Building Strong Communities

Community Conversation Proceedings

October 28, 2016
Mitchell Park Community Center
El Palo Alto Room, 3700 Middlefield Road
Palo Alto, California

Background

This document summarizes key themes and discussion points shared during the Building Strong Communities community conversation as part of Silicon Valley Community Foundation's Grantmaking Review process. This is the second of six community conversations convened by the community foundation as part of this project. A total of 91 participants attended the convening, representing public agencies, board members, housing, transportation and regional planning nonprofit organizations. In addition, various representatives of SVCF's leadership team attended the community conversation, including CEO and President, Emmett Carson, Chief Community Impact Officer, Erica Wood, and Manuel Santamaría, Vice President, Strategic Initiatives and Grantmaking.

OVERVIEW OF GRANTMAKING REVIEW PROCESS

The grantmaking strategic review process is intended to be both a look back at what SVCF has achieved with its grantmaking investments since 2008, as well as a look forward to assess and understand where there are emerging opportunities for SVCF to make a positive difference for our community through grantmaking. The review process will provide SVCF's staff and board of directors with the information necessary to determine whether to stay the course with our grantmaking, make adjustments or direct our investments to new strategic areas of concern. Decisions based on this review process will be announced in October 2017.

STRUCTURE OF COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

Each community conversation follows a similar model, designed to provide participants with a common context and framing for productive discussion. SVCF's CEO and President, Emmett Carson, and Chief Community Impact Officer, Erica Wood, opened the conversation with a welcome; provided an overview of SVCF's impact data related to land use, transportation and regional planning; and introduced the three critical questions participants were being asked to discuss:

- What are the most effective solutions to our region's housing, transportation and community development challenges?
- How can we more effectively remove structural barriers [public policy, financing resources, cross-sector silos, etc.] to support affordable housing, transit-oriented development, quality public transit and sustainable community development?
- What creative, innovative or non-traditional approaches might we consider to advance progress in the housing, transportation and the community development landscape?

Shiree Teng and Miguel Gavaldon of the consulting team, Teng & Smith, Inc., provided instructions on the expectations and group agreements for breakout circles. Participants were invited to self-select one group to engage in direct conversations with each other through facilitated small-group discussions and rotate after a 40 minute discussion to provide the opportunity to answer two of the three questions.

SVCF staff was present in the breakout circles as either notetakers/scribes or listeners only. After small group discussions ended, participants reconvened as a large group where SVCF staff provided information about next steps in the grantmaking review process and reminded participants to check www.siliconvallecf.org/svcfgrants for more information. All aspects of the conversations were recorded by notetakers and then synthesized for the community foundation to take under consideration.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION THEMES

Participants welcomed the opportunity to share and connect with each other and to provide input by focusing on the field of land use, transportation and regional planning as a whole and not just specifically on one issue or as one nonprofit in one sector of the issue. Teng and Smith, Inc. transcribed participants' post-it notes, as well as the notetakers'/scribes' own observations and reflections, providing for a rich and detailed summation of each question.

Given the wealth of information gathered, SVCF decided to organize the data to be most faithful to participants' ideas, which are presented in the following pages. However, the most common themes of recommendations of how SVCF can use its influence in the sector were:

- Incubate, develop and advocate for innovative solutions and efforts in the affordable housing arena for the region, while also taking an active role in creating funding for development of affordable housing, whether it is through policy, advocacy, brokering partnerships, or grants.

- Create and act as a platform for a regional agenda and voice for sustainability and affordable housing. This includes research, convening and lifting up best practices in sustainability, smart growth, complete neighborhoods, and equitable growth from around the nation and the world.

- Act as a platform to connect cross-sector players and build bridges among and between non-profits, government, and the private sector.

- Strengthen capacity for civic engagement in the public sector, private sector, and in communities.

- Think long-term, multi-year funding for outcomes and innovation to undergird sustainability of campaigns, projects, and partnerships.

Conversation Summaries

The group discussions identified further pressing needs and opportunities for greater impact in our region. The following section summarizes discussion for each critical question in an overview of the conversation and reflections of SVCF to influence land use, transportation and regional planning in Silicon Valley.

