



SAMCEDA
San Mateo County Economic Development Association

WEAVING OUR REGION TOGETHER

T RANSPORTATION
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R EGIONALISM
E CONOMY
D EVELOPMENT

Talks

For over half a century, SAMCEDA has worked in partnership with businesses, elected leaders, educators, labor and non-profits, as well as many others to promote San Mateo County as **THE PLACE** to work, live and prosper.



“ STRIVE NOT TO BE A
SUCCESS, BUT RATHER
TO BE OF VALUE. ”

– *ALBERT EINSTEIN*



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ROSANNE FOUST

PRESIDENT & CEO

SAMCEDA

The original success which created the suburban communities between San Francisco and San Jose has now intensified to the point where our region is one of the most highly sought after places to live, work, and create transformational companies.

While we celebrate our unprecedented economic growth, low unemployment, and 21st century innovation, success comes with a price that demands solutions. This is why SAMCEDA convenes, connects, contributes and collaborates with partners and stakeholders on the most difficult and challenging issues facing our region and it's why we launched "THRED" Talks in 2016.

"THRED" Talks was designed to highlight business and community leaders weaving San Mateo County and our greater Bay Region together through solutions that are innovative, creative, and out-of-the-box. It brings together diverse groups ready and willing to tackle the most pressing issues of our time:

Transportation, Housing, Regionalism, Economy and Development – 5 areas that encompass the depth and breadth of the opportunities and the challenges that come with change. Not easy subjects and not easy solutions, but in the following pages you will read a wealth of great ideas, initiatives and forward thinking approaches that have and will make a difference for generations to come.

VOLUME IV HIGHLIGHTS:

- SPUR's *New Social Compact* and vision for the Bay Area in 2070
- JobTrain's "steps to stability" and focused efforts on training for our future workforce
- The work of the Hospital Council of Northern and Central California and the collaboration of San Mateo County's six health care systems
- The Census 2020 and its critical importance to our future
- San Mateo County Office of Education's commitment to school safety through the *Coalition for Safe Schools* and communities and the *Big Five*, a coordinated set of emergency response protocols
- BAWSCA's goal of ensuring we have reliable, high quality water at a fair price
- The bold idea that the faith community and the business community can come together to build a stronger, more resilient, and more accepting community

The following pages reflect the spirit of San Mateo County – what we have accomplished and what we can accomplish if we "weave together" our knowledge, energy, commitment, and values.

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“ I ALONE CANNOT CHANGE
THE WORLD, BUT I CAN CAST A
STONE ACROSS THE WATER TO
CREATE MANY RIPPLES. ”

- *MOTHER TERESA*

“THRED” TALKS
VOLUME IV | **2019**





ALICIA JEAN-BAPTISTE

PRESIDENT & CEO

SPUR

A Vision for the Bay Area in 2070

The San Francisco Bay Area occupies a unique place in the nation's imagination: It's the locus of counterculture and the tech economy; the land of progressive politics and unbelievably high housing costs. For many of us here, to live in the Bay Area is to live in several contrasting realities at once: spectacular natural beauty, extreme traffic congestion, preternatural prosperity and acute and rising homelessness.

In 2018, SPUR launched a multi-year effort to develop a vision for the San Francisco Bay Area in the year 2070, along with the strategies needed to make this vision a reality. Our goal, with the SPUR Regional Strategy, is to develop a set of strategies that will make the Bay Area more livable, more inclusive, more equitable, more environmentally balanced and more regionally integrated. Fundamentally, we are asking ourselves and many, many others: *what kind of place do we want to create? What kind of place do we want to be? And how do we get there?*

To begin, we wanted to understand the forces and trends that are at work in the region today and will shape our future. Forces are things we must prepare for but that we cannot change acting regionally alone. For example, we know that climate change is now unstoppable. Even if we reduce our carbon emissions dramatically, the impact of what's already in the environment will continue to play out — we will need to adapt. We also know that an earthquake is inevitable: the US Geological Survey predicts a 33% chance that an earthquake of a 6.7 magnitude or greater will hit the Hayward fault over the next three decades. We must prepare our regional infrastructure and our communities. The population of the Bay Area is aging and becoming less white, automation is transforming work. And the federal government is both a constant and a wildcard: Washington has significantly disinvested in many of our supportive systems (transportation, housing) in recent decades, and that could continue. These are all forces which impact the Bay Area and our plans for the future must acknowledge their impact.

