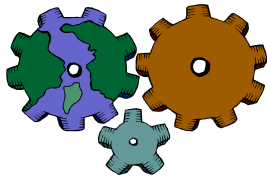


Issue Paper: Meeting Basic Needs



Bay Area Business Roundtable
Creating Sustainable Communities
by TechScribe Communications
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Executive Summary

No community wants to be faced with problems that maintain a cycle of degradation and poverty. If underprivileged neighborhoods are to become sustainable, they must overcome poor environmental quality and health, along with high unemployment rates, and multiple inequalities.

The Bay Area Business Roundtable aims to establish a partnership with government, private industry, and community-based organizations to create sustainable communities in the underprivileged areas of Oakland, making them places where people want to live and work now and in the future. However, before we can start to develop sustainable communities, we must address the issue of how to help people meet their basic needs, so they can become a resource to themselves and their community.

This paper focuses on how to improve the lives of people living in deprived communities of Oakland, which includes those who experience substandard quality of life, including poor local environmental quality and poor access to resources such as jobs, education, and healthcare. In particular the paper highlights the correlation between employment status and healthcare coverage and the impact that this has on an individual's ability to be gainfully employed enabling them to meet basic needs. In particular, this paper provides a gateway to further research and discussion in terms of meeting basic needs, which is the first step in achieving sustainable communities.

What is the Bay Area Business Roundtable?

The Bay Area Business Roundtable (BABR) is a collaboration of state & local government entities, Fortune 500 companies, small businesses, non-profit agencies, and a concerned public working together to build sustainable communities.

BABR's Guiding Principles

The BABR works strategically to promote the following:

- ***Self-sufficiency***: Ideally, every individual should have access to gainful employment, which is essential in meeting basic needs. Greater economic opportunities, job training, education, and adequate wages can potentially reduce the need for support and emergency services.
- ***Community Connection***: Social isolation and indifference threaten the well being of any part of a community, as well as the ability to meet the basic needs. The BABR encourages collaboration in working together to break down social isolation and to provide avenues for individuals to obtain gainful employment, affordable housing, and sufficient food and nutrition, and affordable healthcare.
- ***Coordination, Collaboration and Communication***: The BABR promotes working together collaboratively to provide an integrated and coordinated array of services to those in need, including much-needed information, assistance, and referrals.
- ***Availability and Accessibility***: Make services available and accessible where they are most needed, preferably clustered together in locations throughout communities, allowing “one-stop” service.
- ***Education and Training***: The BABR through its offspring organization, the Regional Technical Training Centers (RTTC) supports the development of a broad array of educational and training opportunities, including job-skills training, career training, and job placement.

Meeting Basic Needs

It is no surprise that a good percentage of Oakland residents have trouble in meeting their basic needs. The evidence is all around — from rising consumer debt levels to increases in employee layoffs and sustained unemployment. According to the 1999 US Census over 19% of Oakland residents lived below the poverty level and it is likely that the percentage is higher now. For the purpose of this paper, basic needs include employment, housing, food and nutrition, and medical care.

In times like these it is no doubt that most people have experienced difficulty in meeting their basic needs at one time or another. But how extensive is the problem? How often do people end up with serious problems like extended unemployment or foregoing necessary medical care because they cannot afford it? Where do people get help when going through rough times? The BABR works collaboratively and strategically with government officials and private industry to improve conditions in underprivileged communities in the San Francisco Bay Area.

Personal or household income is generally regarded as the single most reliable measure to determine the degree to which a person is “well off.” However, other factors also contribute to well-being and quality of life. Difficulty meeting basic needs is greatly associated with barriers to gainful employment. Greater difficulty is usually observed among individuals who were unemployed. Without gainful employment it is nearly impossible to secure adequate housing, sufficient food and nutrition, and healthcare. Overall, income level is strongly associated with the ability to meet basic needs and low income significantly increases the level of difficulty and poverty.

