

A TALE OF TWO VALLEYS...

The Price We Pay for Living in Santa Clara County



**A PUBLIC REPORT BY THE OFFICE OF HUMAN RELATIONS AND
THE HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION OF SANTA CLARA COUNTY
PUBLISHED 2014**

County of Santa Clara
OFFICE OF HUMAN RELATIONS

OUR MISSION

The Office of Human Relations works to foster positive community relations and promotes social equity and the human rights of all County residents through research, inclusion, conflict resolution and community building.

The Office of Human Relations, a department of the Office of the County Executive, provides services that connect and unify the very diverse communities that make up Santa Clara County.

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Introduction

On August 25, 2014 Santa Clara County (SCC) began a conversation on income inequity in the new economy. Over 290 individuals stepped forward to voice the economic, emotional and physical insecurities that are impacting a significant portion of the population. The voices heard on that day included 76 people who stood up in front of an audience to discuss the intimacy of the struggle that they wage daily in order to survive. They spoke of their challenges, trials, difficulties, worry about the future for their families. These individuals also talked about their self-esteem, hardships, stress, anxiety and hopes. These messages were shared by veterans, teachers, workers, mothers, students, realtors, organizers, newspaper editors, professors, gardeners, people who work in the service industry to attend to the high tech industry, people who work in the private sector and community based agencies. Testimonies also came from retired individuals, youth, and home makers.

The audience included the Social Equity Committee of the Human Relations Commission, staff of the Office of Human Relations and many social justice organizations that have been organizing on the issues of housing, elders, children, workers, and other community issues. There were more than 300 people in the audience during the day. The community response to this opportunity to talk about the cost of living in Santa Clara County was overwhelming. An additional 219 written testimonies were collected over a period of three weeks. Many participants expressed gratitude for being able to speak to the topic.

For county residents to take this step and give witness to the difficulties experienced by many was not easy for them. Santa Clara County is seen as the home of Silicon Valley, with a reputation of being an innovative, cutting edge society, and significant player in the new world economy. This is an area where people are succeeding and taking that success to the rest of the world. However, this is also a community that is producing paradoxes. There is great wealth, but there is also boundless poverty.

“The Bay area is one of the most expensive places to live. We should not have to decide between electricity, rent, food, health care co-pays [or] car insurance. We should earn enough to pay for necessities.” Speaker #3

Numerous testimonies were received from people who are making miracles happen on \$10,000-\$30,000 a year, in households with 3 or 4 children. There were also testimonials by people making \$30,000- \$60,000 and others over \$60,000-\$125,000 a year. These people also worry about what the future holds and they see a social inequality that did not exist before. Common themes in the testimonies received included: housing issues (cost, worries, percentage of income allocated to housing); homelessness (fear of, on the verge of); high cost of living (juggling all the costs to survive, food, utilities, basic needs becoming impossible to fulfill); quality of life (the difficulties, stress, worries for family and children, not enough time to spend with children); health issues (depression, stress, inability to pay for health care needs); and work issues (conditions, number of jobs needed to make ends meet). Over 120 of the testimonials were given by Spanish speakers.

The Demographic Picture

The “2014 Silicon Valley Index” begins with the statement, “Silicon Valley is experiencing a level of innovation and economic activity that is impressive by any measure, and leads the nation. Yet, the region also shows stark income and achievement gaps, and faces considerable challenges in accommodating sustained economic growth.” The report also states that people are the most important assets that shape the quality of life in Silicon Valley. Other important data highlighted in the report includes:

- The gap between the highest and lowest earners has increased. The share of households in Silicon Valley earning more than \$100,000 increased two percentage points to 45 percent in 2012, while the share of households earning \$35,000 to \$99,000 decreased two percentage points to 35 percent.
- Silicon Valley’s housing market is becoming an increasingly inhospitable environment for first-time homebuyers. Less than half of Silicon Valley’s first-time homebuyers can afford to purchase a median-priced home, compared to 59 percent in the state.
- Although median household income has finally started to increase following a four-year decline (up \$1,028 between 2011 and 2012), the increase in average annual rental expenses (up \$1,526) is outpacing income gains.
- Income disparities persist between racial and ethnic groups. The lowest-earning racial/ethnic group earns 70 percent less than the highest earning group.
- Income inequality also exists between men and women in the region. Males with a Bachelor’s degree or higher make 40-73 percent more than women at the same level of educational attainment.

According to the index, the region’s population growth has accelerated over the last year due to a 52 percent increase in foreign immigration in 2013 over the previous year. The region’s total population grew 1.31 percent last year compared to 0.88 percent statewide, and our net migration (13,766 people) has not been this high since 1997 when it reached a high of 14,515.

Santa Clara County’s diverse population parallels New York City, Chicago, and Los Angeles, thereby constituting one of the most diverse populations on earth. According to the 2009 Census data, more than half (51.1%) of the County’s foreign-born population have now become U.S. citizens. Two thirds of Santa Clara County families are made up of immigrants and the children of immigrants. According to MediaNet analysis of 2006 Census Data, over 50% of the population speaks a language other than English at home. After English, Spanish is the most frequently spoken language in the County. Santa Clara County is one of the most ethnically diverse counties in the nation and does not have a “majority” population. 37% of the children living in the County are Hispanic, 31.1% Asian, 23.3% Caucasian, 2.2% African American, 0.4% American Indian and 5.9% multiracial or "other."ⁱ

The High Cost of Living in Santa Clara County Presents Challenges for Many Families

In 2011, the U.S. Census Bureau estimated that 12.4% of Santa Clara County children lived in households whose income fell below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). The median family income in Santa Clara County was 107,765.ⁱⁱ The high cost of living in Santa Clara County creates enormous challenges to our community's desire to for safety, health, and successful life. Poverty and the cost of living are intertwined with a number of other factors influencing families at risk.

In 2012, the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) for a family of three – one adult living with one preschooler and one school-age child – was \$19,090. Eligibility for many public support programs are based factoring a percentage of the FPL. For example, Federal Free School lunch eligibility is 130% of the FPL and the Reduced Price lunch program is based on a family earning 185% of the FPL. This family will qualify for the Reduced Price Lunch program only if they earn no more than \$35,316 annually.

The Insight Center for Community Economic Development has estimated that to meet basic needs without public or private assistance, this same family needs a household income of \$77,973. This estimate is known as the Family Economic Self-Sufficiency Standard. The gulf between the Self-Sufficiency Standard and the Federal Poverty Level is sobering. Even more startling, is that it would require this family to work at least three full time minimum wage jobs at \$10.00 per hour (City of San Jose), or \$20,800 annual salary, to come close to meeting the Self Sufficiency Standard. Even these three minimum wage jobs combined, still fall short at \$62,400 annually.

According to the Insight Center, 22.3% of the County households are below the Self-Sufficiency standard. 45% of Latino households are below this measure, and 55.7% of the households with a single mother are below this standard.ⁱⁱⁱ

Wendy Ho of United Way gave the following testimony, *"In the last fiscal year, (United Way's) 211 service received over 30,000 calls and made over 63,000 referrals to local agencies and services, a 21 percent increase from the previous year. Seven out of ten referrals were for basic needs – housing or utilities, Cal Fresh Food referrals."* She further stated that there are many return calls in which callers share that when they contact the referred to agency they are put on waiting lists or told emergency funds have run out for that quarter. For many, the economy has not improved in Santa Clara County. Countless families, have not reached the income, work hours or economic stability of 2007.

"We are sick of being told that if you work hard, right will be done by you...Our sweat, our blood, our families build and maintain this country, and we count as much as any other shareholder. For far too long we have been waiting for a booming economy to be the rising tide that will lift all boats. Well, it's time to stop waiting." Speaker #30

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey 1-year Estimates. Web-accessed December 2012 – December 2013 at <http://factfinder2.census.gov> .

¹ Ibid.

¹ "The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Santa Clara County, CA 2008." Insight Center for Community Economic Development. Web-accessed January 2010 at <http://www.insightcced.org>.

Executive Summary

Delorme McKee-Stovall

Impetus for this Report

Santa Clara County is the principal provider of social and health services within the county especially for persons who are compelled by new economic constraints to turn to the County for services. The economic recession following the 2008 financial crisis exacerbated the strain on County Services by both decreasing revenues and increasing residents' needs. The economic recovery that appears to be underway has restored some stability and profitability for many employers and produced modest decreases in unemployment. But based on local costs for a family with two wage earners and two school children, each adult work must earn \$17.22 an hour to achieve a living wage. Analysis of County's residents without children fall indicates that 29.6% fall below the Self Sufficiency Standard; while 36.7% of Families with children find themselves below the same standard.

Based on many unsolicited reports received from local residents prior to the decision to convene a forum, the Office of Human Relations had become increasingly aware of the growing concern that employers' failure to provide a living wage in Santa Clara County contributed to a significant increase in individuals and families needing to access County services, thereby placing an increased strain on the County's limited resources.

On May 20, 2014 the County of Santa Clara's Board of Supervisors approved a proposal to analyze, gather stakeholder input and report on the feasibility and fiscal implications for a County of Santa Clara Living Wage Ordinance. The proposal from Supervisors D. Cortese and K. Yeager also called for the creation of a Family Friendly Employer Certification Program. The County administration was directed to present a preliminary report back to the Finance and Government Operations Committee on June 12 and the Children, Seniors and Families Committee that included a recommended research plan, including a process for stakeholder engagement.

Per the Board's direction, Administration embarked on a process of stakeholder engagement that would include both a public forum/town hall and a series of roundtable discussions. The County Executive's Office of Human Relations, in conjunction with the Human Relations Commission agreed to convene a public forum on August 25th in the Isaac Newton Senter Auditorium at the County Government Center. The public forum entitled "The Price We Pay to Live in Santa Clara County" was convened in two sessions. The afternoon session took place from 2:00PM – 4:00PM followed by an evening session from 6:00PM to 8:00PM.

Testimony contained in this report captures the voices of individuals and families who not only fall below the Self Sufficiency Standard, but even those who work full time in skilled and professional capacities and yet find themselves struggling to make ends meet. This latter group's experiences have become the new norm in Santa Clara County for a rapidly declining middle class population.

Methodology

Within a 60 day time frame OHR and the HRC were able to reach out to the community at large, community partners, academia and labor organizations for the purpose of gathering oral and written testimony about the price we pay to live in Santa Clara County. A total of two hundred and ninety-five (295) oral and written testimonies were provided. Of that total two hundred-nineteen (219) were written testimonies that were collected from August 8, 2014 through September 8, 2014. During the two public sessions attended by approximately 300 individuals, seventy-six (76) individuals testified orally. Simultaneous translation was available in Spanish, Vietnamese and Tagalog. One hundred and twenty-one of the oral and written testimonies were provided in Spanish. Written testimony was gathered from August 18 until September 8, 2014.

Qualitative Data

All methods captured testimony regarding the impact of the price to live in Santa Clara County on a) one's personal quality of life, b) the quality of life of one's family, and c) the quality of life of the community in general. Some of the specific areas of concern the surveys and oral testimony captured were focused on a) cost of or affordability of housing, b) cost of food, c) the need to work more than one job to sustain oneself or one's family, d) reliance on pay day lenders, e) cost of child care, f) adolescent unemployment, g) high debt to income ratio for young adults, especially those attending college, h) lengthy out of county commutes to work within the county, i) reliance on food banks, even while working, j) inability to save for emergencies, retirement and or children's higher education, k) increased young adult unemployment, and l) increased youth and adult crime.

Witnesses were given three questions to answer in the written testimony prompt:

1. What are your concerns about the cost of living and the impact it has had on the quality of life in Santa Clara County?
2. What is the impact that the cost of living is having on your family and/or you as an individual?
3. How is the cost of living affecting the community at large?

After receiving and reviewing the transcribed oral and written testimony OHR staff and Social Equity Committee members of the Human Relations Commission categorized the feedback into three groups: individuals and families earning income below \$30,000, between \$30,000 and \$80,000, \$80,000 and \$150,000. Only two families reported income over \$200,000. It was notable that the range of reported income mirrored recent graphics of the hour glass associated with Technology Economy with the smallest percentage of families reporting income between \$30,000 and \$80,000.

Feedback on the impact of the cost of living in Santa Clara County from both of these groups was focused on four areas of concern:

Housing costs – lack of affordability

Commute time and costs – impact on

Income insecurity – high debt ratios, low savings and stress

Benefits – lack of employer paid sick leave, vacation and retirement

One hundred and twenty (120) individuals providing oral and written testimony reported earning income below \$30,000.

Feedback was captured in four areas:

Family life – the effects of poverty on family life;

Work – the types and conditions of people’s jobs and the impact on lives;

Survival – how people are coping or not coping

Analysis - **their** reflections on their lives and conditions, and ideas about how to create a more just society.

Scholarship

The Office of Human Relations and the Human Relations Commission invited William Armaline, PhD, Director of the San Jose State University Human Rights Program and his associate, Edith Kinney, PhD to provide relevant scholarship on the human rights instruments and framework as a broader context for the testimony gathered for this report and as guidance on the legal framework that could be key next steps that foster “Human Rights Cities and Counties.” This designation would elevate human rights in local public policy development, create space for participatory governance, a focus on proactively identifying and addressing problems that promote equity and minimize disproportionate impacts. Such steps would also empower further creation of government and community partnerships, inclusivity, responsiveness and accountability. This analysis of the human rights legal framework also includes possible ways to redress systemic causes of discrimination and opportunities to demonstrate local leadership and global solidarity that would lead to sustainable solutions.

Findings

Although the local economy has improved for many businesses, the income of workers has remained stagnant and the cost of living continues to increase beyond earned wages.

- Affordable local housing was reported as the most significant concern followed stagnant wages.
- Low income individuals and families have been forced into making significant sacrifices and engaging in complex juggling of where to apply their income between food, rent, transportation and medical needs.
- Skilled workers and professional class individuals and two income families have lost hope of purchasing an affordable home in the community where they work.
- Retired workers primarily relying on modest pensions report that the prospect of remaining in Santa Clara County grow increasingly difficult with each passing year.
- In the majority, local college and university students are working full time and still do not have sufficient income to vacate their parent’s home due to the high cost of rent.
- College and university graduates are finding it necessary to leave the area to find sustainable work or remain in their parent’s home while working full time in low wage service jobs without benefits.
- Adolescents report that employment has become increasingly necessary to contribute to the support of their families, but local employment opportunities are scarce.

- Unskilled immigrant families are in a constant struggle to survive while working multiple jobs and long hours without sick leave or vacation time and subject to wage theft more than any other group.
- The impact of the current economy has compounded existing stressors that impact the quality of personal health and the continued inaccessibility of lack of affordable health care in spite of the implementation of the Affordable Health Care Act.
- Support for a living wage ordinance that would address income disparity was the most consistent demand made by the vast majority of speakers.