On the other hand, there are trends in the region that we do have the power to collectively shape. The Bay Area's housing affordability crisis is a cautionary tale cited across the nation and the world. It is also a product of choices we collectively made over generations. When we passed Proposition 13 in 1978, we profoundly shifted the economic incentive for cities, to the extent that building office space became a more rational investment than building housing. When we implemented environmental laws curbing sprawl, we made a major investment in the health of our region, but we limited our development footprint. As a result, we created fewer places for housing to be built as well as an incentive structure that discourages housing. Research today shows that although the region's population grew by 1 million (or 15 percent) since the year 2000, the region collectively underbuilt housing by about 700,000 units.

We are living through a period of historic economic expansion, but not everyone is benefitting and the future is not guaranteed. Inequality is on the rise and the Bay Area is in some ways on the leading edge of this national trend. The counties surrounding the 9-county region have seen an increase in households making between \$50,000 to \$75,000 a year but have lost households making under \$50,000 level, supporting the narrative that lower income households are being pushed out and the Bay Area is becoming inaccessible to all but the wealthy. The Bay Area is also becoming a more congested place, a symptom of an underlying structural problem. For decades, we have built auto-centric transportation systems and auto-dependent communities. These decisions, along with our collective disinvestment in public transit, have pushed people into a losing proposition: a reliance on the private car to get to work and meet their daily needs. Finally, we grapple with the trend toward local control and the question of regionalism. Despite multiple attempts to create regional governance capacities, our institutions are most often single-purpose (like the Bay Conservation and Development Commission) and given the authority to regulate against more than the authority to

provide for the regional public good. Addressing our challenges in the region will require the ability to be proactive and the capacity to balance between local perspective and our collective needs.

Today’s Bay Area is the result of the powerful trends we’ve shaped and the ways we’ve responded to external forces. In the *New Social Compact*, SPUR has articulated a vision for the region in 2070 we think reflects values and hopes we all share. In this vision, the Bay Area embraces the belief that we can grow the pie and divide it more equally. This principle of shared prosperity leads to high levels of investment in the social systems which are the foundations of an equitable society. Fast, reliable, affordable transit provides the backbone of our transportation system. Our communities are designed to encourage walking and biking and many neighborhoods have car-free commercial blocks. We welcome new people and new ideas, which allows a dynamic economy to prosper. We eliminate fossil fuels from our homes, vehicles and industries. We embrace infill housing and smaller living spaces, both of which allow more people to afford life in their neighborhoods of choice. Shared prosperity also produces an expansion of representation – our power structures become more diverse as more people have access to quality education, job opportunities, and wealth creation. The Bay Area becomes a model of equity, sustainability and inclusivity.

The choices each of us make today and tomorrow will determine what our region looks like in 50 years. It will require mobilization of resources, of political power and of our own civic will scaled to the problems we face. The good news is, we’ve done this before. In the 1960s, we organized around the region to save the San Francisco Bay—and 50 years later we voted to collectively tax ourselves to restore hundreds of miles of bay shoreline. We built the political will and brokered the cross-sector agreements needed to build BART. We’ve voted to raise millions of dollars to re-invest in regional transportation projects like rail and rapid bus.

We need to do it again. At SPUR, we’re working not only to propose bold ideas that deliver on the vision, we’re working with others on building a sea change: a call to action and shared purpose from Santa Clara County to Sonoma and Bethel Island to Pescadero. The Bay Area has occupied the leading edge of transformational change, from environmental stewardship to economic innovation and social justice. We can continue to lead, but we have to do it together.

“Power without love is reckless and abusive, and love without power is sentimental and anemic. Power at its best is love implementing the demands of justice, and justice at its best is power correcting everything that stands against love.”

- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.





Laura Bliss

West Coast Bureau Chief The Atlantic's CityLab

Love the Bus, Save Your City

(Adapted from an essay originally published on CityLab.com)

Consider the bus. What comes to mind? For many Americans, it's the grumbling, clattering, stuck-in-traffic, when-will-it-come, car's-in-the-shop mobility mode of last resort. You might not ride it, and if you do, you might not like it. That's why we need to talk about it. The bus has rarely needed your love more. And the underdog of transit has never held more heroic potential.

