

University of California, San Francisco
Department of Family and Community Medicine

Bayview Hunters Point Health and Environmental Assessment Project

Docket 97-113

Final Report to the
California Endowment

December 8, 1999

1. Objectives:

- To perform a household survey of 300 residents of the Bayview Community to assess residents' health status, risk, needs, environmental conditions, and potentially develop interventions to improve health and environmental conditions;
- To convene three to four town hall meetings as a process toward community consent and engagement to discuss results of the survey, provide information about health and environmental conditions, and potentially develop interventions to improve health and environmental conditions;
- To actively engage and train Bayview youth and local residents in research activities and implementation.

2. Current status and evaluation of program

i. The household survey project has proved to be an ambitious, arduous, but ultimately extremely successful project. The Task Force has maintained its commitment to making the survey as much of a “community-owned” project as possible, maximizing involvement of residents in all aspects of the project. To this end, the Task Force revised its initial plan of contracting with an outside survey research firm to conduct the survey, and instead decided to directly perform the survey using personnel from the Task Force Research Committee and new personnel to be hired, to the extent possible, from the Bayview Hunters Point community.

Managerial oversight for survey administration was performed by a leadership group representing community residents (Karen Pierce, the Task Force Coordinator and neighborhood resident), the SF Department of Public Health (Jennifer Mann, MPH), and UCSF (Kevin Grumbach, MD). In the summer of 1998, the leadership group interviewed several candidates for the position of survey coordinator. The group recommended (and the Task Force Executive Committee approved) the hiring of a community resident, Patricia Hall, for this position. Ms. Hall assumed day-to-day responsibility for supervising the survey program. Office space was rented in the Bayview Plaza, and recruitment of interviewers for the survey commenced. Emphasis was placed on hiring Bayview Hunters Point residents as survey interviewers, using recruitment methods such as advertising in the Bayview newspaper and distributing flyers to community agencies.

An initial group of 12 interviewers were hired (almost all of whom were Bayview Hunters Point residents) and underwent a training program. Household interviews began in the fall of 1998. Although residents were generally quite responsive to invitations to participate in household interviews, progress on the survey proceeded slowly during the initial months. The major obstacle was a high turnover rate among survey workers. There were multiple reasons for the high turnover rate: a lack of preparedness among workers for the level of commitment required in terms of hours (minimum of 20 hours per week) and adherence to scientifically rigorous interviewing techniques; underlying social instability affecting personnel hired (e.g., insecure childcare arrangements, paid work

threatening eligibility for SSI or other income support programs, spouses experiencing job relocation out of the area). In addition, Ms. Hall experienced a major illness during the winter of 1998/1999, ultimately resulting in her having to resign from her position for health reasons.

Despite these many challenges, work on the survey continued. Ms. Pierce assumed greater responsibility for day-to-day management of the project, and an experienced member of the interviewer team was promoted to a more supervisory position to manage personnel. By the Spring of 1999, the project had developed a reliable core team of interviewers, the team's growing experience with survey procedures was producing a smoothly operating project, and surveys were being completed at the anticipated rate. Most of the interview team continued to be residents (or former residents) of Bayview Hunters Point. The team included an Asian American interviewer fluent in Cantonese and Mandarin, and a Latino-African American interviewer fluent in Spanish.

Survey administration was completed in April of 1999. Two hundred fifty households (71% of eligible contacted households) participated in household interviews. Among these 250 participating households, 171 adults (68%) also completed a supplemental written questionnaire. The response rate among contacted households was high, reflecting the emphasis placed on preparatory community outreach, the hiring of local residents as interviewers, and the community's confidence in the Task Force.

The Task Force Research Committee analyzed survey data and prepared a report for the Task Force and BVHP community. (See attachment A). The report was presented at a Town Hall meeting in October 1999 in BVHP, using overhead projection to display the key graphics summarizing survey results.

ii. The Task Force convened two major Town Hall meetings related to the survey project. The Task Force collaborated in developing and conducting many additional Town Hall meetings on health and environmental issues not specifically related to the survey project.

The first Town Hall meeting, held in May 1998, celebrated winners (and all participants) in the Task Force's "Art Contest." As described in our previous progress report, the Task Force worked with neighborhood schools to sponsor an art contest. Younger children were invited to submit an illustration, and older youths to submit a logo and slogan for the Task Force. Winning submissions were to be used on Task Force documents, such as the cover of the survey questionnaire. Over 100 children and youths responded to the contest. Cash awards (paid from *Endowment* grant funds) were given to the top three entries. The May 1998 Town Hall meeting attracted over 75 attendees. In addition to presentation of awards to contest winners, all contest participants were acknowledged with certificates commemorating their effort. The Town Hall featured youth poetry and dance performances, in addition to informational presentations by Task Force members about health and environmental issues and plans for conducting the household survey.

