
Building the Base

Two Active Living Projects That Inspired Community Participation

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Background: Kalihi Valley is a densely populated, low-income community (28,958 residents in approximately 6 square miles) with insufficient sidewalks, bike lanes, and public green space to support regular physical activity for its residents. Kokua Kalihi Valley (KKV), a community health center formed in 1972, sought to improve Kalihi Valley's built environment based on its history of community- and partnership-based preventive health initiatives that have focused on the social determinants of health.

Intervention: Kokua Kalihi Valley used a flexible partnership model and a focus on direct community action to develop an unused 100-acre state park (the Kalihi Valley Nature Park) and establish a bicycle repair and recycling program that mobilized thousands of community volunteers, attracted widespread media coverage, and established a number of innovative programs for active living. Kokua Kalihi Valley and its partners also contributed to the successful passage of a city charter amendment to prioritize Honolulu as a bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly city.

Results: This initiative was successful in reclaiming a substantial amount of land for active living and in stimulating both public governmental support and widespread private community involvement in programs and activities.

Lessons learned: Projects that engaged community members in activities with tangible accomplishment were shown to be most successful.

Conclusions: This initiative showed that community health centers may be uniquely positioned to provide leadership and assume responsibility for cross-sectoral active-living health projects. (Am J Prev Med 2009;37(6S2):S345–S351) © 2009 American Journal of Preventive Medicine

Introduction

In 2003, Kokua Kalihi Valley (KKV) used a broad-based approach to community health focusing on a historically neglected public health issue in Kalihi Valley: the physical infrastructure and built environment of communities that influence physical activity. Kalihi Valley's growth as a first home for new Asian and Pacific Island immigrants coming to the state created a widening disparity between the increasing size of the community and the physical infrastructure of streets, sidewalks, schools, parks, and other public services that could adequately support this growing population. The plan that was created to address these concerns and improve Kalihi Valley's built environment focused on the 5Ps of the Active Living by Design (ALbD) community action model (www.activelivingbydesign.org/our-approach/community-action-model; preparation, promotion, programs, policy, and physical projects).¹

Kokua Kalihi Valley is a community health center, formed in 1972, with a mission to be an agent for

healing and reconciliation in the Kalihi Valley community. Like the nation's first community health centers,² KKV has a long history seeking to address the social determinants of health in low-income communities. While providing primary medical and dental services to community members over the past 36 years, KKV also established the state's first domestic violence shelter, started a community credit union for Kalihi Valley residents, formed the Phinong Lao Resource Center for incoming Laotian immigrants in the 1980s, and served as the lead social service agency at the second-largest public housing community in the state.

Within the first year of the initiative, two projects that were targeted in the original plan—developing an unused 100-acre state park in the community and creating a bicycle repair and recycling program—quickly gained momentum and became the primary focal points for achieving the goals associated with each of the 5Ps. These two projects, Ho'oulu 'Aina (the Kalihi Valley Nature Park) and Kalihi Valley Instructional Bike Exchange Program (K-VIBE) were the engines over the 5-year project period that energized community partners, mobilized thousands of community volunteers, attracted widespread media coverage, and created a growing number of innovative and effective programs for active living.

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Methods

Settings and Populations

Kalihi Valley is a predominantly residential community of 28,958 people located immediately adjacent to the downtown urban and industrial core of Honolulu (Table 1). The physical boundaries of the community extend from the valley's forested and less-populated upland areas downward to Kalihi Valley's lower border of the H-1 freeway, the primary east-west transportation corridor on the island. Kalihi Valley is one of the state's most densely populated communities, with the highest percentage of public housing residents throughout the state and 26.6% of the population living in dwellings with six or more household members.³ There are six public elementary schools and one public middle school in the area; the state's largest public high school is just outside the Kalihi Valley community. The per capita income of Kalihi Valley is \$13,717, which is 64% of the national average.³