Please note that the detailed notes for each conversation are available in a separate appendix. They reflect the actual comments and feedback from the participants from this community conversation and may not reflect the opinions or future plans of the community foundation.

QUESTION ONE

What are the most effective solutions to our region's housing, transportation and community development challenges?

(Five breakout circles; total of 36 participants)

Overview of Conversation

Key themes gathered from scribe summaries

Housing

- *Focus on affordable housing*. Participants call out the need for affordable housing, and ask that affordable housing be prioritized in the policy arena with relevant definitions of "affordable" and clearly defined goals for proportion of affordable housing relative to overall housing stock. Beginning with an inventory of housing stock and existing/projected household demographics, they want to see a strong strategic effort to increase affordable housing – both owner and renter occupied - in the region for a diverse range of low to medium income households. Strategies to increase affordable housing include: impact fees assessed on developers and corporations; zoning and planning tools; land trusts; moving housing permanently out of the private market "de-commodification of housing" into land trust, or in the control of non-profits, cooperatives, or city governments.

- *Foster immediate interventions to mitigate the housing crisis and to slow the rate of evictions of low and medium income households*. This includes supporting implementation of rent control ordinances, facilitating the connections between households facing eviction and legal resources/recourse, working with landlords to incentivize provision of affordable housing instead of market rate housing or more lucrative Airbnb rentals, and examining city codes and regulations for the potential to make changes that allow for second units for rental.

- *Produce funding for affordable housing in the region*. With reference to the loss of State redevelopment funds, participants highlight the need for seed, bridge and general funding for affordable housing. They offer different strategies for raising funds including impact/development fees.

- *Thorough and holistic, in approach and impact.* Good design for affordable housing that puts nature and public lands at their center, and creates jobs with good wages. Tie affordability to the cost of living in the region. Examine affordability criteria, affordable for whom?

Transportation

- *Encourage development that reduces driving.* Participants want to see development that reduces driving by virtue of location and design; they want to see more transit-oriented development, more density, less sprawl, more complete neighborhoods with all aspects of life – school, work, shopping, etc. - in close proximity to home, more design that encourages walking and biking, and more smart growth.

- *Transit.* Increase planning and funding to make transit a viable option. Increase frequency of transit along key corridors, problem solve to resolve the "last mile" issues that inhibit the use of transit and shared transportation, align transportation resources with desired outcomes, e.g. more buses.

- *Employers.* Work with employers to incentivize, recognize, value, encourage telecommuting jobs, including employer paid public transit.

Make Equity Central to Local and Regional Planning and Policy

- *Work intensively at the local level to increase equity using planning tools and instruments.* Support municipalities to advocate more strongly for equity and sustainability in their General Plans and zoning, workforce agreements and community benefit agreements.

- *Regional voice and platform. Foster a regional perspective*, to advocate for regional policy and resource allocation that balances housing, jobs, education and transportation.

- *Research and lift up best practices in equitable sustainable development, from around the nation and the world.*

- *Increase connection and communication among institutional players.* Connect to enable and strengthen collaboration. Map who's doing what where and understand the changing needs of the region. Support organizations/agencies to talk more to each other to encourage and enable partnerships. Fund partnerships. Build on existing, effective organizations and coalitions. Help organizations differentiate among themselves, share their stories, to determine who can add value where and to share learning.

- *Align the use of public resources with public good.* Examine how public resources – open space, transit, and infrastructure – are deployed in service to economic development. Utilize these to further equity issues such as affordable housing, sustainable development, etc. rather than or in addition to corporate well-being.

Workforce Development and Create a Livable Jobs Pipeline

- *Continue to build the pipeline of good working and middle class jobs.* Create good local, livable jobs for working people. Tie base wages to a high cost of living regional context and work to increase compensation for lower and mid paying jobs to increase working families' ability to afford to remain in the region.

Mobilize Public Will and Cultivate Civic Engagement for Change

- *People power.* Build community voice and capacity to advocate and participate in public processes around development, displacement and transportation. Build the capacity of leaders in communities and nonprofits for community and political engagement with a focus on disenfranchised communities taking the lead.

- *Cultivate public will and people power for a change in culture, ethos, hearts and minds*. Use messaging, storytelling and education to help to frame public understanding and investment in a more equitable, sustainable region.