Oakland Communities Impacted by Low Income and Poverty

The data obtained in describing the following communities included in this paper is derived from the 1990 City of Oakland Housing and Community Development Block Grant Program, along with data from various community development districts in Oakland. During 1990, Oakland’s population was 276,806, with over 60% of the population living at the low to moderate income level. The information focuses on the issues of poverty and low income and is provided to encourage discussion and viable solutions around improving these communities. It is also meant to solicit input and involvement from public agencies, local service providers, residents, and private sector businesses. Though the data is dated, it provides a benchmark for further and expanded research reflecting current conditions.

North Oakland

1990 Population	Total Low – Moderate Income	% Low – Moderate Income
40,271	22,004	54.64

During 1990, approximately 19% of North Oakland’s population lived below the poverty level and individuals between the ages of 18 and 24 were the predominant group in numbers. The diversity of the area consisted primarily of Whites (43%) and African Americans (44%). Eight percent of residents were unemployed and the median household income was \$25,000, which was slightly below the city-wide median household income of \$26,999. In 1990 over 90% of the housing units in North Oakland were occupied, with 35% owner occupied and the remaining 65% renter occupied.

San Antonio

1990 Population	Total Low – Moderate Income	% Low – Moderate Income
38,513	25,527	66.28

During 1990, approximately 27% of San Antonio residents were living below the poverty level. The population then was comprised mostly of Asian Pacific Islanders (34.2%) African Americans (34%) Whites (19.3%), and Latinos (18.8%). Six percent of residents were unemployed and the median household income was \$22,436. Ninety-three percent of the housing units were occupied, with 57% owner occupied and 57% renter occupied.

West Oakland

1990 Population	Total Low – Moderate Income	% Low – Moderate Income
48,100	33,772	70.21

Statistics for West Oakland during 1990 included a poverty level of 76% and a population comprised predominantly of African Americans (80.4%). At that time, 9% of West Oakland’s population was unemployed and 53% were not in the labor force. Eighty-eight percent of housing units were occupied and only 21% were owner occupied, with the remaining 79% being renter occupied.

Central Oakland

1990 Population	Total Low – Moderate Income	% Low – Moderate Income
17,025	9,832	57.75

During 1990, 21% of residents in Central Oakland lived below the poverty level and African Americans made up roughly two-thirds of the population. The unemployment rate was 9% and 38% were not in the labor force. Ninety-four percent of housing units were occupied, with 49% owner occupied, and 51 percent renter occupied.

Fruitvale

1990 Population	Total Low – Moderate Income	% Low – Moderate Income
47,368	31,027	65.50

In 1990, as much as 20% of Fruitvale residents lived below the poverty level. At that time, Fruitvale had a very diverse population, with 36.6% Latino, 27.8% African American, 26.2% White, and over 20% Asian/Pacific Islander. In terms of housing, 94% of housing units are occupied, with 36% owned and 64% renter occupied. The unemployment rate of Fruitvale was 7% and 35% were not in the labor force.

