

Community Conversation – Vacaville 2011

Summary Report

October 28, 2011

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2011

OVERVIEW OF THE SOLANO COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The Solano Community Foundation (SCF) is a nonprofit organization incorporated in 2000 by a group of committed community leaders who had a vision to maintain the quality of life and create a vehicle for local philanthropy in Solano County.

The Solano Community Foundation fills several roles within the community:

I. Role as Grantmaker

The Solano Community Foundation

- Provides financial resources to support local projects
- Adds value to the community by helping meet the needs and interests of the community
- Awards grants that make a real difference.

II. Role as Vehicle for Philanthropy

The Solano Community Foundation

- Provides a critical vehicle through which donors can give to their community in perpetuity
- Provides opportunities for individuals to meet philanthropic goals
- Preserves and protects permanently endowed funds
- Is a charity through which to give.

III. Role as Community Leader

Board and staff:

- Have a vision for the community
- Take a long-view of community well-being
- Identify community issues, have a sense of desired outcomes, and conduct processes that include community interests and voices
- Act as convener.

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

PURPOSE

In the role as grantmaker and community leader, the Solano Community Foundation (SCF) established the Nonprofit Partnership Program (NPP) in 2009 and initiated a process to identify community issues and provide financial resources to local programs addressing specific community needs. This process, referred to as the Community Conversation, was launched in the city of Vallejo in the fall of 2009. The second Community Conversation was held in Fairfield, and included Suisun City, in the fall of 2010. The most recent Community Conversation was held in Vacaville on September 28, 2011.

The purpose of the Community Conversation is to gain a basic understanding of current presenting issues in Vacaville. Using the results of the Community Conversation, SCF will release a Request for Proposals (RFP) in the fall of 2011 to local nonprofits working in the areas that were the highest identified community needs and to set the stage to further identify the unmet or insufficiently addressed issues in Vacaville.

There were two primary components of the Community Conversation:

- I. Community Issues Opinion Survey
- II. Facilitated Community Conversation among NPP members.

COMMUNITY ISSUES OPINION SURVEY

A simple survey was developed and distributed to community members and residents of Vacaville. The survey was sent via email, a link was posted on the SCF website, and press releases/advertisements went to the local media. The purpose of the survey was to solicit community input on what respondents saw as issues facing the city and residents of Vacaville. A total of 72 respondents completed the survey.

Results from the survey were compiled and sorted by rating level to identify those issues that received the highest rating. The highest rated issues were placed in a summary report (see Appendix A) which was used to launch the discussion at the Community Conversation.

The issues that met the following conditions were included in the summary report.

- Received an average rating score of 4.0 or higher along a 5 point Likert scale (i.e., respondents identified that they *agreed* or *strongly agreed* it was an issue for Vacaville).
- Any issue where 50% or more of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* it was an issue for Vacaville.

FACILITATED COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

On September 28, 2011, SCF convened a group of NPP members to review and discuss the top issues identified through the survey. Among the attendees were Vacaville residents and representatives from education, healthcare, and community-based organizations.

The participants were presented with the top issues as identified through the Community Issues Opinion Survey. It was noted that if an issue were not on the summary report, it *did not* imply that it was not important or worthy of being addressed. Because of the nature of the process it was important to filter the issues based on the highest ratings, as identified by the community members through the survey, to fulfill the purpose of the Community Conversation.

LIMITATIONS

As with any data collection, there are limitations inherent in the process. It is imperative that these limitations be stated here.

- 1) This was not intended to be a comprehensive needs assessment for the City of Vacaville.
- 2) The survey was designed to gather *opinions* from the perspective of Vacaville residents.
- 3) The purpose of the Community Conversation was to make a *close approximation* to identify *the most* pressing issues in Vacaville *at this point in time* so SCF can develop an RFP designed to reflect the needs and interests identified by the community.

Results of the Community Conversation

TOP IDENTIFIED ISSUES

Community Conversation participants discussed the presenting issues and identified the highest issues they saw facing Vacaville.

In order of priority the top three issues identified were:

- 1) *Education.* Participants stated that education is an issue for youth and adults. Many youth are dropping out of high school and for those who complete high school, they may not go on to higher level education. Employability is dependent upon education and training. Youth need opportunities for vocational training as well as traditional academic education.
- 2) *Employment.* Low wage jobs make it difficult for residents to make ends meet, and it affects other community related issues (e.g., housing, crime).
- 3) *Youth engagement.* Youth have too much time on their hands and need enriching and constructive outlets (e.g. after school, community, arts).
- 4) A paradigm shift needs to happen in how we engage youth and educate them.

