

COMMUNITY FOUNDATION SONOMA COUNTY



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FOREWARD

In late 2009, Community Foundation Sonoma County received notice from the estate of Roland and Hazel Todd that the Community Foundation was the beneficiary of the Todd Trust. The bequest instructs that the funds be used as follows: “...to support charitable activity primarily in the Sonoma Valley of Sonoma County, California, but also secondarily in Sonoma County generally, in the following areas:

- A. Health and Human Services, especially for the sick, needy and elderly;
- B. Governmental services which are underfunded, such as local fire, library and healthcare districts, but not to include services provided by cities or counties;
- C. Open space, specifically land and trail acquisition.”

Work began in July, 2010, to identify and assess community needs and priority issues for the Sonoma Valley, focusing on the Todds’ areas of interest. A structured interview process and follow-up meetings were conducted with approximately 75 individuals who live in or are involved with Sonoma Valley. After an initial assessment of key themes and potential impact areas, we shared our findings with three groups of interviewees to confirm accuracy and completeness.

This version of the report gives a broad view of the issues facing Sonoma Valley. Our initial goal was to determine the best use of the Todd Trust funds. At this point, we believe that these findings along with the Sonoma County Economic Development Board’s report detailing significant demographic, employment and education data and trends are valuable to a broader audience trying to improve the health and well-being of residents of Sonoma Valley.

Community Foundation Sonoma County & the Sonoma Valley Fund

OVERVIEW OF ISSUES FACING SONOMA VALLEY

Geographic & Economic Make-up

The Sonoma Valley, also known as the Valley of the Moon, is located 46 miles northeast of San Francisco along Highway 12, and approximately 30 miles east of Santa Rosa (the seat of Sonoma County.) The Sonoma Valley is comprised of the City of Sonoma, Kenwood, Glen Ellen, and unincorporated areas referred to collectively as the “Springs” (Boyes Hot Springs, El Verano, Fetters Hot Springs, and Agua Caliente), and separately the unincorporated communities of Eldrige, Schellville, and Vineburg.¹ Unincorporated areas are governed by the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors.

¹ Source: City of Sonoma’s website: <http://www.sonomacity.org>

Sonoma Valley is defined by its rural nature. Industry in Sonoma Valley includes construction, manufacturing, finance, and educational/health services; however, tourism, retail and agriculture both define and drive the Sonoma Valley economy. Sonoma Valley receives the second most revenue of any locale in the county in transient occupancy taxes (TOT), consistently providing at least 10% of the county total TOT.²

SonomaValley4Biz describes Sonoma Valley as:

“Surrounded by rolling oak meadows and draped with vineyards, the Valley, birthplace of California's famed wine industry and home to more than 40 wineries, is a destination favored by visitors from around the world for its wine, food, culture, and vitality. It is estimated that well over half a million visitors each year are attracted to Sonoma Valley's wineries, art galleries, historical sites, spa facilities, restaurants, and special events.”³

The largest private sector employers in Sonoma Valley include Infineon Raceway, Fairmont Sonoma Mission Inn and Spa, St. Francis Winery, The Lodge at Sonoma Hotel and Spa, Sonoma Market/Glen Ellen Village Market, MacArthur Place Hotel and Spa, and Sebastiani Winery. Other major employers include the Sonoma Developmental Center, Sonoma Valley Unified School District (SVUSD), and Sonoma Valley Hospital. A growing number of employers can be found in the Valley's light industrial corridor along Eighth St. East.

Finally, there are a large number of businesses along the Highway 12 corridor that serve residents of the Springs. The majority of local employers are small; more than 60% of Sonoma's jobs are found in businesses with fewer than five employees. There is a large and active home-based business sector in Sonoma Valley.⁴

Sonoma County Trends Relevant to Sonoma Valley

The recently published Sonoma County Indicators of 2010⁵ laid out several important trends for Sonoma County. Following is a list of demographic and economic trends that are particularly relevant to Sonoma Valley:

1. ***Quickly growing age sectors: young Latinos and aging Anglos.*** Age distribution by ethnicity depicts Sonoma County's ethnic demographic composition by age group. The data reflects the county's rapidly growing young Hispanic population and the increasingly aging Caucasian population. In Sonoma County, 41 percent of Hispanic residents are under the age of 18, compared to only 18 percent of white residents. County-wide, the Anglo population currently composes 16% of those over 65, as opposed to less than 4% of the Latino population.⁶

²Source: Comment by Sarah Deming, EDB, preparer of Sonoma Valley Community Profile (2011)

³ Source: SonomaValley4Biz website: <http://www.sonomavalley4biz.com/economic.html>

⁴ Source: Sonoma Valley 4 Biz website: <http://www.sonomavalley4biz.com/economic.html>

⁵ Source: Sonoma County Indicators (Economic Development Board, 2010)

⁶ Source: Sonoma County Indicators, (Economic Development Board, 2010)

2. *Our population is becoming much more diverse.* Birth rates for the most populous ethnicities mirror state trends toward increasing diversity. The Hispanic birthrate in Sonoma County is twice the county average. The Anglo birthrate is the lowest among those compared in the US. The number of Latino, Asian, and African-Americans has grown substantially since 2000. Between 2000 and 2015, the Hispanic, Asian, and African-American populations are expected to grow by 85%, 95%, and 45% respectively. The Anglo population is projected to decline slightly over the same period.

Poverty, Employment, and Education

The population of Sonoma Valley is 40, 608 according to the 2010 Census. Sonoma Valley's population by ethnicity includes 69% white residents, 26% Hispanic or Latino, 1.9% multi-race, 2% Asian, and 1% other.⁷ About 1/3 of the population lives in the City of Sonoma, while the others are spread throughout the Valley. Boyes Hot Springs, El Verano, and Fetters Hot Springs/Agua Caliente have significantly larger portions of the Latino population. There are also significantly more young people in these areas: 36-39% of the Springs population are under the age of 25, vs. 27% in the Valley as a whole. This is because the Latino population in general tends to be younger.⁸

Our key informants identified the Springs area as an area that experienced a high amount of poverty, and this insight was confirmed by the EDB Profile. Based on the profile, it is quite clear that the majority of low-income residents of Sonoma Valley live in the Springs.

A few key facts are useful to point out here.

- 1) ***Poverty:*** In Sonoma Valley, there are 7.4% more of the Hispanic population in poverty than the Anglo population. However, when comparing the Springs to Sonoma Valley, there is a striking difference. In the Springs, between 30.6% to 32.5% of all households are at or below the 200% federal poverty line. **In Fetters/Agua Caliente, 62% of Hispanic residents live in poverty, as**

⁷ Source: (p.2) (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

⁸ Source: (p.2) (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

opposed to 25% of white residents in Fetters.⁹ **This is compared 10% that live in poverty in Sonoma County as whole.**¹⁰

- 2) ***Unemployment: Unemployment in the Springs Area has been significantly higher than the unemployment rate in the City of Sonoma for the last 10 years,*** hitting a recent high in February of 2011 (15.2% in Fetters Hot Springs, 13.5% in El Verano, 10.2% in Boyes Hot Springs, and 8.2% in the City of Sonoma.)¹¹
- 3) ***Employment:*** The EDB Profile points out that the highest paying jobs in Sonoma Valley are in Construction and Manufacturing, while the lowest paying jobs are those in “Other services” and “Agriculture.” There are a higher percentage of workers in lower-paying jobs in the Springs Area than in Sonoma Valley as whole.¹²
- 4) ***Education Gap amongst Latino Adults:*** Another significant finding is the education gap amongst Latinos over the age of 18. The EDB Profile states the following: “There is a clear discrepancy in adult educational attainment between Hispanics and whites in Sonoma Valley. **Only 8.2% of Anglos in Sonoma (Valley) have less than a high school diploma while the majority (51.1%) of Hispanics have less than a high school diploma.** Also, just 18.5% of Hispanics have a Bachelor’s degree of higher while 41% of whites do.”¹³
- 5) ***Trends in Education for Latino Youth:*** Sonoma Valley has also seen an increase of English Learners in the Sonoma Valley Unified School District (SVUSD), for a total of 32.6% of total enrollment in 2009-10, while the number who has gained English proficiency during that time has stayed steady. There is also data to indicate an achievement gap between Latinos and learners of other ethnicities.¹⁴ There are also fewer Latinos who are completing the required courses necessary to continue within a four-year university program. This pattern is continued with a gap in high school dropout rates: 13.1% of Hispanics drop out, compared to 5% of Anglos.¹⁵

⁹ Quote: “These statistics are based on examining both the Federal Poverty line as well as household who have 200% of the Federal poverty line. The EDB report states that “The poverty line is the minimum level of income deemed necessary to have an adequate standard of living for a given family size. For example, the federal poverty line for a family of four is \$22,050. Because of the high cost of living in Sonoma County, an adjusted poverty rate may be much higher. The Living Wage Coalition of Sonoma County estimates \$62,000 is needed for an adequate standard of living for a family of two adults and two children. Insight Center for community Economic Development estimates that \$50,000 is needed for one adult with two children. For this reason, the percentage of households living beneath 200% of the poverty level is also measured here. There are 9,710 Sonoma Valley households, or 25% of the population living under the 200% level of poverty is in the Springs area, which as significantly higher levels of poverty than the whole of Sonoma Valley.” See p.3 of Appendix A for more information. (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

¹⁰ Source: American Communities Survey (based off the US Census) (2005-2009)

¹¹ Source: (p.5) (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

¹² Source: (p.6) (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

¹³ Source: (p.4) (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

¹⁴ Source: (p.7) (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

¹⁵ Source: (p.7) (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

- 6) ***Trends in Education:*** On a more positive note, SVUSD has seen a 50% decrease in the number of high school dropouts over the past 6 years, as well as an increase in graduation rates. Moreover, the dropout rates listed above are both well below the state and county average of 21.5%¹⁶
- 7) ***Low levels of Poverty for People over 65:*** Another positive discovery is that only about 5% of people over 65 living in Sonoma Valley live in poverty. This varies depending on what part of Sonoma Valley, with the highest percentage residing in the City of Sonoma (8% in the City of Sonoma, 6% in El Verano, 5% in Boyes Hot Springs, and less than 0.5% in Eldridge and Fetters Hot Springs.¹⁷) There are less seniors living below the poverty line in Sonoma Valley than in Sonoma County as a whole: about 6% of the 65+ population live in poverty in Sonoma County.¹⁸

About Poverty and the Latino Community

Most families in Sonoma Valley are from the three agricultural states of Michoacán, Jalisco, and Guerrero. By and large, these immigrant families came here with a dream of a better life, to create a home here in the United States or to support their families back in Mexico. Having come originally from extremely rural and mostly agricultural parts of Mexico, many are illiterate or poorly educated, with an average of a 3rd-6th grade education.¹⁹

These immigrant workers and families tend to find jobs in the service industry (as house cleaners, landscapers, or in restaurants and hotels), in the agricultural industry as farm workers, and in wine-industry manufacturing facilities, engaged in activities such as bottling, corking, labeling, warehousing, etc. According to the EDB Profile, while manufacturing and construction are the highest paid industries in Sonoma County, **services and agriculture are amongst the lowest paid in Sonoma County.**²⁰

Thus, families who are entirely dependent on service industry jobs have a harder time making ends meet. A top indicator of that is when looking at housing: **In Fetters Hot Springs/Agua Caliente, more than 60% of the populations spends more than 40% of their income on housing;** in El Verano, about 45% spend more than 40% of their income, and in Boyes, more than 37% spend more than 40% of their income.²¹ This signifies a precarious balance between the ability to produce income and the ability to meet basic needs of shelter, clothing, food, and health.

¹⁶ Source: (p.7) (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

¹⁷ The population size was so small that reliably identifying the ethnic population of those under 65 in poverty was difficult; however, given all other trends, it is likely that most of this population are Anglo.

¹⁸ Source: American Communities Survey, based on the 2010 Census.

¹⁹ Zuli Baron, St. Joseph Health System, Interview, Fall 2010. Quote used with permission.

