

Collaboration Success Stories
Wednesday, 2:15-3:15 p.m.
Grand Ballroom

Working Together to Make Our Communities Healthier Places

Vernice Miller-Travis, Presenter

The session will highlight the efforts of two communities in Jacksonville, FL and Northern Birmingham, AL, to collaborate in efforts to make their communities healthier. It will also share a tool for promoting collaboration to reduce toxins in other communities. In 2010, Health Zone 1 in Jacksonville, Florida was selected as EPA Region 4's EJ Showcase Community. This environmental justice neighborhood is economically under-resourced, environmentally over-burdened and suffering disproportionate health impacts across all major indicators. The Jacksonville Integrated Planning Project (JIPP) identified community goals and potential future uses for the broader neighborhood within proximity of five Superfund sites. A Jacksonville Integrated Planning Committee, including over 40 government, organization and community representatives, was convened to launch the project and identify goals and priorities. One outcome of the JIPP is a map showing cumulative environmental risk that helped prioritize two neighborhoods for future investment. Based on the success of JIPP, EPA's Superfund Redevelopment Initiative.

(SRI) and Office of Environmental Justice created A Pilot Framework for Integrating Community Health and Wellness into the Superfund Reuse Assessment Process. This framework shares how to integrate health, prevention and wellness considerations during the reuse assessment process for a Superfund site. In 2013, EPA used the framework in Northern Birmingham, AL. Operations from the Walter Coke Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA) facility and other nearby industrial facilities impacted several communities in Northern Birmingham, Alabama, resulting in the 35th Avenue Superfund site.

The neighborhoods suffered from breakdowns in trust, lagging cleanup, lack of a strong community organization to support cleanup and revitalization efforts, and a lack of a shared vision among stakeholders for future use planning priorities. EPA helped form a community coalition to identify housing, wellness and commercial revitalization strategies as well as identifying local resource and implementation partners. EPA also supported the community coalition in developing strategic partnerships to address their remaining goals and assisted in the development of the project's final action plan for revitalization.

It Takes a Village to Address EJ Concerns: Collaborative Partnerships and the Use of TRI Data to Address Environmental Concerns in the Southeast Community of Newport News, Virginia

Erica Holloman, Presenter

The Southeast CARE Coalition is a broad, community-based, grassroots alliance consisting of residents, organizations, businesses, and academic institutions brought together to specifically address environmental concerns in the Southeast Community of Newport News, Virginia. The mission of the Southeast CARE Coalition is to fulfill an informational void regarding community specific data and generate action that reduces toxic pollutant emissions and exposure in the Southeast Community. The use of TRI data has been instrumental to the ongoing work of the Coalition and our efforts to accomplish our mission. Highlighted are three fruitful initiatives that used TRI data to empower and educate members of the Southeast Community (and the broader Hampton Roads Region) to take action. The first initiative (three environmental health workshops) educated Coalition and community members about current and past toxic releases in the Southeast Community of Newport News, VA and sustained community concerns regarding air quality and possible links to the disproportionate rates of cardiovascular and lung disease. The generated action resulting from this initiative was the community-based prioritized list of environmental concerns in which air quality was the number one prioritized concern.

The second initiative grew out of the collaborative partnership with the VA Chapter of the Sierra Club in which we successfully collected over 1000 signed petitions requesting the Virginia Secretary of Natural Resources to install state air monitors in the Southeast Community. The fact sheets used during this initiative include TRI data as well as the 2014 and 2015 "Toxics Report" report released by VA Sierra Club which highlighted the top 25 dirtiest zip codes in Virginia. Through a collaborative effort between US EPA Region III, US EPA Office of Air Quality Planning and Standards, the Virginia Department of Environmental Quality and our Coalition, the last initiative was our Title V public commenting training that focused on the second largest source of toxic air emissions according to TRI data. Our comments that were prepared and submitted regarding the renewal of the Title V air permit for this source used TRI data and on February 8 2016, the VA DEQ suspend processing the permit action to allow for additional evaluation. These three initiatives demonstrate the importance of collaboration and working with diverse partners and the need for sustained engagement when addressing concerns in environmental justice communities such as ours, the Southeast Community of Newport News, VA.