

2012 Santa Clara County Community Assessment Project Executive Summary

October 2012

How is our quality of life?

What kind of community
do people want to live in?

What issues are people
concerned about?



Things look relatively good here, but...

From a big picture perspective, the quality of life in Silicon Valley is good. People like living here. The climate is great. Family and friends add **value** to our lives. The economy is relatively robust. We have access to numerous cultural and outdoor activities. However, people are **insecure about their financial situation**, and stressed by the pace and pressure to keep afloat in this very competitive economy. We feel **we don't know our neighbors** well enough. We like the rich diversity of our people, but **don't know how to connect with others** not like us. A significant number of people within Santa Clara County **struggle to make ends meet**, and have a **very different quality of life experience** of living in this community. Many among us may have **no idea such a severe quality of life divide exists**.

Through surveys, data review and numerous conversations with small groups of residents, the Community Assessment Project confirmed much of what was expected to be learned. Compared to other large metropolitan areas in the United States, we are a well-educated population with high median household incomes, a large percentage of people have some form of health insurance, our overall crime rates are still relatively low, and we have a well-regarded entrepreneurial economy. In fact, according to U.S. Census figures, this is the 19th most affluent county in the country.

People in this community are pretty much satisfied with their lives: 51% of phone survey respondents and 43% of online survey respondents indicated they are “very satisfied” with their overall quality of life. Another 45% of phone survey respondents and 51% of online survey respondents expressed being “somewhat satisfied” with their quality of life. Fewer than 6% of respondents on either survey said “not at all satisfied.” More than 38% of phone survey respondents said they are “very satisfied” with their standard of living and 54% are at least “somewhat satisfied” with their standard of living.

Digging deeper, especially listening to residents in the face-to-face small group conversations, we tried to understand what “somewhat satisfied” and “not satisfied” means for residents. We heard common issues of concern and found big disparities, yet the perceptions around these issues are complex and not uniform. What we found were complex answers. While many challenges exist, we learned there are things we can do as individuals and as organizations to improve quality of life.

The Headlines

Key themes emerged from the examination of survey results, data reports produced by others, and face-to-face small-group conversations. The themes are interconnected. Underlying all we examined is this:

- » With near universal regularity in the community conversations, when participants were asked questions such as “Who do you think needs to take action? Who do you trust to work on the issues you described?” participants indicated it would be themselves and their neighbors.
- » The predominant belief is that it is the collective action of the residents themselves that actually changes conditions in this community, not the actions of institutions. Even if institutions are more aligned, changes in community conditions actually occur as a result of what happens in living rooms, around kitchen tables, and in neighborhood yards.
- » If there was one message from our outreach, it is that as community members *“It’s up to us”* to change things.

Longing for a sense of community

We heard from many people a strong expression of a yearning for community connectedness. While a majority of people in both surveys reported that they view their neighborhood as having a strong sense of community, 28% of phone survey respondents and 41% of online survey respondents disagreed, as did most participants in the small-group conversations.

Plenty of financial insecurity to go around

We found an underlying sense of economic insecurity: 60% of phone survey respondents and many in the conversations reported feeling stress over financial concerns, the highest cause of stress among all sources. What was most remarkable about this finding is that it held true across demographic and socioeconomic groups.

We are uniquely diverse and growing older fast

This county is in the middle of a story of an evolving community related to the size and makeup of the population. Census forecasts project a much larger share of the population will be elders. A greater proportion of our children will be from ethnically diverse families. Working-age adults will constitute a smaller share of the population. There is a belief that more relevant and more competent services and opportunities will be required to respond to these demographic changes in a positive way.

Disparities create an invisible divide

Data and surveys suggest there are vast differences in opportunities, access and achievement across a number of indicators. Age, education, race and income are strongly correlated with quality of life indicators and satisfaction levels: older, higher-educated, white and higher-income groups are most satisfied with their quality of life.

Overview of the Project

The 2012 Santa Clara County Community Assessment Project is a collaborative effort to build on the varied studies of this community that have been conducted in the past decade. While most previous assessments have focused on examining “hard data” and socioeconomic indicators, the distinguishing feature of this study is the emphasis on gathering public perceptions about quality of life. Through this effort, community institutions and policymakers will be better informed about how the community views its evolving strengths, needs and trends — and how they can be best supported. And, just as importantly, local residents will know better how their opinions and perspectives align with other members of the community.

