

Community Conversation – Fairfield-Suisun City 2010

Summary Report

Prepared by Rochelle Sherlock



2010

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. A Community Conversation was held for Fairfield and Suisun City on September 30, 2010.

The purpose of the Community Conversation was to gain a basic understanding about current presenting issues in Fairfield and Suisun City. Using the results of the Community Conversation, SCF will release a Request for Proposals (RFP) in the fall of 2010 to target the highest identified community need and to set the stage to further identify the unmet or insufficiently addressed issues in Fairfield and Suisun City.

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 Fairfield and Suisun City. 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 cities and residents of Fairfield and Suisun City. A total of 130 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 Fairfield and Suisun City).
- Any issue where 50% or more of the respondents indicated that they *strongly agreed* it was an issue for Fairfield and Suisun City.

FACILITATED COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

On September 30, 2010, SCF convened a group of NPP members to review and discuss the top issues as identified through the survey. Among the attendees were Fairfield and Suisun City residents and representatives from the following disciplines and focus areas:

- Education (primary and secondary)
- Children's services
- Senior services
- Faith based communities
- The arts
- Health
- United Way
- Local businesses

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 cities of Fairfield and Suisun City.
- 2) The survey was designed to gather *opinions* from the perspective of Fairfield and Suisun City residents.
- 3) The purpose of the Community Conversation was to make a *close approximation* to identify *the most* pressing issues in Fairfield and Suisun City *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 Fairfield and Suisun City.

In order of priority the top three issues identified were:

- 1) Education – Participants stated that the educational system (broadly defined) contributes to community issues in other areas. For instance, high school dropout rate affects employability, the local economy, poverty, rundown neighborhoods, crime and so forth.
- 2) Substance Abuse – Similar to education (above), participants identified substance abuse as having a significant impact on other community issues.
- 3) Poverty – The participants identified poverty (e.g., unemployment, housing, rundown neighborhoods) as the third top issue in Fairfield and Suisun City.

In addition, participants identified the following as important issues:

- 4) Lack of community spirit (e.g., people don't view themselves as part of a larger community/neighborhood).
- 5) Rapidly changing world and technology reduces jobs leaving people unprepared to earn a living and adapt.
- 6) Community development (e.g., lack of resources for small businesses while big businesses get tax breaks and incentives).

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 (i.e., high school drop-out rate, quality of K-12 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 needs were identified by the participants:

- 1) Provide and promote mentoring for children and youth.

Participants identified the importance of community involvement in addressing the issue of education. In particular it was mentioned that there is a need for mentors to work with children and youth. Examples included use of mentors as tutors, college mentors, intergenerational programs, and coaching.

- 2) Offer life skills/college-career training to youth.

Participants indicated that there is a need for life skills training, and college and career guidance. Examples include supporting youth to navigate the educational system and achieve higher education, financial literacy classes, and social skills classes through afterschool and summer programs.

- 3) Work with local businesses to hire and train high school students.

Participants identified an interest in engaging local businesses as partners in supporting and educating youth by offering employment (e.g., seasonal, summer) and hands-on job training or by sponsoring a program, such as neighborhood beautification, where teenagers are hired to help improve neighborhoods.

Appendix A

Summary of Highest Issues Identified through the Survey

1. Basic Needs/Economic Development

Is an Issue

Top three by percentage overall:

				Response Count
1	58.30%	Strongly Agree	Unemployment	127
2	57.90%	Agree	Homelessness	126
3	57.10%	Agree	Hunger	126

Resources or services available

1	70.10%	Not Adequate	Job Growth	127
2	66.90%	Not Adequate	Unemployment	127
3	63.80%	Not Adequate	Livable Wages	127

2. Public Safety

Is an Issue

Top three by percentage overall

1	54.80%	Agree	Safety	126
2	51.20%	Agree	Substance Abuse	125
3	49.2%	Agree	Crime	124

Resources or services available

1	49.60%	Not Adequate	Substance Abuse	119
2	48.80%	Not Adequate	Juvenile Crime	123
3	46.70%	Not Adequate	Gangs	122

3. Education

Is an issue

Top three by percentage overall

				Response Count
1	44.40%	Strongly Agree	HS dropout Rate	124
2	41.90%	Strongly Agree	Quality of K-12	124
3	41.50%	Agree	Employment assistance	123

Resources or services available

1	65.60%	Not Adequate	HS Dropout Rate	122
2	57.70%	Not Adequate	Quality affordable	123
3	53.70%	No Adequate	Quality of K-12	123

4. Community/Civic Development

Is an issue

Top three by percentage overall

1	54.60%	Agree	Rundown neighborhood	119
2	50.40%	Agree	Graffiti	119
3	44.20%	Agree	Access to community center	120

Resources or services available

1	60.50%	Not Adequate	Rundown neighborhood	119
2	52.60%	Not Adequate	Graffiti	116
3	44.40%	Somewhat Ad	Access to community center	117

5. Health

Is an issue

Top three by percentage overall

1	43.60%	Agree	Obesity	117
2	41.90%	Strongly Agree	Teen substance abuse	117
3	40.50%	Agree	Adult substance abuse	116

Resources or services available

1	61.20%	Not Adequate	Teen substance abuse	116
2	56.90%	Not Adequate	Adult substance abuse	116
3	56.00%	Not Adequate	Mental Health	116