²⁰ Source: Sonoma Valley Community Profile, p.6 (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

²¹ Source: Sonoma Valley Community Profile, p.11 (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

This is confirmed in a recent La Luz/Proyecto Enlace survey²² conducted of 100 immigrant families of Sonoma Valley. They discovered that the top three needs (in order of priority) of these families were the following:

- 8) Low-income housing
- 9) Nourishing food for free or at low prices
- 10) Medical insurance

Families are also are faced with basic barriers in the form of a lack of education, variability and quality of work (particularly for those who work seasonally), and for some a lack of US documentation or citizenship.

Poverty takes a toll on families and relationships: the Valley of the Moon Children's Center reported that 70% of children in Sonoma County who enter the child welfare system (i.e., child protective services) have a low enough income to be federally eligible to receive a foster care payment if they are placed with relative. This means that the income of their families have incomes that are about ½ the federal income poverty level.²³ About 38% of these children are Latino (as opposed to about 50% who are white.) In Sonoma County, 33% of children who are in child protective services were placed there because of substantial risk for abuse, 32% suffered neglect, 15% emotional abuse, and 12% physical abuse.²⁴ Other informants linked poverty and domestic violence together, at least anecdotally.

The other strong dynamic affecting this group is a process of cultural integration. While even 20 years ago, many households were composed of single male transient workers, now most households are families with children, some of whom are U.S. citizens, having been born here.

More and more families have one or two generations of children, which presents its own set of challenges. Informants told us that a significant number of young adults who have been in the United States for years are still rooted in the same poverty of their parents. These next generations are also navigating two different identities (that of a Mexican, and that of a Mexican-American) and differences in assumptions based on gender. There are very different expectations of daughters versus sons in how they demonstrate success in the world. As a woman, to be a young mother is common and education is secondary to

²²Source: National Latino Research Center-CSU San Marcos-Proyecto Enlace, conducted by La Luz volunteers (Jan-Feb, 2011), 99 of 100 respondents were Latino Spanish speaking immigrant families and 1 family was an Asian (Filipino) farm worker family. Respondents lived in all parts of Sonoma Valley; 3% Schellville, 5%Kenwood, 16% City of Sonoma, 29% Agua Caliente, 27% Boyes Hot Springs, 11% El Verano, 9% Glen Ellen.

²³The Federal Poverty line for a family of four is \$22,050. If the maximum that a child's family could make to receive aid is \$858, this indicates that their yearly income is less than \$12,000 per year. That means that 70% of these children's families are at about 1/2 of the federal poverty line. Not only that - the Living Wage Coalition of Sonoma County says that the poverty line is closer to \$62,000 in Sonoma County based on higher living costs, telling us that these families are at about ¼ of the actual living wage in Sonoma County.

²⁴ Source: Meg Easter Dawson, Valley of the Moon Children's Center, Sonoma County Human Services Department (Spring 2011). She also noted that 50% of these children are Anglo, 38% are Hispanic, 5% are African-American, 5% are American Indian, .5% is Asian, and 1% is unknown.

family and work. As a man, work is the core to success. College is unfamiliar to many immigrants from Mexico, and its value in comparison to a steady paycheck is hard for this group to identify.

Another insight is that while the Latino community is less transient and now has more families and other stabilizing influences, it does not feel unified. In a December 3, 2010 article in the Sonoma-Index Tribune Noris Binet describes that dynamic:

“The Latino population in Sonoma is not the cohesive altogether community it seems to be when viewed from the outside. In reality, it is a community “in the process of becoming;” it is alive, growing and transforming. The essential parts of the community are in place, evolving in different stages and not yet completely integrating with each other. This is very normal when human groups, moving from one geographical location to another, are culturally and linguistically different. This process has been happening throughout history all over the world.”²⁵

This is a dynamic process, one that immigrants all over the world and throughout history have experienced. The stabilization and lessening of transience in the low-income residents of the Springs could indicate that it is ripe for empowerment, change, and community building.

Sonoma Valley Strengths and Assets

The major asset in Sonoma Valley and in the Springs was easy for informants to identify: its people. Named again and again was its “community spirit,” the “sense of caring for one another,” and “its commitment, and passion,” and “Latino sense of family.” Also mentioned were its active volunteerism and philanthropy. One informant said enthusiastically, “People step up and do what’s right. They are willing to rally around a common vision and volunteer time, give money, and make things happen.” The community benefits from a strong network of partnerships and service clubs.

There is significant expertise to tap into as well: retirees with a valuable set of skills; experts in their field. In general, informants noted that the quantity of talent that was available in the area was an important asset.

People also like living in the Sonoma Valley. One informant said Sonoma Valley has a “small-town” feeling, another noted that “it feels safe.” Others noted that there is a consciousness about health and food, it is a beautiful place that in and of itself creates opportunities for health in its residents, and it is “green and clean.” Many children grow up, leave for college, and are likely to return to Sonoma.

²⁵ Excerpt from Article: “Valley Forum: The Latino community in transition” By Noris Binet, The Sonoma Index-Tribune December 3, 2010 (Permission to use by author and the Sonoma-Index Tribune)

It is also perceived as one of the “premier” areas in Sonoma County. However, informants noted that, while wine and tourism were important, they are not the only economic drivers in the Valley. There is an industrial/technical development area located on and around 8th street in the City of Sonoma. Several other “place-based assets” were also mentioned. This includes its size and geographic boundary: it is a “workable area,” meaning it is possible to engage in a project and see the impact it makes.

Politically, it was noted Sonoma Valley is set up well to do land and ground-water management, with a progressive city council in the City of Sonoma, a clear geographic boundary, and communities that care. Moreover, the Springs is designated as one of three special redevelopment areas in the county, a designation which creates opportunities for funding and special attention which Sonoma Valley is already taking advantage of through its Redevelopment Agency.²⁶ For example, the Redevelopment Agency has recently added in sidewalks in the Boyes Springs area along Highway 12, a major improvement for a highly pedestrian area. Other plans include building a plaza for the Springs area, an idea that is of major interest to the residents of the Springs.

Challenge: The Economic Downturn

The Economic Downturn has had multiple impacts, some of the most significant being state and county budgetary problems according to the informants. These challenges significantly impact the ability of Sonoma Valley to provide the human and health services needed for its more vulnerable populations, including low-income residents and their families, seniors, and youth. Health and Human Services in Sonoma Valley are not only funded by the city and county; they are also funded by the state and federal government, and cuts and caps in these programs have already had an impact on the county as well as Sonoma Valley. Several informants noted that as the State of California was unable to fund programs and Federal matching funds were no longer available, compounding the impact. **Vulnerable programs specifically mentioned were mental health, job training, and adult education.**

²⁶ The purpose of the Redevelopment Law (as it pertains to the Plan) is to 1) eliminate areas experiencing economic dislocation and disuse; (2) facilitate the re-planning, redesign and/or redevelopment of areas which are stagnant or improperly utilized, and which would not be accomplished by private enterprise acting alone without public participation and assistance; (3) protect and promote sound development and redevelopment of blighted areas and the general welfare of citizens of the County by remedying such injurious conditions through the employment of appropriate means; (4) install new or replace existing public improvements, facilities, and utilities in areas that are currently inadequately served with regard to such improvements, facilities, and utilities; and (5) develop and rehabilitate improved housing opportunities in the Project Area and the surrounding areas of the County for low- and moderate-income persons and families. 151\12\440642.7 5 The plan includes goals related to the street environment, housing development and preservation, business attraction and retention, community character and identity, natural environment and recreation, and encouraging programs, services, and neighborhood organizations. (Sonoma County Community Development Commission, 2008) (http://www.sonoma-county.org/cdc/rd_sv_redevelopment_plan.htm)

Support from the City of Sonoma as well as the county has diminished over time. Infrastructure is failing, particularly roads, and people noted that the Springs area was a particular area of neglect. Facilities that have formerly been free to the public, for example, are now being funded through rentals and other forms of outsourcing, making them less accessible.

Informants noted other impacts from the downturn in the economy: a lack of jobs, particularly those that provide a “living wage” (a wage that makes it possible to pay basic bills and get ahead.) Some noted that “even with the downturn,” they were surprised by the fact that affordable housing stock²⁷ did not appear to be increasing. The nonprofit La Luz, one of several core providers of human services to low-income residents, reports that there has been a change of demographics in their weekly food donation line; whereas the lines used to be fully Latino, they are currently about 90% Latino and 10% Anglo.

Potential Responses to the Economic Downturn

Informants were quick to point out solutions, however. They looked to not only economic development, but the personal and professional development of the youth and business people in Sonoma Valley.

Long-term economic development, leadership, and entrepreneurship

Important business trends that could improve the economic conditions in the Valley included digital technology, animation, medical technology, and “green and clean” technology, artisanal/specialty/organic foods and wine, e.g. cheese, bread etc; international foods and the like; specialty “experience” tourism; green buildings/retrofits; “destination wellness” programs, and other exciting ideas.²⁸ These areas could provide opportunities for economic growth in Sonoma County, and by extension, Sonoma Valley. With a thriving economy, local government agencies would have more access to funding and be more able to provide services to Sonoma Valley.

For the Valley to fully take advantage of these opportunities, many informants pointed to a central idea: **encourage entrepreneurship, empowerment, and leadership at the grass-roots level.** Several ideas were put forward to help achieve this effort:

1) Provide Skills, Opportunity & Mentorship for Youth:

- a. Create a Junior Achievement program to encourage design in subjects such as robotics, inspiring creative thinking and other skills useful to students.

²⁷ The Sonoma County Indicators report noted the following about the stock of affordable housing: “The national mortgage crisis has hit Sonoma County particularly hard. Home prices in Sonoma County have dropped more than in other comparable counties and the state. However, poor housing affordability, which has hindered economic growth in recent years, improved significantly in 2009. The percent of residents able to afford a median-priced home increased from 26% to 44% between mid-2008 and mid-2009. “
http://www.sonoma-county.org/edb/pdf/2010/sotc_indicators.pdf

²⁸Source: Ben Stone, Executive Director, Economic Development Board. (Fall 2010)

- b. Provide “Skills for Life” training that helps students lead successful lives as adults.²⁹
 - c. Provide economic opportunity through job creation. This is particularly important for young adults who are between the ages of 18-30. Entry-level work is hard to find these days, and contributes to talent “leaking” out of Sonoma Valley. It was noted that helping youth find and cultivate a sense of purpose through valued work would have many beneficial impacts in the community.
- 2) ***Foster entrepreneurship & economic development in the Springs***: While there is a lot of economic activity in the Springs, several informants stated that Springs businesses had low access to and participation in business networking and training. Visioning a greater future for their business is not common. Several ideas were suggested:
- a. Create a program on how to run a successful small business for Springs residents;
 - b. Develop a micro-loan program to support entrepreneurship for women.
- 3) ***Conduct an assessment based on community indicators***, perhaps modeled on the Sonoma County Indicators program or the HealthAction program. This could help to understand both trends and the changes in Sonoma Valley as whole, and poverty in particular, as well as to track what efforts are creating success in Sonoma Valley. Currently, most indicators are at the county level and lacking at the Valley level.
- 4) ***Empowerment and leadership development***: Many people saw entrepreneurship and economic opportunity as a form of empowerment and leadership development. Fostering leadership development, entrepreneurship, and the success of small business was seen as fundamentally connected to economic and community development in the area.

Challenge: Divide between Culture & Communities

Informants noted that the Latino community and the Anglo community³⁰ do not tend to mingle in Sonoma Valley. This sense of division, which is shared by both segments of the community, is one that keeps the communities of Sonoma Valley separated and hinders its attempts to make significant change.

When they enter the U.S., many of these young Latinos are faced with significant challenges: cultural differences and isolation, finding financially sustainable work (many

²⁹ UNICEF lists Life Skills as the following: 1) Interpersonal and Communication Skills, 2) Decision-Making and Problem-Solving Skills, and 3) Coping & Self-Management Skills.

http://www.unicef.org/lifeskills/index_whichskills.html

³⁰ *Note from Preparer*: There are a number of terms to use in describing the ethnic differences in Sonoma Valley. In this report, we have chosen to use the term “Latino” (as interchangeable with Hispanic in this context), and “Anglo” to describe the obvious differences in the two communities. It should be noted that there are residents that are Asian American and African American, and likely others, in Sonoma Valley; while their realities are quite likely different, and worth exploring, they do not face the kind of community divide we discovered through our interviews.

have more than one job), and a fear of deportation. These fears inhibit their desire and ability to interact with, advocate for, or contribute to their community.