The study brought together a diverse group of private, public and community-based stakeholders passionate about thinking strategically and willing to take a leadership role in prioritizing recommendations and findings in order to benefit the community.

Sponsorship of the project came from a variety of public and private entities: Applied Materials, Cisco, PG&E, The Health Trust, The David & Lucile Packard Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, Silicon Valley Community Foundation, Santa Clara County Planning Department, Santa Clara County Community Health Benefits Coalition and United Way Silicon Valley.

Other organizations provided valuable in-kind and technical assistance. They include: Santa Clara County Public Health Department, San Jose State University, IBM, Applied Survey Research, Santa Clara County Office of Education, Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara, Bank of America, Texas Instruments, Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, City of San Jose Economic Development Department, Raimi Associates, Microsoft, and numerous community organizations.

Input and perspectives about quality of life in this community came from 1,200+ respondents to a phone survey, 3100+ respondents to an online survey, review of 50+ existing data reports, and 500 residents from all walks of life in 80+ informal “kitchen-table-style” small-group conversations. The assessment effort was guided by three committees of local subject matter experts to design, develop, analyze, and interpret the information collected, resulting in these findings and recommendations for community actions. San Jose State’s Survey Policy Research Institute conducted the phone version of the public opinion survey. Santa Clara County Planning Department and Raimi Associates partnered with the Community Assessment Project on the jointly conducted online version of the survey. United Way Silicon Valley and its community partners organized and conducted the small-group conversations.

Findings can be utilized by project partners, sponsors, community groups and residents themselves to guide their investments, advocacy agendas, volunteerism and development of community-based services in a more aligned manner. Additionally, this study identifies quality of life and community engagement issues that merit further analysis.

The entire body of data, including supporting information from the opinion surveys, links to data reports and U.S. Census statistics, and a summary and unfiltered notes from the small-group conversations can be found at www.scc-cap.org.



Understanding the Headlines

Longing for a sense of community

*“There is none of that ‘I got your back here.’ I’ve got to fend for myself. I think that is the reason why the community is not connected.”**

“Kids in the same neighborhood don’t all go to the same schools anymore, and that dilutes the community connection. Younger generations are so absorbed with gadgets they don’t develop the social skills and they don’t want to meet neighbors because they would rather email.”

“Why is it that when the Giants win the World Series there is a sense of community? Why can’t we have that pride or sense of community just by living in a great place?”

“We need to look in the mirror and see what part we play in this. I haven’t knocked on my neighbor’s doors and introduced myself. I need to start with myself and what I can do to fix it.”

“It’s hard to know my neighbors because of the language barrier. We gravitate to our own language and race because it is more comfortable.”

“Kids don’t play in the streets anymore. You see the families who have moved in, and they drive in and close the garage door and you never see anybody. You try to make eye contact and say ‘good morning’ and you get nothing.”

“We used to have a block party, but we haven’t done that in 10 or 15 years.”

*All quotes referenced in this report were taken verbatim from the “kitchen table” community conversations series conducted in conjunction with the project.

Who are my neighbors? What is my community?

While a majority of people in both the phone and online surveys reported that they view their neighborhood as having a “strong sense of community,” 28% of phone survey respondents and 41% of online survey respondents disagreed. In overwhelming numbers in the small-group conversations, people expressed strong desires to get to know their neighbors, to know better how to help improve their children’s schools, to help make the parks safer and cleaner, to teach neighborhood children respect, and to learn more about other cultures. All of these are examples of a desire for more community engagement.

Yet, according to the phone survey, few participate in traditional civic engagement activities (27%) or volunteer (31%), such as serving on a school committee, contacting a public official, or participating in a neighborhood cleanup day. The rate of volunteerism is comparable to national figures, according to the Corporation for National and Community Service. However, many people in the surveys said they do attend social and cultural events, and in the conversations many said they enjoy participating in these types of events that are available in the community. In the surveys, more than half of respondents said they attended at least a few of these events in the past year.