The participants agreed that the issues are all interconnected. Education is correlated with one's ability to find a job at a livable wage. A livable wage is correlated with one's ability to meet basic needs. An ability to meet basic needs or lack thereof is correlated with stress, poor health, crime and so forth.

TOP IDENTIFIED NEEDS

In response to **Education as the top issue**, the participants were asked to identify what they thought was most needed to address that issue. In order of priority, the following ideas were presented by the participants:

- 1) Create workplace mentoring/vocational programs for youth in middle school and high school to promote job skills and employability.
 - Promote internships and vocational training so youth and adults can get good jobs without a post-secondary school degree
 - Teach entrepreneurship
 - Help students develop a viable business before leaving high school
 - Offer a variety of work internships (3 months, 6 months, 1 year)

2) Creative school-based vocational initiatives.

- Offer Green Energy programs at Solano Community College
- Teach business innovation to adults/students
- Offer a career class in high school where local business and tradespeople are guest speakers/teachers
- Intensive high school work experience programs
- Use alternative educational models that address the whole person and provide extended day, year round curriculum. For example the NewEra School is a charter school that focuses on developing Entrepreneurial spirit, providing Renaissance education, and cultivating an Athletic mindset
- Engage Vacaville Chamber of Commerce to identify needed vocations

3) After-school enrichment programs for youth from K-12.

Participants identified the need for after-school enrichment programs for students from K-12 that offer a variety of fun, engaging and educational opportunities. Examples of such enrichment programs include:

- School community gardens
- Art classes with art galleries
- Community band
- Traveling (e.g., overseas) on sporting events
- Collaborating to create computer web pages
- High school musicians teaching younger students to play an instrument

Additional ideas shared by the participants were:

- 4) Establish local TV Networks on YouTube
- 5) Use small farms (5-20 acres) for students to have agricultural experiences
- 6) Invite the community to become engaged

Appendix A

Summary of Highest Issues Identified through the Survey

Basic Needs

1. Homelessness – 54.2%	Not adequate services/resources: 43.7%
2. Hunger – 52.1%	Not adequate services/resources: 18.1%
3. Poverty – 48.6%	Not adequate services/resources: 25%
4. Unemployment – 47.9%	Not adequate services/resources: 50.7%
5. Livable Wages – 45.8%	Not adequate services/resources: 62.5%
6. Job Growth – 42.3%	Not adequate services/resources: 63.9%
7. Skilled Workforce – 39.4%	Not adequate services/resources: 19.7%
8. Safe, affordable housing – 38%	Not adequate services/resources: 31%

Public Safety

1. Domestic Violence – 59.7%	Not adequate services/resources: 23.9%
2. Gangs – 58.2%	Not adequate services/resources: 37.3%
3. Crime – 55.4%	Not adequate services/resources: 24.6%
4. Juvenile Crime – 52.2%	Not adequate services/resources: 31.3%
5. Child Abuse/Neglect – 49.3%	Not adequate services/resources: 19.4%
6. Substance Abuse – 47.7%	Not adequate services/resources: 26.9%

Education

1. HS Dropout Rate – 48.4%	Not adequate services/resources: 39.1%
2. Employment Assistance – 42.2%	Not adequate services/resources: 48.4%
3. Quality affordable preschool – 39.1%	Not adequate services/resources: 43.8%
4. Quality of K-12 education – 38.1%	Not adequate services/resources: 31.1%
5. Quality affordable childcare – 35.9%	Not adequate services/resources: 50%
6. College/Vocational training – 35.9%	Not adequate services/resources: 34.4%
7. Adult Education – 35.9%	Not adequate services/resources: 27%
8. Literacy – 32.8%	Not adequate services/resources: 25%

Community/Civic Development

1. Graffiti – 61.7%	Not adequate services/resources: 45.9%
2. Rundown neighborhoods – 38.3%	Not adequate services/resources: 41%

(Note: the remaining of the highest scores fell under the “Disagree” category)

Health

1. Obesity – 45.9%	Not adequate services/resources: 47.5%
2. Adult substance abuse issues – 45.8%	Not adequate services/resources: 44.3%
3. Adults without dental insurance – 41%	Not adequate services/resources: 44.3%
4. Teen substance abuse issues – 36.7%	Not adequate services/resources: 50.8%