OVERVIEW: WHAT IT COSTS TO LIVE IN SCC

Carol Weiss & Harry Adams

Santa Clara County has had various identities over the years. Once known as the “Valley of the Heart’s Delight,” and now Silicon Valley, our county has been heralded as a center of innovation, prosperity, and progressive social policies. These images are now challenged with a new and growing reality. Silicon Valley has become, “Inequity Valley.” A steadily increasing number of studies and articles describe the growing disparity between the wealthy and the rest of our county’s residents. Many members of our community are falling further behind as they attempt to keep up with the very expensive cost of living throughout the county.

We can’t examine the “Price We Pay” for living in Santa Clara County without also discussing the impact of the growing inability of hundreds of thousands of our residents to pay the price, particularly given the wealth and wage gap. The sad truth is that there are many who can afford to live in Silicon Valley quite comfortably. That’s why we have taken a page from Charles Dickens and write about the “Tale of Two Valleys.”

How does current research data describe the reality of living in Santa Clara County? What does it cost to live here? Consider the tangibles: housing, child care, food, transportation, health care, wage disparity. Then weigh the intangibles: emotional stress, domestic and community violence, depression, lost opportunities, increased discrimination, loss of family and parenting time, for starters.

Between 2000 and 2011, the cost of living increased faster than wages in the region. The working poor are now 16.2% of the workforce and with this, food stamp use has increased 114% from 2008-2011¹. Housing looms large in any equation. Since 2005-2012, median rents increased 10%, while median income only 1%. To afford fair market rent, one would need a salary of \$65,960. However, nearly 60% of very low income families pay 50%+ of income for rent.²

Not surprisingly, this translates to over 7000+ individuals being homeless in any given day. In 2013, 46% indicated that this was the first time they had ever been homeless.³ Many of those who aren’t homeless are severely stressed, economically and emotionally. One in four households have a hard time making ends meet. In this latter group are almost half of local seniors.⁴

Since 2000, in Santa Clara County median household real income has fallen 19.5%, For African American and Latino households, this figure has fallen 29%. The required budgets leave very little for savings, vacations or more than the minimum monthly expenses. Workers can rarely miss a day of work and often have to work more than one job and long hours to house, feed and care for their families.

¹ <http://www.wpusa.org/Publication>

² http://www.chpc.net/dnld/Housing_Need_SANTA_CLARA_Final_060414.pdf

³ 2013 Santa Clara County ASR Homeless Point-In-Time Census & Survey

⁴ <http://www.sccap.org/Secondary%20Data.pdf>

Children are heavily impacted by the income gap that exists in this county. It has been estimated that in 2010, approximately 60,000 children in SCC were living in poverty, a rate that has been steadily increasing since then. The long term effects for these children can be poor health and poor social and cognitive development.⁵

All of the above “...suggests a broadly deteriorating poverty and inequality landscape....Such deterioration is revealed across a host of key indicators, including prime-age employment, long-term unemployment, poverty, income inequality, wealth inequality, and even some forms of health inequality. The facts of the matter, when laid out so starkly, are quite overwhelming.”⁶

How can this “inequality landscape” exist in such a wealthy area as ours? Of 357 metropolitan areas recently surveyed by the U.S. Conference of Mayors, ours has the second largest share of households with income of \$75,000 or more in the nation.⁷ Over 57% of our households seem to be in decent shape, but even many of these households are significantly impacted by the cost of living. But that leaves us with the worst of all the metro areas with the smallest percentage of households earning between \$35,000 and \$74,999 (22.5%).⁸ The bottom has dropped out of the middle class. Combined with all those below \$35,000 and about 42% of our community’s households are in an absolute struggle to ‘pay the price’ to live here. Truly a tale of two valleys.

“It is said that the middle class is the backbone of a country. What happens to a body without a backbone...?” **Speaker # 148**

⁵ http://www.sccgov.org/sites/sccphd/enus/Partners/Documents/Child%20Poverty%20Report_final_072913.pdf

⁶ http://web.stanford.edu/group/scspi/sotu/SOTU_2014_CPI.pdf

⁷ U.S. Metro Economies, Income and Wage Gaps Across the US, IHS Global Insight August 2014, prepared for the United States Conference of Mayors and The Council on Metro Economies and the New American City

⁸ U.S. Metro Economies, Income and Wage Gaps Across the US, IHS Global Insight August 2014, prepared for the United States Conference of Mayors and The Council on Metro Economies and the New American City

THE TESTIMONY

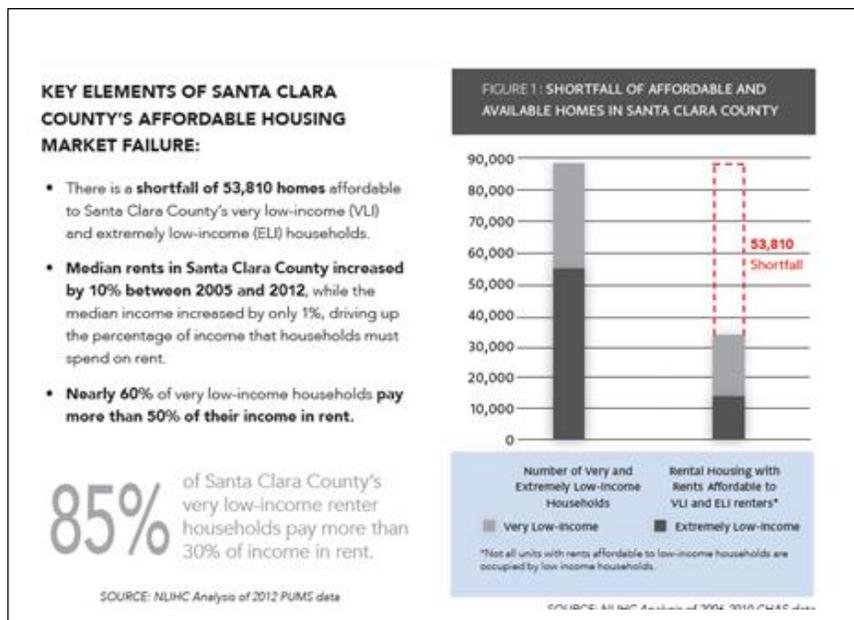
“The Bay Area is one of the most expensive places to live. We should not have to decide between electricity, rent, food, health care co-pays, [and] car insurance. We should earn enough to pay for necessities” – Speaker #3

THE HOUSING CRISIS IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Teresa Castellanos & Sandy Perry

Santa Clara County has the 5th largest shortfall of affordable housing available to low income families in the state. Many families are forced to live in unhealthy or unsafe conditions. Multiple families are often crowded in a single apartment and are still paying more than 50% of their income on housing. According to the California Housing Partnership Corporation, median rents in SCCC increased by 10% between 2005-2012 while median income increased by only 1%. Stagnant wages, displacement during foreclosures, increase in jobs in the high tech industry, coupled with the increase in costs of housing have pushed many families to the edge.

Santa Clara County can now claim to be home to some of the richest corporations in the world and at the same time it is the site of the largest homeless encampment in the continental United States. Several hundred people now live in tents in a camp called "The Jungle" along Coyote Creek near Story Road. "The Jungle" has brought national and international attention to the valley. Volunteers from churches, community groups, and ministries bring food and clothing regularly, but conditions are primitive. The city of San Jose has announced that it will be taking down this encampment shortly. And then there are families that live between these two extremes.



Living in Santa Clara County is expensive. For many, their wages do not match what is needed to pay for housing easily. Many residents are paying too much of their salary for housing. This impacts other life needs like childcare, transportation, food, and determines the overall quality of life. Homelessness has been on the increase since 2009.

According to the Non-Profit Housing Association, the 15 city region that makes up our county has a shortage of over 100,000 units affordable to extremely low-income families in Santa Clara County (NPH, *Moving Silicon Valley Forward*, 2012). Axiometrics reports (*Silicon Valley Business Journal* 7-30-14) that Silicon Valley rents have risen an average of \$390 a month

since 2012, to a total average of \$2500 a month in the San Jose metropolitan area. Over half the population of San Jose is “housing burdened” – they pay over 30% of their income for rent (City of San Jose Draft Housing Element).

“My parents weren’t able to afford a house after retiring. So they had to move to Manteca. Now the family is dispersed...a lot of people I know can’t afford it here so [they] we’re moving out of the area.” David

At the same time, state and federal funding for affordable housing has “fallen off a cliff”, declining by 82% since 2008 (California Housing Partnership Corporation). In 2013, the Housing Authority of Santa Clara County was hit by a federal government sequester, causing it to raise rents on some fixed-income tenants by as much as \$1000 a month or more. The result is a perfect storm, an affordable housing emergency where whole families are forced to double up, sleep on sidewalks, or behind bushes. In spite of the best efforts of service providers, the number of homeless in Santa Clara County is increasing, not going down from the 7631 reported in early 2013. A California Youth Project study released in September found that the number of homeless K-12 students in Santa Clara County nearly doubled from 2011-13 to its current total of 4503.

FUNDING SOURCES	FY 2007/2008	FY 2012/2013	% CHANGE
State Housing Bonds Prop. 46 and Prop. 1C*	\$25,542,607	\$3,000,000	-88%
Redevelopment Funds for Affordable Housing	\$56,828,529	\$0	-100%
Federal CDBG Funds	\$16,766,757	\$13,702,110	-18%
Federal HOME Funds	\$6,666,766	\$3,717,026	-44%
Total	\$105,804,659	\$20,419,136	-81%

SOURCES: CHPC tabulations of HCD's Redevelopment Housing Activities Report and HUD's CPO program formula allocations by fiscal year.

Everyone agrees that the cause of the Silicon Valley housing crisis is the area’s “jobs-housing imbalance”. Unbridled expansion by large corporate employers has attracted many more employees than can fit into the available housing units. Supply and demand cause rents to skyrocket, and builders cannot easily add supply due to the area’s geographical constraints. Unfortunately, few in local government appear to grasp the severity of the regional situation, and that it is on a course to get much, much worse. One Mountain View housing activist described it as similar to “the Titanic heading for an iceberg.”

The City of San Jose General Plan, for instance, establishes a goal for the City to reach a ratio of 1.3 jobs, even though it acknowledges that this will result in “significantly” increasing housing costs and “exacerbating” affordability issues.

We cannot have a housing element goal of creating affordable housing while we have a General Plan which states that it is expected that housing prices will increase when they are already at a point of unaffordable for many.

“With Section 8 no longer an option, I started applying for low income apartments. The wait lists are up to five years, and I turned in 20 of them...I believe I have a right to live where I was born, raised, where my friends and family and support system are; and that I have a right to live where I work and where I contribute to society.” - Jolene, Speaker 12

As the Human Relations Commission and the Office of Human Relations listened to the testimony that crossed socio-economic realities, educational attainment and ethnic diversity, it became apparent that the level of wage increases under consideration will not solve the affordable housing crisis. The National Low-Income Housing Coalition reports that a worker would need to earn an hourly wage of \$31.71 to be able to rent a two-bedroom apartment in the San Jose metropolitan area. Clearly significant changes in housing policy are necessary as well.

The issues related to housing were brought up more than 300 times in the verbal and written statements. The following issues raised were: the expense of housing, the fear of homelessness, the cost of living, and the fear of losing one's home. This was equally true for the individual with an income of \$150,000 as for those earning \$15,000 a year. Obviously the living conditions were different depending on income, but the fears were similar.



Shawneequa Badger, President of San Jose Association of Realtors spoke of the paradox of being able to sell high priced homes and also knowing that the working class and middle class families are getting priced out of housing sales or rentals. She stated, *“I usually find pride in saying we have equity in our homes. There's a lot of potential for potential home buyers. But guess what? That's not affordable, and it's not scale able for working families in Santa Clara County. I made a point before I came here to look up what was the home medium values in Santa Clara County. And as of last month, it was \$725,000. That's an 11.5 percent increase from July of last year, and that's just on the housing purchase side. Let's really talk about what it cost to rent apartments in 2014 in Santa Clara County. In San Jose rents are up to \$2,500 as of June.”* She concluded

with a reflection of whether her 4 year old daughter would be able to stay in the community once she grew up in with the current cost of living.

An unexpected fact of the testimony received was the degree to which housing was not only an issue of the poor, but also an issue of what would be considered the middle class. Dr. William Armaline of San Jose State spoke of facing the reality that he will not be a home owner in the area, *“My wife and I are both working professionals. We will never afford a house here; never going to happen. We're from Ohio. We'll never afford the price here. He also spoke of the difficulty of recruiting professors to San Jose State, “It's also an institutional problem, because we as a university can't actually recruit professors. I bet you know the answer why. No one is going to come to a place where even as a full professor, they can't afford to buy a house. It's not going to happen. We didn't go to school for 12 years to be insulted; right? No one is going to do that. When a majority of income, no matter what we do as a profession goes to our housing costs, then the rest of our money can't go anywhere else...we can't spend money on businesses if we don't have any to spend. Henry Ford figured that out a long time ago.”*

A mother in a family of three spoke to the difficulty of making ends meet even when you are earning over \$100,000. *“We live in the Bay Area where everything is higher than the others. From housing, to food, education and health care. Our family has [an] income around \$100K but it is never been enough to give my only child full education as we wish...We must let her attend public school and our home [we] nearly lost in 2010. We did not borrow anything ... but the monthly payment is more 30% of our gross income. Cost of living made our family share the home with relatives in order to keep up with the payment and stay in the Bay Area.”*

A psychiatric tech earning \$85,000 and supporting a family of four gave the following testimony. *“I am the primary bread winner for my family. One would think that with our income, we would be doing really well. Yes, we can survive on our income, but we are hard-pressed to provide any extras for our children such as, enrichment classes and saving for college. We are holding on to the American dream by the skin of our teeth. We juggle money to make ends meet. I can't imagine how someone can live in this area making minimum wage. Not having enough money to live, not just survive day to day, but to live, causes so much stress. Stress can lead folks to despair.”*

Another testimony focused on the difficulty of living on a fixed income when rents are constantly on the increase. This was true for low income workers as well as retired high income workers. A written testimony stated, *“I am caught in between hard and rock situation and wondering how I am going to survive honorably before this world. I worked for 18 years in a bank and retired as a Manager at New York and moved to California because of my age. I am 78 now. I am unable to bear the cold and snow and that is the reason for my move....I have lived here for the last ten years. I love Sunnyvale and do lot of community services to give back my time to the community. Well, I am ashamed to spell out my present living situation. I rented an apartment like all other retirees do and in 2004 it was \$1,015.00 and today I am paying \$1,848.00 for the same one bed room apartment. When I renewed my lease in June this year that time itself the management warned there will definitely be another hike next year and then my rent will be more than \$2,100.00 per month”*. She took a part time job to pay her rent and a second part-time job last year. She stated that in addition to rent gas and food price has also gone up. She expressed fear in knowing that *“social security is not going up to match my rent”*.