Civic engagement activities generally refer to activities that make a difference in the civic life of our communities and involve individuals developing knowledge, skills, values and motivation to make that difference. It means promoting the quality of life in a community and can be done in numerous formal and informal ways.

In the conversations, people said that culturally relevant and appropriate approaches are a key to engage our ethnically diverse population in creating a stronger sense of community life for everyone. People repeatedly said they don’t know how to go about connecting with other people or with organizational opportunities. Thus, it may be that people don’t know how to connect with others, or have wishes for involvement beyond what they are prepared to carry out. What this means for increasing feelings of community connection among residents will require further investigation to identify what are the actual barriers to their greater engagement.

- » In both surveys and in many conversations, people expressed the strongest feeling of belonging and connection to their friends (this is regardless of where those friends live). This was followed by connection to their work colleagues and/or school mates, and others of similar ethnic background.
- » Survey respondents expressed the strongest affinity with being a part of the Bay Area, as opposed to their neighborhood or city in which they live.
- » Those who participate in civic engagement activities have higher levels of reported happiness. Survey respondents who do participate are 6-8% more likely to report being “very happy” than respondents overall.
- » While a slight majority of young adults get a sense of belonging from their online groups, only 38% of people overall share this view. Thus, using social media can support connectedness strategies, but only for some people.

- » Faith-based organizations may be positioned to play a role in creating community connectedness, yet only for some. The rate of regular church attendance here (24% of phone survey respondents) is much lower than the U.S. average (41% according to a Gallup Survey).
- » Confidence in community institutions (whether financial, government, corporate and/or nonprofit institutions) continues to fall, reflecting a long-standing trend in the country. As an example, the latest Pew Research shows that nationally only about 20% of the public trust the government to “do the right thing most of the time.” Locally, only 20% of residents reported that they “have a great deal” of trust in charities in general.
- » In the phone survey, 49% of residents said they trust the police “a lot.” This compares to 57% nationally, according to Gallup’s study in 2010. Locally, younger residents and people of African-American, Asian, and Hispanic heritage, and foreign-born residents all reported significantly less trust in the police.

Plenty of financial insecurity to go around

*“The cost of living is ridiculous; you do the best that you can.”**

“Working too many jobs, it’s a rat race; there’s no time.”

“A two-income family doesn’t even guarantee stability. You might be okay if you don’t get sick or injured; if you do, you are done in this area.”

“I don’t think you can be stable, not with high tech; nothing is stable.”

“I have purchased a place and have lost it. I don’t have any plans or hopes to ever purchase a house again because it’s so expensive.”

“By the time you reach 40 or 45, you’re old. People don’t feel that secure in high tech.”

“With the salary that I make at this point in my life, I should be able to look forward to purchasing a home, but there is absolutely no way that will ever happen if I stay here.”

*All quotes referenced in this report were taken verbatim from the “kitchen table” community conversations series conducted in conjunction with the project.

Nearly everyone is feeling financially insecure

Despite characterizations of Silicon Valley as a kind of idealized center of wealth and good living by people from outside of our area, in the surveys and in the small-group conversations, many people expressed a sense of financial insecurity and stress. This sense of financial insecurity was found among all groups, and expressed despite the relatively comparable levels of satisfaction in standard of living and happiness levels compared to national statistics. Feeling financially insecure doesn’t have to do with one’s income level, home-ownership status, education level, or financial assets as even highly educated people of significant financial means expressed such concerns. In the conversations,



families at the low end of the income spectrum expressed similar concerns, and face additional stress due to the challenges of meeting basic needs with the high cost of living. Also, not everyone has someone they can turn to for help, especially to help with finances.

In the conversations, people's perceptions about the economy conveyed a sense of fragility, a lack of confidence in the future: "Maybe you're in a better place than in 2008, but it still feels insecure." People often expressed a fear that "I could lose my job tomorrow." Job growth remains erratic, while unemployment and underemployment figures remain at historical highs. New jobs are focused toward high-skilled/high-wage or low-skilled/low-wage workers, not middle-wage earners.