- *There is a role for corporate responsibility and leadership.* Promote, leverage and incentivize a greater role and understanding among corporate leaders in balancing or minimizing the ways they negatively impact transportation, housing and equity for all in Silicon Valley.

Reflections on the Role for SVCF

- *Take immediate action, interventions to slow or halt displacement*, and to retain low and middle-income households in the region.

- Create and act as a platform for a *regional agenda and voice for sustainability* and affordability.

- *Cultivate public will and people power for a change in culture, ethos, hearts and minds.* Messaging, help to frame public understanding and investment in a more equitable, sustainable region.

- *Think big and fund big.* Long-term multi-year funding for outcomes and innovation, to undergird sustainability of campaigns, projects and partnerships. It is difficult to work on large-scale issues with one-year parameters. Expand to multi-year resources.

- *Augment and seed funding for affordable housing in the region.* Take an active role in creating funding for developing affordable housing, whether it be through policy, advocacy, brokering partnerships or actual funds.

- *Research, gather and lift up best practices in sustainability, smart growth, complete neighborhoods and equitable growth* from around the nation and the world. Disseminate among donors and governmental bodies. Generate research and innovation in social justice.

- *Bring together environmental, equity, business, government and other players to craft a shared roadmap.* Connect groups that are working on these different issues so they are working in concert to amplify outcomes.

- *Strengthen capacity for civic engagement.* Mend and strengthen the fabric and paths of civic engagement in relation to governmental bodies.

QUESTION TWO

How can we more effectively remove structural barriers [public policy, financing resources, cross-sector silos, etc.] to support affordable housing, transit-oriented development, quality public transit, and sustainable community development?

(Six breakout circles; total of 49 participants)

Overview of Conversation

Key themes gathered from scribe summaries

Define the structural barriers

- *Initial reflections*. It was beneficial for participants to initially look at the question and dissect it, first defining structural barriers related to affordable housing, transit, transportation and community development. Participants emphasized being honest, bold and holistic in identifying real barriers: corporate impact/responsibility, tax structure incentives, community ownership and investment, lack of engagement, as well as economic, jobs and workforce issues.

Incentivize to Build Capacity & Collaborative Partnerships

- *For communities and organizations*. Participants want to see engagement, leadership development, and capacity building at the community level to raise grassroots level policy influence. This includes education and awareness-building for community members and actual riders that represent low-income, youth, disabled, seniors, etc., and marketing to voters. For nonprofits and community based organizations, this means being paired with resources and capacity, changing 501c3 status to enable organizations to engage in lobbying/campaigning, breaking silos and making connections across policy areas.

- *For regional and cross-sector governance*. Cities are in competition with each other, catalyzing isolation and anti-regionalization sentiment. To remedy this, participants shared ideas on collective regional impact among local jurisdictions and public agencies. Coalition partnerships should be funded and incentivized to result in increased regional power. Participants focused on capacity building, funding and convenings to promote cross-sector collaboration.

Equity / Inclusion

- *Identify who is missing from the conversation*. In terms of inclusion, there is a need for larger agencies to reflect the communities they serve, i.e. low-income, immigrant and other groups. Demographically diverse community members need to be part of decision-making bodies. Removing structural barriers requires analysis and understanding of inequality across public endeavors and racial-economic segregation in planning processes.

- *Increase participation from those traditionally less involved*. Participants listed ways to support inclusion of those traditionally less involved. Ideas include investing in youth leadership development, building "yes in my backyard" constituents, embedding equity measures into government decision-making, changing models of community participation, pathways to citizenship and voting, as well as community education on land use, housing, transportation and public schools.

Housing

- *Funding Barriers.* Addressing housing barriers in terms of funding, participants listed: regional housing trust fund, housing linkage fees, tax structures and financial resources as ways to meet regional housing allocation needs. This is indicative of city/regional governance playing a key role in removing structural barriers in housing.

- *Update codes, standards and ways of thinking in housing development.* Participants want to see change in developers' willingness to create more affordable housing as well as shift institutional understanding and accountability of systemic inequities in housing. Updates are needed for outdated building codes which place limits on development.

- *Housing Policy.* Costa Hawkins state law, the Ellis Act, Proposition 13 received resounding attention from participants, highlighting needs to tackle structural barriers via these policies.

