble more in community development and place-based work with the Jade District.

And that was really because we had a large concentration of Asian folks in this neighborhood. So we became more invested in working on the supports needed to build a healthy and stronger and resilient community from a place-based perspective. So that would include things like housing, transportation and small business and economic development. So that's kind of how our organization evolved from community organizing to community development and how to build safer and stronger communities and neighborhoods.

Gauri Rajbaidya (4m 28s): Great. Yeah, my trajectory is a little, slightly different. It comes from the artistic side. I play music and I primarily play music from where I come from, which is Nepal. And I have a small band of brothers, also from Nepal. And in terms of sharing our music, as an immigrant myself and all of my other band of brothers, all immigrants, we play for other immigrants who understand, you know, the sound that we were playing.

And with that, it brought me to the Center for Intercultural Organizing, which is now Unite Oregon, that Kayse Jama and Stephanie started long time ago. And that's where <inaudible> who's heavily involved in the city, started the color of pencils and art initiative. It's about curating immigrants' culture, poetry, song, dance and food. And so we had this monthly venue where immigrants came together and chaired all of these things.

And that really brought me close to Bhutanese and Nepalese refugees. Bhutanese communities, we share a similar culture and language, but there are refugees from Bhutan, right? And so then they invited us to their homes. Going to people's homes, communities, homes, you really understand where you are aligned, you know, your own experience and the experiences of the families that you are sharing, all of this art, food and cultural with. And the more you do that, the more you realize, there's more that needs to be done.

And because I'm involved in the built environment, architecture, and my firm SERA architects is inherently rooted in that value of community-based, place-based organizing, place-based design, making communities, not making buildings, but thinking communities, right. And it really made a lot of sense to then kind of connect. The overall overlap was very natural, right? Seeing all these communities, their needs for safer community, safer housing, it just seemed to really align.

So I got involved with APANO primarily to really advocate for the API community, more on the political and advocacy side of things. But then all of that really led to the housing need, which really aligned with what I do. I design multi-family housing, you know, public structures and things like that. And so really everything became very synergistic.

Jeff Wood (6m 49s): How important is it for APANO to make these connections? And then also, how do you make the connections with other folks from Nepal and Bhutan and everywhere else?

Duncan Hwang (6m 58s): I think it's absolutely critical for our organization to make these connections. One thing I think about a lot is the ecosystem of organizations that serve our community. The last census that just came out Asian-Americans grew, I think 48% and Pacific Islander grew by 53%. So a lot of the support structures that would serve our community actually are underdeveloped or don't exist yet.

So, I mean, from the art's perspective or a housing perspective, Oregon doesn't have a CDC that builds affordable housing for the members of our community. If you go to some of our peer cities like Seattle or San Francisco, you know, there's like Chinatown CDC in San Francisco or SCIDpa up in Seattle. There's all these different organizations that exist. We just don't have that structure here in Oregon. So we're really looking to step into some of those roles to meet those needs for our community. And having folks like Gauri with that expertise and professional experience just made it all possible.

So those community connections are vital, both from creating and delivering a project to kind of building up the case and problem statement and everything that you need to get these projects funded.

Gauri Rajbaidya (8m 22s): Duncan's covered most of it. My perspective from being a board member. I felt like when we were organizing among with all the other board members and the staff, you know, through and through at APANO it's always been about true, authentic trust building and inviting the community through that lens. Right. So really it was me inviting my other Nepali community members saying, Hey, this is something that is really important for us to do. And for them to kind of really feel aligned with that and then really making connections to word of mouth and to community-based, really grassroots. It's not a big advertise forum. It's really people bringing their friends and their friends and their friends, and that's really how we have grown. And because of that trust-building methodology and how people are coming to APANO, makes the growth of APANO and organizing a little bit more organic and familial in that way. Right. In that sense.

Duncan Hwang (9m 17s): Yeah. I think it's all about building trust. I think one thing I've learned in kind of a community development world is you can do you a traditional check-the-box community engagement. We see that the lot, where maybe there'll be some emails and flyers. You do a community forum and you're basically done with community engagement. That type of engagement doesn't really reach the communities that we serve, who are often are immigrants or refugees or limited English proficiency.

So I think we just have to be a lot more thoughtful and relational and it just takes a lot more time to do that. Kind of like, you know, trust building and deeper down kind of like relationship

building and frankly, this capacity building for all of us to learn how to navigate kind of a dominant culture of spaces and how the rest of the world really operates.