The issue of legal status creates a fundamental obstacle to the Latino community. It affects driving, finding steady work, and feeling safe while receiving services or participating in the larger community. It was noted by an informant that there are stories of human trafficking in Sonoma Valley, where managers go to Mexico, solicit workers, and then charge travel fees that essentially keep this population in an ever-increasing cycle of poverty.

Basic transportation is a critical need for the new Latino immigrant, and continues to be as they make a life here. Basic services are located in Santa Rosa, at least 30 minutes by car from Sonoma Valley. Many don't drive legally (as they are undocumented), so cars can be impounded, resulting in financial loss and no transportation to work and access other basic needs. Once that happens, it is hard to break out of that cycle: money is spent not on their families, but on lawyer's fees. At its worst, a situation like that can separate families. Informants clearly stated that low-cost bilingual legal services are needed as much as any other service.

Fear and dependence is at the heart of the cultural divide

A sentiment that was expressed by some Springs residents, can be boiled down to 1) a sense of frustration of being kept dependent on Anglos while being prevented from or discouraged about becoming empowered; 2) a belief that immigrants have skills and experience that are not being recognized or used, but can be used to build community; and, 3) a sense of frustration, bordering on despair, about perceived uncaring treatment of their children, especially by the schools and police.

The undertone to all this is a sense of fear about speaking up to Anglos combined with a sense of not being understood when they do speak up. For these reasons, Latinos who are afraid to speak will not come to meetings that are about programs and services for them. Following are some specific examples:

1. The Springs Latino community does not have a place that is "theirs".
 - a. Latinos are always dependent on Anglo organizations and their facilities and spaces to conduct activities that Latinos want to run for their community. They are always in someone else's place.
 - b. They essentially feel "homeless" because, although they can often use Anglo-owned or run facilities, they cannot control how or when the facilities get used and they are sometimes asked to give up spaces so that they can be used by Anglos.
 - c. Often, even when access is possible, fees for rental or day use fees at the Aquatic Center are simply beyond the capacity of families to afford.
2. Local nonprofits are not always perceived to be responsive to Latino needs or interests.

3. Springs residents want their own open space for events, for children’s activities – soccer has no place to practice, especially in the winter. (This extends to martial arts classes and the Ballet Folkloric dance group)
4. Larson Park is controlled by gangs, and it is unsafe to gather there.

The end results create internal psychological barriers for Latinos (especially those who are undocumented) to integrate into a larger community. This feeds into a general unwillingness and feeling of inability to engage in the community at large. Children are particularly vulnerable, as they have parents that are ill-equipped to advocate for them in the school system.

In another article written by Noris Binet, a Sonoma Valley resident and bilingual sociologist, she says the following about the cultural division:

“The situation here (in Sonoma Valley) is the very challenge inherent when two or more cultures meet, interact, and co-exist, with one being the dominant host culture. Latino immigrants have not developed a true sense of belonging, in the Latino community itself...The (emotional and psychological stresses characteristic of an immigrant culture, sic) include language barriers, cultural and geographical differences, economic limitations, the issues around procreation and raising children, cultural and artistic deprivation, the loss of their extended support system – whether from their families, villages, or tribes – and, for many Latinos in the Valley, carrying the relentless burden of being undocumented persons.”³¹

Now, second and third generations of Latinos living in Sonoma Valley who have more opportunity as U.S. citizens are as yet caught in the cycle of poverty and dependence.

Geographic Divide: Informants identified Verano Ave. as the marker between the Springs and the City of Sonoma. While this marker may not be visible to those outside the community, to residents it marks where one community ends and the other begins, even though the community of El Verano extends West and well-beyond Verano Ave. There are college-age children who grew up in the Springs but have never visited the historic plaza in the City of Sonoma. While this may not be a common occurrence, a separation of 4-6 miles seems to be a much larger distance in the minds of some Springs residents.

Some informants perceived that the geographic divide is also felt in the relationship between Sonoma Valley and the rest of Sonoma County. To those living inside Sonoma Valley, there is a feeling of not being represented at the county level and not being able to access important services that are only available along the 101 corridor. For those outside of Sonoma Valley, it can feel like Sonoma Valley “has a wall up around it,” and

³¹ Excerpt from “Understanding the Latino Community – Beginning a conversation”, by Noris Binet, Special to the Index-Tribune, Oct. 19, 2010, (Permission to use by author and the Sonoma-Index Tribune)

is not open to working with those outside of the Valley. Either way, the lack of connection between Sonoma Valley and the rest of the county seems to be apparent to all.

Economic Divide: Informants reported a sense of “economic isolation” in the Valley, caused by a disparity of wages and income, less investment in areas such as the Springs, and less economic opportunity that comes with a robust network of the community and greater education. There is concern that the community, whether it is workers who are unable to find jobs, or employers who can’t find skilled labor, will be negatively affected in the long term.

Potential Responses to the Geographic, Cultural and Economic Divide

Listen and extend respect

One direct request was that organizations wanting to help **should listen to the Springs community and get its response before creating new programs there.** Latinos want to be heard and to have a sense of ownership in what happens to them. Anglos and Latinos can partner, but Latinos need to be trusted to decide how to run the programs.

Remove barriers to grass-roots leadership

There are people in the Springs that are highly qualified but (due to regulations and/or discrimination) are not allowed to exercise those skills in the U.S. These are the people who have the potential to be community leaders. There also needs to be a Latino organization in the Springs, run by Latinos and using people who have the knowledge and understanding of Latino (Mexican) culture to work successfully with Latinos.

Build community connection – within Sonoma Valley

Many informants wanted all parts of the community to embrace one another and the rich diversity of the Valley. Informants pointed to many solutions that would bring together different parts of the community, whether it was through collaboration between organizations, developing places that would build a sense of community and connection, or connecting the Valley with the rest of the county by providing services locally, building hiking trails and biking paths, or increasing public and private means of transportation. Many pointed to the recent addition of sidewalks along Highway 12 in the Springs area as an important and gratifying step in the right direction.

Create a “there” there

In the Springs, there are many small businesses³² lined along Highway 12, near the large business of the area, the Sonoma Mission Inn. There is little continuity or cohesiveness in how these stores appear; and it was noted that in the Springs as a whole, there is not a place for the community to gather, have events, or even sit with friends. In essence, there is no “there” there. **Without a place to connect with, there is little to connect to.**

Thus, many spoke of building a safe, central place for the community to gather, so all residents of the Valley, but particularly the those of the Springs, feel welcome. Informants imagined this plaza as a place of economic and social vitality; an attractive

³² The Team would like to do more research on these small businesses, both in hearing from small business owners in that area, as well as understanding what their needs and opportunities are from their perspective.

place that would make residents proud, would provide for their needs, and would be inviting to visitors. The Redevelopment Agency has included a plaza in its plan for just this purpose, and nonprofits in the Springs want to participate once it is built, with ideas including a multi-service center, a recreational and sports complex for all ages and a day labor center. Clearly fundamental to these efforts was the desire of the residents to create a shared vision.

Build community connection – between the county and the Valley

Several informants, both those located outside as well as inside of the Valley, talked about finding ways to connect the Valley with the rest of the county. This was discussed both in providing easier access to basic health and human services, connecting the two areas with trails and better transportation, and to have more Sonoma Valley representation in county activities.

HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES IN SONOMA VALLEY

Web of Care

The “web of care” – the network of county agencies, hospitals, clinics, private practitioners, and nonprofits – that works with the Sonoma Valley population has a number of strengths as well as challenges. The County Department of Health Services and the County Department of Human Services provide an array of basic health and human services that are the foundation of care for vulnerable populations in Sonoma County. Interviewers were impressed by the dedication and knowledge in these pivotal departments.

An aside - Sonoma Valley has about 14% of the county population. Their usage of Services is approximately equal to that--Sonoma Valley residents use about 14% of county medical services, 12 % of food stamps, 10% of general public assistance (cash assistance)³³, and about 11% of WIC services (Women Infant & Children’s Assistance).

³⁴ It was also noted that approximately 50% of all births in Sonoma Valley are WIC eligible.

Below is a brief description of both of these county departments as well as the status of primary care in Sonoma Valley, and a description of the health and human services provided by Sonoma Valley Hospital, the Sonoma Valley Community Health Center, La

³³ Source: Marion Deeds, Director, Economic Assistance Division, Human Services Department (Interview, Fall 2010)

³⁴ Source: Peter Rumble, Director of Health Policy, Planning and Evaluation, Sonoma County Health Services (June, 2011)

Luz, Nuestra Voz and other non-profits identified as critical supports to low-income residents.

Department of Health Services in Sonoma Valley: The mission of the Department of Health Services is “to work with individuals and communities to achieve and preserve health and wellbeing.” Services include alcohol and other drug services; environmental health, mental health, public health and prevention, the WIC program; food safety; animal control; HIV planning; etc.

Their goal is to make Sonoma County the healthiest county in the state by 2020.³⁵ To do this, they have undertaken a well-received “Health Action” effort, with first steps focused on effective local action to increase consumption of healthy food, to increase physical activity, and to connect all residents with prevention-focused primary health care. Specific initiatives include: **iWalk**, a county-wide walking initiative; the Medical Home Collaborative, to help patients find a medical home through working with practitioners; **iGrow**, a county-wide effort to help residents grow more of their own food; the Food System Alliance to work on systems-change around food; the **Healthy Students Initiative**, “aimed at transforming the school culture towards physical exercise and healthy eating;” the **Safe Routes to School initiative**, helping students find safe ways to walk and ride to school; and the **Worksite Wellness initiative**, to support employer wellness programming.³⁶

In Sonoma Valley, the Department of Health Services provides prevention, early intervention, and treatment services to residents in the Springs. Services and activities, including outreach, education, home visits, support groups, nursing, and rehabilitation are provided either by contract (Nueva Vida) or directly by staff, with such partners as Nueva Vida, Nuestra Voz, La Luz, VetConnect, and Sonoma Overnight Services.

In June, 2011 Peter Rumble, Director of Health Policy, Planning and Evaluation at Sonoma County Health Services, also emphasized they are “keenly interested and indeed working on ways to make services more accessible to residents of Sonoma Valley, and are looking for opportunities to partner and work creatively to address health issues in new ways.”

Department of Human Services: At the Department of Human Services, their goal is “to protect and improve the well-being of the individuals and families who reside in Sonoma County – especially those who cannot protect themselves.” They provide many different forms of assistance, including employment services, in-home support to aging and disabled individuals, Veteran’s services, foster care, food stamps, cash assistance, and eligibility for medical services. In addition to operating the Valley of the Moon Children’s Home, an emergency shelter for children who need temporary refuge because

³⁵ County Department of Health Services: <http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/>

³⁶ *Priorities for Action: Summary Project Recommendations for Health Action, a 2020 vision for Sonoma County.*
http://www.sonomahealthaction.org/resources/pdf/summary_of_project_recommendations_april%202009.pdf

of neglect or abuse, they operate 24-hour emergency telephone lines for reporting incidents of suspected child and/or adult abuse. These services, in addition to Department of Human Services' partnerships with the community, contribute to the safety and security of thousands of children and families during times of financial hardship or family distress.

Private practice in Sonoma Valley: Private practice is also available in Sonoma Valley. However, according to the Sonoma County Primary Care Capacity Report (Mary Maddux-Gonzalez, 2011), Sonoma Valley has received the federal designation of "Health Professional Shortage Area." A region could receive this "HPSA" designation for several reasons: geographic (a county or service area), demographic (low-income population,) or institutional (availability of a comprehensive health center, federally qualified health center, or other public facility.) We might infer that the HPSA designation relates directly to the lack of care for the low-income population. The Sonoma County Primary Care Capacity Report also tells us that 64% of primary care practices in Sonoma County are located in Santa Rosa, and 68% practice in large or very large practices.³⁷

Nonprofit Support for Health & Human Services: The nonprofits in Sonoma Valley are also an important aspect of the web of care there. They provide vital services ranging from basic sustenance and health care, to senior, youth, and Latino support. A few key providers of health and human services for low-income residents of Sonoma Valley should be mentioned:

Sonoma Valley Hospital: The Sonoma Valley Hospital's mission is to "maintain, improve and restore the health of everyone in our community." The hospital provides services in birthing, medical imaging, cardiopulmonary services, occupational health, an emergency department, rehabilitation services, a home care program, a skilled nursing unit, integrative medicine, surgery, laboratory services, travel medicine, and women's services.³⁸ Likely, it serves the Springs extensively as an emergency department.

