Regionally, the boards of Peninsula Community Foundation and Community Foundation Silicon Valley made the bold decision to merge and create Silicon Valley Community Foundation. One of the many hopes and aspirations that they expressed for the new community foundation was that it would “be positioned to lead a dialogue on regional issues, such as traffic congestion and transportation, cost of living, housing, insurance costs, disparity of wealth and building cultural awareness.”

Achieving this aspirational vision today requires that we recognize and fully accept that Silicon Valley’s central corridor stretches from downtown Market Street San José to South of Market Street San Francisco and over to the coast. It requires that we reject the self-defeating premise of an either/or view to our region in favor of a more powerful and engaging proposition of both/and. I would ask that you simply look at the current commute patterns to see the truth of this. We have included this in your bag as a conversation starter with others.

For Silicon Valley Community Foundation, this reality means that we must continue to support the unique and specific issues affecting local communities in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties and, at the same time, more fully engage on the integrated regional issues that affect all of us. We believe in this approach because we have had both experience and success in pursuing such a strategy of both/and.

For example, we are proud of our ongoing partnership with 27 school districts engaging over 127,000 students to implement Common Core as well as our new partnership with the city of San José to advance the reading and math skills of the poorest students.

Data Source: United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey PUMS
Analysis: Silicon Valley Institute for Regional Studies
As I have noted many times before, it is unacceptable that 60 percent of African American and Latino 3rd graders as well as 20 percent of white 3rd graders do not read at proficiency. The Big Lift is our signature partnership with the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors, the San Mateo County Board of Education and over 100 partners to ensure that every third grader is reading at proficiency.

We have a unique opportunity today for each of you here to help us with this effort. The Big Lift is a finalist for the Google Impact Challenge to receive up to $500,000 to help kids read. I’m asking that each of you pull out your cell phones—right now—and cast your vote for our kids at votethebiglift.org as well as commit to posting on Facebook and Tweeting your support. Will you join us in this effort to help our kids? Will you?

It was our extensive educational work in local communities that led us to discover that 8th graders, especially African Americans and Latinos, who had successfully passed their math courses were inexplicably being required to repeat the courses in 9th grade. This indefensible practice undermined the students' self-confidence and put them off track for having sufficient math credits to attend college. We were further dismayed to learn that this was a state-wide problem.

We knew we could not solve this problem by going to each of the 54 school districts in San Mateo and Santa Clara counties or those across the state. What we needed was a new state law. As C.S. Park mentioned at the outset, we are thrilled to say that with the support of many, many partners and the incredible leadership of Senator Holly Mitchell, SB 359, sponsored by the community foundation, was just signed into law by Governor Brown this past Monday making such practices illegal across the state. A sincere thank you to all of you who helped us with this effort.

We have other examples of how we have used a both/and strategy. We are administering a grant program funded by Santa Clara County to help 50,000 undocumented immigrants who are eligible to stay in the US receive accurate information about their rights and receive legal services. At the same time, we actively supported a new welcome center for immigrants established by San Mateo County.

Another example is our work on predatory payday lending where borrowers are charged interest rates of 450 percent. Since we started this effort we have helped pass 13 local ordinances restricting payday lending. We also have been active with a statewide coalition that has prevented the expansion of payday lending and we helped to organize a coalition of 57 community foundations from across the nation to encourage the new Consumer Financial Protection Bureau to put restrictions on online predatory payday lenders that are not subject to state laws.

We also have developed partnerships with both San Mateo and Santa Clara counties to prevent human trafficking and prepare for unexpected disasters.

With specific regard to San Francisco County, we have a number of touch points to build on. Our regional planning work already supports several path-breaking collaborations around transportation and affordable housing.

Our partnership with the Silicon Valley Leadership Group has enabled us to collect regional data on our Silicon Valley central corridor, and compare our regional innovation economy with others across the nation in order to develop state policy recommendations.

Our partnership with CalTrain’s Holiday Train, which celebrates our diverse communities with train stops from San Francisco to San José, will be held for the 4th time this year on December 5-6. A new feature to the Holiday Train experience; we will be partnering with Christmas in the Park in San José. I encourage all of you to attend.

And lastly, our decision to expand SVGives next year to include San Francisco nonprofit organizations is another example of adapting to our region’s growing integration and interdependence. We could no longer ignore the many requests from our donor families and partner companies that support nonprofit organizations in San Francisco, or the entreaties from nonprofit organizations headquartered in San Francisco that provide services to people across Silicon Valley. With your help, the May 3, 2016, SVGives event will be our most successful one yet.
For Silicon Valley Community Foundation to meet the most challenging local problems of jobs, housing, transportation, education and livability facing San Mateo and Santa Clara counties, it is imperative that we more actively and strategically engage with elected officials, business leaders, nonprofit organizations and donors in San Francisco County on the regional issues that affect all of us. In fact, we may be one of the few organizations capable of helping to spur this much needed regional dialogue as well as develop and advocate for the adoption of potential policy solutions.

With this as background, I am pleased to announce the creation of the Silicon Valley Regional Fund to tackle the overlapping challenges facing Santa Clara, San Mateo and San Francisco counties.

What will this new fund mean in practice?

- The Silicon Valley Regional Fund will focus on advancing broader regional issues, such as housing and transportation, affecting Silicon Valley's central corridor.
- San Francisco nonprofit organizations addressing local San Francisco challenges are not eligible to participate in this regional effort. We will, however, continue to work with donor families and corporate partners, as we have always done, to achieve their charitable interests whether locally, in San Francisco, across the nation or around the world.
- SVCF's existing community endowment will continue to be primarily directed to nonprofit organizations serving San Mateo and Santa Clara counties around our existing grantmaking priorities.
- Lastly, SVCF will need your help to raise new funds to help expand and support this new regional work. It's our hope to raise sufficient funding to be able to issue a request for proposals by early next year.

Both our local communities and our regional community face big challenges and, consistent with the vision that brought SVCF into existence, we are committed to meeting these challenges.

Time and time again, I am asked how is it that we have been able to dream so big and take on so much work? My answer is three-fold. First, we have had, and continue to have, a visionary board of directors. Second, we have incredibly generous and thoughtful partners including our donor families, corporate partners, elected officials and nonprofit organizations. And third, we have the very best team in philanthropy who truly believe that possibilities for making our community and the world a better place can be achieved through SVCF! I would ask that staff stand and be recognized.

In closing, I want to again thank Angela Blackwell for her wonderful presentation, and our tremendous panel members: Gary Graves, Naomi Kelly and John Maltbie. I look forward to seeing all of you next year for our 10 year anniversary — a party that you will not want to miss. And now, please join us for the reception next door where we are featuring nonprofit organizations that are supported by SVCF's corporate partners.

We are adjourned!