Because of its close proximity to Honolulu, Kalihi Valley has been the primary gateway over the past 100 years for new Asian and Pacific Island immigrants coming to the state. As a result, Kalihi Valley has the highest percentage of new immigrants and the highest percentage of non-English or limited-English speakers throughout the state.³ Ethnically, the community is 93% Asian/Pacific Islander (API), with Filipinos currently having the largest population at 54%, followed by Okinawan/Japanese (12.8%); Hawaiian (11.5%); Samoan (6.1%); Chinese (5.1%); and other API (4%).³ Micronesians from the island of Chuuk have been the fastest growing new immigrant population settling in Kalihi Valley over the past 4 years.

Kalihi Valley also has a rich indigenous Hawaiian cultural heritage associated with some of Hawaii's earliest ancestral deities, and it contains a number of sacred archeologic sites or "heiau" that were established to honor the area's abundant food-producing capabilities. Connection to the land and the land's life-giving qualities is a fundamental aspect of Hawaiian culture and a common value shared and practiced by many of the Asian and Pacific Island people who have made Kalihi Valley their home.

Active Living by Design Community

Action Model

Kokua Kalihi Valley utilized an intervention strategy that engaged community partners through collective action. With longstanding relationships with numerous organizations and groups in the community, KKV used a two-pronged approach that sought to immediately engage community members in tangible programs and projects (e.g., a mother's walking group, a bicycle repair and distribution program, community gardens), while also seeking to engage community members in targeted policy actions based on longer-term community discussion, data gathering, and KKV leadership.

Table 1. Kalihi Valley demographic information (2000 U.S. Census; % unless noted otherwise)

	Kalihi Valley	Honolulu	Hawaii	U.S.
Total population (<i>n</i>)	28,958	876,156	1,211,537	281,421,906
Population of elderly: aged ≥ 60 years	20.7	17.2	17.1	16.3
Per capita income (\$)	13,717	21,998	21,525	21,587
Unemployed	8.7	5.7	5.9	5.7
Households with public assistance	18.9	6.8	7.2	3.4
Foreign-born	38.4	19.2	17.5	11.1
Foreign-born; naturalized citizen	23.1	11.7	10.5	4.5
English spoken not well or not at all	10.9	5.0	4.5	4.2
English not spoken at home	55.1	28.9	26.6	17.9
Households with six or more people	26.6	8.1	7.9	10.9

Preparation

Partnership. The development of a community partnership for this initiative evolved from a centralized steering committee model to a larger, looser, and more diverse network of collaborative partners. Although a core group of community partners was initially convened for regular planning meetings, this model of partnership did not fit smoothly with the project's broad range of objectives. For instance, a local bicycle shop owner was not interested in meetings dealing with community gardens and walking groups. By the end of the first year, a more flexible, project-oriented, and task-specific partnership model developed that was more effectively suited for the initiative's increasing focus on K-VIBE and the Nature Park projects, with each project quickly developing its own distinct sets of community supporters and organizational partners (Table 2). For the Nature Park, a core group of stakeholders met monthly during the critical first 2 years of groundbreaking and renovation activities, although additional partners (e.g., Honolulu Community College Carpentry Apprenticeship Program) were time-specific in their commitments and did not attend monthly stakeholder meetings. For K-VIBE, there was no core group of stakeholders or monthly meetings; partners were engaged individually according to specific tasks and activities (e.g., the city bicycle coordinator helping to install bike racks). While this flexible partnership model was well suited for both K-VIBE and the Nature Park, this model did not allow a more unified coalition of partners to develop specifically around broader-based policy issues affecting the physical design of the community. Owing to the limitation of human and financial resources; the lack of a clearly defined policy issue to mobilize community action; and the outpouring of immediate community support for K-VIBE and the Nature Park, the more flexible and project-specific partnership model developed as the most promising and pragmatic option.