Sonoma Valley Community Health Center (SVCHC): SVCHC is the largest private practice clinic in Sonoma Valley. In 2010, they saw over 7,000 patients, with over 27,400 visits. Of these patients, 46% were at the federal poverty line, and 36% were children (approximately 2,250 total). 53% were Hispanic and 46% were Anglo — the vast majority from the Springs area. Their focus is on comprehensive, preventative care, and includes among other things primary care, physicals, immunizations, family planning, women's health, pregnancy and delivery care services, behavioral and mental health, pharmacy services, and assistance with finding insurance or assistance with medical costs. SCVHC sends one mobile van 4 days per week to La Luz for Pediatrics, Flowery School, El Verano Elementary, and Springs Village. Mental health counseling and substance abuse support is available Monday through Friday by referral.

La Luz Center (La Luz): La Luz Center is a family resource center with a mission to empower our community through education, leadership, and self-advocacy. With program areas in education, family services (emergency assistance, one-on-one support,

³⁷ (Mary Madduz-Gonzalez, Sonoma County Primary Care Capacity Report, 2011)
<http://www.sonoma-county.org/health/ph/data/pdf/primarycare20110110.pdf>

assistance and access to health & social services, and mental health support groups), and leadership, they served over 25,000 individuals last year.³⁸ In terms of health services, they host a St. Joseph's van once/week, a pediatric van from SCVHC once/week, and provide dental screenings 2x/year.³⁹ They also collaborate with the Departments of Health Services and Human Services to help clients access support.

Nuestra Voz: The mission of Nuestra Voz is “to develop leadership among the Latino community of Sonoma Valley.” They engage in community building, health education and also provide leadership and communications training and opportunities for healthy exercise. They work with the County Department of Health Services and Human Services to deliver some services, particularly around mental health and health education and outreach.

Other important nonprofits and services providers in Sonoma Valley include: the Boys and Girls Club, FISH, St. Vincent's, the Vintage House, Meals on Wheels, Sonoma Community Center, Redwood Empire Food Bank, the Teen Center, Nuestra Voz, Sonoma Valley Museum of Art, Vineyard Workers Services, the Sonoma Valley Unified School District and the Sonoma Valley Adult School, the Sonoma Valley Fire and Rescue authority, the Common Bond Foundation, and the Sonoma Overnight Support(SOS) shelter.

Important programs include the Teen Safety Ride Program and Teen Services, Sonoma Valley Mentoring Alliance, St. Leo's migrant encampment, shadowing opportunities provided for parents and youth, and the Sonoma Valley Fund's Youth Initiative.

Exciting collaborations noted were:

1. The Sonoma Valley Health Roundtable, a collaboration between many prominent nonprofits, government agencies, and community citizens to promote health in Sonoma Valley, with a focus on the prevention and treatment of diabetes; a “virtual wellness center,” a Sonoma Valley resource guide; and iWalk.
2. The “Food three-way” between Redwood Empire Food Bank, Catholic Charities and La Luz;
3. The Springs Community Alliance and the Garden Coalition at Larson Park;
4. Partnerships between the Sonoma Valley Unified School District and other nonprofits such as SCVHC, the Sonoma Ecology Center, the Sonoma Valley Museum, and the Adult School.

At the county level, a community resource directory called 2-1-1 is operated by the Volunteer Center of Sonoma County that helps residents find information about crucial social services.⁴⁰ 2-1-1 details the vast majority of health and social services in the county, both public and voluntary, making it much easier for health and human services practitioners as well as residents to find and access these services. 211 is a public-private

³⁸ Source: La Luz Center website (June, 2011) <http://laluzcenter.org/about-la-luz.html>

³⁹ Source: Interview with Kara Reyes, Family Services Director at La Luz Center, (June, 2011).

⁴⁰ 2-1-1 offers its phone services fully translated in over 175 languages, and there are Spanish-speaking persons on staff.

partnership supported by the county, the United Way, the Community Foundation and the Volunteer Center.

Challenge: Health and Human Services for Those in Need

This report defines health in the following way:

“...when we speak of ‘health and well-being’, we mean them in the largest, interrelated sense of the words: very broadly, we are referring to what it means ‘to be well’. We include commonplace aspects such as physical, mental and dental health, nutrition, education, recreation, socialization, and more. We also include factors such as a sense of being accepted, of having hope, to meet basic needs for one’s self and family, and to make a difference to others.”⁴¹

Uppermost in the minds of the informants:

- 1) ***Access to dental health for the needy, particularly for children.*** As of June, 2011, there are no Denti-Cal providers in Sonoma Valley; reimbursements are reported to be so low now that dentists cannot provide for their own costs. While not all children are recipients or users of Denti-Cal, over half of Sonoma Valley’s children are eligible for that program.⁴² Currently, a dentist does come with the St. Joseph’s health van once a week to Nuestra Voz in Springs Village, and La Luz collaborates with Pediatric Dental Institute (of Windsor) for two screening days/year, where they serve up to 60 children. At La Luz, of 50 that were served at their last screening day, 29 of 50 had some form of cavities, 19 of 29 had severe rotting.⁴³ There are children, said informants, who at age 10 or 12 have never had a physical or a dental check up. While physicals and health care is available, dentistry is sorely lacking. A separate but important note: dentistry is also needed for needy seniors, particularly as they receive dentures or other interventions.
- 2) ***Mental health services are sorely lacking:*** Many informants mentioned the need for mental health services in the Latino community. *“The differences in lifestyle from Mexico and the U.S. result in stress, domestic violence, a stress on emotional and mental health. Parents work longer hours and are raising children; mental health needs to focus on strengthening and healing the pillars of the family unit, the parent.”*⁴⁴ It was noted that there is significant depression and some suicides, a phenomenon that is uncommon in the Latino community.⁴⁵

⁴¹See the Executive Summary for more on the Team’s thinking.

⁴² Denti-Cal and Medi-Cal are made available based on the same income bracket that free and reduced-price lunch programs at schools are made available. According to the Sonoma Valley Community Profile, (p.8, (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011), 2,382 students or 52% of the 4,671 students, are eligible for free or reduced-price meals in Sonoma Valley.

⁴³ Source: Interview with Kara Reyes, Director of Family Services at La Luz, (June 2011.)

⁴⁴ Source: Interview with Alejandra Cervantes and Gabriel Sanchez, Nuestra Voz, Interview, (Fall 2010).

⁴⁵ Source: Interview with Zuli Baron, Community Organizer, St. Joseph’s Health Center (Fall, 2010).

Informants believed that there is a need for more prevention and intervention services and that those who deliver this type of support need to speak Spanish and be familiar with the particular cultures in Sonoma Valley. Currently, mental health services are provided by a county staff person in a branch office of the City of Sonoma Police Department; by a psychologist that attends low-income Spanish speaking patients once/week at La Luz (when there is funding,) a psychologist that is available only for uninsured clients at SVCHC, and several county-sponsored programs that are available, as funding permits, through Nuestra Voz. The need far outstrips the availability.

- 3) ***Need for more capacity to conduct preventive and urgent health care:*** While there is a full-scale Emergency Room at the Sonoma Valley Hospital, it was noted that Sonoma Valley also needs more services related to urgent/emergency health issues, along with a gerontology department.
- 4) ***Public recreation facilities are sorely lacking in Sonoma Valley as a whole, as well as in the Springs.*** Many believed that it is through these mutual opportunities for enjoyment and recreation that a united and participative community could be shaped; that problems with gangs and youth could be averted; that health could be maintained for the seniors living in Sonoma Valley. Informants pointed to several specific needs:
 - a. There are no “all-weather” fields for youth; currently, soccer fields are not usable during the rainy season, and children must drive to Santa Rosa and participate in private clubs to gain access to soccer fields during wet weather. It was noted that soccer is the main outdoor sport for Latino children, and has many side benefits of engaging parents, particularly fathers, in their community.
 - b. The high school swimming pool is closed, leaving no public swimming pool available.
 - c. There is no community center that provides space for recreation, education (low-cost art classes, theatre, etc.), and exercise for all parts of the community.

Human Services covers a large gamut of services, from economic assistance for basic needs of food, shelter, and clothing, to job training, GED completion, English as a Second Language classes, and legal assistance. It can even include leadership development, cultural competency training and mentorship, support for entrepreneurship and innovation, or communication skills for working with family members. A few challenges:

1. Many services are only available in Santa Rosa.
2. Some services are available in Sonoma Valley, but are significantly affected by funding availability. For example, adult education that helps residents take their GED, improve language skills or increase computer literacy has decreased in tandem with state and county budget cuts. Likewise, popular programs for family communication skills, sponsored by the Sonoma County Mental Health Department, could happen more frequently with better funding.
3. There is also a need for help in legal and financial advising for individuals on topics of immigration, taxes, tax credits, and financial health. There are many

- check-cash stores in the Springs area, whose practices tend to reinforce poverty, and the recently acquired WestAmerica Bank in the area has reduced its hours, making it less accessible to many of its customers.
4. Several mentioned that those in need had a hard time accessing or transporting food from distribution site to home, procuring low-cost housing, or paying basic utilities, such as water.
 5. Finally, families may have options, such as food stamps, available; but their willingness to apply may be hampered if they must do so in a place where they feel it is risky because of their legal status.

Challenge: Insufficient Transportation

While many informants discussed the issues described above at length, it is important to note that **access and transportation was named as both the most significant short-term and long-term challenge** by a noteworthy number of informants.

Informants noted that the distances between the rest of Sonoma County and the Valley, and having adequate public transportation, were a significant challenge. To put this in perspective: the seat of the county is in Santa Rosa, and so the services for its most vulnerable populations are located between 40-60 minutes away by car (depending on traffic). Sonoma County Transit takes about 11 trips back and forth each day between Santa Rosa and Sonoma Valley,⁴⁶ but they leave every 1 to 1 1/2 hours, and the journey just to downtown Santa Rosa is about that length.

Further, Sonoma Valley is sorely lacking in *local* public transportation. There is no local (Sonoma Valley specific) bus system, or shuttle system. It was noted that large buses are mostly empty and are not regular enough; transportation needs to be more flexible and responsive to travelers' needs. In particular, transportation needs to do a good job of connecting the Springs with the rest of the Sonoma Valley. Informants were specifically sensitive to the needs of those unable to drive, and the burden that placed on them to take care of basic needs within Sonoma Valley as well as in Sonoma County in general.

Informants depicted the Sonoma Valley Community Health Center (SVCHC) and the Sonoma Valley Hospital as primary health resources, particularly for low-income residents. However, SCVHC's current location is about 2 miles from the Springs – a 5 minute drive for many, but over a one hour walk for many Springs residents who travel on foot. The Center is about one-half mile closer to the Springs than the Hospital.⁴⁷ The Center does have plans to build a new Health Center, and their preferred site is in the Boyes Springs area.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Schedules can be seen at <http://sctransit.com/SchedulesMaps.aspx>

⁴⁷ The Sonoma Valley Community Health Center is located at 430 W Napa St # F, Sonoma, CA 95476; the Sonoma Valley Hospital is located at 347 Andrieux St, Sonoma, CA 95476.

⁴⁸ Source: County of Sonoma Community Development Commission Land Acquisition document (September 29, 2009) http://www.sonoma-county.org/board/meetings/meeting_20091006/meeting_20091006_item29.pdf

Potential Responses for Improving Access & Service Delivery

Create a multi-service center located in the Springs

Many informants talked about the idea of having a “one-stop shop” where both human and health services could be provided in the Springs. They cited several reasons: the neediest were located there; this particular group will only come to places where they know they are safe, working with people that they trust. This could be a place where the County could work in partnership with Sonoma Valley agencies and nonprofits. One effort that is already underway is the building of a new Sonoma Valley Community Health Center.