With urban populations and travel on the rise, transportation is now the top contributor to U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Nearly 90 percent of commuters in this country drive private cars, and in many urban areas traffic congestion—i.e., wasted time, gas, and money—is getting worse. Cities are searching for ways to move people around in fewer vehicles and leave a softer impact on the environment, with light-rail referenda, ride-hailing partnerships, autonomous shuttle pilots, dreams of aerial taxis, and more.

All of these modes have a place in the urban present and future. (Except maybe the helicopters; we can leave those to *Die Hard*.) But many cities are ignoring what is arguably the cheapest and most flexible general-purpose option, which happens to be available already: the bus. Buses can carry large numbers of people in a compact amount of road space. They don't require special rights-of-way (though that's sometimes ideal). They can be deployed and rerouted as needed. Across modes, they're the most affordable to cities in terms of capital costs, and often in terms of operations.

And there is no inherent reason that buses must be bottom-shelf transportation. We've just treated them that way. Nationwide, federal, state, and local budgets have long systematically prioritized cars over mass transportation. Service cuts that tore up bus networks across the country during the recession haven't been made up for. That's largely why bus ridership declined in 31 out of 35 major metros last year. Even some cities on rail-building bonanzas, such as L.A. and Denver, are watching transit ridership decline across the board, in part because investment in buses has trailed so far behind the commitment to trains.

Meanwhile, as the transportation consultant Jarrett Walker often points out, the hype around on-demand apps like Uber, Lyft, and Via fuels the notion that the future of transportation is one where traditional transit has ceased to exist. Where we're going, we don't need buses, I'm told: We'll take flying Ubers or subterranean Teslas or something even newer and shinier. The venerable bus—which has been around in some form for centuries—is exquisitely vulnerable to the end-is-nigh narrative. Suburban communities in Florida, Texas, California and beyond are replacing old bus routes with subsidies for demand-response services and hoping for the best. Cities like San Francisco and New York have been watching 8- to 12-seat, semi-flexible "microtransit" shuttles follow routes almost identical to popular bus lines...but with mixed success, since many of these are run of operators who expect to turn a profit. One story I recently reported in a town in Ontario that subsided Uber rides instead of bus found riders dismayed to have a cap put on the number of rides they could take. "I'd never hear a bus driver in Toronto tell me I'd run out of rides," one woman told me.

Part of the downturn in bus ridership has been attributed to the rise of ride-hailing, as fewer Americans who can afford other options choose the bus. Who could blame them? In so many cities, buses are painfully slow. They arrive with big gaps or all bunched together. Their routes and schedules can be byzantine and inscrutable, and riders' ability to track them in real time is woeful. They break down a lot—more than 17 percent of the country's bus systems have fallen out of good repair, according to the most recent Federal Transit Administration report. In spread-out, unwalkable cities, you'll usually get there faster if you choose another mode.

Who's left? The individuals riding buses—to jobs, to shopping, to medical care—tend to be poorer than the average commuter. They are disproportionately people of color, reinforcing the racial stigma associated with the bus in many cities. Some bus riders can't tap into Uber-ish services because they can't afford to, or because they use a wheelchair, or don't own the necessary technology.

If your transportation options are limited, you need the bus now, maybe more than ever. But even if you're not a regular passenger, you need it, too. It's not hard to see how the trend of deprioritizing buses will harden in the age of on-demand door-to-door rides. The problem is, your streets can't fit them. If you care about how well your city moves, how your local economy is faring, and how the planet's future fares, then you

care about your city bus. And you care about making the bus better. You want to see your bus as a piece of social infrastructure that your whole city can take pride in—a sign of prestige, not decay.

Because it turns out that when rubber-tired fleets are treated as a mighty social good, people willingly hop on. See the Minneapolis “A Line,” where buses are essentially held to the standards of rail service: They get first-go at traffic lights, accept boardings at every door, and stop every half mile, rather than every block. Look at all of the cities following the example of Houston, which overhauled its bus route network in 2015 and saw a 15 percent Saturday ridership spike in the first year; Washington, D.C., Los Angeles, and New York City are all taking their cues. And look, perhaps most of all, at San Francisco, Phoenix, and Seattle, the only major cities where bus ridership has meaningfully ticked up in recent years. All have city-wide plans to fund and improve service. What’s been missing in most cities is this type of attention.