Jeff Wood (10m 11s): Yeah. What does that look like organizing at that level? What does that look like and how does that operate?

Duncan Hwang (10m 16s): I think our theory of change has really always been having those who are most impacted lead the way, right? So for us, it's a lot of about political education, empowerment, giving folks the tools they need to be successful advocates. And then some tactical advice or connections to electeds or other folks, kind of along the way. That's how we traditionally approached organizing, not issue driven, but community driven. Affordable housing has always just been one of those key issues that are as always coming up. I think it takes a lot to jump from, we need more affordable housing to, this is how you build affordable housing. That's where, you know, it takes a whole village to do that.

Gauri Rajbaidya (11m 3s): And part of it is the displacement lens. Case in point, when we were looking at the Jade District and the Orchards of 82nd, yes, affordable housing, but is affordable housing way out in Sandy? So all of the community here to have to move to Sandy to be able to access that? Or are the communities here in the Jade District being provided the opportunity to access the affordable housing right here rather than having to be displaced.

Right. And, that part ties back to community organizing. It's really about being rooted in the place. And hence comes to all of these other things, you know, affordable housing, parks and nature, access, safety, safe, route to school, everything, you know, it's all connected then, right?

Jeff Wood (11m 54s): Yeah. And you mentioned being rooted in place and in that place as the Jade District, but that didn't always exist. Where did the Jade District organizing come from and what are the boundaries of that place?

Duncan Hwang (12m 4s): The Jade District's actually a pretty innovative approach to placed-based work from the City of Portland. So we're part of the Neighborhood of Prosperity Network. So we're actually our own micro-urban renewal area. And then our boundaries are basically 82nd-Division and about the half mile around. It's kind of squiggly because it's an urban renewal area.

So it's an attempt to do urban renewal in a more, community-driven way that, you know, advances community priorities rather than serve as a tool for potential displacement, like we've seen urban renewal gone awry in many parts of the country. So this is an attempt to use this specific financing tool to fund community driven projects like the Orchards. And that's TIF, a very small amount of TIF. So as like enough to get a few things done, but not to make any like huge waves, which you know, is kind of like how you would approach it in this kind of pilot phase, I guess.

Gauri Rajbaidya (13m 8s): Just past the Jade District is the Division Midway Alliance, right. DMA that Lisha Shrestha is running right now. And then further up, I guess it's not necessarily a pure NPI, but trying to be is the Rosewood Initiative, that you know is really again, community based. So the way I look at it, it starts at Jade District and it's almost like this little pearl of these NPIs. And if we can really have that stretching all the way to the outer Southeast, how incredible it would be, right. Like really locally-focused and then working on the synergy between these little NPI pods.

Jeff Wood (13m 43s): How would you connect the dots as it were, between those groups?

Duncan Hwang (13m 47s): We are a part of the Neighborhood Prosperity Network. So those groups are all kind of in that network. And we received some city of funding to run the admin and operations, and then also administer the small amount of TIF dollars that we have. And then we try to leverage that with foundations or public funders to scale up our work.

Gauri Rajbaidya (14m 5s): But one way I can see it work out is like, say if PBOT is doing transportation improvement along Division, right. And let's say Safe Routes to School, it's still relevant. I mean, some of that stretch from 60 to 92nd is still really dangerous. And so when that happens, right, I mean, it's still all the DMA along the same Division in line. And then the Rosewood initiative starts with, you know, so it really becomes that collaborative thing, you know,

Jeff Wood (14m 35s): And then you have this parcel, which is a former furniture store and then the place for organizing before it got torn down, How do you pick the parcel and what is the way that it moves forward?

Duncan Hwang (14m 46s): Yeah. So when we first came to establish our headquarters here, this was back in 2013. The first thing we did was a community visioning process to really see what the community wanted to invest in. Right? So we did this process in Chinese and Vietnamese, Russian, Spanish, and English, so, so five languages. And I think Gauri was also one of the facilitators of it and helped to design all these beautiful drawings and things of what the neighborhood could become.

At that key intersection of 82nd and Division there was a abandoned furniture store. It was vacant for many years. And one of the huge, like main priorities where community was like, this building's an eyesore, can you do something with it? It's just like this underutilized space, you know, at the heart of the district. So we actually throughout the process, had public partners come observe a visioning process. Metro, which is our MPO came and was part of the process. And because of that groundswell support, they knew that that building was a key acquisition target.

