



OCCUPATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH

September 20, 2004

Dear Friend:

On behalf of the Department of Public Health, the San Francisco Health Plan, and the Department of City Planning, we take great pleasure in inviting you to be a member of the Community Council to the Eastern Neighborhoods Community and Health Impact Assessment (ENCHIA), a project to commence this fall.

As we all know, the neighborhoods of Showplace Square/Potrero Hill, SoMa and the Mission are currently undergoing a rezoning and community planning process. In brief, the ENCHIA process aims to forecast the impacts of neighborhood rezoning plans on the resources and conditions required for good health, to make recommendations for land use controls, policies, and funding mechanisms that will improve health resources, and to develop a set of monitoring indicators to track long-term progress towards healthy development. The assessment of impacts and recommendations for city policy will contribute to both to comprehensive community plans and the final zoning controls for these neighborhoods. The process will also inform the environmental review process in San Francisco and contribute to the successful implementation of the California Environmental Quality Act.

The Community Council will be charged with actively raising and deliberating diverse objectives, needs, and concerns from neighborhood, citywide, and global perspectives. The assessment itself will occur through a sustained dialogue among Council members and other partners. The Center for Collaborative Policy at California State University Sacramento, an institution with extensive experience with collaborative decision-making, will provide consultation to the process. City staff as well as a national Technical Advisory Committee will provide expertise to the Community Council in response to identified questions and needs. In addition, the community-at-large will participate through periodic neighborhood meetings convened to ensure broader community engagement and transparency.

What motivates us to undertake this assessment is the growing understanding of the relationships between urban planning and the resources required for healthy living. For example, the design of neighborhoods impacts physical activity, crime and safety, adequate housing, mental health and social relationships. Motorized transportation accounts for the majority of air pollution and greenhouse gases, and changes in land use patterns are equally necessary for environmental health goals. As preventing illness and ensuring environmental quality requires attention to urban design and land use regulations, we must evaluate and translate these relationships to the public and to city leaders making land use decisions. We must also decide how we will balance competing priorities and needs.

This project builds on the experiences of partnerships between public health professionals and urban planners internationally. It incorporates lessons from health impact assessments conducted over the past decade in countries such as Canada, Sweden and the United Kingdom. This project and its specific objectives, however, have been informed through conversations with many San Francisco residents and

organizations involved in the Eastern Neighborhoods Community Planning Process. We believe this is an innovative process that can widen the representation of sectors, interests, and disciplines in land use policy-making.

Our hope is to convene the Council by the end of October. We envision the Council will meet approximately every three weeks over the course of one year. Your expertise and experience will benefit this process tremendously. We acknowledge that participation on the Council requires a significant commitment of time. The project will provide a limited number of stipends to requesting organizations in order to offset costs of attendance.

Attached you will find a one-page description of the project, a list of Technical Advisory Committee members, and a participant response form. **Please complete and return the enclosed participant response form so we can assess your organizational interest, availability and participation. To finalize Council membership by the end of September and schedule our first meeting by the end of the October, we are hoping to hear from you by September 30th.** Please do not hesitate to contact one of us if you have questions about the project. Project Staff will also be following up with you personally in the next few weeks to assess your interest and answer any questions you might have.

We sincerely hope you will be able to join us in this innovative, consensus-building effort.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rajiv Bhatia', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Rajiv Bhatia, MD, MPH
Director, Environmental Health