That’s why I’ve focused a lot on buses in my reporting, certainly not to the exclusion of other modes, including Uber Air, but probably more than many other reporters cued to the transportation future. I try to look at what’s working on bus systems in the U.S., with the belief that there is no inherent reason that buses cannot be great. Which cities are winning the battles to prioritize road space? Where is the gold standard for frequent, fast, and reliable transit being set by buses? And how might that change local visions for the future of transportation?

I also look at how technology can improve bus fundamentals. Automation is coming to transportation, and it could transform surface transit, too. Sharper GPS and smartphone tools can make riding (and waiting for) the bus a happier and more predictable experience. And electric buses could banish the grumble and smoke of the diesel era. The idea is not to be anti-Uber or any other emerging mode. On-demand rides are here. They add a lot of value to the transportation landscape. But the bus does *too*, and it is also here to stay.

After all, it’s telling that, even while transit agencies are being told to be more like Uber and Lyft, Uber and Lyft are mimicking buses. Both companies have run “shuttle” or “line” services along preset routes with preset stops during peak commuter hours, just like a bus. It’s existential to the future of these companies that they stop subsidizing high-end solo rides and instead cram in the maximum number of riders per vehicle—in other words, that they reproduce a bus. The basic model—a big moving container of people on a fixed route—has never stopped working. But from what I can tell, it’s time to make it work much, much better.

“The basic model—a big moving container of people on a fixed route—has never stopped working.”





JO COFFARO

REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT

HOSPITAL COUNCIL OF NORTHERN AND CENTRAL CALIFORNIA

Hospitals are unique. They are a place where someone can get the very best news, and the very worst news, they might ever receive. They are places of pain and passing, fear and joy, and birth and recovery.

It is impossible to work in that environment without being moved, humbled, and, especially, changed. That's why doctors, nurses and other hospital caregivers become so dedicated to their work and committed to doing their best. You cannot be indifferent in such a place. It touches you too deeply.

A hospital is not a business in the usual sense. It is a sacred trust with the community. San Mateo County hospitals take that trust with the utmost seriousness.

San Mateo County's six health care systems which operate hospitals and clinics: Kaiser Permanente hospitals, Mills-Peninsula Health Services hospitals, Seton Medical Center hospitals, Sequoia Hospital, San Mateo Medical Center Hospital in San Mateo, Stanford Health Care and Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford.

Those hospitals are there to serve anyone who comes to their doors, including the estimated 50,000 people in San Mateo County who have no health care coverage whatsoever. In 2017, there were almost 150,000 emergency department visits alone, not to mention the births, the surgeries, the ICU stays and more.

San Mateo County hospitals are also planning for the future, as the population is growing older and heavier and needs change.

Every three years, the San Mateo County hospitals get together with Stanford Health Care and Lucile Packard Children's Hospital at Stanford and community experts to assess the state of health care in the county and identify the pressing needs.

In the collaborations' most recent report, it was abundantly clear that the looming challenge is that people are getting older. Many of the needs identified related to conditions that become more common as one gets older.

Among the needs identified:

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE & DEMENTIA

Alzheimer's disease is the fastest growing cause of death in the state and the number of people living with the disease is growing also. The mortality rate from Alzheimer's is higher in the county than in the state overall.

ARTHRITIS

The adult arthritis prevalence rate in the county is slightly higher than the state average, and the county has an increasing proportion of older adult residents.

BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

The percentage of adults who report mental and emotional problems is rising and binge drinking among young adult males is trending up. Suicide is one of the top 10 leading causes of death in the county.

BIRTH OUTCOMES

Black and Asian/Pacific Islander women are more likely to have low birthweight babies than women of other ethnicities in the county.

CHILDHOOD OBESITY

The rates of obese, overweight, and/or at-risk of overweight children are higher in the county compared to California. Childhood obesity disproportionately affects Latino, Black, and American Indian children in the county.