So Metro's transit-oriented development program bought the building, and basically leased it to APANO for like a dollar a year for a couple of years. And we basically ran kind of like a impromptu community site for public events. You know, we hosted a number of nonprofits and

bands practiced out of there. I mean, there was just a real vibrant kind of community space that was really kind of rough around the edges, but people loved it. Over those couple of years, Gauri's team did the architectural design and we applied for low-income housing tax credits and APANO actually ran a capital campaign.

And that was always part of the deal, right. This building we can use for now, but how do we make sure the community understands: it's going to get torn down and we're going to build something back. We're going to build affordable housing on top and then continue to have that community space on the ground floor. So that was the sequence of events from this massive community vision to the actual building that we have now today.

Gauri Rajbaidya (16m 60s): And I think some of the other things to keep in mind is before PCC developed their campus, there used to be the traditional Chinese restaurant that used to be the community gathering place. They had a lot of the banquets and galas and things like that. When that went away, there was this big lack of community hall. So with the Jade visioning process, not only was the affordable housing identified, but also a night market as a concept was a big piece that community brought forth.

And at first we were doing the night market at the Fubonn parking lot, and it got so big that we had to kind of move to PCC campus. Right. And so then the big space we had at the furniture store really functioned as that community gathering space, even though it was really rough on the outside and somewhat rough on the inside. So the idea that that place needed to be preserved as an anchor for the community became very, very clear. So even when we developed the affordable housing with partnership with Rose CDC, it was always clear that that ground floor needed to be the anchor for the community.

And then when APANO kind of really put the vision for APANO's space, with the multicultural gathering area that opened up, could bookend the night market coming in from PCC, right. Really kind of completed the narrative and story right in that particular pocket. So it seemed to be the ideal space for transit oriented development, you know, because that's exactly the intersection where you have all the buses stop right in the four corners. And easy access for the residents, easy view. And then also the access to the humanities around the area all made sense.

Duncan Hwang (18m 52s): And this is all kind of like a process of establishing, you know, your presence and, you know, sending a statement about neighborhood identity and where we are, and also building trust. This wasn't just our first project, the first thing that we did when we got here. There was lower hanging fruit, besides like a \$20 million building to start.

The first thing we did was the visioning. And then we built the community garden. And then we ran these night markets and really activated a kind of under utilized space. We've worked on advocating for traffic and safety improvements. So you see the crossings and some lighting as a result of our advocacy. So it was like, what kind of smaller projects can you do to demonstrate

yes, we're following this vision and taking the community demands and asks to heart and moving those priorities. And then scaling up to developing things like affordable housing.

Gauri Rajbaidya (19m 57s): Yeah. Also a lot of also lived in the neighborhood. I was living in the 89th. Khanh Pham, house representative for the district, also lived in that area. Travis Dang, the lead designer for the building, has been teaching martial arts in this neighborhood for ages, right? I mean, kids have grown from elementary to high school. This is another little hobby that he does besides the designing architecture. So there was a lot of connection for a lot of us in the community. And that meant a lot for us.

Jeff Wood (20m 31s): And how is this tied to the traffic improvements too? I mean, Duncan, you mentioned it a little bit, but there's also the division transit improvements. There's also the discussion about y'all helped to get \$80 million in funding and the transfer of control of 82nd street from ODAT to the City of Portland. How much connected to the transportation improvements is, is your organizing, is this specific project overall?

Duncan Hwang (20m 54s): Well, I would say in our community and organization has been working on traffic and transportation for the entire time. It's related in that it's a TOD project related to a new BRT line, which is the Division Transit project. But I think from the original visioning transportation justice and transportation and safety was all as a high priority. From like our stretch at 82nd Division out to 182nd, we've had four Asian elders die in four years. It's on the same couple blocks; it all happens at night. These are elders. They're like 60 or older, they are recent immigrants. So it's not like happenstance. I think these are systemic failures that were facing.

So the advocacy around improvements to the built environment have been a long time coming. We've been working on that for, you know, seven to eight years now. And we're just now starting to see the construction happening. Last year, they broke ground on the Division Transit project, the BRT project. And then the corresponding safety project on Division, which will add bike lanes and safer crossings and lighting. And that construction will start this fall into, to next year.