Assessment and planning. The need for improved infrastructure in Kalihi Valley supportive of increased daily physical activity was assessed through a variety of informal and anecdotal community indicators. Deteriorating or nonexistent sidewalks were clearly observable throughout the community, and school administrators consulted for this initiative relayed safety concerns for their students walking to schools on these narrow streets without sidewalks. The most recent census data confirmed Kalihi Valley as one of the state's most densely populated residential communities. Health center data at KKV showed a patient population in Kalihi Valley increasingly

Table 2. Key partners and major accomplishments of the Kokua Kalihi Valley project

Initiative	Key partners	Major accomplishments
K-VIBE	City and County of Honolulu, bicycle coordinator	1890 bicycles refurbished and provided to community (2004–2008)
	Eki Cyclery (Kalihi bicycle business) Honolulu Bicycle League Dole Middle School Seto Foundation The Bike Shop, Island Triathlon, and Bike Hawaii Down Hill Hawaii	12,000 bicycles of community members repaired (2004–2008) 3371 community members coming to K-VIBE shop (2004–2008) 20 bike racks installed in community (2005–2008)
Ho'oulu 'Aina (Kalihi Valley Nature Preserve)	State of Hawaii, DLNR, State Parks Division	970 community reforestation volunteers (2007–2008)
	State of Hawaii, DLNR, Division of Forestry and Wildlife	70 public high school students involved in nature preserve science projects
	Consuelo Alger Foundation	50 participants in Diabetes Gardening Program (2006–2008)
	Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation	\$1,005,520 additional funds generated for nature preserve programs (2004–2009)
	University of Hawaii, Department of Native Hawaiian Health	
	University of Hawaii, School of Nursing	
	Halau Lokahi Charter School, State Department of Education	
	Farrington High School, State Department of Education	
	Kamehameha Schools/Bishop Estate	
	University of Hawaii, Hawaiian Studies Program	
Honolulu Community College, Carpentry Apprentice Program		
YMCA, Nuuanu and Kalihi Branch		
Salvation Army, Women's Way Program		

K-VIBE, Kalihi Valley Instructional Bike Exchange

suffering from exercise-related chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and obesity.⁴ Community petitions and legislative appeals from Kalihi Valley residents in the mid-1980s showed widespread support for preserving community green space and opposing further residential subdivision developments.

Capacity building. By the end of the first year of the initiative, as both K-VIBE and the Nature Park projects were gaining traction, KKV agreed to provide additional financial support for a full-time project coordinator that helped to attract and secure qualified staff capable of coordinating such a wide-ranging project. This commitment was made because of KKV's overall financial stability and a belief in the eventual self-sustaining potential of the Nature Park. At the same time, the physical capacity of the project was exponentially increased owing to the support of both the director of the State Parks Division and the director of the state's Department of Land and Natural Resources, who helped to secure a unique 20-year lease agreement from the state for the entire 100-acre Kalihi Valley Nature Park.

Implementation

Policies. No specific policies were identified for targeted community engagement at the beginning of the initiative. This was due to the challenge of mobilizing broad-based community support for physical design changes in Kalihi Valley amidst competing land-use needs (sidewalks versus parking areas) and other pressing social problems (e.g., gangs, poor schools, domestic violence). Instead, policy action was projected to emerge through partnership dis-

cussions and a strategic assessment of the policy goals that would be most beneficial and realistic to pursue. However, as community support quickly developed for K-VIBE and the Nature Park, ALbD staff time was soon devoted almost entirely to these projects, and the work of an engaged community process to discern ALbD policy issues to pursue was abandoned. Kokua Kalihi Valley and other Active Living partners, however, did play a contributing role in a major active-living policy achievement for Honolulu.

In 2005, an amendment to the city charter was proposed that stated that one of the priorities of the city's Department of Transportation Services should be to make Honolulu a pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly city. The amendment was voted on in November 2006 and passed with 77% of the votes.⁵ To support passage of this amendment, KKV made and distributed banners and flyers and made phone calls to other community health centers on O'ahu urging their support. The One Voice for Livable Islands Coalition, which KKV was actively involved in developing, formed to support implementation efforts of this amendment. This coalition includes American Association of Retired Persons Hawaii, Hawaii Public Health Association, Hawaii Bicycle League, the Department of Health Injury Prevention, and the Sierra Club and continues to play an active and important role pressuring policymakers to make Hawaii a more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly state.

