

Urban Agriculture Strengths, Challenges, and Opportunities in the Bayview Hunter's Point Community

Prepared for the Bayview HEAL Zone & the Southeast Food Access (SEFA) Working Group

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Executive Summary

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to **synthesize data** gathered from key informant interviews, focus groups, and best practices to **make recommendations** to strengthen urban agriculture (UA) in the Bayview Hunters Point Neighborhood (BVHP).

Led by the Bayview HEAL Zone and Southeast Food Access (SEFA), Bayview based consultants worked with staff and volunteers to learn about UA needs, challenges, and opportunities in the Bayview. Founded in 2007, SEFA is a collaborative of residents, community based organizations, city agencies and others working on food access and food systems in Bayview Hunters Point. Building on the work of SEFA, The Bayview HEAL Zone is a network of community partners working together to make healthy choices the easy choice for Bayview Hunters Point residents thus addressing health outcomes associated with chronic diseases.

With this work, the Bayview HEAL Zone and SEFA hope to achieve the following:

- Determine community needs for urban agriculture in BVHP.
- Identify ways to increase food access and workforce development in BVHP through urban agriculture projects.
- Build capacity among BVHP gardeners, starting with education programming and training.
- Develop a replicable model of urban agriculture projects in BVHP.

Approach

During the latter part of 2013 and early part of 2014, Bayview-based consultants worked with HEAL Zone and SEFA leadership to:

- develop interview guides and procedures;
- contact urban agriculture leaders in the Bayview;
- conduct email, telephone, and in-person interviews;
- hold two focus groups; and
- convene 1 community meeting to solicit input on proposed recommendations.

The consultants also conducted a literature review, identified best practices in UA, and compiled case studies of the most promising efforts. (See appendix C for case studies).

Leaders of the following 23 organizations generously offered time to provide their valuable experience, expertise, and guidance for this effort:

- San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR)
- City Slicker Farms
- San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
- Oakland Food Policy Council
- Family and Child Empowerment Services (FACES SF)
- Quesada Gardens Initiative
- SEFA Food Guardians
- Northridge Cooperative Homes CommUNITY Garden
- Education Outside SFUSD
- BuildOn youth service program
- Mandela Plaza Garden
- GIRLS 2000
- Palou Garden
- Bayview Underground Food Scene
- Abundance Homestead
- Willie Mays Boys and Girls Club
- San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market
- Alice Griffith Community Garden
- Hunters Point Family
- BCA Rafiki Wellness
- City of Dreams
- San Francisco Dept. of Public Works
- SF Links
- Numerous backyard gardeners

In addition, in November of 2013, 2 focus groups were convened which included 17 urban agriculture leaders from BVHP. Lastly, a community meeting was held in January 2014 to review proposed recommendations derived from the interviews and add any additional recommendations.

Results from these efforts are synthesized into key findings and recommendations below.

Key Findings

Strengths

- **Youth**—large population of youth, many in need of workforce development opportunities
- **Water**—free access on public land
- **Weather**—abundant sunshine, great growing conditions, amenable to bees
- **Community Cohesion**—BVHP gardens bring neighbors together in a positive and safe environment

Opportunities

- **Food Guardians/Community Health Experts/Advocates**—trained and dedicated community advocates and educators with a track record and built trust.
- **Economic Development**—numerous existing programs could help to develop economic opportunities for those involved in UA.
- **Workforce Development**—participation in urban agriculture, particularly for youth, builds job skills and current programs could expand or change to include UA.
- **Trained and Activated Youth**—there have been several UA projects in BVHP that involved youth which have now been discontinued. New UA efforts could harness the energy and expertise of youth involved previously.
- **Support from SF Rec and Parks** – urban ag coordinator, resource centers
- **Policies that support UA**—recent state and city policies are providing new opportunities and support.

- **Public Utilities Commission**—resources from PUC and new projects could contribute to the development of UA initiatives.
- **CBOs and Existing Leadership**—BVHP has a long and rich history of CBOs and community activism which could be coordinated and harnessed to develop UA initiatives.
- **Restaurants/Corner Stores/Pop-up Markets**—restaurants focused on workforce development, corner stores converting to offer healthier options, and pop-up markets are all examples of private enterprise opportunities.
- **Abundant Land**—open plots of land and new development could be assets for UA projects.