TABLE 1 : WHO IS BEING LEFT OUT OF THE SANTA CLARA HOUSING MARKET?

HUD 50% of Area Median Income (AMI) in Santa Clara Co. for a three person household: \$47,250
Total workers earning < 50% AMI: 200,950

Salary needed to afford Fair Market Rent: \$65,960

JOB CATEGORY	MEDIAN INCOME IN SANTA CLARA COUNTY
Substitute Teachers	\$41,810
Medical Assistants	\$37,640
Security Guards	\$30,970
Childcare Workers	\$28,350
Retail Salespersons	\$22,330
Waiters/Waitresses	\$19,040

SOURCES: See Endnote 3



Robert a retired county employee who is a second generation county worker stated, *"I can't survive in this town. Believe it or not, I'm a millionaire because of the property I bought when I was young. When I was young, my first job was working at McDonald's at night as a custodian... I was able to buy a house. My house payment was \$189 a month off Gridley Avenue on Penitencia Creek. I did a study about Gilroy a couple months ago. The cheapest house in Gilroy is 440,000 and it's only one and it's a wooden house. And for you to get in, your house payment would be \$3,000 a month. What minimum wage person can handle that? "* He also put in perspective that many minimum wage employees are not being given full time work, they are being given part time work so that they will not qualify for benefits, leaving many low wage workers with several jobs to make ends meet. He stated, *"People are not hiring for 40-hours-of-work... They're doing the minimum, so they can get more profit. You really need to look at even people that are renting can't afford it. I couldn't afford a house to rent. There used to be a song in the '60s, "Do You Know Your Way to San Jose?" What we should be singing is "Can You Live in San Jose?"*

Although Gilroy has a cheaper cost of living than other parts of Santa Clara County, it also has lower wages, higher poverty rates, and higher rates of job insecurity. *"All too often Gilroy residents have to travel to other parts of the county to access services. According to a 2013 report from the Gilroy Systems Advisory Committee administered by Community Technology Assurance, in the fiscal year '11/'12, homeless service programs throughout the county provided emergency shelter and other safety services to 925 unduplicated homeless individuals who identified Gilroy as their last permanent residence." Speaker 11*

Many mentioned living pay check to pay check; the difficulties with creating a savings; the inability to deal with unplanned emergencies such as a car breaking down or illness. Others mentioned the impact on their personal life, the sense of loss in relationships and community because of the difficulties in surviving and stress. Others spoke about having to move out of the area only to continue to work in the area and face a 2-3 hour commute in each direction. Speaker #123 stated,

"It's very hard for those of us on the bottom end of the middle class. We don't qualify for the benefits of the very poor and we cannot pay the prices that the upper middle class can pay. Apartment owners are going to keep raising prices until they can't fill units anymore. Unfortunately, by that time, I may be forced out."

The stress regarding the combination of the cost of living with the cost of housing was repeated over and over again. It came up 203 times in the testimony submitted. Statements include the following:

- *"The middle class struggles to make ends meet, to pay rent, or to have food on the table"- #25*
- *"There is no such thing as a middle class in Silicon Valley. Rent, food, gas, PG&E and health care costs have gone up and my pay has not kept up the speed"- #72*
- *"I feel as if I don't matter. I don't want to become just another homeless person. After raising 4 children on my own, 2-3 jobs at a time, we were never threatened with becoming homeless". - #83*
- *"Talk about stretching your dollar, I have stretched my dollar beyond recognition. In order to substitute the food we cannot afford, I now stand in line at the food bank for at least 3-4 hours"- #83*
- *"People don't have anywhere to live and are forced to live with family members causing large family households- #111*

- *"We live on the edge of survival"- #112*
- *"According to statistics, 80,000 homes are in distress especially here in the bay area, I am one of them"- #137*
- *"The struggle is real. It's become extremely difficult to live" -#133*
- *"Financial hardship is regular for me and my family". - #160*
- *"I worry about not having a life of dignity that a human being deserves."- #176*

The vulnerability of low wage workers and single parents came up repeatedly and many stated that they were working 3-4 jobs to make ends meet. The numbers of hours needed to work to pay for rent; the number of jobs; the number of adults and the hours not spent with children; the number of times rents went up, the number of people living in a household and the desperation were emphasized numerous times. An advocate stated, *"Last year I was with a group of tenants and the landlord increased their rent 18 percent; and they were crying. They were in tears. They worked three jobs and could not pay it. And he [the landlord] said they should bring him in cookies because according to San Jose rent law, he was legally able to raise their rent to 21 percent and they should be grateful to him."*

"I recently moved. I downsized my home hoping to make my life a little less expensive. We went from a 4 bedroom house in Santa Clara. To a 3 bedroom house in East San Jose. I pay all the same utilities... Even the neighborhoods are opposite. I am one all for change but this is ridiculous. One check for rent, the other for utilities. Oh yeah and food if we can squeeze it in the budget. That's not even including transportation to doctors' appointments. I could only afford minimal school clothes for my child this year. How do you explain it to your child that you don't have the money for anything except the basics? Then there's reduced breakfast and lunch at times I can't even afford that and you know she needs to eat. I see more people struggling to stay afloat. Lots of families becoming homeless. The food banks are being flooded with more and more needy families. People losing their jobs because they can't afford the gas for their car and can't afford public transportation. The jobs are becoming scarcer. I've even considered taking on another job to help make things a little less stressful. Even that's hard when I need to be available at a moment's notice." Elizabeth, speaker 20.

For the disabled the issue of housing is additionally complicated as they are living of a fixed income, are working part time due to their disabilities or are trying to address their disability in a high cost of living area. *"I have two graduate degrees in law and social work. I'm also visually impaired, and I moved back to this area specifically because of public transportation, which allows me to live independently. Recently I was commuting three hours a day to work, because I was living with family members. I couldn't afford my own place to live. After months of looking and hundreds of dollars in application fees, a friend and I found a place to live. For two people who have graduate degrees and working in white collar professions it's difficult to find affordable housing, that's magnified a hundred times by people in our community who don't have that. I think the most privileged people in this community and the tech companies and all the other industries doing well now would grind to a halt if we didn't have people to mow the lawns and care for the children and care for the elderly. We need think of about how to build a community that can accommodate that" -Jessica, Speaker 32.*

Another speaker spoke to the difficulties of the high cost of living, housing and a disability, *"I was born and raised here in San Jose, and I have earned two college degrees in the Bay Area. Due to a chronic health condition, I'm only working part time while also receiving disability; therefore, I make a very limited income. High rental prices in San Jose have made it nearly impossible for me to even rent a bedroom. Rooms are now going up to \$1,000 a month. I have been getting by renting from friends who give me discounted rates or forced to choose substandard conditions. I've been forced to uproot myself 9 times in 8 years. On Saturday I just made my 9th move. Moving is stressful for anyone but someone with a health condition, it's that much harder. I desperately want a place to call my own"-Jolene, Speaker 12*

Housing advocates from the Affordable Housing Network, SHAM and SHHAC and homeless community members spoke to the crisis and the difficulties of surviving in the context of desperation and need. Santa Clara County has the highest

average rent for a two bedroom apartment in California followed by San Francisco-Oakland area, Los Angeles and San Diego. Santa Clara County's average rent for a two bedroom apartment is \$2,153 while in Seattle it is \$1,252. The way we count homelessness does not include when 2-4 families are living in 1 housing unit.

An advocate noted, *"We have 8,000 homeless in our county and more every year. And with the amount of wealth in this County, it's not a question of inequality; its exploitation and oppression and a failed economic system... Housing justice, what that means is housing the homeless. And if you can't house the homeless immediately, at least stop persecuting them the way the City of San Jose does. Provide legal campgrounds with water, showers, security, sanitation, and the basics of human life. We need an ordinance against discrimination against people with Section 8 vouchers; that should be passed immediately. There's no excuse. We're in the richest area in the world. There's no excuse for having people living in poverty and homeless..."*

Homeless residents spoke eloquently and with dignity as they described the reasons for the situations they found themselves in. Robert stated, *"I'm a 60-year-old resident of the largest camp of homeless persons in San Jose commonly known as "The Jungle." I have been a resident of San Jose for over 40 years, owned my own business and my own home. I'm an unemployed engineer and the victim of manufacturers leaving for cheaper labor. My wife is handicapped and gainfully employed. We became homeless due to her failing health, and we are being trapped by a system where we earn too much money for assistance and too little for traditional housing. We're being forced to leave the encampment and have nowhere to go. We are not being provided alternative housing even though I have a voucher. There is presently less than one percent housing availability in San Jose; making it almost impossible to find suitable housing."*

Teachers and professors spoke about their student population that struggles with having their basic needs met. Housing costs connected with the need to go to school, pay for books, pay for tuition created a delicate balance between the present and the future. One student stated, *"We are always referred to as the hope of the future but we are your present and we are suffering."* Whether they were professors at San Jose State, at a local community college or a teacher at an elementary school they spoke of the suffering of the student, the young and the child. Brianne, a student, spoke of the difficulties her family faces with the current housing crisis,

"I'm a local college student here. Right now I'm just living at home with my mom and my little brother. We can't afford the rent, just three of us. We have to share our house with another single mother with her three kids, and there's an older lady that lives in the room next to mine. So just -- we just can't afford having our own space. And I'm scared for my brother -- my little brother, like, what is he going to have to live through? I just learned that we are the richest county in the country, and I wonder why there is so many homeless people."

Others spoke of their worries for their adult children who will soon be priced out of the region or are struggling to stay in the region. Some people spoke about their concerns of having strangers living in their households. A professor from San Jose City College, Jim Kelley spoke about his student, *"Last year, there was a student that came to my class. He was an Iraq veteran. And in the class he revealed to us he was homeless and living in his car. He was struggling, and he dropped out."*

Veterans as a group also spoke to the difficulty of surviving on minimum wage jobs, homelessness, and the need for support and services. Speaker 26 said, *"I'm a veteran of the Army, and let me just say that there are so many veterans that need help. I have heard many of them talk about the fact that they find themselves at minimum wage jobs. The people that I see, the people that I talk to are only a portion of the many veterans who are homeless. It's really a shame for this country that veterans are homeless; it really is. These individuals paid a little bit of their lives for our liberties. They should not be treated this way."*

Miguel, another veteran, also stated, *"I come before you representing all the veterans in our region, in our county, and here in our City of San Jose. I served in the United States Marine Corps, and I am proud of it... defense of my nation. That was not a real challenge. The real challenge, I'll tell you, was coming home. That I had not volunteered for, to come home to an area where unemployment was rampant; and to be unemployed for 11 months and to come home to my city and find a job after 11 months at a transnational. At the time the official minimum wage was \$8. My salary at the time was better only by 25 cents. I never thought that it would be me, an educated individual who had a degree at San Jose State University who will be buying food with food coupons. I never thought that it will be me who last year seriously contemplated living out of my car."*

A healthy economy must include low and moderate income households to be strong and diverse. Speaker #90 stated, *"It's upsetting to watch our town become more and more upscale in some ways -- huge homes, very expensive cars, more high-end stores geared to the very rich -- and realize that the people who pick up our garbage, provide service in restaurants, run gas stations, provide lawn and other home services are having a harder time surviving in this area because they can't earn a good wage. The discrepancy in life style is unfair, discouraging and embarrassing. Our community is becoming more and more divided with the very rich on one end and the people struggling to survive on the other"*

Every high-tech worker is part of a community and needs services and all the amenities that make up a community. We are all interconnected. As we create the future in Silicon Valley we must ensure that we do not create the inequities of the past and that all humans have the right to live with dignity without having to sacrifice every ounce of strength to meet their basic needs. We can create a new economy, dedicated to taking care of the livelihood and happiness of the people, instead of the private profit of the few.

Housing Section Conclusion:

Next steps articulated by the housing advocates that participated in the forum identified the following proposals to begin to address the housing crisis in the region. In addition to reversing the Federal sequester and securing a dedicated state revenue stream for affordable housing, the affordable housing advocates of Santa Clara County recommend the following local measures to solve Silicon Valley's housing crisis:

- 1) Extend and strengthen local rent control ordinances to the maximum extent permitted by Costa-Hawkins, including reducing allowable rents, increasing units covered, and a genuine just cause eviction ordinance. Campaign to protect California's renters by repealing Costa-Hawkins.
- 2) Revise local Mobile Home Ordinances to prevent any closure and conversion of mobile home parks whatsoever.
- 3) Pass a Housing Impact Fee in San Jose and all Santa Clara County cities set at the highest level permitted by law.
- 4) Organize regionally now to impose the steep commercial impact fees necessary to offset the demand for affordable housing created by Silicon Valley companies.
- 5) Relieve the stress of the disabled and/or part-time, temporary, and low-wage workers who live under constant threat of eviction. Establish a new income category to fund construction of housing for families that earn 15% of median income or below (\$11,000 or below for a single individual and \$16,000 or below for a family of four). Allocate affordable housing funds to the various income categories based on greatest need.
- 6) For any homeless that cannot be immediately housed, save lives by securing vacant buildings suitable for sheltering them, including hotel rooms, and provide legal campgrounds and vehicle dweller parking areas with security, water, sanitary facilities, showers, and trash receptacles. Abolish oppressive "enforcement" ordinances designed to punish the homeless and those who feed and minister to them.

"It is shameful that we have the largest homeless encampment in the country in the midst of the wealth of Silicon Valley." Anne Rosenzweig, Esq.

Working Conditions in Santa Clara County

Harry Adams, Shannon Gleason & Teresa Castellanos

Silicon Valley, once the Valley of Hearts Delight, is the central hub for the global information economy, which has produced both enormous amounts of innovation and wealth, and well as rising inequality. As startups dot the landscape where orchards once stood, the changing South Bay economy has simultaneously expanded opportunities for low-wage work, as demographic growth and new forms of disposable income have fueled service industries such as retail, restaurants/hospitality, and domestic work. A services provider from the city of Sunnyvale stated,

“We are the most innovative place in the whole country, in the whole world; and our citizens and residents deserve to have a quality of life that is showing the dignity and respect that all of us deserve. As one of the emergency assistant safety net agencies in our county, we see firsthand everyday people who are working hard or people who have worked in our valley who cannot afford to live here.” She further stated that many “leave Santa Clara County for elsewhere, because they know even if they work hard 12, 14 hours a day, they are not going to be able to make the wage required to live here.”