Physical projects. Within the original active-living initiative, unused greenspace at two public housing projects, an undeveloped city park, and an undeveloped state park were all

Figure 1. Ho’oulu ‘Aina master plan

identified as potential places for community food-production sites, and each of these areas was pursued during the initiative’s first year. While small barriers to development quickly arose for three of the four areas (e.g., city government red tape, slow pace of public housing support), state support in handing over management of the Kalihi Valley Nature Park to KKV was remarkably smooth. The State Parks Division did not have the financial resources to develop and maintain this 100-acre park parcel, and a number of different public-private partnership agreements had already been created with local organizations seeking to assist with stewardship activities at other state park locations.

These factors allowed a unique 20-year, long-term lease agreement to be signed with the state. The Nature Park, located at the very end of Kalihi Street, is one of the last accessible properties by car or foot in Kalihi Valley. Two deteriorating residential structures remained on-site: a 1960s wooden tract home on the upper portion of the property and a 1930s concrete home and adjoining studio immediately

accessible by a short driveway from Kalihi Street. A number of surprisingly intact Hawaiian archeologic sites, rediscovered in the 1970s, are visible reminders of the area’s agricultural past. Four years of sustained community effort, through regularly scheduled volunteer workdays and an emerging set of distinct program activities, have already reclaimed a major portion of this land and the structures on it (Figure 1).

The Kalihi Valley Instructional Bike Exchange Program also carved out a physical presence in the community through the establishment of the K-VIBE bike shop in the corner section of the KKV Warehouse. The K-VIBE shop includes a large inventory of donated and repaired bicycles, two bike repair stations, an office, and a covered lounge space in which neighborhood youth can congregate. The location of the shop on a heavily trafficked four-lane community road within a half-mile of a public elementary school, a public middle school, a large district park, and neighborhood stores has made it an accessible and attractive location for after-school youth, adult volunteers, and community members across the island.

Promotions. Local press and television coverage of K-VIBE and the Nature Park have been consistent throughout the milestones in each of these projects' development. Timely press releases, personal contact with reporters, and a series of newsworthy events for both projects (e.g., grand openings, community bike rides, volunteer workdays) have all contributed to featured articles and stories in Honolulu newspapers, local television news broadcasts, weekly publications, and monthly magazines. Because of the increasing concerns regarding traffic congestion on O'ahu and a recent series of pedestrian- and bicycle-related fatalities, K-VIBE and KKV's active-living coordinators have been sought out for comments by local television, newspapers, and magazines. These interviews, as well as other recent promotional pieces, came as a result of the growing visibility of K-VIBE and the Nature Park in the public eye and through references from other organizations and individuals who had become informed and familiar with these projects and the KKV staff.

Programs. The Nature Park and K-VIBE are the two projects of the ALbD initiative that developed their own unique set of programs and activities. These programs increased opportunities for regular physical activity in Kalihi Valley while overlapping with a much broader range of social, cultural, and environmental objectives and funding streams. Gradually, K-VIBE has been incorporated into KKV's Youth and Family Services program as an innovative prevention program and hands-on skill and vocational training site for at-risk youth in this community. The K-VIBE bike shop, with its tools, repair stations, posters, couches, and caring and creative male staff, has been especially attractive for boys aged 8 to 13 years in the community. Programs for K-VIBE have included nutrition lessons and healthy snacks; gang, violence, and pregnancy prevention activities; part-time job opportunities; and a placement site for expelled and probationary youth at the nearby public middle school.