In Board Meeting Minutes dated October 6, 2010, the following description is provided:

“The Sonoma Valley Community Health Center is now actively planning for a new 20,000 square foot, “green” building facility to accommodate its expanding operations... The increase in space will allow SVCHC to expand its family practice, obstetrics and gynecology, and mental health services, and will allow SVCHC to provide new services, such as child and adult dental care. While this facility will be fully utilized as a Health Center, there may be ways to “attach” other human services in adjoining facilities.”⁴⁹

Improve public and private means of transportation

Informants recommended several ideas for improving Sonoma Valley transportation, including restarting a program like “Caravan” which existed in Sonoma until 10 years ago. Caravan was a small-sized bus that made a loop around the valley each hour. Informants noted that there was also a “Dial a Ride” element to it in which a person could call to be picked up along the route. Most similar to this service currently is one that the Vintage House Senior Center offers, called “LIMO.” It helps seniors with needs for transportation to doctor’s appointments, shopping, etc. Teen Rides is another service currently offered that supports safe teen transportation.

Continue to develop online access and relationships

Several ideas were offered here:

- 1) Use video conferencing by experts in other parts of the county to provide support services in Sonoma Valley.
- 2) Continue the efforts around creating access to registration for services via the internet. La Luz has a computer lab which they use to teach computer literacy courses that they plan to use for more independent learning and applications for services.⁵⁰

⁴⁹Project Description from Sonoma Valley Community Health Center Board Meeting Minutes(October, 2009, p.2): http://www.sonoma-county.org/board/meetings/meeting_20091006/meeting_20091006_item29.pdf

⁵⁰ Source: Yvonne Hall, Executive Director, La Luz Center (June, 2011)

Challenge: Serving the Latino Community

There are further difficulties in providing health and human services to the Latino community:

- 1) Nonprofits and local agencies who work with the Latino community of the Springs find that trust is hard won. For those who come to the U.S. without documentation, they are constantly worried about deportation. “Institutions” are viewed with suspicion compounded by a lack of knowledge about the purpose and function of different institutions. Trust tends to be extended to those who are seen working there every day and who are recommended by other community members.
- 2) In particular, agencies from outside Sonoma Valley have found that their efforts to work with this group have been only somewhat successful, and tend to be most successful when subcontract trusted entities in the community to provide those services.
- 3) Decisions are made differently in the Latino family unit: Western culture emphasizes individual choice, while decisions in Latino families are likely to be made in conjunction with its eldest member. Latino culture also defines “immediate family” differently, including grandparents, aunts and uncles. This is an important cultural difference; in the U.S., most services are oriented towards caring for the individual, as opposed to the family.
- 4) Many members of this community are unable to read, even in Spanish, so written communications have not been found to be effective.

Potential Responses for Serving the Latino Community

Leveraging the strengths of the Latino community

The Latino community in the Valley is much more stable than it was even 20 years ago; families have moved in, and are staying to raise their children. Informants talked about students who were graduating; and about Latino leaders who were important role models. They mentioned programs like the English Learner Advisory Committee(ELAC), a way for parents to become active in their children’s lives through advocacy, and other supportive programs. “Shadowing experiences” have also been successful, where parents were brought out to visit college campuses and learn how to better support their children. Informants from Nuestra Voz talked about celebrating important cultural holidays, of writing and performing theatre; of the enthusiasm for soccer which brings the whole community out. They told stories of people of this community showing up for events, providing potluck dinners, music and dancing. They pointed to the enthusiasm of gardeners who built twenty “salsa gardens” in 2010 as part of the county-wide 350 Garden Challenge. Classes in communication for couples, led in Spanish and held through the Department of Health Services and Nuestra Voz are helping couples be better partners as well as better parents. Likewise, a group of women is regularly convened to develop their individual capabilities.

A success story was described by Kara Reyes, Family Services Director at La Luz. There, a group of twelve women and men from their community decided to form into a new committee which eventually they called “Poder Popular.” Poder Popular now

not only helps to organize the food lines (a weekly event where hundreds of people line up to receive food donations), but have grown into taking action on matters of health, housing, leadership, and surveys. This group is self-managed, autonomous, committed to each other, and is made up of people who themselves receive some of the services that La Luz provides. The impetus for this committee rose in response to the heavier demands that the community placed on La Luz during the economic crisis. What seems to be the lesson here is that grassroots leadership will arise if the community sees how and where they can make a contribution, and are given the resources to be able to do so.⁵¹

Successful Outreach to the Latino Community

The Latino community has in place several radio stations, which are easier to manage than television and is an effective way to reach a goodly percentage of the local population. These programs include a program founded by Bill Hammett, and run by Nuestra Voz on Saturday mornings; KBBF which has senior programs in Spanish (although limited to the Sonoma Plaza); and the bilingual KSBY 91.3 FM (range is again limited to Sonoma Valley, extending to some parts of Napa and Petaluma). Nuestra Voz has also just started a “magazine” that will be a “bilingual graphical tool,” and along with nonprofit announcements and descriptions of services, will have articles on health, family, sports, services, etc. They also plan to connect with teens via Facebook and Twitter.

Working with the Family

Many of the informants suggested that whether the intended focus is youth, parents, or seniors, it is very important to work with the family as whole, making services easily accessed for the entire family, and educating the entire family. **To this end, it was suggested that as we look at health and human services, that Sonoma Valley would be well advised to create integrated efforts that provide for the family as a unit, that includes children, parents, grandparents, and extended family members.** This theme is seen throughout the report, and presents exciting ideas for nonprofits and agencies, including creating an inter-generational family resource center in the Springs, developing schools as community centers, and providing training, support and community activities for parents, elders, and children.

Education for the Latino Community

It was noted again and again that here, as in other places, education must be part of the solution. Literacy in Spanish is a challenge for some members of this community and English is a challenge for others. The lack of GEDs for the Latino community is really astounding (over 51% for Latinos over the age of 18). This not only provides skills, but a sense of purpose, connection, and ease in the U.S. For this reason, **informants identified classes in English as a Second Language, as well as Spanish for Spanish Speakers, as being important.**

These kinds of opportunities exist in the Sonoma Valley Adult School that works with La Luz, to provide ESL, computer classes, GEDs, and other educational resources for this

⁵¹ Source: Interview with Kara Reyes, Family Services Director, La Luz (June, 2011)

group. Mentoring provides another pathway for orienting people who are navigating a new culture and its system.

It was pointed out that the Sonoma Valley Unified School District has property in Boyes Springs next to the Teen Center that at one point was slotted for use by the Sonoma Valley Adult School, an important resource for adult education and other human services in Sonoma Valley. Re-invigorating this opportunity could provide a place for a variety of human services vital to improving the lives of the “needy” in Boyes Springs.

Some informants connected the idea of promoting entrepreneurship, and the accompanying skills for success (self-initiative, self-improvement, leadership, networking, vision) as being an important pathway for change.

Focus on Development and Empowerment, not Crisis Intervention and Dependence

Informants made the point that if the Latino community is really going to thrive, **the scope of services must expand from “crisis intervention” to “developing capacity”**. There must be opportunities to build leadership development, personal development, and a feeling of community integration to allow a shift toward a personal sense of vision, hope, and connection. Further, the Latino community wants to feel ownership in its solutions, and trust from the larger community to design solutions that will work for them.

Challenge: Special Needs for Seniors in Sonoma Valley

This following quote made by one of the informants sums up the themes discovered about seniors in Sonoma Valley: “The graying of Sonoma, along with the rest of the country, is also an issue. Their needs are very different from those of the previous generation as they are living longer and are increasing as a percentage of our community.”⁵²

Seniors in Sonoma Valley tend to be active, engaged, and healthy much later into life. Nineteen percent of Sonoma Valley is over the age of 65 (as opposed to twenty percent in Sonoma County.) As we noted earlier, seniors also tend to be Anglo: the Sonoma County 2010 Indicators report noted that 16% of the Anglo population is over 65, as opposed to less than 4% of the Latino population.⁵³ Poverty is much less widespread for seniors in Sonoma Valley: poverty is at its highest for seniors in the City of Sonoma at 8%, hovering between 5-6% in the Springs, and is below .5% in Eldridge.⁵⁴

That being said, there are vulnerable populations of seniors in both the Anglo and Latino populations that are on a fixed income or do not receive services that they could, for various reasons. Low-income Latino seniors may be better off than Anglo seniors, as they tend to stay and live with their families and basic needs are taken care of there. Anglo seniors, on the other hand, may live alone and need to look elsewhere for

⁵² Source: Interview with Cynthia Scarborough, Executive Director, Vintage House (Fall 2010)

⁵³ Source: Sonoma County Indicators (Economic Development Board, 2010)

⁵⁴ Source: American Communities Survey, Poverty & Age Data (2010)

assistance with basic needs, and could be on fixed incomes without much outside support.

Seniors in Sonoma Valley have special needs, which range from health concerns to changing usage needs, to institutional trust. As this group is only predicted to grow, Sonoma County is already working on initiatives to meet those needs. Adult and Aging Services, a division of the Human Services Department, has the goal of helping seniors live independently in their homes, and while continuing to have the choices they are accustomed to for support and assistance. Thus, they are focused on case management, nutrition, and skilled care. The Older Adult Collaborative MHSA grant funds senior services agencies including the Linkages program which helps seniors who are suicidal or depressed. While no longer funded by the state, Linkages is now operated using Mental Health Services Act funding in Sonoma County.⁵⁵

They also offer a bilingual radio program for seniors as well as a senior resource guide online, in paper, and in Spanish. They have added a bilingual staff person, and have seen a big increase in service usage since then. Another effort in place is the Seniors Health Initiative, based out of the Health Department, which addresses issues such as access to food, nutrition, information and assistance, and serves people who 50 years of age or older.

Special needs for seniors in Sonoma Valley

- 1) ***Chronic health issues:*** This includes dementia, diabetes, asthma, depression, and cancer, with a need for different services to be located in Sonoma Valley. Depression is a common and treatable ailment for seniors that typically can be helped with small changes including engagement, access to food or social activities, etc.
- 2) ***Dental health for low-income seniors:*** As seniors age, they have increasing need for dental services. Dentures are one such change that requires dental care. However, low-income seniors face the same challenges discussed for other low-income residents: as of June, 2011, there are no Denti-Cal providers in Sonoma Valley.
- 3) ***Who to trust:*** Segments of the senior population, such as undocumented or LGBT seniors rarely if ever go to government institutions for help. Some service providers we interviewed struggle with “finding” these seniors to provide them with important services. Citizenship and language issues for undocumented seniors can keep them from finding help they need. Both populations share a suspicion of government institutions, and tend to trust nonprofits over government agencies.
- 4) ***Relevance of services:*** It was related that congregate dining halls, an effective way in the past to distribute meals to seniors, is no longer popular. Informants also stated that their services weren’t being used, even when they were locally available. Informants indicated a need to identify relevant services and the best way to deliver them.

⁵⁵ Source: Diane Kalijian, Director of Adult & Aging Services Division, Department of Human Services (Interview, Fall 2010)

- 5) ***Fixed income, rising prices:*** Some seniors live on a fixed income and struggle to pay their essential living costs such as water bills. At food distribution sites, it has been observed that there is an increase in the number of seniors receiving food.
- 6) ***Lack of access to service:*** While there is a wide-range of services available, most are available along the 101 corridor. This is particularly hard for seniors with disabilities or those unable to drive.
- 7) ***Lack of caregivers:*** Caregivers are typically found along the 101 corridor, and less willing to come to Sonoma Valley. There are caregivers available in Sonoma, but many only speak Spanish, and non-Spanish speaking seniors can be reluctant to work with them.
- 8) ***Lack of access to skilled nursing:*** It is challenging to find skilled nursing without having to go to the hospital, or to Santa Rosa.
- 9) ***Independence vs. care:*** Case managers can help seniors stay in their homes and out of institutions; however, seniors, particularly those who can pay for it, are resistant to having case managers, who can help them navigate the system. They typically feel they don't need it. This raises important issues about how seniors can receive the care they need without feeling that they are losing dignity and self-reliance.