In the conversations, many people described the expectation that they be totally engaged in their work, as "just part of the Silicon Valley culture" and lamented the extra pressures on juggling family life that it creates. And some people expressed that while the strong focus on our incomes, jobs and economic status are a key part of Silicon Valley culture, it is a piece of our culture that is stressful and often uncomfortable for people to talk about with one another.

- » In the phone survey, 82% of people reported being "somewhat" or "very stressed" by something in their life. Residents are most stressed by financial concerns (62%) and work-related concerns (49%). Among online respondents, 74% reported stress about financial concerns.
- » 27% of phone survey respondents said they have no one to turn to for financial support. This figure was even higher for online survey respondents, as 36% reported having no one to turn to for financial support.
- » Comparable to Gallup's national statistics that show 48% of Americans "with a lot of happiness," 47% of phone survey respondents said they are "very happy" about their life.

- » Groups least likely to report being “very happy” include adults ages 35-64, people of Asian ethnicity, people with high school/some college education levels, and people in lower-income households.
- » 1 in 4 phone survey respondents indicated that it is the high cost of living that most takes away from their quality of life.
- » Making ends meet remains a challenge for many people. Over the past decade, research has shown that about 1 in 4 local households struggle to make ends meet. A new study from Working Partnerships USA suggests that with relatively flat wages and rising living costs, that figure could actually be 1 in 3 households that are struggling. In the phone survey, 1 in 10 residents reported going without one or more basic need in the past year. One in 3 residents reported difficulty with the cost of housing.
- » Among the 12% of total phone survey respondents who went without a basic need, the most frequently cited item was forgoing health care: 58% said they went without receiving health care treatment.
- » 10% of overall phone survey respondents reported that they were unable to receive health care they needed in the past year. This was due to a combination of factors: being too expensive, insurance would not cover it, unable to afford premiums, unable to afford co-pays as well as lacking actual insurance.
- » Rents have skyrocketed in Santa Clara County, increasing 12.9% in the last year. In the city of San Jose, rents have increased by 10.1%. In spring of 2012, the countywide average monthly rent had risen to \$1,961.

We are uniquely diverse and growing older fast

*“There are so many cultures represented here. Immigrant stories are rich, but I doubt people know about this.”**

“Because of language barriers, we can’t share information, so maybe there are things going on that we don’t know about that are happening.”

“Who is going to take care of me when I am really old and need help? My kids and grandkids all live back East.”

“What I liked about coming here was all the different races; it’s a lot more interesting than where I came from.”

“Kids are taught, ‘don’t talk to strangers.’ The little kids in my neighborhood seemed afraid of me, an old woman. Until they really got to know me, they had no eye contact. It feels good when they talk to me.”

“Diversity is a good thing for a community. There must be an ability to understand a person to some degree.”

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The Changing Face of Our Community

This county is in the middle of a story of an evolving community related to the size and make-up of the population. Census forecasts project about 300,000 additional people overall in the next 20 years, and a much larger share of the population will be elders. There is no ethnic/racial majority in Santa Clara County, with Whites, Asians, and Hispanics each accounting for about a third of the population.

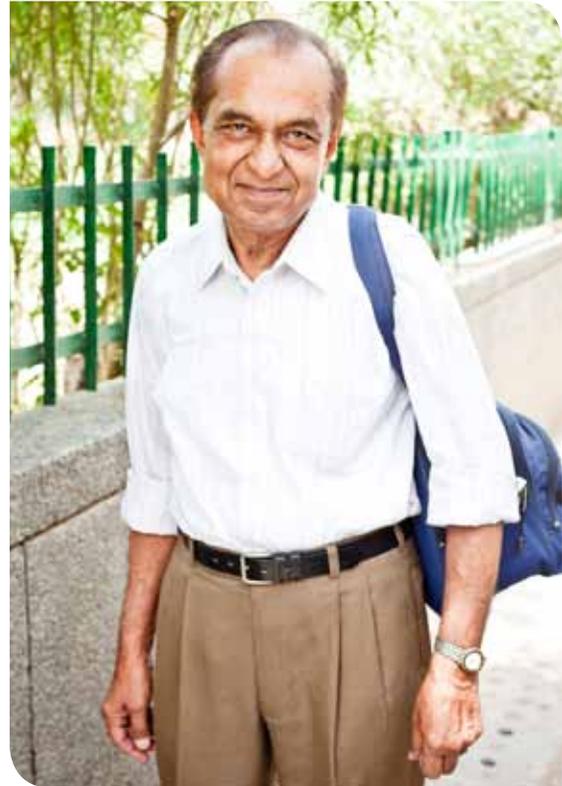
A greater proportion of our children will be of Hispanic and Asian ethnic heritage. While the number of young adults will increase in population, working-age adults will constitute a smaller share of the overall population. There is a belief that more relevant and more competent services and opportunities will be required to respond to those demographic changes in a positive way.