The second Town Hall meeting, entitled “Landscape of Our Dreams,” was conducted on October 9, 1999. This meeting was developed and conducted in collaboration with Southeast Alliance for Environmental Justice and Urban Habitat, consistent with the Endowment’s grant condition. 124 people attended this event at the Gloria R. Davis Middle School in BVHP. The morning session was devoted to presentation of the results of both the Task Force survey and the focus group interviews for the SAEJ/Urban Habitat project. The afternoon program consisted of small group workshops. One workshop focused on a discussion of the survey results and implications for program development in BVHP. (See Attachment B). This workshop received extremely favorable ratings on the evaluation forms completed by participants (see Attachment C). 19 people participated in the workshop. Of those, 10 completed the evaluation sheet: 7 female, 1 male and 2 who chose not to respond to the demographic information. 4 were African American, 1 Latina, 3 Bi-racial. 9 rated the workshop very useful (5) and 1 rated it somewhat useful (3). Written comments indicated that many learned new information and want to get involved in community projects.

Participants in this workshop echoed one of the principal findings of the household survey: that the top two concerns of residents were 1) drug and alcohol use, and 2) violence or crime. Residents at the workshop reinforced the belief that health concerns were often overshadowed by some of these more pressing neighborhood concerns. Participants emphasized the need for improving substance abuse treatment services for residents and linking these services to a continuum of interventions that addressed rehabilitation, job training, and job placement. Our survey findings also corroborated the impression of discussants at the workshop; drug and alcohol treatment was rated the poorest among the 15 city services queried about in the survey.

The October Town Hall has led to redirection of the Task Force’s activities. Monthly meetings of the Task Force subsequent to the October 8 Town Hall meeting have concentrated on developing and implementing an action plan around substance use and neighborhood crime/violence. The initial project under development is focusing on the high prevalence of liquor stores in the Third Street corridor and the social unrest that occurs proximate to these stores. The Task Force is inviting representatives from city agencies to attend the December Task Force meeting to discuss methods for regulating liquor sales and activities such as littering, defacement, and crime that occur in the vicinity of these liquor stores. These activities remain consistent with the Task Force mission of addressing the quality of the environment in the neighborhood, although the emphasis has shifted from more traditional issues of toxins to a broader concept of environmental issues and concerns—motivated largely by the findings of the survey and workshop that reflect the concerns of a representative sample of BVHP residents. This diversification of environmental activities should be to the neighborhood’s advantage. Organizations such as SAEJ and Urban Habitat and the task force itself will continue to play a strong role in advocacy and education around environmental toxins and pollution.

In addition to these Town Hall events specifically related to the survey project, the Task Force has been an integral part of two Breast Cancer Town Hall meetings, planned and

presented through a collaborative effort of residents, community based agencies and numerous health agencies, including the American Cancer Society, Bayview Hunters Point Network for Elders, Bayview Hunters Point Health and Environmental Resource Center, Booker T. Washington Community Center, Breast Cancer Action, Breast Cancer Early Detection Project/West Bay Partnership, El Bethel AME, Kimochi, Inc., Maxine Hall Health Center, San Francisco Department of Public Health, San Francisco Health Plan, UCSF Carol Franc Buck Breast Care Center, UCSF/Mt. Zion Art for Recovery, UCSF/Mt. Zion Cancer Center, Women's Cancer Network, Women's Health Education Network. The Spring, 1999 Town Hall was presented in the Western Addition neighborhood and the Fall 1999, in Bayview Hunters Point. Both included panels of breast cancer survivors and information about breast cancer aimed at aiding participants in taking control of their own health. They also included showings of Breast Cancer quilts, made by residents of the various neighborhoods in memory or tribute to women with breast cancer. The Bayview Town Hall added a new dimension with the participation of a panelist who is the spouse of a breast cancer survivor and a conscious effort to bring the whole family into the process. The Task Force is now involved in exploring funding to ensure annual Town Hall meetings on breast cancer and to expand to other San Francisco neighborhoods.

iii. Community residents have participated in all phases of the survey project. Over 20 individuals were trained and worked as survey interviewers. The majority of these individuals were BVHP residents. Although interviewers have now completed their employment for the Task Force survey, efforts have been made to refer these individuals to job opportunities at UCSF and the SFDPH, such as working as interviewers on related types of survey projects. For many interviewers, the experience on the Task Force project has offered a critical work experience and references. One former interviewer, Byron Beasley, has recently been hired as the new administrative assistant for the Task Force; this job is a full-time position with full benefits through the City and County of SF. Another former interviewer, Mario Benton, has been hired by the Bayview Hunters Point Foundation to conduct outreach for an HIV project. Both individuals had no prior experience in research or public health and have moved into full-time employment in public health careers.