Potential Responses to Serving the Needs of Seniors

- 1) ***Making services available in Sonoma Valley.*** While there are advantages to consolidation in one spot in Santa Rosa, the lack of mobility for this senior population would make a centralized location for services in Sonoma Valley attractive. There is openness to exploring that idea on the part of the county health & human services departments.
- 2) ***The Village- to-Village program for seniors.*** For an annual fee, the program offers “cooperative care groups” that serve as a form of concierge for seniors, so they get the kind of quality help they need, from lawn-mowing and groceries to in-home assistance.
- 3) ***Develop all-inclusive adult day care health programs,*** which, through an innovative use of Medicare, provide a way for seniors to receive medical care while staying at home.
- 4) ***Create intergenerational resource centers for Latinos,*** ideally in the Springs area that co-locates other family resources that could significantly increase participation for this group. It was noted that these services could be provided in conjunction with an “inter-generational, multi-service center,” which could be at a health clinic, or even at schools. Service providers would not need to be co-housed but could use common space to provide on-site services on certain days of the week.

Other Vulnerable Adult Populations

There was some mention of other vulnerable adult populations in Sonoma Valley, specifically:

- 1) Adults in frail health between the ages of 45-59, who are not eligible for Medicare. This could include cancer patients to people with chronic diseases. This population typically needs services that are mostly available only along the 101 corridor, as opposed to Sonoma Valley.
- 2) The Sonoma Valley disabled community is served by Becoming Independent, a nonprofit based out Santa Rosa. While there is a staff person located in Sonoma Valley, Becoming Independent will be the first to tell you that they are funded mostly by the state, and much of that funding is at risk right now.

Improving Health and Health Care in Sonoma Valley

Approach health holistically

It was pointed out that for better health – mental, physical, spiritual, and emotional - people have to feel good about themselves, and that health efforts should be fundamentally focused on creating optimal health for everyone. Several informants pointed out that until the internal conditions change that lead to stress and violence, those behaviors would not change. Many informants also believed that there is a connection between personal development (“leadership training,” “personal improvement,” “health education” or “stress reduction”) and being able to create health for themselves.

Encourage coordination and collaboration amongst health/ human service providers

A desire to collaborate, plan, and coordinate efforts was indicated several times by participants. Several ideas were named in response to support this idea:

- 1) Create a forum for planning among hospitals, cities, and foundations with county departments.
- 2) Regularly come together with other organizations (convene them) to partner and jointly plan, set goals, create a vision for working together. HealthAction, led by the Sonoma County Department of Health Services, First Five’s Early Prevention strategy and United Way’s Schools of Hope are all good examples for doing this.
- 3) Create a calendar of events to better coordinate efforts. There are many organizations but they need better communication. They need to more consciously work together.
- 4) Expand and continue to develop collaborative efforts like the Sonoma Valley Health Roundtable and the Mental Health Coalition.
- 5) The county departments are willing to explore ways to bring their services more locally. One example to emulate is at the City of Sonoma Police Department, where the Department of Health Services located a branch office.
- 6) Work with programs that already exist by creating capacity, adding services, encouraging collaboration.

Build on current organizational efforts and resources:

- 1) La Luz has facility space that can be used by other agencies, and is already highly used by Catholic Charities, Redwood Food Bank, St. Joseph’s Health

- Center, Narcotics Anonymous, the Springs Community Alliance, local women's groups, etc.⁵⁶
- 2) Some informants suggested considering schools as community centers, where not only health and human services might be offered, but the performing arts and sports are made accessible to the community as well.

OPEN SPACE IN SONOMA VALLEY

Description of Open Space in Sonoma Valley

There are fourteen Sonoma Valley properties conserved through the Sonoma Land Trust; seven regional parks in Sonoma Valley; about a dozen small parks and amenities in the City of Sonoma, of which two include basketball courts and other recreational amenities. There are two state parks in Sonoma Valley: the Jack London State Park and the Sonoma Historic Park (a series of unique historical buildings, including the Sonoma Mission, that border the City Plaza) and two that are closely connected to Sonoma Valley: Annadel State Park and Sugarloaf Ridge. Several additional properties are protected through the Open Space District. Schools also provide “open space” if one considers them in terms of recreation and facilities for use by the community. There are several trails in Sonoma Valley as well.

The Sonoma Ecology Center⁵⁷ says the following about the Sonoma Creek Watershed:

“The Sonoma Creek watershed is a 166-square-mile valley 45 miles north of San Francisco. A beautiful, largely rural watershed, Sonoma Valley boasts some of the finest parks, forests, grasslands, and vineyards in the San Francisco Bay Area. Upland areas are drained by Sonoma Creek—which, along with its tributaries, is home to a run of endangered steelhead trout, as well as Chinook salmon and California freshwater shrimp.”

Challenge: Needs for Open Space in Sonoma Valley

Informants described a positive vision for a vibrant, connected Sonoma Valley and watershed. However, they did make clear some important challenges.

⁵⁶ Source: Yvonne Hall, Executive Director, La Luz Center (Spring, 2011)

⁵⁷ Source: Sonoma Ecology Center Website

http://www.sonomaecologycenter.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=section&layout=blog&id=5&Itemid=7

Need for increased linkages between preserved properties

“Creating linkages” is both a physical initiative (literally, connecting pieces of land together through acquiring land that is close to other open spaces,) and in practice (i.e., creating opportunities for land managers and owners to share best practices, coordinate their restoration and management efforts, open pathways intended for people and wildlife etc.)

Creating linkages as a key strategy: it is much easier to manage eco-systems and open space as a connected system. Informants said that linkages leverage restoration efforts by focusing efforts, resources, and habitat connectivity.

Need for increased linkages between people and land

Informants were also keenly aware of the need for people to have access to these natural spaces, citing both practical connection (the ability to move from one part of the Valley to another in ways other than automobile), as well as the other advantage that a population that is aware of, using, and appreciating the land around them will be much more likely to care for it in the present and future.

Need for planning

Some informants identified **a gap in planning the “micro-scale” vs. the “macro-scale.”** For example, if they were to plan a linkage between the Annadel State Park and the Jack London State Park, they would need time to talk with private landowners, to achieve an understanding what landowners want, before any of the formal planning process could take place. Also, providing for trail assessment, design, and analysis as early as possible would be helpful.

Other informants identified the need for **planning support that was focused on the long term**, asking such questions as:

In the face of the state and county budget crisis, how will the community, and specifically nonprofits and local agencies, organize to support the acquisition and maintenance of trails, open space, and parks? Informants pointed out that nonprofits and local agencies need to organize to support the maintenance of trails, open space and parks over time. The community needs to consider how to leverage partnerships between public and private agencies and create a new model for funding and fundraising.

Facilitating Trail & Open Space Acquisition and Maintenance

Maintenance and Operation (M&O) of Trails/Open Space

The informants also pointed out that in some ways, acquisition of land and trails is the easy part; it is the maintenance and operations – where a long-term source of funding is needed - which can drag a project off course. There is a need for maintenance and operations funding.

Specific projects that are in various stages of acquisition, design and construction include the north and east slope trails on Sonoma Mountain and the Calabazas Creek trail.

Need help to take advantage of short-term opportunities in land acquisition

Informants talked about how at times, they need access to “quick funds;” for example, a landowner will offer them land that they have been waiting for, and they need to show their seriousness by paying for an appraisal, or by putting down an option price.

Sonoma Valley water conservation and climate change

Sonoma Valley, and Sonoma County in general, has a number of top experts who are working in land management and open space acquisition, restoration, and ecological education. From this group, a significant theme arose: climate change creates a variety of threats to Sonoma Valley. Its ability to source water locally and protect water supplies was the number one concern named – “for food, for play, for critters.” Also listed were changing habitat, flooding, particularly in Schellville, and an increased danger of wildfire in a climate made drier by climate change.

Separate from climate change but also mentioned was a decreasing ability for Sonoma Valley to recharge its groundwater, a key strategy for sourcing water locally. Policies around energy use and water conservation must be implemented in tandem with educating the public in terms of specific behavioral change. Reducing the need for water is a related key strategy.

Need to continue public outreach

Referring back to the desire for “a population in love with their open space,” some informants talked about creating an ongoing forum that interacts with the broader community. These organizations are looking for ways to market programs to make them really exciting and to highlight the natural assets of Sonoma County. A high priority for nonprofits focused on environmental issues was **environmental education**.

Informants wanted to solidify public support for the environment of Sonoma Valley, and identified school programs, **particularly in early education**, as being important. By educating students about the environment, as well as creating public access to protected lands through trails and educational programs, they hoped to help shape support for the environment long into the future. Informants also identified **a need to have a larger, more diverse community working on and understanding these issues**.

Potential Responses for Open Space in Sonoma Valley

Environmental planning

In order to manage open space for optimum results in the eco-system and for its residents, environmental planning is a must. Politically, it was noted Sonoma Valley is set up well to do land and ground-water management, with a progressive city council, a clear geographic boundary, and a community that cares.

Informants noted that an opportunity to work with the State Park System to create an overarching road and trails plan for Sonoma Mountain would be terrific; planning for habitat restoration, groundwater recharge and management along with erosion control could create important progress for people and the planet. Part of this process would be to identify the most important areas to protect groundwater recharge, ensuring enough water flow in summer as well as what are the best spots for flood control and natural

water percolation in the winter. They noted that in Sonoma Mountain, building access and habitat restoration could increase the exciting potential of black bears, warblers, bob cats, and other important endemic species. These ideas could easily be married with ways to incorporate human use. They also noted that there are grants available for groundwater recharge.

Connect land with land, and people with land

Connecting people with land as well as connecting land with land would create a slew of synergistic benefits. By connecting land with land, these properties can be managed as a whole, maximizing the benefits of limited resources as well as helping them to be managed as an eco-system as opposed to disparate pieces of an eco-system. Likewise, connecting people to land would help them feel more connected to the natural world, with obvious health and environmental benefits, as well as foster a sense of appreciation and connection to the natural and human community they reside in. The creative question was asked: what does “ecotopia” (ecological utopia) look like when thinking about human recreation and habitat restoration?

There were many exciting ideas to create linkages of different kinds:

- 1) ***Connect land to residents:*** It was noted that in general, the public relates to the landscape through trails, parks, and small farms. Ways to foster this connection include:
 - a. Create “feeder trails” into neighborhoods: Sonoma Valley could have a series of trails at different elevations around the Valley that are directly connected to the neighborhoods, so that people can experience wilds on a regular place – informants felt that it is vital that people see the value of the natural world on a daily basis.
 - b. Create Sonoma Valley Central trail plan for bikes and pedestrians. This plan has been talked about for 20 years, and has some funds earmarked for the Springs. A number of key parcels are in place, and the trail plan could be done with easements. Informants noted that the Central Trail Plan is identified in the Sonoma Valley Key Trails Plan and the Outdoor Recreation Plan, and ideally could link all the way to Santa Rosa. Informants noted that hopefully it will be incorporated to general plan. Currently planning partners don’t have funding for working with landowners. Informants asserted that once it is complete, these kinds of pathways are never regretted. Eventually, the trail could reach all the way from Sonoma to the coast.
 - c. Increase trails and parks in Boyes Springs, which was identified as having limited trails and underutilized, under- maintained parks and open spaces. (See section on page 54 for more ideas about the Springs.)
 - d. Connect Bayer Farm in Santa Rosa with a similar garden space in Sonoma Valley via a hiking trail.
 - e. Link recreation lands together and create a “hut-to-hut” trail throughout Sonoma County, including Sonoma Valley (i.e., Annadel, Hood Mt, and

Sugar Loaf). It was noted that like Cinque Terra in Italy⁵⁸, this could create a tourist attraction and economic benefit for the area as well.