And then 82nd avenue is a state highway and really kind of prioritized speed and freight transportation over the community. And we pushed really hard for jurisdiction transfer for many years and it just kind of happened this year. And it was mainly a result of the decade of advocacy, the American Rescue Plan Act dollars being available at the state. And then we also had two tragic fatalities on basically the same intersection of 82nd earlier this year.

So, you know, Gauri's old roommate, Khanh Pham was on staff at APANO and is now our state representative. He was able to secure a deal for that the \$80 million, which overall is \$185 million between the state, ODOT and PBOT, the city transportation bureau, to get that money put together for a jurisdictional transfer. So a lot of the things kind of like worked out, hopefully for better, but it took a lot of tragedy to get us there. So yeah, like transportation safety has been a huge priority.

It's a massive undertaking because you do a lot of community engagement and it's like, well, you won't see any construction for another couple of years. And that construction will take up a couple of years. So you're doing all this input now about what you want to see. But if you're still here in seven or eight years, you'll have a much nicer street. So it's a real long-term process and it requires a lot of conversations.

There's just a lot of trade offs as part of any transportation project. Our neighborhood is really auto-centric. We're on the edge of being a more suburban neighborhood that was not built for biking or walking or anything like that. And we're asking our community, you are going to have to give up some parking for these bike lanes. You're going to give up your access to turn lanes for these medians that improve safety, but you know, your business will be impacted. So it's just a lot of a change management that we've had to do. Like, overall a lot of support for it. But like when the bulldozers show up, people are rightfully alarmed.

Jeff Wood (24m 26s): I saw that in the language talking about the division transit project specifically. One of my hobby horses to a certain extent is dedicated lanes for transit. And, I noticed that there was an explainer of why there were no dedicated lanes. And obviously that's one of those trade off things that you kind of have to go through in order to kind of get the things that you want. And you have to give away some of the things that you still want, but maybe because of the auto-centricity of the place, it's hard to convince the majority.

Duncan Hwang (24m 53s): Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it's a really difficult pill for a lot of businesses to swallow, like give up your parking. And a lot of our side streets are unpaved, right? The streets off the major corridors are unpaved and you can't really safely park there. So some businesses just don't really have access to parking anymore. So yeah, I don't think we're going to be able to meet our long-term sustainability and climate goals without deeper investments in alternative forms of transportation. But there's a difficult conversation to have with individual business owners. And rightfully so, because this is their livelihood.

Jeff Wood (25m 30s): For the orchards project specifically. I'm wondering what kind of design input you got from the community and what were they looking for? In addition to some of the things you all were already doing, like organizing space. The night markets sound really awesome, those types of things, but were folks asking for?

Gauri Rajbaidya (25m 49s): Yes. So a big piece was really family-based, units that are appropriate for the family. I mean, again, thinking about cultural specificity, you know, a lot of the immigrant families and especially API families still tend to be a bit more nuclear, right? I mean, when we first looked at the site, it's a very constrained, very compact site, if you look at it on an aerial view. And so we wanted to not waste even an inch of land. Which meant trying to get as many units as possible within the comp plan of the height that we were allowed, managing within the cost parameters. The big piece was making sure that we had three and two bedroom units. And even the one bedroom unit, to have it designed in such an ample way, given such a constrained site, to design it in such a way that it really has the most flexibility and

most daylight, such that it felt much, much expansive and bigger, right? So that was one of the things. And originally when we did the layout, we probably had more units, probably were more one bedrooms. So we really dedicated the key corners for three bedrooms and two bedrooms. That was one major thing.

And then another one was making sure that the service cores, were like the laundry room would happen, had some extra space. So you could be hanging out with your child while you were doing your laundry or you could move out from your unit to kind of come into the laundry area or like the community room to do the homework with the kid, if you needed to do that.

Space was very premium, right? We didn't have a lot. So we really had to think creatively to make the most within that, right. Allowing for bike parking, really encouraging that part, quite a bit. So those were some of the major, major things that we incorporated as part of the community giving us the feedback. How the bedrooms to be organized. And so when we were around the DD, design development, phase we actually presented everything that we had. The community actually came and they were really giving very pointed comments, all the way from the types of trees being planted to the back patio play area that their kids had. Some of those were the first ones that we kind of incorporated - unit types, unit sizes to accommodate families.