This demographic shift, based on projections of a significantly aging Santa Clara County population, will create employment opportunities in sectors serving the aging population, and in particular, within the healthcare workforce. Some of these jobs can be filled by people with high-school-level education, yet many positions will require post-secondary certifications.

The experiences of aging are varied and affected by culture, ethnicity, economic status and other factors. Living in a multi-generational family and the easy access to caring relatives is common in some cultures and very uncommon in others.

In contrast to the explosive growth over the past 30-40 years, there was a net outflow of the county's population during the late 2000s. Those most likely to go were older residents, people leaving because of affordability, and college-aged residents leaving for college or to find jobs elsewhere.

- » U.S. Census figures show that nearly 40% of residents were born in another country, and a majority of those born elsewhere were from an Asian country.
- » U.S. Census figures indicate the racial/ethnic composition of Santa Clara County is 38% White, 32% Asian, 24% Hispanic, and 2.5% African American.
- » County residents of Asian heritage are most likely to be of Chinese, Vietnamese, Asian Indian, or Filipino ethnicity.
- » By 2030, 25% of Santa Clara County residents will be 60+ years of age (currently they are 15% of the population).
- » The number of people 85 and older, those most likely to need support and long-term services, is projected to grow at a dramatic rate.



- » We are almost a completely “wired community,” with more than 92% of residents reporting that they have internet access in their homes. Of those without internet at home, 35% said they don’t need it, and nearly all others said they access the internet through libraries, work, friends/relatives or their cell phones.
- » Two groups most likely to report not having internet at home still have high degrees of internet access: households with incomes below \$25k (74%), and respondents with less than a high school education (69%).
- » Statistics show that segments of the population experience high levels of social isolation, and this is due to a variety of factors (age, ethnicity, economics, language). In Santa Clara County, 22% of residents identified themselves as having inadequate social support, reporting that they never, rarely or sometimes get the support they need.
- » The Council on Aging Silicon Valley reports that seniors in particular are at high risk for social isolation, as 21% of Santa Clara County seniors live alone, and more than 1 in 4 are over age 75, an age group known to be more likely to experience mobility challenges.

Disparities Create an Invisible Divide

*“I see huge economic disparities. I have a daughter that is thinking of going somewhere else because she can’t afford to live here.”**

“Honestly, the reality is the affluent parts of the community are very disconnected from the community that is not so affluent. There are things available for certain parts and nothing available for others.

“People in Palo Alto have no idea what is going on; they never come to this part of Bay Area. The world ends for them in Sunnyvale.”

“I am surrounded by clients who have a lot of money. I’ve gotten used to it. People don’t feel ‘rich’ until they have \$1 million. This ties into the divide.”

“Kids in this community don’t have opportunity; income inequality is huge in Santa Clara County.”

“I want a community with better teachers, supplies and textbooks. I want a community with less discrimination between different school districts.”

“The Vietnamese community is closed, the Mexican community is closed. We are segregated by neighborhood.”

*All quotes referenced in this report were taken verbatim from the “kitchen table” community conversations series conducted in conjunction with the project.

Vastly Different Quality of Life

Data and surveys suggest there are vast differences in opportunity, access and achievement across a number of indicators. Age, education, race and income are strongly correlated with satisfaction: older, higher-educated, white and higher-income groups are most satisfied with their quality of life. Economic success and quality of life are uneven across ethnicities and geography in Santa Clara County. While countywide averages may appear good, for some quality of life indicators in certain areas of the county are marked by low average household incomes, poor health status of residents, low-quality education in the local schools and high incidence of violent crime. There is a great disparity among residents regarding perceptions of safety. In addition, multiple studies have shown that income and education levels are strongly correlated as social determinants of a person's health.