- f. Create public access and manage the Montini trail north of the city. The property was bought by the Open Space District, and there has been an ongoing discussion about access and management, involving the District, the City and the Sonoma Ecology Center.
- 2) **Connecting land to land:** There were several trails mentioned that would connect important conservation lands (parks, open space properties, etc.) Those which could specifically benefit from support by private funding include:⁵⁹
- a. Completing (planning and constructing) the 1.6 mile long East Slope Sonoma Mountain Ridge Trail which will connect with and lengthen the existing 8 miles of Ridge Trail in Jack London Historic State Park (4 miles are connector trails to the staging area) and connect with the 4.5 mile North Slope Ridge Trail segment currently under construction.
 - b. Connecting (planning and constructing) 5 Ridge Trail miles from (and including) Calabazas Creek Open Space Preserve to Sugarloaf Ridge State Park (involves State Parks and Open Space District owned lands and private land easements). This is the original list's #3 -- Connecting the Sonoma Mountain to Mayacamas Range. Informants discussed eventually linking into other counties - up the mountain and all the way over. Likewise, connecting Mayacamas Trails would be a great addition.
 - c. Connecting Jack London Historic State Park to Annadel State Park. Acquire and plan a 4 mile long segment on private lands which will connect North Slope Ridge Trail et al with Annadel State Park creating a continuous 12.5 miles of trails for hikers, bicyclists and equestrians when complete. This trail segment will help connect Sonoma Valley with Oakmont as well as with the Mayacamas.
 - d. The Old Padre Trail is an important goal as well and the Ridge Trail has plans to have a trail connecting our primary trail alignment (all of the above are primary trails) with the Town of Sonoma and the Old Padre Trail would be an ideal trail to include in that alignment.
 - e. Other ideas include:
 - a) Connect Sugarloaf Ridge State Park to Robert Louis Stevenson Regional Park
 - b) Create a trail that spans Highway 12 from Bouverie Preserve via land trust and easement acquisitions
 - c) Connect the Miwok trail from Sonoma Coast to the Great Basin, Nevada.

⁵⁸ Cinque Terra is a popular hiking trail in Italy where enthusiasts can walk from B&B to B&B in the lovely mountains of Italy.

⁵⁹ The following list of trails were brainstormed during a March 21, 2011 meeting with informants focused on Open Space. Later, (July, 2011) Dee Swanhuysen, North Ridge Trail helped to flesh out our understanding of the specific needs regarding the top four trails, from the perspective of the needs of Sonoma Valley as a whole, as opposed to only the North Ridge Trail.

Invest in local parks in the Springs Area

There are several ideas for open space and access to the natural world in the Springs, including:

- 1) Building a community garden: Nuestra Voz, the Sonoma Ecology Center, and a number of other local nonprofits and government agencies are currently building a community garden at Larson Park. This will create many benefits: along with creating a food source, the shared work will increase community ownership and cohesiveness, and will also create more “eyes-on” for Larson Park (which is known to decrease riskier elements.)
- 2) Increasing parks and trails in the Springs, including:
 - a. Developing the trail system along Agua Caliente creek corridor in Boyes Springs Area
 - b. Creating a “Hillside park” to the east of Boyes Springs area
 - c. Connect the Springs to the rest of the Valley through a central Sonoma Bike/Pedestrian pathway.

Larson Park could also be used to further conservation and education goals for the community. Several informants talked about how changing the recreation activities available, engaging community to “reclaim” it from gangs, and involving local activists could all be pathways to revitalizing Larson Park.

Informants also thought about ways to leverage that effort. For example, a community garden would not only foster community and produce food; it could also recharge groundwater and become a part of a larger water conservation plan. Alternatively, a multi-agency demonstration project on groundwater recharge, tying together flood control, recharge and creek restoration could be created. There is openness to collaboration between the Regional Parks Department, the Open Space District, the Ecology Center and the Land Trust. By building a groundwater recharge demonstration site, the community could create a form of environmental education while also enhancing restoration in that location.

In the variety of environmental agencies and nonprofits focused on these topics, many indicated that they are willing to work together to achieve community goals, from community gardens to water conservation.

Support traditional and non-traditional partnerships

Informants were clear that partnership – whether with the “tried and true” partners of the past, or with new partners, takes time and is underfunded. They also said that there was opportunity to work with new, non-traditional partners, particularly in the efforts where human benefit is easy to see.

- 1) **State Parks**, specifically about the State Park Trails Plan;
- 2) **Napa County**, as has been done in the past with the trail plan through Sugar Ridge State Park;

- 3) **Private Foundations:** Informants noted that grants are really tailored to each project. Thus, each organization has a long list of potential funders, but each project really requires a collage of partners. Some traditional partners include:
 - a. Coastal Conservancy
 - b. Gordon Moore Foundation
 - c. Marin Community Foundation
 - d. Silicon Valley Foundation
 - e. Goldman Foundation
 - f. Packard Foundation
 - a. Nature Conservancy
 - b. National Audubon

- 2) **City/County/State Agencies & Citizens:** There are several groups that would be important to contact to understand community concerns.
 - a. There is a groundwater citizen advisory committee of a cross-section of citizens dealing with groundwater. One way to approach them would be to present a suite of projects, and find out what interests them.
 - b. Springs Redevelopment Agency is an important partner for any effort in the Springs.
 - c. State Parks: As we all know, they are currently closing many local parks due to the state budget crisis; however, they might be able collaborate with local organizations and agencies. Some efforts are already being made to come up with a cooperative model for “smart stewardship” of State Parks, and to engage a corps of citizens to do what State Parks can’t do. Parks will be closed unless we come up with a solution.
 - d. The Board of Supervisors, on putting the Parks and Recreation plan into the General Plan.

- 3) **Non-Traditional Partners:** Informants were excited about collaborating with different types of partners for different ideas. For example:
 - a. Collaborate with Tourism & Winery Partners on a walking vacation tour through Sonoma Valley, visiting wineries, restaurants, hotels, and of course Sonoma Valley open space.
 - b. Collaborate with Sonoma Valley Hospital and tourism industry for marketing Sonoma Valley as a healing destination spot.
 - c. Organize around needs for the whole communities as opposed to only conservation goals, i.e., create a trail that children could walk on to school, and include such partners as schools, wineries, public health, and homeowners associations.

YOUTH AND LEADERSHIP

Challenge: Gangs, Drugs, and a Lack of Identity in Latino Youth

The fall-out from the challenges facing the Latino community is most visible in its youth, and their troubles affect the whole community. Communities struggle with gang activity, falling high school graduation rates, along with alcohol and drug use among youth. The EDB Profile mentions several troubling statistics: a high level of harassment across all high school grade levels (around 25%); nearly 5% of all grades reported carrying a gun to school; and 50% of Grade 11 students reporting usage of alcohol in the last month.⁶⁰ It was mentioned that over the course of the 2010-2011 school year, there had been over 100 incidences related to substance in the school district, of which the vast majority were for marijuana.⁶¹ Gangs are typically organized around illegal sales of drugs; and Chief of Police Bret Sacket reported that over the last three years there has been an obvious increase in the number of crimes associated with drugs and alcohol (from about 18% in 2007-08, to 58% in 2010-11.)

There were diverse opinions about why youth faced these problems. Some said that it was a lack of advocacy by adults, some pointed to an identity crisis in children functioning “in-between” two cultural backgrounds, and others said that appropriate examples were not being set by the community around alcohol and drugs.

Regardless of why, it is clear that many Latino children likely experience a “tug-of-war” that is confusing, hard to navigate, and has serious consequences for the family unit and for the child’s long-term success. Parents may not know or understand those needs, and while they may understand the dangers to their children, they may not know how to help them.

Education, counseling, and mentoring could more adequately provide for Latino youth by focusing on the “identity issues” through educating young Latinos about their cultural heritage, and also working to build community among Anglo and Latino youth. In particular, some informants noted, “Boys are getting lost.” Boys who have difficulties in school or who get into trouble are abandoned by the schools (*with a zero tolerance policy*): there appear to be no programs that can help them.

These youth are not gaining all they could from their education because they are not receiving enough support in these fundamental areas. Further, counseling and mentorship programs that are adapted to the needs of Latino families (as whole units) are lacking.

Challenge: Need to Cultivate a Viable Future Workforce

⁶⁰ Source: (p.10) Sonoma Valley Community Profile (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

⁶¹ Source: Chief of Police, Bret Sacket, City of Sonoma Police Department (June, 2011)

When informants discussed youth and education, many were concerned both about the ability of young people to succeed, as well as the ability of Sonoma Valley and Sonoma County to succeed. There were several trends and needs identified:

- 1) *There is an educational achievement gap between Latinos and Anglos in Sonoma Valley.* This is directly supported in the EDB Profile, which indicated a significantly higher rate of dropouts amongst Latino youth when compared to Anglo youth: **a 13.1% high school drop-out rate amongst Latino high school students in the 2008-09 school years, as opposed to 5.3% amongst Anglo students.**⁶² This is matched by another striking statistic: **over 50% of Latino adults lack a high school diploma.**⁶³ While graduation rates have been increasing over the last 6 years (a highly encouraging trend), there are still serious implications of an achievement gap. Another data point relays that while the number of English learners in SVUSD is rising (about 32% in 2010), the number that are actually being “redesignated” as proficient in English are remaining approximately the same (about 8%).⁶⁴ The concern is that because of a lack of English and of education, many youth and adults are unable to take advantage of local, higher-paying economic opportunities. If they wish to stay in Sonoma County, lower paying jobs are the only option. Others also pointed out that this gap is very likely to significantly affect the economic competitiveness of Sonoma Valley, as employers are unable to find employees able to take jobs, and students are unable to find higher-level jobs with their degree of skill or no high school diploma. It was pointed out that the gap in educational achievement is directly connected to the cultural and economic divide between Latinos and Anglos, mentioned in Section II. One informant summarized the sentiment by stating, “Latino youth are not prepared to be main-lined in the community.”
- 2) *There is a need to encourage small business development for women.* Informants expressed a desire to start their own businesses, and knew others who also wanted to start their own businesses.
- 3) One informant noted *that more could be done for leadership development and succession planning* throughout the organizations in Sonoma Valley (from business to government to non-profits). Special care needs to be taken to facilitate inclusion of diverse populations in community leadership.
- 4) *Education could provide better for a larger range of learners:* Several also mentioned a dearth of vocational education and summer schools.

In the long term, the combination of these challenges will make a fundamental impact on Sonoma Valley’s ability to find local, employable workers to sustain their businesses.

Potential Responses to Latino Youth and Future Workforce

⁶² Source: Sonoma Valley Community Profile, p.7 (Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

⁶³ Source: Sonoma Valley Community Profile, p. 4(Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

⁶⁴ Source: Sonoma Valley Community Profile, p. 8(Economic Development Board, Sonoma County, 2011)

Building on “what works” is a sentiment shared by many of the informants. Below is a list of programs that are already part of “what works” for youth in Sonoma Valley, as well as innovative new ideas that have worked in other areas. Supporting these initiatives could create exciting, sustainable possibilities for the community and address the fundamental need to cultivate a viable future workforce in Sonoma County. These are all direct recommendations from informants.

Create alternative forms of education

Several different efforts and programs that have already proved successful were mentioned:

- 1) The Sonoma Valley Fund’s Youth Initiative, a summer school program that involved students with low-income and a history of not succeeding in school, was cited as a successful example several times. The Youth Initiative combined a variety of educational trips along with other types of learning; teachers were amazed by the enthusiasm these students had for the program when they returned to school that fall. As of January 2011 there are now six after-school classes supported by the Youth Initiative along with after-school classes provided by the SVUSD.
- 2) Another success story mentioned was the Boys & Girls’ club, which for a low yearly fee provided a safe space after school with opportunities for students to take classes, play sports, access computers. Over 50% of its participants are Latino.⁶⁵
- 3) The Teacher Support Network (TSN), a program in SVUSD, brings in community members to teach to children – everything from pottery to science. Retirees are an ideal source for participation in this and other community involvement initiatives.
- 4) The Sonoma Valley High School is focusing on career *and* college readiness as a primary goal; in that way they are helping students identify the multiple avenues available to them after high-school.

Working with gangs

- 1) The City of Sonoma’s Youth Diversion Program has been very effective. In 2010-2011 school year, 74 of 125 were successfully diverted from the juvenile court system.⁶⁶
- 2) GREAT (Gang Resistance Education And Training), offered by the Boys & Girls’ club in tandem with Community Service Officers, is a program that could be expanded.