The Nature Park has also developed a number of distinct program areas that include Community Food Production, Native Reforestation, Archeological Restoration, and Community Access. These programs, with their implicit physical activity, developed as natural outgrowths of the sheer physical space of the 100-acre Nature Park and the distinct cultural and physical resources that existed on-site. Approximately 5 acres of land have been cleared for food production, and half of this land is currently being cultivated by a number of community groups and KKV health center programs. The native reforestation program is working to restore 20 acres of the Park to a native Koa (*acacia koa*) mesic forest through a 10-year grant from the State Division of Forestry and Wildlife. Archeologic restoration and other culture-based activities have been included into class activities of Halau Lokahi, a public charter school meeting daily at the park for classroom and outdoor lessons and learning activities. A new partnership has also been formed with the University of Hawaii's Hawaiian Studies Program, allowing classes studying the use of native Hawaiian medicinal plants to come to the park for both classroom lessons and outdoor identification and collection fieldwork (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Two children receive bicycles through the Kalihi Valley Instructional Bike Exchange.

Results

The national ALbD initiative acted as an important catalyst that created greater opportunities for physical activity in the Kalihi Valley community. Overall, goals for each of the 5Ps have been achieved. This initiative was successful in reclaiming 100 acres of new green space for active-living purposes and in stimulating both governmental support and widespread community involvement in this initiative's two main projects (Table 2). Through a growing number of partnerships at the Nature Park, 60 to 70 community members are involved each week in a diverse range of environmental, cultural, and health-related activities, and an average of 50 additional community volunteers turn out each month for community workdays. Because of the success of these activities, the Nature Park recently secured a 3-year, \$150,000-per-year grant for its wide range of activities that make up Hope for Kids.

In Kalihi Valley's urban environment, K-VIBE has successfully established itself as a youth-powered bike distribution and promotion program and has recently been incorporated into KKV's Youth and Family Services program for ongoing sustainability and growth. Nearly 2000 bicycles have been refurbished and provided to community members by K-VIBE over the last 4 years for transportation and as a means for staying physically active. A recent grant from the State Department of Health's Healthy Hawaii Initiative will allow K-VIBE to replicate the bike repair and distribution model at three new sites around O'ahu. Additionally, Honolulu Charter Amendment 8 has been successfully passed and now acts as an important leverage for ongoing implementation efforts to make Honolulu a more pedestrian- and bicycle-friendly city.

Discussion

The overall impact of the KKV Active Living by Design initiative has been one of project-driven incremental

change. More opportunities for regular physical activity have been created locally in Kalihi Valley because of the initiative's activities, resulting in new demonstration models that are eliciting popular community support and expanding the traditional definition of health services for Hawaii's broader health and human services community. Recent examples of this include K-VIBE being used as a prototype for the Hawaii Department of Health's most recent statewide Healthy Hawaii Initiative, and the Nature Park continuing to attract new partners, such as the Salvation Army, as a site for physically active, culture-based programs of healing.

Lessons Learned

A number of practical lessons were learned through the course of this initiative. One lesson learned was to invest energy where there is community traction and to allow unsuccessful projects to be discontinued. A Mother's Walking Group that was poorly received and a community gardening project that encountered numerous logistical difficulties were abandoned for projects that engaged community members with tangible accomplishments and immediately perceivable results (e.g., old bikes picked up and repaired, trash being hauled, and trails being constructed). These projects were energizing and brought together a wide spectrum of community members united toward a common, achievable goal. A second lesson learned was that staffing matters. This initiative has been fortunate to have attracted staff at K-VIBE and the Nature Park who had the passion, skills, experience, and a full list of contacts to get things done. Without these staff, the initiative would not have accomplished as much as it has. A third lesson involved KKV's decision not to pursue policy change as a primary goal (below).