Challenges

- **Lack of resources/competition for funding**
- **History/gentrification/neighborhood demographic changes (multilingual/multicultural)**
- **Lack of volunteers (including parents at school gardens)**
- **Lack of youth involvement (without stipends)**
- **Need for infrastructure**
- **Labor for maintenance and upkeep of existing gardens**
- **Access to water/affordable water/drought**
- **Environmental concerns/soil contamination**

Recommendations

1. *Expand economic and workforce development opportunities through urban agriculture projects.*
 - Foster economic development projects to build capacity of community based organizations to generate income for individuals and worker owned enterprises.
 - Build on workforce development efforts in BVHP to address high unemployment rates and the large number of youth in the community.
2. *Increase community capacity and cohesion with urban agriculture initiatives.*
 - Establish a BVHP Urban Agriculture Community Network.
 - Increase resident and volunteer engagement in urban agriculture projects that reflects diversity of neighborhood.
 - Work with and support existing garden programs and promote leadership from people of color.
 - Develop free or low cost educational programs and training opportunities to meet community needs.
3. *Improve resiliency and sustainability of existing and future urban agriculture projects.*
 - Through BVHP Urban Ag Community Network, identify and coordinate available resources.
 - Seek sustainable funding from city and private funders for existing and proposed urban agriculture projects.
 - Work with SFPUC resources to support existing urban agriculture programs.

For a more detailed list of recommendations, see Appendix A.

Urban Agriculture Strengths, Challenges, & Opportunities in the Bayview Hunter's Point Community

Introduction

The Bayview HEAL Zone and Southeast Food Access (SEFA) worked together to learn about the urban agriculture needs of the Bayview Hunters Point community. SEFA is a collaborative of residents, community-based organizations, city agencies and others working on food access and food systems in Bayview Hunters Point (BVHP). SEFA was founded in 2007 and built on three pillars (awareness/education, food access, and urban agriculture). The Bayview HEAL Zone built its work on that of SEFA and is a collaborative funded by Kaiser Permanente to increase opportunities for healthy eating and active living. This report marks the HEAL Zone and SEFA's first significant foray into the urban agriculture landscape.

With this work, both groups hope to achieve the following:

- Determine community needs for urban agriculture in BVHP.
- Identify ways to increase food access and workforce development in BVHP through urban agriculture projects.
- Build capacity among BVHP gardeners, starting with education programming and training.
- Develop a replicable model of urban agriculture projects in BVHP.

Urban Agriculture History and Community Description

The Bayview Hunters Point (BVHP) boasts a rich agriculture history as a result of fertile land, proximity to the bay and substantial land assets. In the 1950s and 1960s, urban agriculture projects flourished in BVHP.ⁱ Organizations later formed to ensure that residents maintained a healthy connection to food. In the 1990s, the San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners (SLUG) demonstrated success in communities of color with education, training, and jobs. Interview respondents indicated that SLUG succeeded due to its inclusion of the African American community, prioritization of youth and young adult workforce development, jobs, adequate public funding, and abundant partnerships with local city/county agencies, colleges and universities, as well as other urban agriculture programs. Unfortunately, SLUG ultimately lost funding and the programs they sponsored were eliminated. Over the decades, many factors conspired to change that wealth of healthy food into a neighborhood characterized as a food desert. Interest in changing course and returning to that rich food history is evident in the burgeoning urban agriculture movement.

BVHP is one of the most racial and ethnically diverse communities in San Francisco, has the second highest population in the city, and has the highest number of children of any district in SF.ⁱⁱ BVHP is “the most densely populated African American neighborhood of San Francisco” with more than 33% of residents representing this demographic.ⁱⁱⁱ Nearly

another third are Asian (30.7%), a quarter are Hispanic or Latino (24.9%) and 12% are white.^{iv}

Today, one out of three people in BVHP experience hunger on a daily basis, with almost 40% of those people being children.^v “Food insecure,” “food swamp,” and “food desert” are phrases often used to describe this community’s food landscape, where most markets are liquor or corner stores.^{vi} Fast food establishments also serve as social hubs for teenagers.^{vii}

With limited food shopping options, many residents with access to a car or transportation often travel out of BVHP to buy groceries. This has led to an estimated \$38 million annual drain from the community.^{viii} Nearly 60% of residents frequently buy groceries outside of the neighborhood.^{ix} For those who do not shop outside the community for healthier options, they rely on cheap, unhealthy food that tends to be the habitual choice or the only option.