Use schools to build bridges

- 1) Schools can potentially provide a safe locale for families, including grandparents, to receive support regardless of their legal status. **Several informants discussed using schools to provide health and human services for more than children, starting with children, expanding to parents and then on to the rest of the community.** The Sonoma Community Health Center’s van at El Verano and Flowery elementary schools are already providing some access to these services,

⁶⁵ Source: Dave Piers, Executive Director, Boys & Girls Club (June, 2011)

⁶⁶ Source: Chief of Police Bret Sacket, Sonoma Valley Police Department (June 2011)

and could be expanded to ESL training, legal services, county services, etc., and services to help parents learn how to support their children as learners.

- 2) **School sites could fill gaps in the community for services such** as a performing arts center and a community swimming pool, assets that would be attractive to all parts of the community and could serve as a platform for bridging cultural divides.
- 3) Using the classroom to build bridges by enhancing teacher training could help bridge the divide within classrooms. Another idea to this end was to not separate children who speak English as a second language from children who speak English as a first language.

Work with identity & mindset by tailoring education to needs of Latino youth

- 1) Informants suggested that working proactively with first generation identity issues, culture clash, differences between family and societal expectations through providing bi-lingual mental health services, ethnic studies, heritage Spanish, and Mexican history could help Latino youth be proud of their identity and connected to their history. One idea mentioned at least twice was to establish a charter school with an emphasis on the Latino culture and the Spanish language.
- 2) Informants also stated that youth need to be mentored towards shared values, and expect that these youth can and will be successful. One informant stated that “We should prepare, encourage, and motivate the youth. Latino youth need support: they need tutoring, enrichment activities, field trips, after school programs, meals.”
- 3) Create more and different educational opportunities, like summer school with enrichment activities, field trips; as well as classes in computers, ESL, etc.
- 4) Provide opportunities for multiple learning styles, including vocational training, mentorship with community members and experts, field trips, arts, and other opportunities. Counseling in schools needs to be focused on advocating for the student.

Work with parents and family

Informants noted that involving parents is critical to the success of the child, and the earlier they are involved in their education, the more likely the child is to receive the parental support they need. Some ideas they discussed included:

- 1) When working with the Latino community, it should be tailored to the needs of the Latino youth and ideally involve the whole family.
- 2) Creating a mentoring program specifically designed for immigrant Latino teens with non-English-speaking parents who are not acculturated to the US and who don't understand what their children are experiencing could help bridge the gap between parents and children. Many noted that this was a significant challenge for working with teens.
- 3) Create a Parent University (similar to a program in Napa County) to help parents understand what college is about, and how to help their children achieve college education
- 4) Provide parents an opportunity to meet their educational needs along with children. Several informants noted that as children begin experiencing success in

school, parents are also influenced and encouraged to pursue education. Taking advantage of that impetus could significantly curtail the cycle of poverty.

Focus on early education and young children

- 1) One informant mentioned the “Sandbox Investment,” a study done by David Kirp, showed that children who received preschool and early education had significantly higher earning potential and lower rates of incarceration.
- 2) Several informants, in and out of the field of education, talked about the importance of creating good early educational experiences for children, saying that early childhood is when attitudes about learning are set for children, and when influencing the parent can really make a significant impact.
- 3) They also noted that maintaining health in this younger age group will also have a significant impact on their success as students later on.
- 4) Two programs were identified to explore further: the Community Action Partnership program of “prevention and early intervention”; and Avance, a parent-child education program for children in the preschool age.

Need for diversification of leadership and Latino leadership development

Many different informants noted that there is a significant need for leaders from the Latino community and from youth to join the nonprofit boards, volunteer efforts, and city government. Latinos are historically under-represented in the institutions which have (and could have) direct impact on their lives. They noted that there were few people who are “telling the story” of the Latino community in Sonoma Valley, and that they needed to “find the voice” for that group of people.

There were several reasons informants cited as to why this might be, and it seems to be tightly wound with the feelings of fear and dependence noted earlier. Some also noted the limited formal education that some portion of Latinos had; another noted that there was no “model of community leadership,” where leadership from the community could be heard and cultivated more effectively.

Potential Responses for Leadership Development

A combination of mentorship and training in leadership development, along with creating opportunities “to lead”, was mentioned as people talked about this challenge. **Latinos could benefit from an approach which combines direct mentorship and training on leadership with opportunities to contribute materially to the success and development of the community** by becoming role models, volunteering in programs like the Teachers’ Support Network, or simply becoming business owners.

For those who are working currently in leadership development for the Latino community, this meant connecting all of those dots, including training in interpersonal communication skills; a sense of cultural identity, particularly for youth; creating a strong

family unit; fostering a sense of personal vision and entrepreneurship; and developing a sense of community with all members of Sonoma Valley. They pointed to many empowered success stories: creating events where participants all contributed a small part - food, labor, performance - that created a larger good; or organizing a student-led, unofficial soccer tournament where Latinos, Anglos and others joined based on merit and desire, resulting in a decrease in violence at their school; or working together to improve the food lines at La Luz.

While diversifying nonprofit boards may be an end result; any strategy for empowerment needs to be owned by the community. **Entrepreneurship was seen as being directly connected to helping inspire grander vision and a way to reach out to a larger community.**

Challenge: Effective Sonoma Valley Nonprofits & Agencies

There were several different perspectives about the effectiveness of collaboration in Sonoma Valley amongst its various organizations. While many noted the willingness of nonprofits to work together, the “bond of cohesiveness” that is felt, and the effective networking between nonprofits, it was also noted that there could be more collaboration among nonprofits and agencies. Informants noted that many of the services were not coordinated in the Springs area, particularly from the perspective of service recipients.

Informants also noted that in order for the “big problems” being faced by the Sonoma Valley to be solved, ones that require a lot of resources, skills, and creativity to address, the capacity for effective collaboration would be crucial.

Potential Responses for Effective Nonprofits:

Encourage collaboration and coordination amongst county and city agencies, nonprofits, volunteers, and community groups

“The future has to be about public/private partnerships; coming together in new ways – there is no place in the future for stand-alone organizations.” An important nuance that was pointed out: while the benefits to collaboration are easy to see – relationship, shared effort, greater impact, there are also costs to collaboration in time, autonomy, and effort. These collaborations should be thoughtfully established to meet specific goals, as multiple collaborations are time intensive. A few other ideas along these lines were mentioned:

- 1) Regularly come together with other organizations to partner and jointly plan, set goals, and create a vision for working together. HealthAction, led by the Sonoma County Department of Health Services, First Five’s Early Prevention strategy and United Way’s “Schools of Hope” are all good examples for doing this.
- 2) Create a calendar of events to better coordinate efforts. There are many organizations but they need better communication. They need to more consciously work together.

- 3) Expand and continue to develop collaborations like the Sonoma Valley Health Roundtable, the Springs Community Alliance, and the Mental Health Coalition.
- 4) Require collaboration. Philanthropists and Foundations can require collaboration in their grants.
- 5) Find the conveners. Look for the strong organization that can bring people together.

Leadership & board development

Many informants stated that the organizations working in Sonoma Valley would be well-served to support the continued development of their boards, to have leadership training in areas of organizational development and board effectiveness, and to help nonprofits find ways to work together. It was noted that there are many crossovers in services provided, and not enough coordination. Another area of board development may be training in cross-cultural collaboration, to facilitate effective boards that reflect the diverse nature of Sonoma Valley.

Engage in efforts that are “significant and holistic”

The ultimate impact for the community should be focused by nonprofits and agencies. How many people are served? What will be the results for the whole community? Efforts must engage the community and build on existing organizations’ efforts. Informants suggested that doing something that best serves the community, “*With a concentrated effort in turning the tide on social problems.*” Informants pointed to the Buck Institute, where a substantial grant created one of the great institutions on aging. Informants asked nonprofits to think about how to create the most benefit from their projects: like a community garden that is also a water conservation demonstration site and a groundwater recharge site; or a service center that provided for many different aspects of wellness and living.

Need to shift fundraising model

It was noted that Sonoma Valley – both its donors and its nonprofits – tend to be “event-centric” in how funds are raised. It was advised that nonprofits should target their ideal donor profiles, and reach out to them – even if they are outside of Sonoma Valley. Helping these nonprofits find ongoing sustainability through providing program services, as opposed to focusing on big events, is a change that a few noted would be important for nonprofits.

Build on organizations and efforts that are already in place. Build leadership and capacity.

This was a theme that resounded throughout the interviews; there are many assets in place at the city and valley level, as well as from the county. Work with programs that already exist by creating capacity, adding services, and encouraging collaboration

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

The Sonoma Valley Library

The Library District is a joint powers authority that is supervised and appointed by the Board of Supervisors. It is an independently directed organization, but organized along the same lines as the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors Districts. Commissions are appointed by each of the five County Supervisors. Books are shared throughout the county between each district. The Sonoma Valley Library is on West Napa Street about one-half mile from downtown Sonoma. The library is about 3 miles from the Springs, which like other Sonoma services, represents an extensive walk from the Springs to those who do not have access to transport by automobile. In the Springs, the library works with the Sonoma Valley Unified School District to provide a book mobile.

In August, 2011 the Library will begin a \$2.5 million remodel with Redevelopment Agency funding.⁶⁷ The library will move into a local church so that they can continue services during that remodeling time.

Emergency Services

Emergency Services in Sonoma County provide services in fire prevention and operations, dealing with natural disasters (most commonly floods), hazardous materials, and management of emergency response through an Emergency Operations Center. Emergency Services partners with the Sonoma Valley Fire and Rescue Authority, which has primary responsibility for most of the Valley. The principal exception is the Mayacamas Fire District, which the county is responsible for.

The Sonoma Valley Fire and Rescue Authority cover the “territory” of Sonoma Valley well. Emergency Services, also organized by “districts” determined by the City and County, are funded by taxes.

Informants discussed a concern that as Sonoma Valley becomes more populated, and continues to shift from rural needs to suburban needs, the Fire & Rescue Authority will need to increase its level of service. It was noted that the current way of funding these districts in general is unsustainable, and should be addressed in tandem with new developments.

The largest risk for Emergency Services is that of the “Big Earthquake” scenario, where services could be disrupted for more than 72 hours and multiple fires are likely. The capacity to respond to multiple fires at once is becoming more of a concern as the population gets denser.

⁶⁷ Source: *Sonoma Spends 16 million in Redevelopment Projects*, by Ted Appel, Press Democrat, (Feb 23 2011)(<http://www.watchsonomacounty.com/2011/02/cities/sonoma-speeds-16-million-in-redevelopment-projects/>)

Volunteers, through the Community Emergency Response Team model (CERTs), already formed in Santa Rosa, Sebastopol, and other parts of the county, provide a good form of organizing for emergencies, and are a model that could be expanded. This would allow for a much more organized approach, and would be particularly helpful given the rural nature of many parts of Sonoma Valley.

Valley of the Moon Water District

This is excerpted from the Valley of the Moon Water District website:

“The Valley of the Moon Water District serves approximately 23,000 water hookups throughout the Valley from northern Glen Ellen to Temelec. There are two sources for water: from the Sonoma County Water Agency via the Russian River, and from groundwater wells, including five wells owned by the Valley of the Moon Water District, along with private wells throughout the Valley. Sonoma Valley sources provide about 1/7 (about 490 acre feet/year) of total water for the Valley. The success of the water district is directly tied into the health of the watershed.”⁶⁸

Several challenges were identified by the Valley of the Moon Water District:

Water for Low-Income Seniors

As mentioned earlier, an important challenge is the growing body of seniors with special needs in Temelec that cannot consistently meet their living expenses. When residents are unable to pay, they lose access to water until they pay a penalty fee to restart the water, which they usually can't afford. The cycle then starts all over. While no immediate solutions were offered to help seniors in Temelec or other areas that might be experiencing this challenge, it certainly bears exploration. Likely, these are seniors who are getting by only on social security, and thus are struggling to pay their water bills.

Groundwater Recharge

The section on Open Space discussed recharging water into the watershed as a large concern. Their goal is to both increase groundwater and to improve the quality of the groundwater. They pointed to the chronic flooding that occurs in the Schellville area and its linkage to the slowing of groundwater recharge. Increasing public awareness about the value and approaches for recharging groundwater was identified as an important solution. Perhaps creating a multi-agency recharge demonstration site (as mentioned earlier, in conjunction with a possible community garden) could be part of that approach.

⁶⁸ Source: Valley of the Moon Water District website (Spring, 2011) <http://www.vomwd.com/about.html>