Much has been written and said about the centrality of the technology industry to the economic well-being of Silicon Valley. Less has been noticed about the role of this same industry in maintaining or worsening income and working condition equity. The contrasting conditions are highlighted in many of the largest tech companies. While many of the “core” employees such as software developers, engineers and management earn salaries that allow them to afford the high cost of living, many others, the “invisible workforce”, i.e. contracted service workers, laborers with significantly less wages and benefits. As Working Partnerships USA wrote, “Although they go to work each day on the same campus as the engineers and coders, their wages are worlds apart...A janitor working full-time ...would have to use his or her monthly income plus working overtime just to pay the rent on an average apartment in Santa Clara County.”⁹

To add insult to injury many of the tech firm employees receive free food, shuttle transportation, flexible hours and liberal sick leave and vacation time. All of these benefits are denied to the landscapers, janitors, food service workers, security officers and shuttle drivers. “Such workers. are tenuously employed with few job protections...Some (shuttle) drivers have also questioned the practices employed by those contractors, such as requiring drivers to work split shifts in which they spend unpaid hours waiting for the afternoon leg of the commute.”¹⁰ Similarly, private sector and non-profit contractors and sub-contractors of public agencies, pay wages and provide benefits that are below living wage standards and often significantly

“We are sick of being told that if you work hard, right will be done by you...Our sweat, our blood, our families build and maintain this county, and we count as much as any other shareholder. For far too long we have been waiting for a booming economy to be the rising tide that will lift all boats. Well, it’s time to stop waiting.” Speaker #30

⁹ “Tech’s Diversity Problem – More Than Meets the Eye”, Working Partnerships USA

¹⁰ “Commute can be brutal for tech shuttle drivers”, Kristen V. Brown, San Francisco Chronicle, September 28, 2014

below those paid to the employees Santa Clara County and the various cities and districts in the county. The ironies of the high tech industry were also addressed by the testimony as it is an industry that produces great wealth for some but does not improve the quality of life for many.

Speaker #36 stated, *“For every high tech job we created in Silicon Valley, we need four to five workers to support that individual. We need people who are gardeners, healthcare workers, cafeteria workers, people who cut hair, people who are in the service industry and hospitality industry. If you have an engineer making \$100,000, it takes five other wages at \$10 an hour to equal that \$100,000. So not only do you need five workers to help that person thrive in their work, but five workers are needed to make that one wage. So the irony of that and the tragedy of that is really the tale of our two cities.”*

Charles a security officer in the high tech industry stated, *“The south bay is easily the richest area in the country. We're surrounded by many of the wealthiest companies on Earth. As a result the cost of living has grown exponentially, however the wages of the people who support the tech workers haven't kept up at all. I'm a professional Security Officer. I make \$12.00/hour, work 40hrs a week. My job is difficult, dangerous, physically demanding, stressful and at times disturbing. Security Officers are killed on an almost daily basis. Needless to say there's no way I can afford to rent an apartment or buy a car, it's a mathematical impossibility. I have to live with my parents and use public transportation to go everywhere that I need to. Because it's unreliable I am late to work, appointments and social functions sometimes too. It's hard for me to think about my goals and dreams because I am too busy thinking about just surviving and having a roof over my head and some food on the table. I would love to go to school, help my family and have some of the luxuries in life, but those are far off fantasies. I know that this is the reality of almost every non-union employee in the south bay. I dare anyone to refute that”.*

Another security officer in the high tech industry, Tom Gozzo said, *“I am a proud Vietnam Veteran and security officer who should be retired by now. But instead I live with my mom and I struggle to make ends meet. I work full time and thought I could enjoy retirement and maybe marry my girlfriend. But the cost of living in this area doesn't allow me to. I don't want to be a financial burden on anyone or the government. I just want to work and earn a decent wage”.*

Rosa, a janitor in the high tech industry, stated, *“I work full-time and make \$13.94 an hour. I have two sons, and truthfully, with the cost of living in this area, I find it at times impossible. Although, I have a union at my job and we get paid benefits, what I earn leaves us at the end of the month with nothing to save. If one of my sons gets sick, the cost of medication eats up that little I try to save. The rent takes up 3/4 of my paycheck and what's left is for food, car insurance and occasionally an outfit for my sons and myself. We only eat at home and we try to use parks and free entertainment.”*

“Government should not have to subsidize private employers who refuse to pay a living wage. Often the public does not realize that people who make substandard wages are forced to turn to public assistance”- Speaker #2

Santa Clara County is in one of the most prosperous regions in the nation, as well as one of the most diverse. Almost fifty percent of Santa Clara County residents speak a language other than English at home, and 30 percent are foreign born. Immigrant workers – who range from engineers to day laborers – comprise 37 percent of California's labor force (Bohn and Schiff 2011). Some of these immigrant workers have joined the ranks of prosperous information workers, who enjoy one of the highest median incomes in the country, many others have joined a large and struggling working class.

Richard Konda, Asian Law Alliance, stated, *“The low wage workers in Silicon Valley are the backbone of our community. They are the security officers protecting the companies. They are the janitors cleaning these companies. They are the home healthcare workers who are taking care of our elderly and disabled.”*

Several children of immigrant families spoke of the need to work at a young age to help their families make ends meet. Lynn a graduate of Yerba Buena High School on the Eastside of San Jose, a freshman in college, spoke about having to work as a high school student,

“I missed school events, and every Friday I went to sleep at 8:00 and woke up at 4:00 to go to the flea market to sell. As a product of divorced parents, I watched my sisters and I grow up on bad noodles and fast food. As my mother worked two jobs, my father suffered financially as well. With lack of English skills and education, my parents couldn't -- and they had no time to go to school to improve their English skills, so they couldn't afford to miss a day of sick leave. Because of this my major focus as a sophomore a few years ago was to survive. So I put school aside to seek for a job and tried to get my dad out of a sofa that he slept in in the back of a business.”

She spoke of the choices she made to stay in school while she faced the pressure to quit to work and help her family. She spoke of her continuing need to work two jobs to help her family and go to school.

Another student, Cathy, shared:

“I don't represent any organization, but I do represent all the other students at my school who have been working aside from their job, which should be being a full-time student. As a child I don't ever remember having a time when we weren't in need of money, when we had that extra money to buy anything special. And I remember coming home from school and trying to finish my class work in order to follow along with my parents for their side job, which was collecting cardboard to sell and recycle along with collecting aluminum cans. And so now I'm a high school student. I have a lot of friends who have to take on part-time jobs.” She concluded with a statement that her generation “really needs” a living wage.

“We are not bums looking for a handout..., we're working class people trying to provide for our families! It's heart breaking.” Vicky Moreno

While over seventeen percent of California workers enjoy union representation, including 14 percent of those in the San Jose-Sunnyvale-Santa Clara metropolitan area, the vast majority of other low-wage workers in this region are prone to job insecurity. Labor standards enforcement agencies are underfunded, understaffed, and backlogged (Bobo 2008, Government Accountability Office 2009), and lack of affordable legal counsel and unpaid judgments mean that the promises of labor standards often ring hollow (Bernhardt et al. 2008; Cho et al. 2013). Based on a national survey of low-wage workers in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York City, 43 percent of respondents reported experiencing one or more forms of illegal retaliation at the workplace (i.e. their employer threatened to fire/suspend them, call immigration authorities, or cut their hours or pay) (Bernhardt et al. 2009, p. 3).

Undocumented workers are over-represented in this state (7.8 percent versus 5 percent of the U.S. workforce) (Passel and Cohn 2009), including 10.2% of Santa Clara County (San Jose) (Hill and Johnson 2011). These workers are amongst the most vulnerable to workplace violations, although federal and state law have clear legal protections for all workers regardless of their immigration status. However, they paradoxically also confront an expanding national immigration enforcement apparatus (despite California's recent protections), legal sanctions against those who hire them, and lower rates of union representation.

Workplace violations are rampant in these low-wage post-industrial industries, especially those where immigrants comprise a substantial part of the workforce (Bernhardt et al. 2009). Declining union membership and contingent employment relationships enable employers to disavow workers legal protections.

The Santa Clara County Wage Theft Coalition recently issued a report on the epidemic of wage theft in the county, which occurs when employers fail to pay their workers any or all of their wages.¹¹ Based on survey data and interviews with workers, we also know that workers face challenges when they come forward to complain about unlawful working conditions, and those who do often receive little respite from their employer. As a result, many workers keep quiet in order to protect their jobs. A representative of the Muslim Community Association stated, *"So this is not just a wage issue. This is not just a monetary issue. This is actually a human rights issue to be able to live in this county without fear of retaliation for standing up for one's rights."*

However, the challenges do not stop for workers who do choose to mobilize their rights under the law. Drawing on public data, the coalition uncovered the inadequacy of current protections. They found that from 2012-2013, the almost 2,000 workers who filed claims with the regional office were awarded \$8.4 million in owed wages. However, of the \$8.4 million awarded in San Jose and Salinas, workers could collect only \$2.8 million (33% of the total awarded). The result of these workplace violations is economic devastation for families and their health, as well as unfair competition for small businesses, and lost revenue for local governments.

The difficulties that many workers face impact living conditions, quality of life issues, relationships and physical health. And at the same time everyone is doing their best to make ends meet.

Victor C. "I get paid \$10 per hour and work from 11 a.m. until 3 a.m. (16 hour days) and though the law says I should get paid extra for overtime, it is not like that. I work hard for my employer and leave tired but only get regular pay."

Marie Bernard, Executive Director of the Sunnyvale Community Services said, *"We're one of the agencies helping with the VTA pilot program for low cost transit passes. We have 100 folks every month who stand and wait for two weeks to get a pass*

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<http://www.sccgov.org/sites/owp/Documents/pub/WageTheftReportFinal-2014.pdf>

that costs \$25 that is worth \$70. They are standing in line to save \$45 a month, so they can get to work; that they can get to their education; that they can get to their medical appointments. For them to have to work that hard to save \$45 so they can remain employed or in school or go to the medical appointments shows how hard people are working here.”

Working Conditions Conclusions

At the forum and in testimony submitted in writing, workers voiced stress, frustrations, working conditions and the need to live with dignity whether they were earning \$20,000 – \$100,000 a year. Testimony also identified an effort currently underway to pressure the County and City of San Jose to deploy resources to enforce the rights of wage theft victims (Gleeson, Silver-Taube and Noss 2014). Another effort calls for the creation of a broader living wage that more accurately reflects this region’s rising costs of living. An allied campaign also highlights the need for broader wage equality in Silicon Valley’s tech industry, and broaden public discourse surrounding the needs of the industry’s largely invisible Black, Latino, and immigrant service workers.¹²

“...We are the wealthiest county in the United States, and we have a plantation economy. A third of our people are serving the economy; the economy doesn’t serve them.” **Reverend Carol Been, Speaker #24**

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<http://www.wpusa.org/>

PARENTS WORKING MULTIPLE JOBS: IMPACT TO CHILDREN

Carol Weiss, Dana Bunnnett & Araceli Lopez

The testimony, both oral and written, overwhelmingly highlighted the frustration of living paycheck to paycheck and thus of having to work two, even three jobs to make ends meet. What are the consequences of this for the family and for our community? In Santa Clara County, as well as the nation, our future depends on how we invest in our children, including those in immigrant families. If all our children develop the skills they need to become productive workers and parents who support their children’s learning, the county’s future will be bright.

Children under the age of 18 make up 24.3% of Santa Clara County. The total population of the county is 1,842,254, including 439,320 children. There are:

- 148,700 children who are under 6 years old
- 197,545 children who are 6-13 years old
- 93,075 children who are 14-17 years old

Figure 2: Characteristics of Santa Clara County Families Below and Above the Self-Sufficiency Standard, 2007

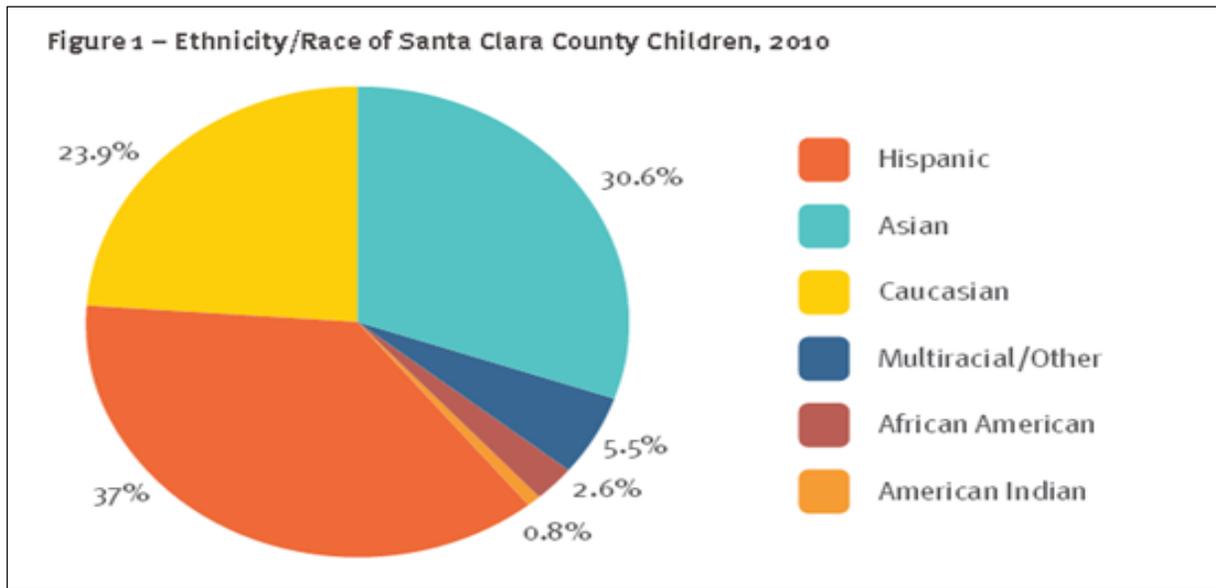
Household Type	Total	Percent of Households	Percent Below Self-Sufficiency Standard	Percent Above Self-Sufficiency Standard
Total Households in the County	460,867	100%	22.2%	77.8%
Asian Households	144,323	31.3%	18.8%	81.2%
Black or African American Households	13,419	2.9%	32.3%	67.7%
Latino Households	93,288	20.2%	45.0%	55.0%
White Households	205,671	44.6%	13.5%	86.5%
Households with one or more children	212,161	46%	29.5%	70.5%
Married Couple with Children	161,567	35.1%	22.8%	77.2%
Single Mother	35,261	7.7%	55.7%	44.3%
Single Father	15,333	3.3%	39.4%	60.6%

Source: Insight Center for Community Economic Development

Diversity in SCC Families

The U.S. Census Bureau indicates that 62.4% of children in Santa Clara County live with one or more parents who was born in another country. The public schools report that 24.2% of enrolled children are English language learners. I

The county’s foreign-born-parent population includes those who are naturalized U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, temporary migrants, humanitarian migrants and unauthorized migrants. A microcosm of the future of the United States, Silicon Valley’s immigrant population is represented by five of the top six countries whose citizens come to the United States: Mexico, the Philippines, India, Vietnam and China. ii