Partnership Flexibility and Policy Change

As stated previously, no cohesive and unified partnership was organized and no sustained efforts were directed toward policy changes influencing the built environment. Efforts to form a unified partnership and to achieve specific policy changes would have required considerable time and energy aimed at a very challenging outcome and would have drastically reduced the development of both K-VIBE and the Nature Park. Although the need for active-living design improvements in Kalihi Valley is obvious, the challenges to achieving this through policy changes include an economically distressed population with numerous competing social needs and a dense urban and residential environment hard-pressed to incorporate new sidewalks and bike lanes. Ultimately, the initiative's original two-pronged approach, which included a local policy objective, was overly ambitious. The real choice for the initiative would have been between the locally based,

project-oriented approach (which resulted in K-VIBE and the Nature Park) and a broader, Honolulu-based policy effort. The passage of Charter 8 by 77% of Honolulu's voters and the establishment and continuing activities of the One Voice Coalition strongly indicate that a unified coalition of partners focused on island and statewide ALbD policy changes is the right partnership model for policy change and is backed by strong popular demand. Both approaches were effective but were not compatible within a single initiative.

The Role of Community Health Centers

The ALbD initiative re-invigorated an important quality in the original community health center movement that addressed the broader social determinants of health in a particular community. This initiative also showed that community health centers may be uniquely positioned to provide leadership and assume responsibility for broad-based community health projects. Through KKV's long-term presence as a community health center in Kalihi Valley, a unique public-private partnership was forged between KKV and the State of Hawaii, allowing unused public lands to be developed for the healthcare needs of the com-

Table 3. Active Living program grants and donations (\$)

2004	Hawaii State Department of Health	20,000
2004	Kalakaua Lion's Club	10,000
2004	Hawaii Community Foundation	40,000
2005	Group 70 Foundation	7,000
2005	National Trust for Historic Preservation	5,000
2005	Office of Hawaiian Affairs	40,000
2006	Kaulunani Urban Forestry Program	7,000
2006	Hawaii State Grant-in-Aid	200,000
2006	Weinberg Fellows Award	10,000
2006	Anonymous private donation	20,000
2006	KSSK/Central Pacific Bank	5,000
2007	State Forest Stewardship Program (2007-2016)	355,520
2007	Cooke Foundation	5,000
2007	Seto Foundation	5,000
2007	State Department of Human Services	5,000
2007	Consuelo Alger Foundation (yearly support)	25,000
2007	Hawaii State Grant-in-Aid (pending release)	100,000
2008	National Institute of Health (2008-2012)	5,000
2008	Seto Foundation	10,000
2008	Friends of Hawaii Charity	10,000
2008	Cooke Foundation	10,000
2008	DOT Safe Routes to School	13,500
2009	Hau'oli Mau Loa Foundation	150,000
2009	Office of Hawaiian Affairs	35,000
TOTAL		1,093,020

DOT, Department of Transportation

munity. As a community health center, KKV has also been able to sustain the initial investment of resources to launch a youth-driven bicycle repair program that attracted cross-sectoral participation from neighborhood businesses, public schools, community volunteers, and youth service organizations.

Project Sustainability

The Kalihi Valley Instructional Bike Exchange Program has been incorporated into KKV's Youth and Family Services Program and continues to secure competitive grants through its mix of skill-building, entrepreneurialism, and health promotion activities and its ability to attract and work with large numbers of at-risk youth (mostly boys) in the community. Because of these accomplishments, K-VIBE will continue in the community as long as outside funding and revenues from internal KKV support remain relatively stable. The Nature Park recently secured a 3-year, \$150,000-per-year capacity-building grant and is beginning to undertake a series of feasibility studies for income-generating projects to support long-term self-sufficiency. These projects include wooden crafts from forest timber; propagation, processing, and sales of Hawaiian medicinal plants; food propagation and sales; and culturally based eco-tourism. Long-term supportive funding is also being pursued from community organizations (e.g., YMCA, Salvation Army) and schools (e.g., Halau Lokahi Charter School, Kamehameha Schools) who have regularly been using the park with their own students and clientele. These loose partnerships have

grown over the months and years during which the park has developed and may soon evolve into an invested relationship, with all parties benefiting from the life-giving qualities of the land (Table 3).

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