The replicability of this particular model that we did a Jade, you know, that's exactly the piece that we want it to see is, you know, can this model be replicated? And in fact, or at least on the other side, like competing for similar projects like this, we are actually doing that. And Metro actually took this particular development model of Jade and, or just of 82nd and are doing further acquisitions of property on the transit lines, very, very heavily served by public transit and then really creating a public RFP process to develop this into sustainable affordable housing with, you know, some meaningful ground floor, just like, APANO is anchoring the Jade.

Jeff Wood (28m 59s): What was the affordability level of the units?

Duncan Hwang (29m 1s): The main developer was Rose Community Development Corporation Rose CDC. So we were partnered with them and we were all part of the development team that won the right's to develop this project,

Gauri Rajbaidya (29m 14s): Total number of units are 48 units. Number of units affordable at below 60% AMI is 47. So all of the units are below 60% AMI. And I think we did separate one for market rate. Let's see if there were further data. I think we had some section eight units, like maybe eight section eight units or so. And I feel like there were some that were below 30% AMI as well.

Jeff Wood (29m 45s): Is there anything that surprised you about the process that wasn't expected, or it was kind of a happy accident or anything along those lines? I

Gauri Rajbaidya (29m 52s): I think it's the designing of the Plaza to bookend to the night market. How it all came to synergistically work with APANO's programming to create the multicultural space. We worked with Suenn Ho Design and Resolve Architects. They designed APANO's pod commercial condominium, in the legal speak, but the whole APANO space was designed by Suenn Ho Design and Resolve Architects in collaboration with us. And so working together to really make all of this, the building part, the residential part and Rose's residential community area, to sing together with APANO's multicultural space. And using the corridor, the main passageway, actually as a gallery space, that connects between the front plaza to the back plaza, where the youth to play. That all worked out really nicely. And that was definitely a fun part.

Probably we should not have been surprised, but I think the neighbors kind of struggled with the myths surrounding affordable housing, right? So the negative myths that are truly nothing but just myths that affordable housing will devalue their properties. That was one big concern that really got brought up a lot. Affordable housing will add a lot of crime and such in this neighborhood. That was another piece that we had to really try to dispel, incredibly.

And, you know, the housing that we would build would be such poor quality, it would be, quote unquote, affordable-bad-looking. There was this, all of these things. And that it needed to have tons of parking is another one. So those were the things that we had to really work with. And it was actually, you know, I think enlightening in the way that, you know, we were very transparent. We had very, very open forums where neighbors were really allowed to really say what they have to say, but gave us the opportunity to kind of dispel some of these myths.

For example, I remember Nick Souvie the E.D. at Rose CDC, actually shared a white paper that actually dispelled that myth that affordable housing lowers neighboring property value. I don't think so. In fact, I feel like the building, Orchard of 82nds, is so nice, so beautiful. It's actually been a catalyst in terms of really changing that intersection quite a bit. I mean, as you can see, there's been so many more developments that's happened since the Orchards of 82nd. Right. So those were some of the things that we knew that there would be challenges, but we just didn't realize how much, you know, how much of an intense challenge that would be. So, yeah, no, that was definitely a surprise.

Duncan Hwang (32m 31s): It's interesting to think about, people were like, Well, there's the abandoned eyesore furniture store here now, but this brand new building will lower my property value somehow.

Jeff Wood (32m 40s):. It's been kind of a tough year for everyone, I think, but especially for the Asian community specifically, because of the rise of some of the hate crimes, how did the connection's built through APANO and your networks, how have they helped people get through the tough time this last year and a half of the pandemic?

Duncan Hwang (33m 2s): I talked a little bit about the expansion of our mission from the traditional kind of organizing and advocacy to community development and building things.

This past year was another big shift to mutual aid and meeting immediate needs. So we have now like rental assistance programs and we collected resources for unemployed workers at our local shops and restaurants. The community space at the Orchards was originally intended for community celebrations or planning events or whatnot.

But we had to shut down and it became basically a warehouse for diapers and PPE distribution and cleaning supplies and stuff like that. And we're also doing a lot of small business technical assistance and support. So helping our local business community apply for PPP loans. I think we've actually done re-grants almost \$2 million now to our local business community to help try to support them in survival, basically, from the pandemic.