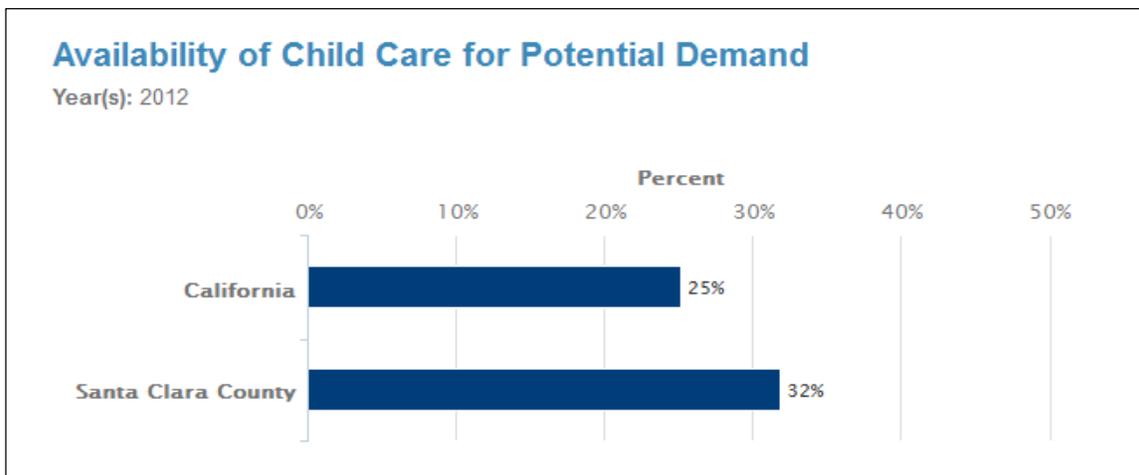
Income disparities and unmet needs for quality child care are sharply striking in Santa Clara County. According to the 2013 Santa Clara County Child Care Needs Assessment, there are over 46,600 children in families with working parents who are at or below 70% of the state median income. In addition, of the 20,000 preschool-aged children (3- and 4-year olds) in Santa Clara County with at least one non-working parent, there are an estimated 12,000 who are eligible for state subsidized early education programs. These families struggle to make ends meet, often working 2-3 jobs to just to survive. However, without sufficient child care assistance to support all eligible children, it is challenging to even imagine how low-income families can afford the high cost of child care.

The Needs Assessment Data indicate that full-time, center-based care for a child under 2 years of age averages over \$17,700 per year. Even in a licensed family child care home setting, the cost is a huge burden on low-income families, averaging just under \$12,000 per year. Full-time care for a preschool-age child (2-5 years old) amounts to an average of over \$12,700 in a center, and over \$10,900 in family child care homes. Considering many families have more than one child, the cost of child care quickly becomes out of reach for many low-income families. Painting a picture of the concerns families face, the Silicon Valley Community Foundation's Parent Story Project (2014) interviewed parents from a variety of diverse backgrounds in San Mateo and Santa Clara Counties.

In general, their findings tell a story of parent engagement through strong systems of support, general satisfaction with schools and child care providers, as well as positive parenting practices. Yet, their analysis also revealed a disparity when considering low-income and Latino parents. Low-income families report less support in times of need, lower enrollment in preschool, less satisfaction with elementary schools, lower participation in enrichment activities, and less enrollment in

formalized child care. Given the information about the high cost of care, it is not surprising that low-income parents identified 'cost or subsidies' and 'lack of a waitlist' as important criteria when selecting a preschool, more so than middle-to-high income parents.

The survey findings show that a smaller percentage of low-income preschool-age children enrolled in preschool compared to middle-to-high income children. Parents who reported problems finding child care most frequently indicated concerns with cost and quality of the care. Low-income parents were more likely to encounter problems finding child care and were more likely to be the primary caregiver compared to middle-to-high income parents. Furthermore, low-income parents were more concerned about cost and the convenience of the location when selecting child care.



According to the Santa Clara County School Linked Services Strategic Plan (2012), “the overarching concern expressed by the large majority of those who participated was ‘low expectations, resignation, and hopelessness.’ Members voiced deep concerns that “children and youth are losing hope about what life has to offer them.”

Mayela describes her family situation in this way:

“My husband works three jobs and it is only to get by. It is always a hardship every week just to put food on our table for our family. I supplement our income by taking care of children a few days a week, but if you add up my earnings it comes to about \$5 an hour. I earn little because those families that pay me also make very little...We live in poverty and the more my husband and I work to get ahead the less time we spend with our children.”

Noted Sylvia:

“At one point I have [sic] been working two or three jobs to pay the rent. There’s some times where (sic) I cannot feed my mother and daughter...and I had to take food out of the trash...” Yet Sylvia had multiple jobs.

How can one effectively parent a child in these situations? A clinical social worker (speaker #5) who works with children up to the age of five years explained:

“...We work with children with delays, language delays, or ADHD or autism or something interfering with their typical development...Many times their delays are aggravated by the fact that their parents are working two jobs...and how can that child who has ADHD have a chance at regulating his emotions and being on task and doing his homework and being successful?”

The short term and long term costs of a parent not being there for her child extend well beyond the immediate family. For any child's success in school, strong parental involvement is a must.

Speaker #16, a teacher, explained that,

If parents are “...forced to work extra hours or another job because they are not being paid appropriately...parents and guardians won't be able to be there for their children when they're needed most, their formative school-age years. The result is exploitation of the entire family now and injustice that carries on long into the future.”

Martha, a teacher's assistant who tries to support a family of five on \$27,000/year further explained that,

“The quality of life in SCC leads you to leave your children for long periods of time in order to provide a modest home for them...Of course if they take a bad turn the mother is the first they blame for leaving them alone.”

An equally serious problem was pointed out by speakers #8 and #9. The children who are left alone while their parents work multiple jobs are susceptible to gang activity, they are vulnerable to join gangs. Speaker #23, a public health nurse and mother, described it this way:

“...I see people working two, three jobs at a time, for their children are left alone, because they cannot afford to be there parenting them. What happens then? They go to crime. That is what they have to do. They are bored. The children come home from school, they have no supervision. So what happens? They go and they go to where it's....giving them some kind of direction, direction towards crime.”

This, then, is the choice parents must make, as described by speaker#12:

“I have to wake up every day and choose do I go to my first job and then go to my second job to survive, or do I stay home and have the opportunity to be a parent? No one should ever have that choice....”

If the family has young children, the additional cost of childcare must be factored in. Ernesto, a butcher, tries to deal with a demanding boss and fear of getting fired, along with the stress of increasing household costs. Sometimes, rather than pay \$80/day in childcare costs, he will ask for the day off, because he cannot afford that cost.

One speaker expressed her frustration as, “The community at large seems to have no free time for our children...” Speaker #7, name withheld.

Food insecurity and hunger are strongly associated with many negative outcomes for children, including:

- Maternal depression that has an impact on a young child's social-emotional development,
- Susceptibility to illness and infection,
- Deficits in cognition, attention and behavior,

- Increased school absences, repeating a grade, suspensions and higher rates of tardiness,
- Depressive disorders and suicidal behaviors in teenagers,
- Greater likelihood of dropping out of high school,
- Greater rates of overweight and obesity. ii

Such choices place an unbelievable amount of stress on a parent, especially a single mom:

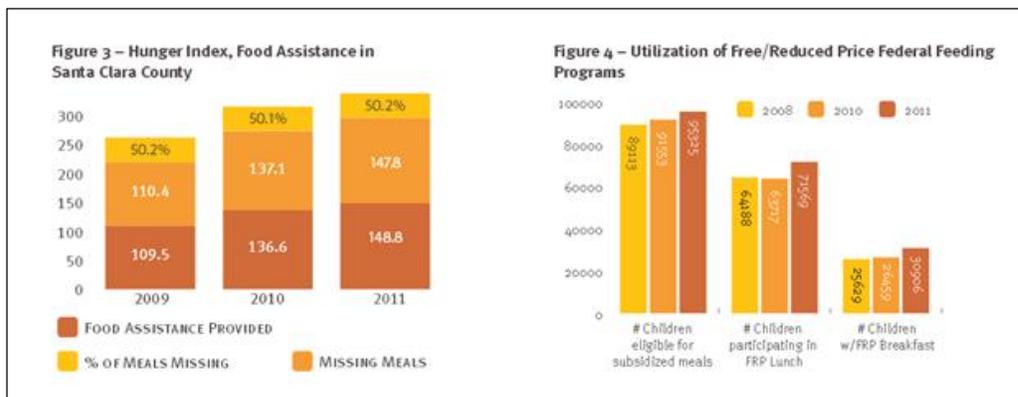
"I don't enjoy the little things and times with my daughters because I'm stressing about what I can cover each month and what's not going to get covered. Not getting to spend time with my kids because I'm trying to work overtime if it's offered. I'm missing my daughter(sic) grow up and losing the bond with them because I'm so stressed and hating the way I'm having to survive my life instead of living it," Delia Ramirez.

There is stress and there is real fear as well. Maria, a para-educator, trying, somehow, to support a family of 4 on \$10,000/year writes,

"Most parents have two jobs. I pray the rosary and I sacrifice by not taking a second job so I can stay home and care for my children... Because of all the insecurity I can't leave them in the streets alone. I live with worry and fear."

Silvia is a childcare provider who earns \$6,000/year. In writing about single mothers who must work one or two jobs to pay the rent, she tells of *"...children growing up alone, or in the streets...girls are becoming mothers too soon..."* The consequences cross boundaries of geography as well as of generations, present and future.

The demand for food assistance in Santa Clara County has outpaced our ability to provide this assistance. The Hunger Index, an aggregate measure of the need for food among the most vulnerable members of our community. Developed by Santa Clara University, this index provides a means of comparing need and our community's ability to meet that need annually. From 2009 to 2012, the need for food assistance grew by nearly 40%, from 219.9 million meals in 2009 to 307.5 million meals in 2012. In 2012, federally funded and local food programs provided 153.8 million meals, a 40.5% increase over the 109.5 million meals provided in 2009. Even with this increased provision of meals, the need grew so much in Santa Clara County that residents experienced 153.7 million "missing" meals in 2012. lii



"As a single mother I've had to leave my children for 15 hours, working 2 jobs. We had no food. I only ask that you help us have a better life, not only for me but for the town. Increasing wages, give us opportunities and education." Name withheld.

This committee, the Social Equity Committee of the Human Relations Commission, repeatedly heard the same few points being made:

- This county has people working long hours, at low wages, often at multiple jobs, to merely survive.
- Children are often left unattended, to their own devices. They find other kids in the same situation. The lack of supervision and time with parents can lead to youth getting in trouble.
- When parents are living on the financial edge, doing all they can for survival, their own and their children's, it is impossible for them to save for their children's future education, for their way out of poverty.

In this context, we heard from professors, teachers and students. Speaker #14, a faculty member of SJSU explained that "*the majority of our students have to work 20, 30, or 40 hours a week...*" just to pay the greatly increased tuition rates. These students cannot count on any help from their beleaguered parents. Yet they understand the importance of a college degree if they want to get ahead. Even if they achieve that degree, will they be able to afford living in this county? The odds are not in their favor.

i Santamaria, Manuel J., Palm, Mauricio. "Immigrant Integration in Silicon Valley: Legalization, Language Acquisition and Bridging the Cultural Gap, Grant Making Strategies Research Paper. Silicon Valley Community Foundation. October, 2008.

ii "The Consequences of Hunger and Food Insecurity for Children- Evidence from Recent Scientific Studies." Center on Hunger and Poverty, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University. June 2002.

iii "Hunger Index 2012: Santa Clara and San Mateo Counties." Early release of Hunger Index Data by Santa Clara University and Second Harvest Food Bank, December 2013.

Sustaining Health in Santa Clara County

Teresa Castellanos & Dolores Alvarado

Santa Clara County is known throughout the world as part of the affluent Silicon Valley. In 2012, the County median household income was \$86,850, with the average being \$113,161. However, one in five residents continues to live at or below the 200% of the Federal Poverty Level. While ranking as the second healthiest county in California, we continue to have significant health disparities and inequities, largely associated with poor educational opportunities and poverty. Of all social determinants, **income** is one of the strongest predictors of health outcomes worldwide.

Despite the implementation of the Affordable Care Act in 2014 and the expansion of Medi-Cal in California (CA) that provided coverage to a large number of previously uninsured individuals in Santa Clara County, it is estimated approximately 167,584 Santa Clara County (SCC) residents still remain uninsured (based on a 9% county uninsured rate). As we found in the testimony given at the community forum, many who are insured also worry about health care costs, access to medications and their future. Many spoke of the new health care changes and acknowledged that it was a first step but that it did not address the complicated work situations that exist in the valley: several part time jobs do not equal a full time job or provide health insurance; salaries that do not meet the basic needs of the cost of living; provided paid sick days; lack of time to spend with ill family members.

Speaker #20 stated, *“Because of the high cost of housing, I and others must go without health insurance in order to keep a roof over our heads.”*

“Unless we find a way to increase wages, to bring wages up to a living wage level, we cannot make health insurance accessible. We can’t fulfill the dream of the Affordable Care Act in Santa Clara County.” **Bob Brownstein, Working Partnerships USA**

A Former Mayor of Sunnyvale stated, *“Many companies covering retail and food service, caregivers, and many more are moving to use more part-time workers; and by doing so, keeping employees from qualifying for company medical. The part-time work is not covered by the Affordable Care Act. The employer is only required to cover full-time employees.”*

“There is no free time for me at work. There’s no vacation. I don’t get paid if I get sick. So if I get sick, I have to go to work even though I’m shaky. Even though I got fever, I have to go to work. Because I can’t afford losing one day of work. Plus I don’t get benefits. I don’t get insurance. ...I couldn’t afford health insurance. After Obama Care, I still can’t afford health insurance but I’m forced to buy it. So I’m forced to work overtime 16, 18 hours a day. Then my car broke down. Then I got sick. I applied for Medi-Cal; I don’t qualify, because I got two cars. If I apply to Medi-Cal, I have to sell one of my cars even though my wife has to work.” - Omar, Speaker #18

Others spoke of the complications of limited access despite the new law, unresolved questions, cost and lack of infrastructure in the context of making ends meet. Catherine stated, *“There’s sort of a bait and switch situation I feel going on with the new law and Medi-Cal. Medi-Cal is supposed to cover not only all the low income people it’s been covering so far but also people 133 percent of federal poverty level. Yet we don’t have the infrastructure to deal with it. There are not enough primary doctors. People are waiting and waiting to get into healthcare.”*

Ruth shared, *“My story is about my mother who is 82 years old. Despite my many years of advocating through the Self-Help Center and having worked for Kaiser for over 16 years, it took me over a year to get in-home health support services for her. What is wrong with that? I went down there. I got bounced from person to person. And, finally, by the grace of God, I was able to get her in-home health support services. Until four years ago she worked as an in-home health support person.”*

“I live on the Alameda; trucks all the time; they're tearing up the street. It's really wonderful, the investment in our infrastructure. Let us invest in human infrastructure. Let us invest in human beings and no longer say, oh, we just can't do it.... If we're concerned about our businesses, we better be concerned about our families first. There is no excuse.” Reverend Carol.

