June 29, 2015

Dear Neighbors,

The purpose of this letter is to invite you to a community meeting on July 30, 2015 to share recent sound measurement and analysis results from UCSF medical helicopter transports at our UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital helipad. A national noise consultant will report on analysis and sound testing performed in April 2015 in residential locations.

Since the UCSF Medical Center at Mission Bay opened in February, we have been accepting helicopter transports for the most critically ill children as well as women with serious pregnancy complications. These transports occur only from other hospitals that are unable to provide the resources, level of care, and pediatric specialists available at UCSF Benioff Children’s Hospital.

Community involvement has been at the forefront of the planning process for the Medical Center for many years. In 2008-2009, UCSF worked with neighbors to develop the UCSF Residential Sound Reduction Program for Helicopter Operations (RSRP). The purpose of this groundbreaking program is to measure potential sound impacts on nearby homeowners who may be affected by helicopter noise and to provide funding for any required sound improvements to qualified applicants. The helipad and RSRP were approved by the San Francisco Board of Supervisors in 2009, and included in the UCSF supplemental environmental report (SEIR). In addition to SEIR public meetings, UCSF communicated with neighbors about the RSRP at community meetings in November 2014 and May 2015.

In response to community feedback, UCSF has also made significant changes to minimize sound impacts:

- Located helipad toward the center of campus near 16th & 4th Streets
- Placed elevator shaft to south of helipad to reduce sound travelling toward closest residences
- Developed flight paths over the bay and away from residences to the greatest extent possible

UCSF is now notifying residents and owners of residential property in the vicinity of recent sound measurements and analysis results. (We are reaching out to neighbors and property owners well beyond the area required by the RSRP/SEIR).

First, I’d like to introduce some technical terminology:

*Community Noise Equivalent Level (CNEL)*—a 24-hour cumulative noise metric, which is utilized in transportation noise assessments. The FAA and the State of California use CNEL to identify the noise impact area for projects in California.

*Single Event Noise Exposure Level (SENEL)*—a noise metric that relates to a single event such as helicopter arrival or departure. In choosing to use SENEL, which is more beneficial to neighbors, UCSF consulted guidelines prepared by the Federal Interagency Committee on Aircraft Noise, which recommends use of this single event metric to assess awakenings from aircraft noise. An exterior SENEL of 95 decibels (dB) is equivalent to an interior 80 dB SENEL.

*FAA Integrated Noise Model*—a computer software program that determines aircraft sound levels in the vicinity of the landings and departures, like helipads and airports.

In keeping with the RSRP/SEIR, UCSF’s expert sound consultants (HMMH) measured actual UCSF helicopter transports in April 2015 to draw the perimeter of the 95 dB SENEL sound perimeter, or “contour,” as determined through the use of the FAA’s Integrated Noise Model. A residential property qualifies for RSRP sound reduction measures if interior noise levels exceed 80 dB SENEL within the sleeping areas based on actual sound measurements.
Based on these measurements and analysis, UCSF has determined that there are no residential properties experiencing 95 dB SENEL (interior level of 80 dB) from normal UCSF helicopter transports. The UCSF accommodation of community concerns—relocating the helipad and the placement of the elevator shaft—proved quite successful. In addition, the hospital buildings help shield helipad noise from the closest neighbors.

In accordance with the RSRP/SEIR, “all residential properties located on any block that is touched by the 95 dB SENEL noise contour” would be included in the RSRP. Thus, residential properties within the block defined by Mariposa and 18th streets between Tennessee and Minnesota streets may qualify for the RSRP. If, through additional testing, the sleeping areas are shown to experience SENEL greater than 80 dB, those areas would qualify for sound reduction measures.

We would like to share these results at our upcoming community meeting*:

Date: Thursday, July 30, 2015
Time: 6:30 pm
Location: UCSF Medical Center at Mission Bay Auditorium
1855 – 4th Street, 1st floor

→See tiny.ucsf.edu/ucsfhelipad for a helpful video of HMMH consultant Eugene Reindel explaining the analysis in more detail (background information on the RSRP and its accompanying community process is also at that link).

Please feel free to contact me with questions or feedback at Michele.Davis@ucsf.edu or 415-476-3024.

Sincerely,

Michele Davis, MPH, MCP
Assistant Director, Community Relations

* UCSF fully ascribes to the Americans with Disabilities Act. If at any time you feel you have a need for accommodation, please contact UCSF Community & Government Relations at 415-476-3206 or community@cgr.ucsf.edu with your suggested accommodation.

UCSF Mission Bay is accessible using the MUNI T-Third light rail line and bus #55. If you must drive, please park at no cost in the surface lot near 4th Street Public Plaza. Complimentary parking is not available in the garage.

If you would like to be on our email notification list, please email community@cgr.ucsf.edu, specifying the campus site(s) of interest: Parnassus, Mission Bay, Laurel Heights, Mount Zion, San Francisco General Hospital.