3. Could the project have met stated objectives more effectively?

Conducting a community survey that maximizes the community as a resource for research has been a learning process for everyone involved, from interviewers with no prior research experience to UCSF faculty and SFDPH staff with extensive experience in less engaged forms of research. The process of community engagement resulted in slower progress than might have occurred with a survey performed by an "expert" survey outfit, and required particular effort to maintain scientific rigor. However, the process contributed to greater responsiveness and participation among residents selected for interviews, infused an "authenticity" to the development and administration of the survey, and empowered members of the community through both intellectual involvement and employment. We believe the product of this effort has been a project that has achieved

both its scientific aim of obtaining valid and accurate information about health and related issues in Bayview Hunters Point, and its aim of using the process of conducting research itself as a tool for community empowerment. Alternative approaches to the project may have produced a more expeditious survey study, but would have lacked the level of community participation that was an essential aspect of the program objectives.

4. Grant conditions

The grant condition to work with other Endowment grantees in BVHP helped motivate organizations to collaborate on projects with overlapping themes. The most successful product of this collaboration was the October 8 Town Hall event that was planned and administered by staff of the Task Force, SAEJ, Urban Habitat and other organizations. The event showcased the complementary projects and activities of these organizations and allowed outreach to a broader constituency.

The Task Force also collaborated with SAEJ and Urban Habitat on a tour of Brownfields sites in BVHP. The Tour was the first segment of the “Landscape of our Dreams” project. The Tour targeted agencies and organizations that have the potential for funding or determining projects that will be approved for reuse of land that has been abandoned or unused as the result of past/current toxic contamination. Approximately 40 participants visited more than 8 sites and heard descriptions of their history, current use, proposed reuse and community opportunities.

5. Unanticipated problems or successes?

Unanticipated problems, such as the illness of the Survey Coordinator Pat Hall, have been described above. Many problems related to delays in the survey process were probably not truly unanticipated but reflect the challenges inherent in community based research.

Most of the project’s successes were ones stated as explicit project goals. The process of community engagement and consent has appeared to have created receptiveness to the project findings among community residents and other interested parties. Potentially controversial findings have not been dismissed out of hand as invalid or the result of poor research methods, but have been carefully considered and discussed at the Town Hall workshop and other meetings. Most encouraging has been the value of the survey findings in shaping plans for concrete steps for future program development for the Task Force.

6. Impact and outcomes

The project’s main impacts have been described above in section 2. The project succeeded both in performing a scientifically valid research study and in empowering the community through knowledge and employment and educational opportunities. Employment of two interviewers as permanent public health staff is an example of the types of tangible impact on the community.

Knowledge gleaned from the survey has also had an influence on community planning. The survey confirmed that the prevalence of many chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes is high in BVHP, although rates appear to be comparable to those of African American communities throughout the US. One message of the survey thus is that while health status in BVHP is bad, it is not necessarily “uniquely” worse than that in many African American communities. In addition, although access to health care appeared to be slightly worse in BVHP than for Californians overall, access problems were not glaringly bad. 90% of respondents had a regular source of care, for example. Nor did respondents report that they commonly experienced racial discrimination in health care settings.

The loudest message from both the survey respondents and residents participating in the Town Hall workshop was that fundamental social issues such as substance use, crime and violence tend to overshadow other concerns such as health care needs. Efforts to build a healthier BVHP will need to respond to residents’ concerns about these pressing social issues. The Task Force is attempting to respond to this message in building its programs for the coming 1-2 years.

7. Sustainability

The Task Force has emerged from the survey project revitalized with infusion of some new residents participating in the monthly meetings. The Task Force continues to receive some core salary support from the SF Department of Public Health and in-kind SFDPH and UCSF contributions of personnel. As noted in earlier reports, the Task Force also received a small grant from the San Francisco Foundation to assist with the survey project. It is likely that the Task Force will need to continue to look to foundations to provide grant support for specific projects, supplementing the core SF DPH and in-kind resources of the Task Force. The Task Force is also investigating federal funding sources, such as the EPA and National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS).

8. Additional comments

None

Financial report

The UCSF Accounting Office will forward a final accounting statement under separate cover. The grant account is in the process of being closed and reconciled by the Accounting Office.