- *Policy & Private Interest Barriers.* The real estate industry represents a structural barrier in affordable housing with significant interests and influence on policy-making. Private interests have the tendency to impose NIMBY (not in my backyard) interests on public policymakers. Honest economic analysis of how private and public investment works in the region is a possible avenue to remedy these structural barriers.

Transit / Transportation Planning

- *Understand connections between jobs & housing and the role they play in transit.* Density of jobs and quality local job creation are named factors impacting housing and transit planning. Ask what the economic incentives are for cities to add more housing. Ask what self-sustaining models of community exist. Participants listed first analyzing these issues then setting goals and funding linked to jobs, housing and transportation. Investing locally and regionally to reduce people and traffic was a resounding theme.

- *Transform transit pricing structure and mindset (assumptions).* Create volume transit pricing structure for low-income workers. Change solutions mindset and political will in a more effective Bay Area public transit system. Expand long-term strategy and funding investments for sustainability. Tie transportation funds to local government performance in approving affordable housing near transit hubs.

Reform Regional Governance

- *Focus on regional approaches to planning.* Reconcile local need and unions as a way to prioritize housing and development. Reform regional planning and governance, i.e. MTC, ABAG. Keep public resources (public land, affordable housing, public transportation) public. Look to opportunities for ballot measures in 2018. How do we create new mobility and new governance models?

Influence / Increase Political Will

- *Look deeper at private/public sector roles for areas of improvement and potential change.* Need political will and commitments to make outcomes equitable. Unlikely partnerships (could be formed) to create public will and political power for equity-oriented housing plans and transportation community groups, faith, business, CDFIs, developers, labor and schools. Change public perception around affordable housing and who lives in it. Persuade local governments that transit-oriented development, housing and public transit are beneficial to them. Incentivize housing development and incentivize government leaders by rewarding those who demonstrate leadership in funding transportation and affordable housing.

Reflections on the Role for SVCF

- *Hold Private Sector Accountable.* Reflect on the private sector's responsibility and involvement politically, financially, etc. Make private corporations pay for community impacts. Unleash opportunity for private

sector (i.e. Lyft, Uber) to help deliver public transit, serve areas that are not profitable for public transit. Increase venture philanthropy and tech resources. Tell businesses to go where the people are.

- *Commit to long-haul planning to address issues over* time. Tie community perspectives / needs to long-term technical planning and impact. Find long-term solutions by holding more convenings (think on a seven-year funding cycle). Participants called attention to lengthening commitments to funding and addressing issues over time being mindful of how long it takes to create lasting change.

- *SVCF's role as convener.* SVCF must leverage its influence as a convener to align policy-related philanthropy, NGOs, input groups, government and businesses around big policy initiatives, region-wide. SVCF and partners can be community counterpart for tech sector thinking about jobs long-term. SVCF has a unique role in reducing barriers. Proactively funding collaborations, fund organizations that might be seen as opposition.

QUESTION THREE

What creative, innovative, or non-traditional approaches might we consider to advance progress in the housing, transportation and the community development landscape?

(Five breakout circles; total of 38 participants)

Overview of Conversation

Key themes gathered from scribe summaries

Transform community engagement and build political will

- *Transform community engagement by fostering new conversations:* Foster new kinds of conversations among diverse stakeholders about regional issues and solutions. Create safe spaces to promote honest communication and trust, to allow people with a range of power valences to express themselves away from position driven arenas such as city council chambers. Frame conversations proactively, future-oriented, focused on what is possible rather than limitations, concerns, fears about what will be lost. Root conversations in something tangible rather than abstract plans. Disrupt the linkages between elected officials and moneyed elite in the region; create new political pathways that are more reflective of low to medium income populations of color. "Break out of 1950's planning paradigm."

- *Build broader more diverse participation and representation in democratic public processes around transportation, housing and land use.* Especially, build over time new leadership that is rooted in low to medium income communities of color. Renew and mend community engagement pathways using technology and fresh thinking.

