

Community Economic Development Strategic Conversation Proceedings September 27, 2007

South San Francisco Conference Center
255 South Airport Boulevard
South San Francisco, California 94080

This document summarizes key themes and discussion points shared during the Community Economic Development strategic conversation held as part of Silicon Valley Community Foundation's Community Input Project. This was the fourth of nine strategic conversations convened by the community foundation as part of this project. A total of 32 participants attended the convening, representing community development agencies, philanthropic organizations, community advocates, employment training specialist and others engaged in community economic development activities in the region. In addition, various representatives of the community foundation's board of directors and leadership team attended this convening, including CEO and President, Emmett Carson, Chief of Donor Engagement and Giving, Eleanor Clement Glass, Vice President, Community Initiatives, Convening and Research, Erica Wood and Vice President, Grantmaking, Ellen Clear.

Overview of the Community Input Project

Silicon Valley Community Foundation is committed to the best ideas and most effective solutions—at the local and the regional levels. With those goals in mind, the community foundation has initiated the Community Input Project, a series of strategic conversations, data review, and community surveying around needs and issues that matter most. The issues were selected based on a review of local data, the many excellent assessments available about the health, social and environmental concerns in the region, and issues community members and leaders have raised.

The community foundation anticipates this process will spur a greater interest in regional partnerships as well as strategic solutions for meaningful, lasting and transformative change. The community foundation's board of directors will take the results into consideration when making decisions about future directions and strategies.

This project focuses on the following nine issue areas:

- Arts and Culture
- Child and Youth Development
- Civic Engagement
- Community Economic Development
- Education
- Environment
- Health
- Housing and Basic Needs
- Immigration

Structure of the Strategic Conversations

Each strategic conversation follows a similar model, designed to provide participants with a common context and framing for productive discussion. Community foundation staff opens the session with a welcome and overview, and then introduces a keynote speaker who delivers an inspirational presentation with the goal of creating a sense of energy and purpose for the group's conversations to follow.

Participants engage in direct conversation with each other and the community foundation through facilitated small-group discussions organized around the key issues identified in the issue briefs prepared in advance of the conversation. Issue briefs are available for download at www.siliconvalleycf.org. These small-group discussions are generative in nature, as participants respond to two key questions:

- What are region's key issues in the area under examination for today's conversation?
- What are the most promising solutions and ripe opportunities for significant impact?

Participants reconvene as a large group following the small-group discussions to engage in integrative thinking. As a large group, participants share "big ideas" and strategies to impact the region's most critical issues.

All aspects of the conversations are recorded and synthesized for the community foundation to take under consideration.

Keynote Presentation and Subject Matter Experts

Bob Friedman general counsel, founder and chair of the board of Corporation for Enterprise Development, also known as CFED, provided the keynote address for the community economic development conversation. Based in San Francisco, Friedman also serves on the boards of CFED's community development financial institution subsidiary, the National Fund for Enterprise Development, Levi Strauss & Co., Ecotrust, the Rosenberg Foundation and the Friedman Family Foundation.

Mr. Friedman's comments—informed by his 30 years of experience in economic and asset development as well as results from the California Scorecard (a statistical profile ranking county performance in five categories related to community economic development)—addressed the following five key points:

1. Community economic development should create pathways into the mainstream economy for low-income people as entrepreneurs and full participants in economic opportunity.
2. Assets are more a function of policy than income and are unequally distributed in this economy.

3. Certain populations—African-Americans in particular—are disproportionately affected by policy decisions that impact asset accumulation and therefore lifetime economic opportunity.
4. Overall, the current status of key indicators for community economic development in California as a whole and Silicon Valley specifically is unacceptable.
5. Business development for families is a strategy that is often overlooked and has tremendous potential.

Issues for Discussion: Pressing Needs and Opportunities for Impact

The three issues for discussion that participants engaged with in the community economic development conversation were:

1. Asset Building Strategies
2. Private Industry and Investment
3. Workforce Development and Readiness

The following summarizes the top-level themes from the small-group discussions on these topics.