Elmhurst

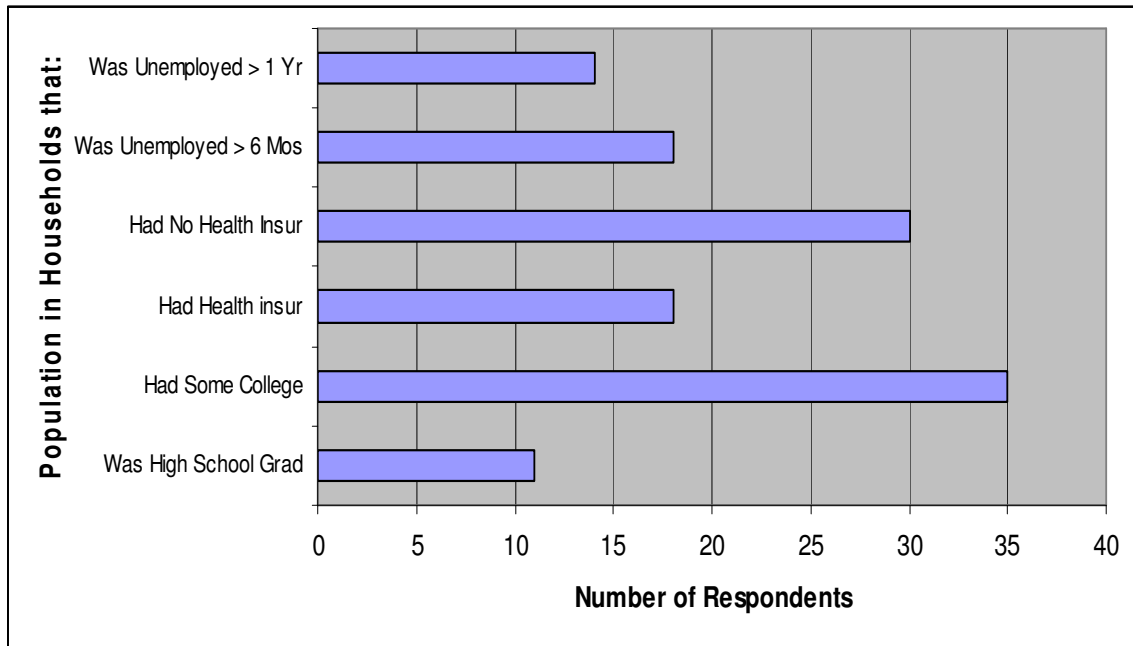
1990 Population	Total Low – Moderate Income	% Low – Moderate Income
44,496	26,702	60.01

Elmhurst was primarily inhabited by African Americans. At that time over 75% of the population was African American and over 20% lived below the poverty level. The housing stock was occupied by 57% owners and 43% renters. While the unemployment rate was 8%, 41% of Elmhurst’s population was not active in the labor force.

Basic Needs Survey

The BABR surveyed trainees of the RTTC. Of the 95 participants surveyed, 52% were residents of Oakland. For the purpose of this paper, only Oakland survey data is referenced. The average age of Oakland respondents at the time of the survey was 42, with some being well into their seventies.

Figure 1 – Status in Terms of Meeting Basic Needs in Oakland Communities: 2008



Source: RTTC survey of training program participants, administered Winter - 2007

Significant Outcomes Based on Survey Data

Based on Oakland’s responses, over 60% reported having no healthcare coverage and 38% were without a job for over one year. In a number of cases, respondents commented that they chose to forego healthcare coverage, because they could not afford it. This data shows a correlation between employment status and the ability to obtain and maintain healthcare coverage. The absence of healthcare coverage deters people from receiving routine medical exams and care and consequently sets the stage for a host of medical conditions that can impact an individual’s ability to become and remain gainfully employed. This paradox gives rise to the need for additional research to determine the full effect that the absence of healthcare has on an underprivileged and aging population - one that needs to be actively involved in the workforce beyond the norm in order to meet their basic needs.

Some Assumptions Regarding Basic Needs

- Faith-based organizations and some nonprofits are currently doing most of the work and providing the most assistance in the arena of helping people to meet their basic needs. However, so much more can be done collaboratively.
- While the immediate needs of communities must be met, long term solutions must be pursued.
- Those most affected must take active roles in meeting their own needs.

Barriers to Meeting Basic Needs

- Limited Resources
- Poor Existing Services
- Lack of Awareness
- Applying Traditional Thinking and Approaches
- Maintaining Status Quo

Key Recommendations

- In the short term, efforts must be coordinated to ensure that employment and other basic needs of the impoverished and working poor are met.
- Educational programming should accompany giving programs.
- Better job opportunities are needed. BABR will continue to develop the business climate to generate more jobs and program funding.
- Conduct more research to determine why people are poor. Address the root causes such as lack of education, job opportunities, etc.
- Don't just give people a fish - teach them how to fish
- Educate employers about tax incentives for hiring certain types of employees
- Individuals need to take an active role in meeting their own needs, including enrollment in financial counseling.

The BABR is currently working with local corporations and various community task forces in creating a shared agenda to improve economic conditions in Oakland. If Oakland is to create sustainable communities, the current situation in terms of meeting basic needs throughout the various communities must be improved. Therefore, if you are interested in expanding social responsibility and participating in the BABR, please contact:

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