- *Change hearts and minds, generate public will for change through storytelling, shifting narrative, and increasing understanding across social lines.* Participants recommend that narratives around issues such as density and linkages between housing and schools be interrogated and disrupted to be reframed and shifted to be more accurate. Use creative strategies, such as film, gaming and competitions to increase empathy and understanding across socio-economic lines. Foster shared values by helping to create a new identity for Silicon Valley rooted in quality of life, equity and sustainability. Find allies, such as health departments, to help reframe hot button issues of equity and sustainability – housing and transportation - around health and well-being. Recognize all the innovation that is happening already, and build political will to support existing solutions in place.

Housing

- *Focus on developing affordable housing for specific segments of the workforce.* Work to identify specific low to middle income worker groups that are in danger of displacement due to the region's housing affordability crisis. Forge new partnerships, e.g. with school districts, to develop housing for workers segments such as government workers, teachers and non-profit workers. Develop affordable housing to anchor these essential workers in the region and close to their work.

- *Locate creative funding for affordable housing.* Identify and leverage new sources of funding for affordable housing such as public agency pension funds, regional taxes, and corporate contributions to build and preserve affordable housing in the region.

- *Intervene in the housing market to encourage increased supply of affordable housing.* Use a combination of tools to preserve and grow the supply of affordable housing. "DE commoditize" housing by taking it out of the market through land trusts or banks and by supporting nonprofits to buy new and old housing stock for affordable housing. Incentivize landlords to rent below market. Encourage cooperative and

collective ownership. Increase shared housing and shift away from the single-family home ownership model.

Transportation and Transit

- *Regional Conversations and Solutions.* A regional outlook and coordination is critical in planning to address transportation needs and challenges in the region.

- *Employer Focus.* Explore the ways that large and medium size employers can be incentivized and/or required to subside employee travel and transit to reduce single occupancy driving and to contribute to a healthier region.

- *Policy.* Examine the policy horizon and arena to prepare to move policy to support a more integrated effective regional transportation network and reduce vehicular travel. Bring policy to bear to help employers play their role in reducing vehicular travel.

Rethinking Development at the Intersection of Jobs, Housing, Transportation and Land Use

- *Promote infill development, smart growth, density, and complete neighborhoods and development.*

- *Front load equity and sustainability mandates in planning and development processes.* Assess implications of proposed projects on infrastructure and regional equity, especially housing and jobs linkages. Develop criteria to measure and address implications of these in early phases of planning and development. Make development/projects contingent upon aligning infrastructure with impacts. Pay attention to the whole picture up front.

Build Social and Community Capital; Fight Displacement

- *Invest in building community power, voice and leadership*. Support communities to engage and respond to a skewed political landscape. Support models that consolidate and strengthen community ownership and empowerment.

- *Fight displacement*. Create an anti-displacement policy template. Find ways to keep nonprofits anchored in communities that are facing displacement.

Explore How Technology Can Be Used For Equity and Sustainability

- Explore ways that "disruptive" technologies can become adopted and modified by communities to advance community connection, empowerment and wealth. Understand how new frontiers of vehicular mobility will impact transportation infrastructure and regional sustainability. How can technology be used to better integrate transportation systems?

Corporate Responsibility for Public Good

- Challenge businesses and corporations to invest more in the communities they reside in, benefit from and impact – in terms of parks and open space, libraries, transportation, clean water, community services and housing.

Reflections on the Role for SVCF

- *Augment, connect and seed funding for affordable housing in the region.* Take an active role in creating funding for developing affordable housing, whether it be through policy, advocacy, brokering partnerships or actual funds.

- *Incubate*, develop and advocate for innovative solutions and efforts in the affordable housing arena for the region.

- *Strengthen capacity for civic engagement*. Mend and strengthen the fabric and paths of civic engagement in relation to governmental bodies.

- Create and act as a platform for a *regional agenda and voice for sustainability* and affordable housing.

- *Cultivate public will and people power for a change in culture, ethos, hearts and minds.* Messaging, help to frame public understanding and investment in a more equitable, sustainable region. Help to change the discourse to create shared values, and shift the vision for what Silicon Valley is and can be.

- *Connect.* Act as a platform to connect cross-sector players. De-silo. Build bridges among and between nonprofits, government and the private sector. Cultivate and incentivize for fresh, effective partnerships and conversations, and to reduce redundancy. Hold a picture of the arena and actors in the field.

- *Grantmaking in support of advocacy for policy* that will translate into increased sustainability and equity in the region.