Asset-Building Strategies

Pressing Needs

- Poor financial literacy among individuals and the public agencies that serve them related to maximizing and preserving assets while managing debt and tax liability
- Lack of affordable housing and non-predatory mortgage options
- Lack of investment from the state in local asset-building strategies
- Limited understanding and definition of “asset-building” and its implications for specific populations
- Non-existent comprehensive public policy platform or regional approach

Promising Solutions and Opportunities for Impact

- Identify and incubate strategies that are unique to specific neighborhoods that support community asset development
- Opportunity to assist youth exiting foster care to access resources to support self-sufficiency
- Encourage local purchasing and first-search hiring practices by cities and counties
- Engage in policy advocacy to address issues related to home ownership, rental housing availability, property taxes, earned income tax credits, etc.
- Support enterprise development as a form of equity

Private Industry and Investment

Pressing Needs

- Significant barriers prevent entry into entrepreneurial or business development opportunities
- Lack of employment options with a livable wage
- Lack of affordable housing, public transportation, health insurance, health care and child care
- Stagnant wages for existing jobs and new jobs do not pay a living wage
- Lack of career ladders and opportunities for training
- Difficulty in accessing existing funds to support employment training and job readiness skill development
- Challenge for communities to understand and utilize existing law to support redevelopment efforts

Promising Solutions and Opportunities for Impact

- Research policy solutions to the transfer of public wealth into private hands
- Establish “corporate colleges,” which bring education to workers in the workplace
- Foster local responsibility and ownership among local donors and investors
- Expand green businesses and related enterprises
- Encourage collaboration across sectors, including employers, nonprofit organizations, developers and educational entities
- Identify existing models for applicability to regional approach
- Build on community awareness and interest
- Reinvigorate socially responsible investments

Workforce Development and Readiness

Pressing Needs

- Low high school and college attainment levels for certain populations
- Lack of affordable housing for homeless families that are transitioning through employment and training assistance
- Lack of a comprehensive and inclusive approach to asset attainment at the policy level
- Lack of supportive services to complement job training and career development efforts
- Insufficient number of living wage employment options in particular sectors
- Shortage of available child care for individuals and families
- Poor alignment between job training services and viable employment options

Promising Solutions and Opportunities for Impact

- Opportunity to work with and in schools to identify and connect out-of-school youth as well as those who have been recently incarcerated
- Develop and provide apprenticeships and other vocational training opportunities
- Provide employer incentives for training
- Issue of education is on state and federal political platform
- Increasing support for leadership development
- Linking land use policies, business development and employment training
- Expand financial literacy

Participants' Overarching Suggestions

Building on the ideas and discussions generated during the facilitated small group rotations, participants shared their overarching suggestions that are at the intersection of critical issues, ripe opportunities and potential for meaningful impact. The following provides a summary overview of these suggestions. Please note that there may be overlap with ideas generated in the small-group discussions previously summarized and some ideas may have been subsumed or categorized with others to reduce redundancies. It is also important to bear in mind that these overarching suggestions are not only for Silicon Valley Community Foundation's consideration, but also for all those who are interested in and support community economic development in the region.

Summary of Overarching Suggestions

- Develop faster model land use policies that require industry, cities and counties to emphasize sustainable and equitable development strategies
- Design a regional public policy and advocacy campaign to build coalitions across sectors to influence Sacramento and beyond
- Invest in building collaborative approaches to sector-based workforce development with emphasis on investment in relevant workforce training, incumbent worker training and regional workforce development strategies
- Support service learning, training and apprenticeship opportunities through increased collaboration among colleges, unions, employers and the community
- Research the connections to educational opportunities for people to make a living wage
- Invest in workforce development with wrap-around support services, targeting sectors with growing demand of workers with a career pathway for disadvantaged people and low-wage workers as well as developing a legal framework to address the status of immigrants that support the economy
- Expand and connect asset-building efforts including individual development accounts, children's saving accounts and employer-matched savings programs. Lobby California to produce and rationalize the state's asset-building tax incentives so that low- and moderate-income Californians can save through this asset-building incentive
- Bring corporate leadership to the table to assist in developing policy for development affecting low-income persons

Next Steps

Silicon Valley Community Foundation staff is reviewing and analyzing content from all nine strategic conversations, alongside results from a community survey and comprehensive review of local studies, to provide recommendations for the board of directors to consider in determining future community impact work. These recommendations will encompass the variety of ways in which the community foundation can achieve impact, including grantmaking, initiatives, convening, research, donor engagement and policy/advocacy efforts.

For more information, to download the issue brief for the conversation or to access an archived webcast presentation of the keynote address, please visit our website at www.siliconvalleycf.org. You can also email questions, comments or suggestions to Charu Seth, administrative assistant at cseth@siliconvalleycf.org.