- » 51% of residents overall expressed being “very satisfied” with their quality of life. And, older residents (67%), Whites (58%), college graduates (60%) and higher-income residents were even more likely to report being satisfied.
- » Age is strongly correlated with levels of quality of life satisfaction: 52% of those over age 65 reported being “very satisfied” with their quality of life, compared to only 32-39% of younger adult age groups.
- » Household income is strongly correlated with quality of life satisfaction: 59% (\$100k+ household income) compared to 35% (less than \$50k household income) said they are “very satisfied.”
- » 20% of households with lower incomes (less than \$20k) reported that crime, violence and drug activity are a major problem in their neighborhoods, as compared to 3% of those with annual incomes of \$75,000 or more.
- » While difficulties with the high cost of housing is widespread (1 in 3 residents reported difficulties), these difficulties are more pronounced among some groups. Half or more of young adults, Hispanics, people with lower levels of education and people with lower incomes (households earning below \$75k) reported having challenges.
- » Homelessness affects more than 7,000 people in the county, and disproportionately affects men (68%), single adults (88%), Latinos (31% of homeless people vs. 24% of the overall population), and African Americans (17% of homeless people vs. 2.5% of the overall population).
- » Half of lower-income residents, one-third of Hispanics and one-third of foreign-born residents reported having no one to turn to for financial assistance.
- » 1 in 5 people overall reported experiencing discrimination or being treated unfairly in the past year. Young people (under age 35), Hispanics and African Americans reported much higher rates of discrimination.
- » Education achievement is uneven across geography. The Portrait of California report showed the combined cities of Cupertino, Saratoga and Los Gatos have the highest percentage of residents with at least a bachelor's degree at 70.8%, followed closely by Los Altos, Mountain View and Palo Alto, grouping at 69.7%. This compares to U.S. Census numbers that indicate citywide, only 37% of San Jose adults have at least a bachelor's degree.

Recommendations

Based on what has been learned, we believe the themes identified here are very much interconnected, and improving the status of any one of them can be a positive force for improving the status of the others. Residents can benefit from greater connections to one another, a strengthened sense of economic security, reductions in quality of life disparities, and community institutions better prepared and capable of supporting the evolving demographic make-up of the county. Changing the community's current conditions will likely require a mix of approaches that include policy, programmatic and personal actions. Some of the emerging ideas for these actions are listed below. Some still need further analysis.

Principles for Action

From the analysis of secondary data reports, consistent ideas emerged about how to strengthen the community and the quality of life for more people. The principles that follow came from varied sources ranging from kitchen table conversation participants to local subject matter experts.

- » Community organizations and institutions are more experienced at delivering on concrete strategies to improve health status, economic conditions, and/or educational outcomes. It appears that addressing “less concrete” matters such as increasing community connectedness and quality of life satisfaction levels will require a different mix of strategies.
- » Further listening is needed to better understand and learn what it will take to foster and promote individual action that results in higher levels of community connectedness. How can barriers be overcome that make it hard for people to connect?
- » New approaches to inspire volunteerism and civic engagement activities are needed and have potential to be important tools in growing community connectedness and changing conditions.
- » The rich diversity of our community requires multiple approaches to effectively engage the range and mix of residents in a culturally competent manner.
- » Local institutions, organizations and policymakers have a role to play in keeping the community moving forward.
- » The collective action of the residents themselves, not the actions of institutions, may be the key to making positive and lasting change. Community change occurs in living rooms, around kitchen tables, and in neighborhood yards. A range of actions that individuals can take are also listed below. The notion that “It’s up to us” may prove to be the key take-away from the Community Assessment Project.

Many positive attributes of this community exist and must be built upon: a relatively robust economy, lots of individual wealth, a diverse mix of ethnicities and cultures, access to quality higher education facilities, nearby places of cultural interest, the good climate, numerous opportunities for year-round outdoor activities and more.