A lack of access to nutritious food is linked to health-related disparities. Health problems are prevalent in BVHP and include Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease and obesity.^x Nearly 14% of BVHP residents have Type 2 diabetes, which is twice as high as the city’s total average.^{xi} Obesity levels are also high in BVHP, with a 2010 rate reported at 28% compared to the city average of 12%.^{xii} Overall, residents of BVHP “can expect to live, on average, 14 years less than their counterparts on Russian Hill.”^{xiii} This shorter life expectancy is linked to numerous issues including limited access to healthy foods.

District 10 (which includes BVHP) has the lowest median income per capita of just over \$21,000,^{xiv} and 30% of BVHP families earn less than \$10,000 a year.^{xv} Furthermore, BVHP has the highest unemployment rates (19%), where more than half of young adults aged 18 to 24 are unemployed (60%).^{xvi} District 10 hosts the largest number of CalFresh recipients in the city.^{xvii} With more children in this district than all other San Francisco districts (18,005), half of those receiving CalFresh are children under 18-years-old (5,313).^{xviii} District 10 also ranks first for the most free/reduced lunches in schools (4,433).^{xix}

Despite challenges facing BVHP, this neighborhood is known for its culturally rich and diverse constituency. The presence of families, church-goers, and community-based organizations create a strong and resilient community. Residents come together to solve larger issues when limited available resources are out of reach. Furthermore, home ownership remains highest compared to any other neighborhood in San Francisco, thus ensuring invested and loyal voices in the community.

Together, these conditions led SEFA to address the food access disparities and build a coalition that focused on the food system as a whole. In response to calls from community-based organizations, SEFA's work began with a focus on improving retail food access in 2007. With that work underway and with BVHP's agriculture history, both Bayview HEAL Zone and SEFA recognize that urban agriculture can be a potent force in bringing local, fresh, healthy food to BVHP residents.^{xx}

(For more on the benefits and challenges offered by urban agriculture, see appendix B).

Methods

Key findings and recommendations included in this report are based on extensive key informant interviews with urban agriculture experts and leaders in BVHP, 2 focus groups consisting of 17 people, a review of the literature and best practices, as well as one community meeting to review preliminary recommendations. Interviews and focus groups took place from September 2013 through February of 2014. Participating organizations included the following:

- San Francisco Planning and Urban Research Association (SPUR)
- City Slicker Farms
- San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
- Oakland Food Policy Council
- Family and Child Empowerment Services (FACES SF)
- Quesada Gardens Initiative
- SEFA Food Guardians
- Northridge Cooperative Homes CommUNITY Garden
- Education Outside SFUSD
- BuildOn youth service program
- Mandela Plaza Garden
- GIRLS 2000
- Palou Garden
- Bayview Underground Food Scene
- Abundance Homestead
- Willie Mays Boys and Girls Club
- San Francisco Wholesale Produce Market
- Alice Griffith Community Garden
- Hunters Point Family
- BCA Rafiki Wellness
- City of Dreams
- San Francisco Dept. of Public Works
- Numerous family gardeners
- SF Links

Key Findings

Current BVHP Urban Agriculture Assets and Initiatives

Urban agriculture projects in Bayview Hunters Point produce about 10,000 pounds of food each year.^{xxi} However, many of those interviewed believe that with the right coordination, funding, and support, urban agriculture in BVHP could be expanded considerably. Gardens in BVHP serve a variety of purposes. According to Quesada Gardens Initiative, “some community gardens have been created specifically to operate as informal public forums, with food production as a secondary objective.”

Benefits of BVHP gardens cited by interview and focus group participants include:

- Youth development—leadership, skills, job training
- Workforce development opportunities
- Improving health with nutritious food
- Connecting youth to nature
- Providing food security
- Beautifying the neighborhood
- Bridging different neighborhoods and groups
- Providing alternative engagement options for youth
- Allowing girls the chance for self-discovery and healing from trauma
- Providing safe places for neighbors to build community
- Creation of art, recreation, and/or neighborhood meeting places

Most BVHP **community gardens** are free and open to the public, often with a shared goal of serving local community and youth. Some are maintained by paid adults who work with CBO's and city agencies or by nearby part-time volunteer residents who may not have individual garden plots. Volunteers consist of families, youth, senior citizens, and/or adults seeking job-training skills. Harvested food generally consists of vegetables and fruit that are grown using different methods like planter boxes, raised beds and terraced gardens. Also, some gardens provide honey and raised chickens.