“There is no such thing as “middle class” in Silicon Valley and I am in the low level of pay along with the poor. Due to [the fact that] I pay out of pocket out of my wages for food and higher rent and toward my cost of healthcare. I have higher copayments on my health insurance, and try not to go my doctor due to how much I will have to pay out of pocket if I do. My health is even threatened and I work for Valley Medical. I cannot afford to retire.” Testimony # 72,

Health Disparities associated with Income Level & Educational Status

The health of county residents is also largely influenced by social factors including income, years of education, race/ethnicity, immigration status, and the physical conditions in the neighborhoods where we live, play, work, and age. In our county, the combination of low educational status and lack of employment opportunities, coupled with substandard wages and shockingly high cost of living make for a perfect storm for our already disenfranchised populations. Therefore, it is not surprising that despite all efforts by our healthcare delivery system, one of the best predictors of life expectancy and quality of life is the census tract in which one lives.

We have known for a long time that the never-ending cycle of *poverty* has had a detrimental impact on the families and their health status. It is not surprising that health conditions such as high rates of adolescent births, lack of adequate healthcare coverage and/or inability to use the healthcare system, rising rates of diabetes in young adults and children are direct consequences of living in poverty. In this county, the top two causes of mortality, cancer and heart disease, account for approximately 50% of all deaths. Diabetes is often an underlying condition and contributor to heart conditions and mortality. Additionally, poverty can play a significant role in a child's educational opportunities that indirectly influence their future health.

A 20 year teacher in a title one school shared,

“My students usually come to school sick, because their families cannot stay home with them, because the adults don't have sick days and they work multiple jobs. So my room routinely goes through 150 boxes of large Kleenex tissues every year. My students and I get sick more frequently than other people as a result of that, because the students are coming to school sick. We are not giving students -- we are not giving the next generation a chance for a good life in our county ...” Title one schools are schools where a high percentage of the children's families qualify for free or reduced lunch because they earn so little money. This is a federal government program.

The testimony provided by parents, elders and youth during the community forum and the written testimonials spoke of the chronic stress, worry and depression from the combination of housing, and living costs in Santa Clara County. *“I am impacted first of all in my health as I live with chronic stress”- Susan, mother of 4, who has a family income of \$15,000 per*

year. As student stated, *"I am very stressed. I don't have a good quality of life"*. Her family has an income of \$11,000 per year. Quality of life issues, depression and health were brought up 223 times in the testimonials. A Mountain View Resident expressed this collective fear and stress:

"The constant preoccupation of being able to survive in this area, the level of tension in which we live, the daily dissatisfaction [with life]. The lack of opportunity for livelihood and growth. Tremendous insecurity given the fear of cost of living increases without rent control, hikes could result in my inability to pay rent added to a feeling of impotence of not being able to provide a better future for my family. It creates a tension in personal relations, insecurity, frustration, violence and lack of productivity."

Another resident explained this in a different way: *"There used to be a time when hunters used to run around from dawn to night. This is an industrialized nation, and now we have created the same scenario again. We are working from job to job, trying to make a living here; and yet every day we been bombarded by corporations, Wall Street, you name it."*

An In Home Supportive Services (IHSS) provider spoke to the worry of becoming sick as the sole provider in her family, and the impacts that would be inevitable on her budget. She also spoke to the issue of not being able to stay home with her sick child because no one can cover for her at work and about going to work sick and spreading an illness as a *catch*

22,

"As a parent and sole provider my greatest daily worry and struggle is illness and injury since I have no choice but to work regardless of who in my family is sick or hurt. I can't take time off to tend to my sick child which is an awful feeling as a parent. For myself, getting sick and unable to work would be devastating for my family. We are on a very tight budget and all money is accounted for with little to spare. Having to choose to work regardless of being ill not only affects the worker, it also affects the individual who is being cared for as illness and infections etc. are being spread around. A lot of individuals that are being provided the care usually have health problems already and adding to their health problems doesn't help anyone"

There was also a discussion of collective health, not just individual health.

"Norovirus often gets attention for outbreaks on cruise ships. But according to the Center of Disease Control, that's only about one percent of all reported cases. Norovirus is very contagious, and outbreaks can occur anywhere people gather or food is served. In cases where investigators were able to pinpoint the source, 70 percent were caused by infected food workers. One of the CDC's recommendations is the use of paid sick leave. I have additional concerns. A parent who is working without a living wage and paid sick leave can't stay home with a sick child. Often those kids are sent to school before they're well, because the parent has no other viable alternative. Again, the result is an increased risk of illness." Bryan

"I'm a public health nurse. I am also a teacher...We have seen the prices of gas, water, and electricity increasing. I have seen as a public health nurse, firsthand, [during visits to] these homes where there are [several] people living in a two-bedroom apartment. I have worked with people that have active tuberculosis, living in an environment of this sort. And I ask you: Where is the county's health? Where is it going to go? Why are these people living in this type of environment in one of the richest areas in this country? We worry about our health. We need to worry about the people that are living there and why are they living in this type of environment. I wonder, and I ask, and I say, you know, there's the health of the community involved here. As a public health nurse, that's what I'm concerned with." Speaker #23

This remaining population without health coverage is comprised of approximately 82,002 (49%) adult individuals without legal immigration status, 22,411 (13%) Medi-Cal eligible individuals, 49,766 (30%) Covered CA subsidized individuals, and 13,405 (8%) Covered California non-subsidy eligible individuals.

Through the efforts of many non-profits, Santa Clara County was the first to form a network of Outreach & Enrollment entities that worked to increase enrollment and to help families establish a regular connection to health services, but obviously much more work needs to be done. In the testimony that was heard or submitted to the Human Relations Commission, many participants revealed that they were forced to choose between housing and health by making the difficult decisions of whether to pay for rent or medical care needs. There was also an acknowledgement of the county efforts to improve health in the valley.

"It's also important, related to healthcare, that we must find the political will and the money to save our hospitals. They're in danger of closing again. We know what happened with San Jose Medical Center. It wasn't all the way saved. It was saved to a certain extent. Now we're in the same situation with O'Connor and Saint Louise. And we're willing -- we hope everyone here is willing to participate with the county in fighting to buy these hospitals." Speaker #25

"We...thank the county and all of its healthcare partners and hope they continue to treat undocumented people in our community Not leave them out." Health Care Advocate

Conclusions for Health Section:

Advocates and community members identified the following steps to continue the improvement of health access in Santa Clara County:

Launch a movement in Santa Clara County that will prepare all to take charge of their health, in spite of where they live will have to include various components as follows:

- *Work closely with the County, non-profit organizations, and employers to ensure adequate health coverage options.*
- *Work closely with the network of Santa Clara County enrollment entities and clinics to educate the community about healthcare coverage options, including MediCal.*
- *Continue to develop a strategic and targeted effort to educate and raise the level of health literacy of our constituents so that they may understand fully the choices available through the many health coverage products.*
- *Develop and implement a plan to educate the consumer regarding the effective use of the personal health data available and how to interpret it. For example, understanding the significance of the data in the patient's health portal and communicating with a health provider.*
- *Develop and support a strong partnership with community health organizations in order to improve consumer behavior specifically in the area of exercise and food choices*

Voices of the Very Poor

Sylvia Romero

For this segment, we have focused on families subsisting on an income below \$30,000 annually.

Responses Summarized

There were some 121 respondents. What follows is a summary of their responses. They can be grouped under several main headings:

Family – the effects of poverty on family life;

Work – the types and conditions of people’s jobs, and the impact on lives;

Survival (in Santa Clara County) – How people are coping or not coping;

Analysis – **their** reflections on their lives and conditions, and ideas about how to create a more just society.

Family

As might be expected, respondents were virtually all concerned about the corrosive effects a high cost of living has on their families. The difficulties of raising children and maintaining a healthy family are magnified when money is scarce and there is no time or space to be together as a family. Respondents tell of nine people living together in a three-bedroom apartment, of 23 people living together in one apartment. There are references to families renting space for only certain hours of the day, of people renting couches for \$300 a month. Such overcrowding is common, mentioned several times. Such conditions make intimacy, or even the most basic privacy, impossible. *“It keeps everybody on edge,”* one respondent reported. One cited such overcrowding as a main cause of separation and divorce.

Parents often cannot survive with one job alone: this means that they work two, or three jobs and are away from home frequently and, because the price of child care is so high (6 respondents, mentioned this), they are forced to leave their children to fend for themselves, which makes them more susceptible to joining gang activities or, in the case of girls, teen pregnancies.

“As the neighborhood gets poorer, more kids drop out of school to help their families.”

“With so many people out of work on the street, you’re afraid to go out or let your kids play outside.”

“I’m really embarrassed about this conversation, that we have the words “working poor” in our lexicon. Speaker #21, Reverend Reginald Swilley

Several mentioned the pain they feel because they cannot spend time with their families. They feel like they cannot be close to their children because have to spend so much time working. They are, for example, unable to go out to eat or go places (to visit relatives, for example) because they cannot afford it.

One respondent rhetorically asked, referring to her children *“What will the money go for? A good meal? Decent clothes?”* Virtually all of the respondents refer to the choices they have to make.

As might be expected, the major impact of the high cost of living within the family falls on women. Many women reported have to raise two, or three, or four, children on their own.

As a single mother, *“the biggest impact is not being there to share (my children’s) lives. When they take a bad turn, the mother is the first they blame for leaving them alone. Don’t they realize that rent is going up forcing 10 people to live in one apartment, while new condos are being constructed for middle class people?”*

“Being female, we receive less than men.”

Others mention disparity in wages based on ethnicity. *“I think there should be equality of pay and opportunity (for Hispanics). I think that Hispanics are paid less for being Hispanic.”*

“Whole families living under bridges, in their cars, in the hills.” This reference to “whole families living under bridges” was a common one.

“It is now a privilege for a family to live alone in a house.”

Several talked about having to go without food so other family members could eat:

“If you eat lunch, you won’t eat dinner. If you have dinner, you won’t have breakfast. Or you might prefer not to eat so your children can eat.”

And for many, the biggest fear is, *“...that my rent will continue to climb and I will be unable to pay and end up in the street with my kids.”*

Or, put another way by an expectant mother, *“my concern is that I will not be able to find a home, a place where I can lie down. I am about to bring two little ones into the world and not having a place to live in this world would not be agreeable. I am afraid I might have to leave them alone, or be without food that is too expensive.”*

There are also longer-term effects to such limited lives: *“We cannot afford to save for university for our daughter because food and rents are so high.”*

Work

One of the unexpected facts about many of these people is that they are not unemployed. A high percentage of them have jobs – indeed, some have two or three jobs, but the conditions of their jobs are such that their poverty is sustained, not relieved, by their work. The jobs they do support various sectors of Silicon Valley’s lifestyle: restaurants, schools, construction, landscaping, non-profits, health, auto mechanics, supermarkets, caregiving services. Nearly every respondent had a comment about his or her work. Often they are forced to work in exploitive or illegal circumstances. Their work – the amount of hours they have to work, the conditions of their labor, the money they are paid, defines the limits of their lives – where they go, what they can or cannot do, how much time they spend with their families, etc. In most situations, the lack of a living wage severely restricts their possibilities.

“I have lived and worked in this county for 25 years,” one woman declared, *“but I do not see the fruits of my labor.”*

Often, children drop out of high school, or out of college and university in order to help their families. Losing one’s job can mean, as it did in one case, the loss of one’s house.

"It's the corporations, always pushing us to work for less."

Long hours were a common complaint. Witnesses testified as to work 10, 12, even 16-hour days. Others talked about spending years at the same job with no raise. Some mentioned the fact that they had no paid sick days, and that missing a day might cost them their job.

"We need to have dignity after work," said one witness, *"I leave home at 5:00 am to get to work, and by the time I get home, it's already 7:30 pm. My daughters are already asleep. I can't be involved in their daily school work and family activities. I can't give them a life of dignity." I feel like I'm not being a good father."*

Almost universally, respondents testified that wages must be raised. Again and again, they cited the amount they were paid. With a raise in the minimum wage, they reasoned, their lives would be easier. But respondents are well aware that merely raising the minimum wage is not enough. Many called for some sort of rent control, and price controls for food, medical care, gasoline, utilities and public transportation. *"If you only raise wages, and do not control rents, it make no difference,"* said one.

Several respondents felt that they could not complain about unfair or illegal conditions at their workplaces because they would be fired if they did. *"The corporations around here get rich by our work, but we only get the crumbs... even with all the great effort we put into our work, our labor is cheap."*

Some respondents talked about one of the peripheral effects of working long hours for low wages. *"(I am) not able to go to school myself to get a good career."*

"Day laborers work from 7am to 11 pm and make \$50 a day. We need stable, well-paying jobs."

Some among them have become active in the community to try and improve their situation and that of their community. *"I have made time to get involved in my children's school, my church and organizations such as SIREN, but I am always thinking while I am involved that I should be working more to pay the rent or that the children need new shoes for school."*

Surviving

Despite all their problems, people work out ways to survive, but most do not consider that they, or their children, have a future. Many earn barely enough to live from day to day. They have to choose among necessities what to pay with their meager resources. As noted earlier, many families have given up on the whole idea of living in a house or apartment, or room, and live in their cars, under a bridge, on the street, or in the hills – and these are working people.

"We survive with the help of the family, and the limited resources of the community. We are forced to seek help from the government."

"When I pay the rent, their clothes have to be paid for on credit, which in the long run costs you more. My son has been 15 since December of 2013 (when we bought the clothes) but I had to wait till now to pay the money back." "I lost my license because I had to choose between paying my traffic tickets and my medical bills. So I chose to pay the medical bills, but now I have no license."

"I work full time at Facebook. I have two sons, and truthfully, with the cost of living in this area, I find it at times impossible. The rent takes up ¾ of my paycheck ...we try to eat at home and we try to use parks and free entertainment."

"We go to church and we walk to the flea market and other places because taking a trip with the family means gas and parking and eating out. If something happens with the car and I get a ticket, then we don't go anywhere."

There is a universal call among these testimonials for some kind of rent control. One senior speaks of sudden and rapid rent increases, from \$700 to \$1029 over a period of 6 months. *“How can I be a low-income senior when I am paying \$1200 a month rent?”* he asks, *“I am a custodian and have received a workload increase, but not a pay increase.”*

“Over the last three years, my rent has increased for a total of \$320 a month.”