What follows are just a few examples of what we can do, regardless of our role or position, in the community. After all, if things are going to be any different from the way they are now, **it’s going to be up to us.**

What You Can Do

Around Your Home

- » Interact with your neighbors. Share fruits, vegetables or baked goods from your home. Make a point to welcome new residents. Invite your neighbors to join you in a walking group.
- » Say “hello” to young people in your neighborhood. Get to know them by name. Ask them for help with yard work or bringing in trash cans when you’re away. For very young children, keep chalk handy near your front yard and offer it for sidewalk art.
- » Keep your front yard tidy. A clean appearance is inviting to neighbors and promotes community pride.
- » Answer public survey questionnaires.

Around Your Neighborhood

- » Invite neighbors to join you for an hour of neighborhood cleanup and enjoy snacks together, or organize a multi-family garage sale and donate a portion of the proceeds to the local school or library. Host a block party or other activity where people connect informally with one another.
- » Set up an online communication group just for the people who live close by.
- » Institute a neighborhood watch where you live as a way to deter crime, improve neighbor interaction and increase communication.
- » Clean up after your dog and make sure all of your trash gets tossed in a waste can when you’re in public. Taking responsibility builds good will among neighbors.
- » Gather trash during outings to parks or walks in your neighborhood.
- » Rush to the aid of accident and street-crime victims and testify as a witness later in court.
- » Pursue instances of injustice by protesting these to the authorities or the media. Call the police if a traffic law is regularly ignored by drivers in your neighborhood. Call the City Arborist if you have concerns about a big shade tree scheduled for removal.

In Your Community

- » Experience our rich cultural diversity by frequenting locally owned ethnic businesses and performing arts organizations.
- » When you notice someone showing extra kindness or care in their job, like a grocery clerk, teacher or police officer, thank that person and ask for the name of his or her boss. Write a note to the boss commending their actions.
- » Vote in or run for elections. Volunteer for a candidate you believe in, and keep tabs on the past and present track record of those elected.
- » Attend a school board or council meeting on issues affecting your family or your neighborhood.
- » Insist on fiscal transparency. Know what your tax dollars are funding and how it impacts your community.

- » Volunteer your time at a school, senior center, youth agency, food pantry or other nonprofit agency on a regular basis.
- » Speak up on behalf of those who may not have a voice (children, frail elders, homeless people, people with disabilities, undocumented residents, etc.).
- » Support engaged school principals. Introduce yourself and help them better understand the neighborhood and the community's strengths. Encourage principals to utilize those strengths to work with parents to improve children's education.
- » Donate blood from time to time to stave off shortages at blood banks.
- » Greet your postal carrier and other delivery people.

What Organizations Can Do

Businesses

- » Provide leadership in creating thriving communities. This will help recruit and retain employees.
- » Build a sense of community-connectedness among employees and their families, especially with newcomers.
- » Commit to continued investments in strengthening this community to foster the next generation of workers.
- » Support opportunities for employees to improve their health and wellness.
- » Encourage and support employees' efforts to take advantage of community volunteering opportunities.

Philanthropic Groups

- » Narrow the focus and deeply invest in key communities that most contribute to inequities.
- » Educate donors about the disparities facing people who live in high-needs/low-income communities and what can be done to support their successes.
- » Use your resources and expertise to address family social and economic challenges that create obstacles to student educational achievement.

Service Providers

- » Make broadly available information about community resources, whether for those looking for help or those people wanting to help others.
- » Expand quality after-school programs that help busy working parents, often with multiple jobs, keep kids occupied in safe, fun and creative educational activities. Provide academic support to students who need help. Offer programs with easy access for youth and their families. Expand youth sports programs that divert youthful energy into healthy teamwork activities.
- » Expand English-language skills, early-literacy and computer-literacy programs that help immigrant parents become better partners in their children's education.

- » Offer programs and activities that support families in a range of areas such as child development, elder care and overall health and wellness.
- » Improve interagency communication and strengthen relationships between organizations. Working collaboratively with one another is imperative.