While there are dedicated, knowledgeable, and passionate leaders working in urban agriculture in BVHP, there is potential for more BVHP adults and youth to participate. The key informant interviews and focus groups suggest that a lack of awareness about urban agriculture's importance and/or how to get involved are reasons for the lack of participation. Also, incentives such as stipends are important to youth from low-income families. Youth who are involved tend to be housing complex residents (e.g. Northridge Cooperative Homes, Alice Griffith Housing Community, Kiska Rd Housing Community) and/or are engaged through youth development programming (e.g. GIRLS 2000). Quesada Gardens Initiative, Bridgeview Community Garden, Abundance Homestead, Northridge Cooperative Homes' CommUNITY Garden, City of Dreams, Willie Mays Boys & Girls Club, and Hunters Point Family Alice Griffith Community Garden and GIRLS 2000 are some of the more than 35 urban farms or gardens in BVHP.^{xxii} Each of these urban agriculture projects serves different goals.

In addition, there are also many **backyard gardens** in BVHP due to the relative abundance of yard space. These gardens can play an important role in feeding BVHP families as well.

School gardens are another common garden type in BVHP, where there is usually support and involvement from students, teachers, principals, and other school staff. Science curriculum is designed to incorporate experiential learning for students in outdoor classrooms. San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) has partnered with Education Outside to provide staff and resources for school gardens. After school programs may also use these spaces for recreation and learning, and the hope of increased parental involvement. Existing schools or after school programs with gardens in BVHP include Malcolm X Academy, Willie Brown Jr. Academy, Bret Harte Elementary School, Charles Drew Elementary School, George Washington Carver, Thurgood Marshall High School and Willie Mays Boys and Girls Club.

BVHP Urban Agriculture Strengths, Opportunities, and Challenges

The key informant interviews and focus groups inquired about major assets for urban agriculture projects in BVHP. Strengths and opportunities included:

- Youth
- Water and other resources
- Weather
- Community cohesion
- Food Guardians and other community health experts/advocates
- Economic development
- Workforce development
- Centralized resources
- Policies to support urban agriculture
- San Francisco Public Utilities Commission
- SF Wholesale Produce Market
- Restaurants
- CBOs
- Existing networks

Strengths

Youth

Urban agriculture offer opportunities for health, education, and youth development, by offering a safe place for children who are excited to learn outside. Within the protected boundaries of a garden, youth are safe to enjoy free play and develop problem-solving skills while feeling a sense of ownership. Furthermore, gardens can be a calming space for all who participate. Benefits may be greatest for youth in school gardens, where there is support from the school district as well as involvement from key staff members.

Given the large population of youth in BVHP (1 in 3), there is a lot of potential for BVHP youth to engage with urban agriculture through school gardens or paid internships. Most gardens owe longer-term success to consistently maintaining a core group of three to five key interns or volunteers. For example, one successful workforce development model consists of garden leaders training paid interns, and the interns are responsible for mentoring high school youth who collectively manage the garden.

Water and Other Resources

Access to free water on public property is a large financial asset to urban gardening in BVHP. Water usage has also been discounted for some private urban agriculture projects. Other operations have received small grants and donations in order to stay afloat. Some projects offer plots for a minimal, affordable annual membership fee (e.g. \$10.00). There are also businesses in the area that donate resources (e.g. Recology delivers free compost). Municipal agencies can provide important infrastructure help (e.g. water and irrigation supplies, mulch, grading, equipment) for projects operating on public land. These resources can ease financial strains of urban gardening and help to increase production volume resulting in some gardens able to harvest weekly or even daily and offer supplemental food to residents.

Favorable Weather

Location is also important for successful urban agriculture initiatives. This may be the most substantial asset for BVHP, considering it offers some of the sunniest weather in the city. The ample sunshine creates an ideal environment to grow food. Beekeepers also state that they are successful in producing honey in this part of the city.

Community Cohesion

Since the presence of gardens has helped reduce blight (e.g. trash) and beautify neighborhoods, they tend to be highly visible and gain attention from nearby residents. The result is increased conversations among neighbors. Social connections in gardens is both a strength and an opportunity, as community urban agriculture plants the seeds of a sharing economy and stronger community cohesion. For instance, seeds, seedling starts, produce, soil, watering responsibilities, and other resources are commonly shared among neighbors. Some community partnerships have been established due to different groups working together in the gardens.