One Cornell University graduate, who has 4 part-time jobs, writes, “I pay \$1,000 for a room and bathroom. I have to worry 24/7 about paying rent.”

“There is no regulation on the increases in the rent. The increases are not just annually, but \$50 to \$150 every 6 months. This is a race without end that does not benefit the community.”

“With wages so low, you have to work twice as hard as a normal person.”

“There are more low income than in any generation since the Great Depression! Proof is “The Jungle” at Senter Rd. and Keyes,” commented a retired social worker.

Faith helps some people to survive. *“God is very great and He will open doors.” “We believe in God and He will send angels to assist us.”*

One mother claimed that, just by surviving in such an environment, *“I make miracles!”*

Health care is a common concern. People speak of putting off visiting a doctor because of the expense until the condition is worse, thus putting themselves and their children at risk for more serious and more expensive illnesses.

“My husband has no insurance and to get a molar out, they charged us \$4,000. It took us 6 months to pay it.”

“We can’t even put together money for a medical check-up, we only go to emergency.”

The cost of food is a common concern as well. *“With \$25 I used to buy food for one day. Now I spend \$70 a day.”*

Many spoke of moving out of Santa Clara County in order to afford rent. One family now commutes two hours each way so that one parent can stay behind to care for their special needs child. Several mentioned that, sooner or later, the high cost of living would force them to leave the county.

Analysis and Proposed Community Solutions

It would be short-sighted and incorrect to assume that these respondents and people like them are unaware of the reasons for their poverty, or that all around them in Santa Clara County, there are pockets of almost unimaginable wealth. Often they proposed solutions to the problems they refer to.

“Life is expensive in Santa Clara County – maybe it is the most expensive place in the whole country.”

“I invite representatives of our county to come to the East Side and live in these houses, with rats, old houses with lead paint and suffer from asthma or pulmonary problems and pay their rent with the low wages prevalent here. Let’s see if they could make it.”

“There are always more families that must live with 4-5 in a small room, which is like living in a jail cell. But a jail cell does not have 4-5 people in a small room – we do.”

Some refer to the services that do exist in the county to help, and how they could be improved. *"I would ask our supervisors to open social service offices at hours that are accessible to the community, in the afternoons and evenings or on Sundays".* *"The county needs health outreach workers to take information out of the neighborhoods, not to be afraid to knock on doors and speak the language of the people."* Others mentioned specifically that the county needs more aid workers who speak Spanish.

One woman displayed an understanding of simple economics: *"If the wages go up, then the poor will have more money to spend. We can't save it, and we can't go anywhere else to spend it, so we will spend it in the neighborhoods, at our local stores. This is good for everybody, because it keeps the money rolling around."*

Though nearly all mention a raise in the minimum wage, most realize that without a ceiling on their other expenses, such a raise would be meaningless. One example: *"I want salaries to increase but not the cost of living."* Another, among many: *"Raising wages is not enough, it is important, but stop basic food prices from going up. You have to have rent control."*

It is clear that many of the respondents are not just thinking of themselves and their own families. *"There should be a salary raise but for everyone! Open up more job opportunities, particularly for women by starting childcare programs that let them work."*

"Enough with them (the corporations) stepping on us by claiming to give us salary increases when they are already plotting to raise prices."

Reprisals to those who "whistle blow" was mentioned several times. *"Investigate employers who do not pay in accordance with the law. If we do report them there should not be reprisals...we are not going to keep on being quiet about this."*

A waitress and mother of two wrote: *"We accept decisions that harm us because we lack a voice."*

More than one person referred to their lives as *"living in the shadows."* *"We need to live in dignity and not in the shadows."*

"When you live in the shadows, you have nothing." *"The most affected are those living in the shadows."* These phrases strongly infer that people do not have the time or the resources to be truly human. Nearly all their waking time is taken up trying to simply survive.

"In this county," one commented, *"with low resources and high cost of living, you cannot have a dignified and just way of life."* This is a common theme that the county resources and programs have not kept pace with the explosive growth that the county has experienced because of the big companies in Silicon Valley. People mention the need for child care and after school programs, for centers for elders, low-income housing, etc. Youth programs were also mentioned, and programs for prisoners returning to the greater society. *"I would like that they have consideration to the young people that have been in jail and are in debt to the County from infractions. When they are looking for work, give them the opportunity to work. They are young and want to go on the good road but do not get the opportunity."*

Health care, even when offered on the job is often too costly. *"They (employers) told me that if I want benefits my salary would be reduced by \$2 to \$10 per hour, and that is not even minimum salary. The insurance they offer is far too expensive."*

Over and over people declared, *"I ask you please that you analyze the cost of living and that you raise our wages."*

To sum up: *"We live in the richest state in the U.S., but where the majority of the people are poor in all areas: economically, health, education, housing and time with the family."*

And *“We need education to make ourselves better, need to have more security, better policing, better salaries, quality medical insurance, cleaner streets and less juvenile delinquency.”*

“They (government) are more interested in what happens in other countries than in our own. They should find ways to help families who have no place to live. Inflation gets higher every day and the most affected people are the working class, while millionaires and government officials are concentrating, some on making more money and others on how to get more power every day.”

“The worst would be for the crisis to continue and those that can, do nothing.”

Afterword on the “Working Poor”

The impression one gets, after reading through these testimonies, is that of a vast, often invisible, population of low-wage earners who are living day-to-day, barely surviving, overcoming a whole series of circumstances which militate against them. *“Insecurity, frustration, impotence, depression, tension, violence, and lack of productivity. We become more aggressive, individualistic, and unhappy.”*

Yet these people, by their work, and the low wages they are paid, actually support the rest of society and enable those with more resources to live more carefree and leisurely lives. If there is one common, almost universal thread that runs through their comments, it is the need for a higher minimum wage, or a living wage. Yet, as most of them are well aware, a raise in wages will be meaningless if the cost of basic subsistence also goes up.

The irony, of course, is that there are so many and that the place involved, is Santa Clara County, Silicon Valley, the birthplace of the Semiconductor Revolution and all its peripheral industries, the maker of so many millionaires, a place where almost obscene wealth exists close by the side of so much struggle, so much need. To quote one respondent, “Please hear us!”

“The test of our progress is not whether we add to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.” Franklin D. Roosevelt

Addressing Wage and Income Inequity

Harry Adams

There is no dispute that the cost of living in Santa Clara County is very expensive. The data in this report and in many other studies and reports all reflect it. Organizations ranging from business, labor, faith-based and non-profit recognize its existence and deal with its implications. And of course, the County of Santa Clara and other governmental agencies need to plan and provide services to those most impacted.

The most stark and revealing evidence though comes from the voices of County residents. The recent “The Price We Pay” forum and subsequent written testimony revealed in great detail the challenges that our community faces in creating stable, self-sustaining, and dignified working and living conditions.

“For the past 17 years, living in the community of San Jose...In order to pay for everyday living my husband has to work three jobs. It’s hard for us to get the right amount of money to be able to pay for our groceries...I live in poverty.” Name withheld

Approximately 295 local residents presented oral or written testimony. With few exceptions, from homeless living in “the jungle” to college professors, from life-long residents to recent immigrants, and in many different occupations, all described the problems they and their families have living in Santa Clara County. Those providing testimony are only the tip of the iceberg. As cited earlier in this report we know that this is the worst of all the metro areas with the smallest percentage of households earning between \$35,000 and \$74,999 (22.5%).¹³ The bottom has dropped out of the middle class. Combined with all those below \$35,000 and about 42% of our community’s households are in an absolute struggle to ‘pay the price” to live here. Certainly many other hundreds of local residents can speak of the difficulties housing, feeding, transporting, caring and educating their families given the great disparity in income and opportunity.

The data and testimony clearly show the problems. But we heard something more from our community. “What we have here is a tale of two cities; those who have abundance and those of us who are struggling to make ends meet...we have the means and capability of paying the living wage in Santa Clara County. *We are innovative... and we should lead.*” Reverend Jethro Moore, President, San Jose-Silicon Valley NAACP

Throughout this report we have detailed not only the challenges but also the many ideas of ways Santa Clara County could show the leadership that our community demanded. Each section details specific recommendations that the Board of Supervisors should consider.

¹³ U.S. Metro Economies, Income and Wage Gaps Across the US, IHS Global Insight August 2014, prepared for the United States Conference of Mayors and The Council on Metro Economies and the New American City

The most common solution proposed was for the County to establish a comprehensive living wage. A great need was expressed for middle and low income families to earn more wages for their work and to also have more opportunities for full-time work, regular work schedules, health benefits, more leave time and the right to improve their working conditions without fear of retaliation. Over 150 individuals expressed support for a living wage ordinance.

Based on the testimony and on reports of wage inequity there are a number of obstacles to economic self-sufficiency and prosperity for the significant majority of Santa Clara County residents. The most obvious is the amount of money people earn when they work.

The concept of a living wage is spreading fairly rapidly throughout the nation. Over 140 cities have approved such measures to date. Often these policies focus on the amount per hour wages with some adjustment for health benefit costs and annual cost-of-living increases. These measures are improving the ability of individuals and families to afford the cost-of-living in their respective cities. However, the residents of our community, reinforced by various studies and reports, face additional challenges even with significant increases in hourly wages.

Many households will have inadequate financial resources even with the implementation of a “living wage” only policy. More workers want full-time work than is available or provided by employers. “About 27.4 million Americans work part time. The number of part timers who would prefer to work full time has nearly doubled since 2007.”¹⁴ Many part-time workers want more hours than they are scheduled and would like stable work schedules rather than a “...a growing push to curb scheduling practices...that can cause havoc in employees lives.”¹⁵ Workers lose pay when they have no or inadequate leave days. Unfortunately low-wage workers have less access to paid sick leave with only 33% of those earning less than \$20,000 earning sick leave.¹⁶ A worker who can only work 20-28 hours a week or miss 10 days of work per year for illness will still only be marginal even with a \$20 hourly wage.

The cost of living in our county is so prohibitively expensive that any loss of income will leave one on the edge of insufficiency or poverty and in inadequate and unhealthy housing and neighborhoods, “...as a single mother I’ve had to leave my children for 15 hours, working 2 jobs. We had no food. I only ask that you help us have a better life, not only for me but for the town. Increasing wages, give us opportunities and education.” Name withheld

The most recent Joint Venture Institute analysis heralds the fact that in Silicon Valley there is a significant increase in households earning at least \$150,000 dollars.¹⁷ Obviously there are those in our community who are prospering and able to comfortably afford, even willing to pay more for, housing, education, health care and food. This is not just a wage gap but

¹⁴ “A Push to Give Steadier Shifts to Part-timers”, Steven Greenhouse, New York Times, July 15, 2014

¹⁵ “Starbucks to Revise Policies to End Irregular Schedules for Its 130,000 Baristas”, Jodi Kantor, New York Times, August 14, 2014

¹⁶ “Earned Sick Leave in San Jose”, Analysis by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research and Working Partnerships USA, 2014

¹⁷ Joint Venture Institute for Regional Studies analysis of US Census Bureau 2013 American Community Survey

a gap of access and opportunity for low and middle income households, particularly Latinos, African Americans, women, immigrants, seniors, disabled and veterans.

Many community members are calling for the leadership of Santa Clara County. Their testimony has made clear the great distress that many feel. *“My community is living in poverty. We have to live with 2-3 other families to afford the rent and if we did not have family here we would be living in the streets or we would have to make shacks in the park.”* Maria S.

RELEVANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS AND A HUMAN RIGHTS FRAMEWORK

William Armaline, PhD & Edith Kinney, PhD

The legal relevance of human rights instruments with respect to U.S. policy and governance can be defined based on (1) U.S. [limited] ratification of international human rights instruments¹⁸, and (2) the experience and recommendations of human rights scholars, NGOs, international legal experts, and international oversight bodies working to realize human rights practice in the U.S.

(1) The U.S. has signed every major international human rights instrument, and historically played a leading role in the development of the U.N. Charter, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [UDHR], and the International Criminal Court [ICC]. Yet it has only ratified the ICCPR¹⁹ with the now infamous reservation that the instrument is “not self-executing,” or that its legal relevance is to be decided on a case-by-case basis in U.S. judicial and legislative processes.

In sum, this means that the U.S. agrees in principle with every major human rights instrument (as a state signatory), but has so far failed to fully ratify any of them to the extent that they become the “law of the land” (Constitution of the U.S.). The U.S. stands alone when it comes to this grand historical contradiction—what human rights scholars call “American exceptionalism.”

(2) Despite this lack of substantive legal obligations, human rights law and certainly a human rights discourse or framework are far from irrelevant in U.S. policy and practice, particularly at the local level. Human rights provide a powerful framework for local government agencies and authorities to evaluate existing laws and policies as well as develop programs to promote advances to strengthen human rights in local communities. Current strategies for realizing human rights practice in the U.S. are now based on the ratification and recognition of human rights instruments as the standard for policy and practice at local levels of governance. To demonstrate the strategies and reasoning for doing so, we will reference (and suggest Commission members read, in full) the 2012 study and report by Columbia Law School’s Human Rights Institute, *Bringing Human Rights Home*²⁰.

[The following] recommendations apply to all state and local officials because authority to implement human rights belongs to all local decision-makers, including governors, mayors, state legislators, city council members, law enforcement, city, county and town executives, and boards of supervisors. Indeed, fulfilling the promise of human rights will ultimately require multiple strategies and collaboration among all levels of government.

- Making Aspirational Commitments to, and Raising Awareness of, Human Rights [this would include efforts toward “human rights education”]

¹⁸ Human rights instruments refer to the documents defining human rights through international law. These documents include both declarations (non-binding, such as the UDHR) and ratified treaties (such as the two Covenants). Binding human rights instruments have the same legal weight as other international treaties in accordance with the 1969 Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties.

¹⁹ International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights

²⁰ Page 1. Please see the full report here: <https://web.law.columbia.edu/sites/default/files/microsites/human-rights-institute/files/Bringing%20Human%20Rights%20Home.pdf>

- Reframing Local Concerns as Human Rights Issues
- Fostering Participatory Governance
- Reporting on Local Compliance with Human Rights Treaties; and
- Conducting Human Rights Based Audits and Impact Assessments

A human rights framework is especially useful in that it (pg. 6):

- Places a focus on proactively identifying and addressing problems
- Empowers and elevates public service
- Fosters partnerships and promotes inclusivity
- Enhances responsiveness and Accountability
- Emphasizes addressing systemic causes of discrimination
- Provides opportunities to demonstrate leadership locally and globally [often in solidarity networks]

Historical Precedent for Economic and Social Rights in the U.S.