Public Entities

- » Expand opportunities for cultural events highlighting the county’s rich diversity that are welcoming to (and attended by) a full of range of people.
- » Ensure that libraries and community centers are open and available to people when residents can utilize them.
- » Ensure that local parks, trails and neighborhoods are well-cared for and safe. These are our great natural resources. Increase access to safe recreational and walkable areas and support strategies promoting regular physical activity that can reduce obesity.
- » Expand assistance for enrolling in public and government benefits, ensuring that local families maximize access to income, health and social supports.
- » Provide information on accessing community resources, and make them available in multiple Asian languages and Spanish, in addition to English.
- » Ensure all children have access to quality early-learning opportunities, whether at home, with relatives or at child care facilities. Strengthen “kindergarten academic” and “self regulation” levels before children enter kindergarten to increase academic success by third grade.
- » Provide in-classroom and family supports to keep students learning on track. Focus efforts especially on students from families with low socioeconomic status.
- » Increase cross-cultural and linguistic proficiency of health, wellness and educational providers across the spectrum to deliver services in a culturally proficient manner.

What Policymakers Can Do

- » **Expand publicly provided work supports** that assist families living below economic self-sufficiency (which means having to forego one basic need for another). Work supports such as the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and other tax credits, child care subsidies and supports for housing, transportation and health care are effective in increasing post-tax incomes for working families.
- » **Expand job training and apprenticeship opportunities.** Getting people into the workforce with transferable skills and paid at livable wages puts them on the road to economic success.
- » **Expand policies that encourage savings.** Whether for retirement, education or starting a small business, policies and programs that encourage and provide incentives for families to build assets will benefit the whole community in the long run and help them overcome unexpected financial crises. Children’s matched savings accounts are a long-range strategy, and have been shown to significantly increase the likelihood that youth will successfully graduate from high school and go on to some form of post-secondary education.

- » **Support policies that result in increase educational attainment.** Indisputably, individuals and families with higher educational achievement can provide for themselves much better. Any and all strategies to increase educational levels for all racial and ethnic groups are needed.
- » **Restore funding levels for local school districts** to national and state averages. All local schools need more resources to help children achieve. The huge funding disparity among local districts needs to be remedied.
- » **Ensure that vocational and career opportunities are incorporated** into K-12 curriculum.
- » **Advocate for a culturally competent implementation of the Federal Affordable Care Act**, and support local policy and programmatic efforts to increase the availability of affordable primary health care for everyone.
- » **Ensure the local Children’s Health Initiative stays fiscally strong.** Currently, 94% of local children are enrolled in health insurance, increasing their opportunity to receive care.
- » **Increase funding for safety-net services, especially for families and seniors.** This includes nutrition, transportation, housing, legal services, and in-home support and programs.
- » **Support efforts that promote an integrated system of long-term supports and services (LTSS)** for older adults and people with disabilities so that they can remain living independently in the community.
- » **Advocate for restored funding to family caregiver programs** to support individuals who are caring for children, elders or disabled loved ones.

For more information about the 2012 Santa Clara County Community Assessment Project and how you can get involved in your community, go to www.scc-cap.org or contact us at info@scc-cap.org.

2012 Santa Clara County Community Assessment Project Team

Steering Committee

Elizabeth Sills	Kaiser Permanente, Co-Chair
Vanessa Cooper	Housing Authority of the County of Santa Clara, Co-Chair
Anne Ehresman	Project Cornerstone
Carole Leigh Hutton	United Way Silicon Valley
Cora Tomalinas	First 5 Commissioner
Dana McQuary	Santa Clara County Social Services Agency
David Brody	First 5
Eileen Consiglio	IBM
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Jennifer Thrift	O'Connor Hospital
Jessica Garcia-Kohl	Rocketship Schools
Jessica Mancini	The David & Lucile Packard Foundation
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Michele Lew	Asian Americans for Community Involvement
Mindy Berkowitz	Jewish Family Services
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Todd Hansen	The Health Trust

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Sponsors

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Project Partners

Santa Clara County Public Health Department, San Jose State University, IBM, Applied Survey Research, Santa Clara County Office of Education, Housing Authority of Santa Clara County, Bank of America, Texas Instruments, Santa Clara County Social Services Agency, City of San Jose Economic Development Department, Raimi Associates, Microsoft, and many community organizations.

The entire body of data, including all information sources from the surveys, secondary data report reviews and community conversations are available at the Community Assessment Project's website at www.scc-cap.org.



www.scc-cap.org