A few gardens have a solid infrastructure that is “built to last.” Some even have restrooms, an on-site kitchen, and places to sit. Most people feel that the lack of gates is a strength for gardens as well, since it creates an inclusive space where everyone is granted access. Many gardens have raised beds to improve accessibility for elder or disabled residents as well as to minimize potential harmful effects from contaminated soil¹. Some gardens in BVHP, such as Abundance Homestead, pay particular attention to children, families, and/or elders by giving away produce packages with healthy recipes.

Opportunities

Food Guardians and other Community Health Experts/Advocates

Food Guardians are central to increasing awareness of urban agriculture in BVHP. They have already exhibited great success in working with the community to transform three corner stores into markets carrying fresh produce.

Opportunities also exist within schools to engage youth in nutrition education as part of their curriculum. San Francisco’s Green Schoolyard Alliance, People Organized to Win Employment Rights (POWER), and other community groups help to maintain school gardens as outdoor classrooms, community-building spaces, and peer mentoring sites for youth-led gardening. The San Francisco Unified School District, alone, has over 80 gardens and grant money that is being used to build more gardens in partnership with AmeriCorps for staffing. This could provide more training for people from the BVHP community.

Engaged, Activated and Trained Youth

In addition to Food Guardians and educators in schools, youth can play an important role in increasing knowledge and understanding about healthy eating. For instance, San Francisco’s Youth Leadership Institute developed a food justice curriculum and worked with Bayview youth to promote healthy eating with a poster campaign throughout the neighborhood. Other community groups continue to create murals with messages of healthy food choices. When funding runs out for these initiatives, the youth often want to continue the work of using food as education. The community has also expressed interest in nutrition and cooking classes, which are great engagement tools for youth.

Economic Development

There are many opportunities to collaborate with SF City agencies, non-profits, and businesses for economic development. There are a number of SF city agencies that already provide opportunities or collaborate with local organizations for workforce development: Dept. of Public Works, SF Recreation and Parks, SF PUC and several others.

Workforce development

¹ However, according to Quesada Gardens Initiative, soil-testing shows that lead levels are low and safe in BVHP gardens.

Workforce development is one of the greatest needs in BVHP where unemployment rates are higher than other city districts. Local youth who intern for garden projects learn essential job skills for finding more long-term employment. Increased funding for workforce development will help unemployed youth and young adults build skills they need. By creating opportunities for youth to learn new skills or apply the knowledge they already possess, such as carpentry work, they feel empowered to take initiative and ensure project completion.

The Food Guardian positions may be one of the best examples of building skills and confidence in young adults. By advocating, educating, and mobilizing support of the community, Food Guardians have gained trust and respect from residents of BVHP as well as citywide partners. They could serve as a core group to increase awareness about community urban agriculture initiatives.

Cottage Industry: “Made in BVHP”

Opportunities for government support are on the rise with the introductions of the Cottage Foods Act (AB 1616) and the Urban Agriculture Incentives Zones Act (AB 551) in 2013. Assembly Bill 1616 “allows individuals to prepare and/or package certain non-potentially hazardous foods in private-home kitchens” and sell to the public after applying for a \$250 permit.^{xxiii} This could allow emerging entrepreneurs to profit from the production of value-added items, such as honey, bundled herbs, teas, and wine.

Centralize Resources for Urban Ag in SF

Recently, San Francisco’s Recreation and Parks Department (RPD) brought the city’s urban agriculture program in-house and is working on rolling out urban agriculture resource centers across the city. The first resource center recently opened at the Golden Gate Park CommUNITY Garden.^{xxiv} All of their resource centers will be accessible by the public with resources such as mulch and tools. Additionally, RPD hired a full-time coordinator in January of 2014 to oversee the development and management of several resource centers in 2014, including one site at Alemany Farm. The Recreation and Parks Department developed an urban agriculture website, which could eventually serve as a resource for communities like BVHP, especially as a clearinghouse for funding information.

Policies to increase Access to Land in SF for Urban Ag Uses

In addition to producing and selling value-added products, California gardeners and farmers will soon feel more confident in long-term land use through the implementation of AB 551. Landowners who allow their property to be used for urban agriculture for at least five years will be granted significant property tax breaks. This will be especially valuable for any commercial ventures that meet the minimum requirement of one-tenth of an acre to a maximum of three acres.

Public Utilities Commission

The PUC could serve as an additional funding stream for urban agriculture in BVHP. Given that the PUC owns San Francisco's Southeast Wastewater Treatment Plant, Southeast Community Facility and adjacent greenhouses, there is opportunity to define and design a community vision for this three-block radius of land. The PUC is investing in renovations for all three sites and could potentially include urban agriculture as well as workforce development projects.