First, the re-election of Franklin D. Roosevelt to an incredible *four terms* in office as President arguably stands as a precedent for economic and social rights in the U.S. Historians are in general agreement that his popularity was in large part due to the success of New Deal policies and the war time economy that brought U.S. workers out of the Great Depression, and set the stage for the greatest economic period in U.S. history that followed the world war and FDR's passing in 1945. The New Deal, based on efforts toward "relief, recovery, and reform" following the Depression, produced the basis for modern labor and economic rights for workers in the U.S., including the creation of the Wagner Act (protecting unions), the US Housing Authority, the Farm Security Administration, the Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938, and the Social Security Act. Further, the New Deal set a precedent for living wage, public employment that also built much of our lasting (and now deteriorating) national infrastructure through the Civil Works Administration and Works Progress Administration.

Second, while many are aware that First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt led the charge to draft the UDHR as the U.S. also led efforts to establish the U.N. Charter, many remain unaware that *FDR introduced an "economic" or "second Bill of Rights" in the U.S. toward the close of World War II.* In his 1944 State of the Union Address—as the European front ended and the Pacific front raged on—he argued that economic inequality and severe poverty would threaten the very *national security* of the U.S. and other Western democracies in the post-war world, and that the civil and political rights articulated in the original Bill of Rights would no longer suffice:

"...We cannot be content, no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people—whether it be one-third or one-fifth or one-tenth—is ill fed, ill clothed, ill housed, and insecure. This Republic had its beginning, and grew to its present strength, under the protection of certain inalienable political rights... As our Nation has grown in size and stature, however—as our industrial economy expanded—these political rights proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness. We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. 'Necessitous men are not free men.' People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made. In our day these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second Bill of Rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can established for all regardless of station, race, or creed."

Among these are:

- The right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the Nation;
- The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation;
- The right of every farmer to raise and sell his [sic.] products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living;
- The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition and domination by monopolies at home or abroad;
- The right of every family to a decent home;
- The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health;
- The right to adequate protection from the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment;
- The right to a good education.

"All of these rights spell security. And after this war is won we must be prepared to move forward, in the implementation of these rights, to new goals of human happiness and well-being.

America's own rightful place in the world depends in large part upon how fully these and similar rights have been carried into practice for our citizens. For unless there is security here at home there cannot be lasting peace in the world."²¹

A few things are worth noting here:

- 1) FDR's "second Bill of Rights" reflects many of the economic and social rights later articulated in the (non-binding) UDHR and the (binding) ICESCR. This suggests their substantive legitimacy with regard to international consensus (the foundation for all international human rights instruments).
- 2) Human rights scholars, particularly critical sociologists, have argued forcefully that in order for civil and political rights to have any meaning, they cannot be separated from fundamental social and economic rights. This is in line with FDR's argument that the original Bill "proved inadequate."
- 3) Many scholars would point out that FDR's connection between economic insecurity and national security is certainly supported, if not prophetic. At the center of nearly every current national security threat—from ISIS to Mexican Drug Cartels—are populations of young adults facing dire economic futures. In short, our greatest threats seem to thrive (materially and ideologically) on economic inequality and structured poverty that flow from U.S. domestic/foreign policy and the general political economic structures developed by U.S. led global institutions such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, World Trade Organization, and so forth.
- 4) There is *clearly* a precedent for the creation of meaningful economic and social rights at all levels of governance in the U.S. When introduced (the New Deal), such policies have enjoyed incredible popularity and support, while demonstrating a sustained significance in American life (Social Security for example).

Case Examples, Economic and Social Human Rights at the Local Level:

²¹ For more information, see the FDR Library website: http://www.fdrlibrary.marist.edu/archives/address_text.html.

Right to Health Care

Vermont was the first state (2010, full implementation by 2017) to enact a public, transparent, universal health care system (Green Mountain Care) in the U.S. through a statewide campaign on “healthcare as a human right.” Human rights principles were also used in the deliberation of how the health care system would be implemented—keeping out a proposed amendment that would have excluded undocumented populations from coverage.

Right to Housing

Madison (and Dane County), Wisconsin successfully passed resolutions in 2011 and 2012 recognizing housing as a human right after studies and testimony demonstrated problems with homelessness, housing cost and availability, and the disproportionate experience of homelessness and insecure shelter among populations of color and LGBTQ communities (in itself a violation of the ICCPR). The resolutions effectively produced assessments of local housing availability/need/cost, public funds toward increasing affordable housing in the city and county, prioritizing services and resources for homeless populations (children in particular), a county-wide fair housing plan, and policies to prevent “foreclosures, evictions, and the criminalization of homelessness.”

Human Rights Cities

Several cities in the U.S. including Pittsburgh, Carrboro/Chapel Hill, Washington D.C. and Eugene have joined the “human rights cities” movement in the last 10 years. Human rights cities refer to municipalities that apply human rights law, norms, and standards to improve community living conditions or address specific social problems. This typically includes a full or partial ratification of international human rights instruments at the local (municipal or county) level. Human rights cities also enjoy the benefit of an international network that aid in the adoption and implementation of human rights frameworks for local governance²².

- In 2011, *Pittsburgh, PA* proclaimed itself a human rights city primarily in order to address issues of racial justice and residential segregation. The Pittsburgh city council has since worked with a group of youth activists—Racial Justice Through Human Rights—to author the city’s proclamation, and follow with public educational and policy efforts to illustrate and develop solutions to the city’s problems with racial inequities and segregation.
- *Eugene, OR* initially proclaimed itself a human rights city in 2008, and re-visits this proclamation once annually on International Human Rights Day. One of the oldest and most advanced human rights cities in the U.S., Eugene

²² For more on human rights cities, see: Stephen Marks et al. (2008) *Human Rights Cities: Civic Engagement for Societal Development, People’s Movement for Human Rights Learning*

(PDHRE); and the Human Rights Cities Forum, found at <http://humanrightscity.net/eng/>. For an interesting white paper on the international network of these cities, see B. Oomen and M. Baumgartel, “Human Rights Cities” found at <http://mensenrechten.verdus.nl/upload/documents/Oomen%20Baumgartel%20Human%20Rights%20Cities%20v2%20March%202013.pdf>.

employs the following: the Eugene Human Rights City Project that explores all potential for human rights to inform city governance, a revitalized and relatively powerful Human Rights Commission that seeks to “promote and support” the “full range” of rights articulated in the UDHR/IBHR at the city level, human rights education and training programs for key city employees, human rights assessment tools for city departments, growing recognition of other “single issue” instruments such as the International Convention to Eliminate all forms of Racial Discrimination [ICERD], and the recognition of many specific Economic and Social rights relative to local social problems, such as the right to housing [ICESCR/UDHR].

Assessment and Reporting at the Local Level

In 2007 the city of *Berkeley, CA* became one of the first U.S. cities to adopt a “Human Rights Ordinance” in line with the U.N. Charter, suggesting that all city residents had equal rights under the law regardless of race, sex, language, or religion (often called the “equal protection” clause found at the beginning of all human rights instruments). They followed this up in 2009 and years since through (1) formalizing local reporting with respect to all human rights instruments ratified (to any extent) by the U.S., such as the ICCPR; (2) issuing yearly reports on the extent to which various city policies and offices complied with these international instruments. The Berkeley, CA case demonstrates how international levels of human rights assessments, such as the Universal Periodic Review process, can be re-envisioned and tailored for local governing bodies to address local social problems.

Relevant Instruments and Articles, Economic and Social Human Rights in SCC:

From a preliminary view of the socio-economic data contained in this report and the record of testimony from community members, the following instruments and articles are relevant to this report, and should form a local policy framework linked to the international legal framework for policy discussion moving forward.

Primary Relevance

- Right to work (UDHR Article 23, ICESCR Article 6)
- Right to favorable and just conditions of work (UDHR, Article 23, ICESCR Article 6)

These rights include “the right of everyone to the opportunity to gain his [sic.] living by work which he freely chooses or accepts [sic.]” and the duty of states to “include technical and vocational guidance and training programs, policies and techniques to achieve steady economic, social and cultural development and full productive employment under conditions safeguarding fundamental political and economic freedoms to the individual.” (ICESCR, Article 6).
- Right to an adequate standard of living (UDHR Article 25, ICESCR Article 11)
- Freedom from Hunger (ICESCR Article 11)

Specifically, these rights refer to “the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family [sic.], including adequate food, clothing and housing, and to the continuous improvement of living conditions” (ICESCR Article 11).

- Right to health care (ICESCR Article 12, UDHR Article 25)

This refers to “the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health.” States Parties are expected to take the necessary steps to reduce infant mortality and facilitate the healthy development of children, improve all aspects of environmental and industrial hygiene, treat and control epidemic/endemic/occupational diseases, and create “conditions which would assure to all medical service and medical attention in the event of sickness” (ICESCR Article 11).

Secondary Relevance

- Right to rest and leisure (UDHR Article 24, ICESCR Article 7)

CONCLUSIONS & NEXT STEPS

The Human Relations Commission and the County of Santa Clara Office of Human Relations have had the opportunity and privilege to hear from hundreds of local residents and community advocates about the challenges of making ends meet in Santa Clara County. We have also reviewed some of the latest studies and reports that highlight the living and working conditions in our community.

This document is difficult to read at times. Understanding the struggle for daily survival can be overwhelming, but there is also a resiliency, hard work and dignity in the stories that were shared. In these pages there is a profound understanding of the reality and opportunity at hand in the context of a new economy when there is also justice. Without a doubt the voices you heard are hardworking, intelligent, innovative people that are making miracles happen on a daily basis these are also the shareholder who should be taken into account,

"We are sick of being told that if you work hard, right will be done by you...Our sweat, our blood, our families build and maintain this county, and we count as much as any other shareholder. For far too long we have been waiting for a booming economy to be the rising tide that will lift all boats. Well, it's time to stop waiting". -Speaker 30

The courage of those who testified on the price we pay to live in Santa Clara County was palpable and at times soul shattering during the public forum. The written intimate descriptions of the struggles that local residents have been forced to engage in on a daily basis to keep hope alive while they make difficult decisions about where to live, how to pay for basic needs, how and when to find time to rest between jobs were unsettling. The risks that are taken to continue working when ill and exhausted, or to send children to school when ill due to a lack of affordable child care, paid family leave or sick time have compromised employee performance and student readiness and performance. People are seeking relief from a long period of sustained economic insecurity that demands more and more from labor without adequate compensation or opportunities to rest, and recuperate, to invest in their futures or participate in civic life that would highlight the need for just policies. The fact that so many responded to the County's first call for personal stories about their daily experiences is a testament to what local residents feel is at stake. Their testimonies are the basis for why this report contributes a foundation for a community call to action by government and the private business sector in partnership with the public to establish a living wage policy and policies that address the income disparity that is associated with the new technology economy. Based on the significant input received we are forwarding a series of conclusions and possible actions for the Board of Supervisors consideration:

The testimonies and research data clearly show that there is an extremely high cost of living in Santa Clara County. The testimonies vividly and sadly reflected the inability of many in our community to sustain a decent quality of life for their families and themselves.

The cost of living is exacerbated by the fact that there is a crisis in the ever-widening wage/income gap. Our county has become the most inequitable of the 357 largest metropolitan areas in the nation. This inequity allows the wealthy to afford the high cost of housing and drive up the cost for the rest of the county's residents. The percentage of middle income households continues to decrease at an alarming rate. The testimony brought forth the fact that not just the traditional poor are affected.

At the same time, the cost of living and the wage gap have a disproportionate impact on minorities, immigrants, women, and youth. The impact is felt not only in securing decent housing, but in health care, education, working conditions, and family life. Our youth are plagued by doubts about their present and future.

Our community believes that we have a moral responsibility to address the growing disparity. It is unconscionable to allow 'two valleys' to exist. Our residents are looking to the Board of Supervisors and other city and county officials for leadership. Continually we heard people stating that they were in crisis and demanding that it was time to take action.

People want a living wage, more full-time work, regular work schedules, leave time, affordable health care and controls on housing costs. They also need the ability to improve wages, benefits, and decent work schedules and leave time at the workplace without the fear of discrimination and retaliation.

Local residents are also increasingly aware that there is a growing movement across the nation in response to income inequality and access to opportunity as the issue of our time. It is therefore important to continue to acknowledge and include the diversity of people residing in the County of Santa Clara in understanding the current impact and long term consequence of income inequality and the development of sustainable solutions.

The Road to a More Equitable Valley

The following are some possible recommended priorities and actions that advocates, community residents, the Human Relations Commission and the Office of Human Relations recommend for the consideration of the County of Santa Clara Board of Supervisors:

The County of Santa Clara should adopt a comprehensive living wage ordinance that addresses the serious and growing wage gap as a first step toward address the broader impact of income inequality throughout the County.

County policymakers and administration should continue to support and promote local, regional, and national policies that address income disparities, housing costs, working conditions, health care affordability and accessibility, homelessness, racial and gender discrimination, job creation, and opportunities for youth and veterans, and senior living conditions.

“The test of our progress is not whether we add to the abundance of those who have much; it is whether we provide enough for those who have too little.” ***Franklin D. Roosevelt***

We understand that city, county and other local agencies cannot resolve these problems alone. The private sector must be held accountable through effective policies and regulations to deal with the wide disparity of wages, benefits, and working conditions of the people they employ or with whom they contract.

A plan of action that includes ongoing research, deliberate action, evaluation of impacts should be developed which includes a plan of targeted improvements and remedies that can be implemented with defined timelines and public input.

The County of Santa Clara needs to look for and evaluate examples and the impact of living wage policies from other cities and regions. The County should also identify and eliminate barriers to opportunities and promote other efforts to mitigate cost of living and disparity issues.

We should continue to involve County residents in the process with focused dialogues, meetings, and surveys. These are not matters to be left to experts alone to solve. Many members of our community are in crisis and their families destabilized. We need to continually involve them, if we want to earn their trust and increased commitment to creating a community that is just.

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How SCC is failing to meeting the housing needs of low income families

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County of Santa Clara
HUMAN RELATIONS COMMISSION

The Human Relations Commission (HRC) was formed in 1972 in response to civil unrest that was taking place in Santa Clara County during the civil rights and peace movements. This 15 member commission is appointed by the Board of Supervisors to represent their respective districts and to advise the Board on issues that affect the human and civil rights of all County residents.

The HRC meets on the second Thursday of the month (except in July and December) at 6:30 p.m. in the Board Chambers in the County Government Building located at 70 West Hedding Street, San Jose, CA 95110.

To seek appointment to the Human Relations Commission please contact the Office of the Clerk of the Board at (408) 200-5001 or go to their website to apply at: <http://cob.sccgov.org>. You can also contact the Director of the Office of Human Relations regarding appointment to the Commission and/ or to place an item on the HRC agenda Call: (408) 792-2301.

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