So yeah, I think there this year has just been an incredibly difficult year with the pandemic and then with the economic fallouts and then the rise of like hidden bias incidents that have targeted our community. So I think that kind of organizing and community building and relationship building kind of became more activated in terms of mutual support and, you know, getting through these difficult times,

Jeff Wood (34m 43s): Has the space opened up a little bit more, since the more people who've been getting vaccines? And there has been, I know that you all start a new mask mandate recently just because of the Delta, but has it been opening up a little bit more for you all?

Duncan Hwang (34m 54s): I think it's been opening up somewhat over the summer for most of the state, but we never fully reopened. We were scheduled to fully reopen this fall, much like many businesses. But then with Delta variant and the new mask orders and everything from the state, we've also had to delay that. So, you know, it's kind of unfortunate. We opened in August of 2019. So we had about four or five months of actual operation before the governor's shut-down orders.

So we were still in the midst of like, how do we use the space, you know, for the community-serving uses that we had designed it for? And then the shutdown happened. So, it's still there and we'll figure that out when we can safely reopen. And I think there's some of our staff are using it, on an optional basis. But it hasn't really been available for public use.

Jeff Wood Have the night market's been open as well.

Duncan Hwang No, I mean the, I mean the night market brings, I think on average about 10,000 people a night. We're just not permitted to have such large scale of people. This year, we maybe could've done it, but it was just so dicey in the spring, when we would be doing all of the preparations and sponsorships that we were not sure we could it in August.

Gauri Rajbaidya (36m 24s): It's a very vibrant event, incredibly vibrant event. I mean, when we first did it at the food bank parking lot, how packed and got right, like, I mean, 5,000 people a night. To manage that kind of vibrancy under mandates and such, it's just a little tricky.

Jeff Wood (36m 43s): Is there a question that you don't get asked that you wish you would, or is there something that you wish you would get to talk about more?

Gauri Rajbaidya (36m 51s): I would say: How come this similar kind of intense community listening process doesn't happen in all projects? We were incredibly lucky. I mean, like, Duncan said, we did the Jade visioning and that happened before the affordable housing was identified as a site. Right. And just the way it happened in terms of like tandem and the sequencing was incredibly rich. I would hope that, you know, this gets asked more and that it's asked of the developer and the community more, to do it like so.

Duncan Hwang (37m 29s): One of the missing stories here is just a fundamental difference in how we think about building community capacity and how to do this kind of longer term planning and visioning. The Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative, which is like the NPNs, which Jade District was in, came with a ten-year commitment from the city. And it came with the TIF dollars that we were basically open for the community investment. And also unrestricted funding from the city to do the organizing and visioning type of work.

Like I said earlier, we talked about transportation safety for seven years, and right now we just got this big chunk of money, but it's going to take another three or four years before that money is done.

So I think we just need to recognize that community development is a long term process and you've got to be in it for the long haul. I spent five years of my life working on in the Orchards of 82nd. That's from like the vision, to the fundraising campaign, to the grand opening.

And these projects just take forever. And I think it's important for to the community to know that. And for stakeholders, like funders and the government, to be aware of that. And also, just trust in community. The community knows what they want. This is the theme of this entire podcast - we know what we need. We need affordable housing. We need safer streets. And if you give that community more unrestricted funding and the level of trust, they will produce. But if you make every investment a six month thing and you've got to write a report and then you've got to prove your deliverables, that's what slows down and burns out community organizations and community leaders is that level of scrutiny. Whereas if you were just trust in folks, give them the resources and they'll be successful. And I think that's what the story shows.

Jeff Wood (39m 31s): Well, Duncan and Gauri, I want to thank you all for joining us. How can we look up information about what you all are up to?

Duncan Hwang (39m 44s): Everything we do with APANO.org. We're on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram @APANOnews. But not Tik tok. It's too much work.

Gauri Rajbaidya (40m 9s): A lot of the stuff I do is listed at seradesign.com. We're deeply interested in the community, resiliency, affordability, placemaking. Another big piece I work on is seismic retrofitting. I come from Nepal, where the seismic issues are big. All along this west

coast, that's going to be a big issue. And we all know, with the experience with the pandemic, communities of color or underrepresented communities, BIPOC, or poor communities are going to be the ones impacted the most. I know a lot of the affordable housing is the oldest stock. Talking about climate change, rather than building the new stock, we have to preserve the old stock, which really means retrofits and appropriate weatherization and things like that.

Speaker 0 (41m 8s): Awesome. Well, thank you all so much for joining us.

###