The PUC owns three acres of hydroponic greenhouses in BVHP, which were originally intended as an environmental mitigation project in the early 1980s. Due to community frustration with expansion of the PUC treatment plant, the PUC built greenhouses to serve as an education center and to create jobs. Today, however, three wholesale horticulture companies utilize the greenhouses. As wholesale businesses, the greenhouses are only open to the public about one day a month. The PUC is responding to the unmet original intentions for the greenhouses and has recently received letters of interest to turn over the greenhouses for new projects, with urban agriculture being a highly popular interest. Major renovations will begin on the greenhouses by the summer of 2014.

The PUC also offered green space around the sewage treatment facility as well as startup funding for an urban agriculture project. However, many residents and community stakeholders expressed very little interest in the site and felt it was inappropriate due to high traffic and noxious fumes. Instead the community expressed interest in PUC job training with jobs at the culmination of the training. There is strong interest in a resource center but the location has been questioned. The goal of the PUC initiatives is to increase equity in urban agriculture and to pilot an urban agriculture demonstration model in BVHP. The PUC funding for this project is earmarked to be used by 2015.

SF Wholesale Produce Market

Based in the Bayview, the Wholesale Produce Market (WPM) serves as the only nonprofit wholesale produce market in the United States. Most of San Francisco's produce is procured from WPM, which has been involved in a leadership capacity with SEFA and the Food Guardians' corner store transformation work since its inception. WPM is willing to help further urban agriculture initiatives in BVHP. This could be a long-term and stable partnership, since WPM just began a new 60-year lease with the city in 2013. Not only could Wholesale Produce possibly sell local fruits and vegetables, but it could also function as a job-training site. The latter option would be funding-dependent as there is not currently a formal training program in place.

Restaurants, Corner Stores, and Pop-up Markets

Restaurants can also play a significant part in community development. Growing food onsite or nearby can supply consumers with the freshest ingredients. Old Skool Café, for instance, may be open to collaborating with local urban agriculture projects. As a job training site, the restaurant helps at-risk youth from the community and understands the importance of workforce development. Sales of produce to local restaurants, like Old Skool, can support workforce development and supplement farmers' incomes.

Corner stores are starting to see profits in selling produce as well. The Food Guardians have demonstrated success with corner store transformations in BVHP. The next step could be sourcing produce from neighborhood gardens/farms and serving as distribution markets.

The BVHP Pop Up Market on Third St. is open every Thursday evening to promote local entrepreneurs. This can serve as a place for urban ag programs to sell produce or other agriculture related products. The City of Dreams works with their youth to sell produce at this weekly event. Links offers information about produce used in traditional African diets and sells plates of delicious, locally prepared dishes that represent this tradition.

CBOs and Community Wisdom

Like Old Skool Café, there are a plethora of dynamic organizations focused on improving low-income communities of color. Opportunities exist to collaborate with different BVHP projects, such as the Youth in Power program of POWER. The Community Youth Center's Bayview Youth Advocates program, Literacy for Environmental Justice (LEJ) and Bayview Hunters Point Center for Arts and Technology (BAYCAT) also work with local youth, who could help with urban agriculture community outreach.

The Black Coalition on AIDS (BCA) and Rafiki Wellness have also expressed interest in developing social entrepreneurship around healthy eating.

Expertise is also present in existing organizations such as: Hunters Point Family, Literacy for Environmental Justice, Northridge Coop CommUNITY Garden and Quesada Gardens, which have demonstrated success in workforce development and community building through urban agriculture. These organizations can share knowledge and resources, in addition to businesses that also have applicable resources to offer. Bayview Greenwaste creates free mulch; Building REsources and Scroungers' Center for Reusable Art Parts (SCRAP) sell materials at discounted prices; and nearby Excelsior has a tool lending library.^{xxv}

The youth of Bayview Hunters Point should be considered a source of local knowledge, in addition to the cultural knowledge of immigrant communities. Agrarian roots are strong among immigrant families in BVHP. Each diverse group of immigrants have a unique connection with food and can help guide gardens and farms in planting more culturally-relevant crops, which will increase consumption by all families.

Existing Networks

There is immense grassroots wisdom in BVHP that can further organizing efforts around urban agriculture. Community organizing in this manner is possible with strong, local leadership that is already present. Leaders can help build community partnerships with existing farms and gardens to create a support network for urban agriculture in BVHP. Working with existing local business can provide places to sell produce or offer agriculture related products such as locally produced honey.

There are opportunities to create an urban agriculture support network by utilizing gardening projects as entry points for external organizations to share their messages. These gardens can then operate as on-the-ground community hubs for information, in addition to online resources like Bayview Footprints Local News and the SEFA website. Organizing information-sharing initiatives such as these can create strong social ties by bringing people together, building community and increasing community cohesion. Gardening, in general, presents itself as a community-building tool that increases resident engagement, trust, and neighborhood social capital. There is consensus among participants involved in the interviews and focus groups that people of BVHP are interested in urban agriculture and are “hungry” for something “different.”

Abundant Land

Large tracts of land are an asset and opportunity for BVHP. With abundant land available in BVHP, there is also an opportunity to develop a tool lending library/urban agriculture resource center specifically for this community. This could be with the help of public agencies, such as RPD, DPW or the PUC, or through AB 551 on private land. Since much of the land is void of agriculture, there are opportunities to design new projects based on neighborhood needs. Designs could include resource centers, individual gardens, beautifying spaces (e.g. railways and rail spurs), and possibly returning BVHP to the agriculture hub it once was.

BVHP Urban Agriculture Challenges

The key informant interviews and focus groups inquired about challenges facing urban agriculture projects in BVHP. Challenges discussed included:

- Lack of resources/competition for funding
- History/gentrification/neighborhood demographic changes (multilingual/multicultural)
- Lack of volunteers (including parents at school gardens)
- Lack of youth involvement (without stipends)
- Need for infrastructure
- Labor for maintenance and upkeep of existing gardens
- Access to water/affordable water/drought
- Environmental concerns/soil contamination

Lack of Resources/Competition for Funding

Securing sustainable funding is one of the biggest challenges for urban agriculture in BVHP. Lack of funding has perpetuated competition between similar projects and/or organizations for sub-grants. Rather than organize and work together to apply for grants, organizations work in isolation to gain funding for their own projects. Most of these projects need at least one dedicated, paid staff member. Coordinating efforts and developing a urban agriculture community network could help to leverage funding.

Additional funding needs include: workforce development (especially for youth), training (e.g. horticulture, administrative support, grant writing, operations management, volunteer recruitment, and outreach), and contaminated soil remediation.

History/Gentrification/Demographic Changes

As is true in many isolated and underserved communities, outside organizations and agencies enter to help meet community needs. Most people from outside BVHP say they have a difficult time establishing credibility with community members in part due to negative historical experiences.

The city of San Francisco is facing a significant housing crisis and gentrification in many neighborhoods, including BVHP. Outcomes include significant changes in community demographics, unstable housing, and displacement of longtime residents. Some of those who participated in the interviews are concerned about how gentrification will impact community cohesion and involvement in urban agriculture projects. Concerns that urban agriculture is seen as a hobby of newer residents with more resources may prevent longtime residents from participating. Some expressed concerns about investing time, money, and energy into projects that may not continue with the rise of redevelopment and new developments in the community.

Further, while BVHP has historically been an African American community, increasingly, Latino, Asians, and Pacific Islanders are being pushed out of other neighborhoods and moving into the Bayview. Challenges to the changing demographics include cultural and language barriers that must be accounted for when developing new programming and recruiting volunteers (e.g. flyers and events need to be provide translation).

Shortage of Volunteers

Gardens consistently experience a shortage of volunteers who are willing to help with essential tasks, such as weeding. Considering that work is unsteady and unemployment is high in BVHP, many residents do not have expendable incomes and may want something in return for their time. Even though many gardens give volunteers produce, it can be a challenge to grow culturally relevant foods that are more attractive to residents. Furthermore, residents may simply be unaware of nearby gardens. Community gardeners have expressed that posting flyers and making announcements has not helped to increase awareness or participation in garden projects.

Lacking volunteers of color can also be a deterrent to recruiting help for gardens. Many community members express that people in BVHP gardens do not look like most of the residents, which makes it difficult for urban agriculture projects to attract and serve a diverse group of people. Increasing the number of volunteers of color might help local youth connect with existing projects. Participants suggested that there are service organizations representative of the demographics of BVHP that can provide volunteers more representative of the community.

There is a strong desire among community gardeners, especially in school gardens, to connect with families. Yet, turnout is often low, even with targeted events. Limited parental involvement is an ongoing issue for school gardens. Some school garden coordinators have also faced difficulty in gaining support from the larger school community. If the garden coordinator is the only person maintaining a school garden,

issues arise during the summer or when the coordinator needs to go out of town. Watering is especially crucial for the health of a garden and some school gardens are not equipped with drip irrigation systems, which amounts to a significant time commitment for hand watering.

Lack of Youth Involvement

Though schools are often successful at engaging youth aged 6 to 11, participation generally drops among teenagers especially when stipends are not available. Groups are still learning how to establish a connection between teenagers and food justice in order to create longer-term interest.

Need for Infrastructure

Another barrier is the lack of retail operations where testing and marketing of value-added products can be done (e.g. La Cocina in the Mission). In addition to infrastructure needs, large equipment (including dump trucks, forklifts and cargo and passenger vans) is needed by all garden and farm projects. Having such equipment would allow easier removal of rocks and roots, as well as transporting youth for field trips.

A few BVHP urban agriculture projects have larger equipment, which they would be willing to share. Many organizations are unaware of what other groups may need or have to offer due to the current habit of working in isolation with limited time and capacity to reach out. Many organizations of BVHP have not yet found a way to work with existing organizations and infrastructure on a solutions-oriented approach to urban agriculture needs. There is currently weak collaboration and communication among most urban agriculture projects in BVHP, which can disconnect assets for urban agriculture success. Developing an urban agriculture community network could help to coordinate and share infrastructure resources.

Sustaining Garden Maintenance

It is difficult to maintain gardens long-term without paid staff, given that there are few available volunteers and high turnover rates among those volunteers. Of those who are involved, time to manage gardens on a daily basis is often limited. Time is therefore a severely limited resource, which also hinders leaders' ability to properly train new gardeners. Exhaustion and burnout are inevitable when faced with inadequate time and help.

Most urban agriculture sites in BVHP have trouble with trash and vandalism in the beginning of new projects. Poorly maintained sites, however, threatens the growth of new projects. People may be afraid to spend time in a garden if it appears to be neglected.

Access to water

While many garden sites on public land have access to free water, this is generally not the case for projects on private land including backyard gardens. The current severe drought may limit the growth of backyard gardens particularly if limitations are placed on water use at residences.

Environmental Concerns

Environmental concerns around soil contaminations also exist. Not all garden sites have been tested and for those that have, most tests only show lead levels. For a community that already faces disproportionate environmental toxics in air, soil and water, fear of toxic soil may decrease the amount of people who want to grow their own food.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

Despite facing considerable challenges, urban agriculture has the tremendous opportunity to contribute to economic and workforce development, building community cohesion and capacity, and contributing to solving significant barriers to access to healthy food in the Bayview Hunter's Point community. Representatives from 23 organizations as well as several backyard gardeners generously offered their time and expertise to help identify strengths, opportunities, and challenges to urban agriculture in the community. Key informant interviews, focus groups, and an open community meeting provided a robust forum to identify the history, current successes, and opportunities to guide future urban agriculture efforts.

The data presented here in this report represent the first significant effort by the Bayview HEAL Zone and SEFA to identify community needs and opportunities for urban agriculture. It is our hope that this report, and the dialogue we continue to have with our partners and those committed to urban agriculture, will help shape the future where urban agriculture contributes to a healthy and vibrant Bayview Hunter's Point Community.

Recommendations

Recommendations included below reflect extensive discussions with experienced and passionate urban agriculture advocates in BVHP as well as a review of best practices in the field.

1. Expand economic and workforce development opportunities through urban agriculture projects.
 - Foster economic development projects to build capacity of community based organizations to generate income for individuals and worker owned enterprises.
 - Build on workforce development efforts in BVHP to address high unemployment rates and the large number of youth in the community.
2. Increase community capacity and cohesion with urban agriculture initiatives.
 - Establish a BVHP urban agriculture Community Network.
 - Increase resident and volunteer engagement in urban agriculture projects that reflects diversity of neighborhood.
 - Work with and support existing garden programs and promote leadership from people of color.

- Develop free or low cost educational programs and training opportunities to meet community needs.
3. Improve resiliency and sustainability of existing and future urban agriculture projects.
- Through BVHP Urban Ag Network, identify and coordinate available resources.
 - Seek sustainable funding from city and private funders for existing and proposed urban agriculture projects.
 - Work with SFPUC resources to support existing urban agriculture programs.

For a more detailed list of recommendations, see Appendix A.

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