“We keep moving forward, opening new doors, and doing new things because we’re curious and curiosity keeps leading us down new paths.”

- Walt Disney

Right now, it often seems that the future for hospitals is uncertain and fraught. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) brought health insurance coverage to many more people and health coverage is the hinge on better medical care and better health pivots. However, the current presidential administration is determined to undo several of the reforms the ACA created. At the same time, each of the Democratic presidential candidates has a different plan for health care reform. The lack of direction and constant change is challenging. But hospitals adapt and evolve. They always have. San Mateo County hospitals intend to keep doing that and to be there into the future, for the births and the emergencies and so many other major events of life.





HON. CAROLE GROOM

PRESIDENT, BOARD OF SUPERVISORS COUNTY OF SAN MATEO

Every 10 years, the federal government is required to count all residents in the United States, citizens and noncitizens alike through a national census. The next national census is April 2020 and San Mateo County is committed to ensuring that we have an accurate count in order to guarantee representation in our political system and fair allocation of government resources.

The census data *determines* how \$675 billion per year is funneled from the federal government to state and local governments for housing, education, health, and transportation services in the community. The data is used by businesses, researchers and government entities to identify growth trends, determine economic forecasts and inform policy that addresses local needs.

And more than data, it determines how congressional seats are apportioned and *how San Mateo County is represented*. The data that emerges every ten years gives voice to the needs of the residents of San Mateo County.

California could lose up to \$1,000 in federal funds for *each* person NOT counted in Census 2020, for each of the next 10 years, according to the most recent analysis from George Washington University's study titled *Counting for Dollars 2020*. These are funds that California tax payers have contributed and are entitled to for improving highways, delivering emergency services, investing in the workforce and housing, providing kids with early childhood and special education, enhancing public safety, school lunches and nutrition programs, and healthcare.

Developers and business rely on accurate counts to build new homes, expand businesses, and revitalize neighborhoods. Each year, approximately \$800 billion in federal funding is allocated nationally as investments in workforce development, education and transportation. Programs like *Women, Infants and Children Program (WIC)*, *School Lunch*, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program/CalFresh*, *Medi-Cal* and *Medicare Part B* are fundamental to the health and well-being of residents, and San Mateo County's ability to deliver these programs contribute to the county being second healthiest in the state.

Census 2020 is *first-ever* tech-based census, in which residents will be invited to submit responses online. This is an opportunity for business, government and community to collaborate to encourage technological access and resources towards education. When the whole community participates in census, the *whole community* wins.

While there is much to gain and participation is mandatory, concern still exists around the census, including the what questions will be asked and how the data will be used.

Here's what you need to know.

It is against federal law for the Census Bureau to publicly release responses in any way that could identify individuals or individual households. Data collected cannot be shared with other governmental agencies and is treated with the highest confidentiality. Every

Census Bureau employee takes an oath to protect personal information and answers cannot be used for any purpose other than providing disaggregated, high-level population data.

This year, for the first time, residents will receive an invitation to respond online in March, in addition to by mail or phone, and there will be accommodations for people with disabilities and non-English speaking residents. Households that *do not* respond will be visited at the residence by a census taker. The Census Bureau will be taking strong precautions to keep online responses secure and confidential.

And what can you do to help achieve an accurate count in 2020?

Everyone has a role to play in the months leading up to Census 2020. First, be informed. Misinformation and misunderstanding can be extremely detrimental to getting an accurate count, so ensure that you know the facts and share the resources. The County of San Mateo has invested in this effort, creating fact sheets, materials, online training guides and opportunities for residents to engage in the census. Resources can be found online at www.smccensus.org.

Encourage employees, customers, and colleagues to learn more through employee communications, customer communications, social media, and connecting with local or state-based Complete Count Committee. Reach out to residents who may represent an historically hard-to-count population (rural households, seniors, minority communities, immigration communities, veterans, people with disabilities and households with young children). And talk about it – the more we know about how the census works and can improve our community, the more participation we will see.

Completing the census is a way to take part in our democracy and in history.

Join me in saying, “I count!”

“When you have decided what you believe, what you feel must be done, have the courage to stand alone and be counted.”

- Eleanor Roosevelt





BARRIE HATHAWAY

PRESIDENT AND CEO

JOBTRAIN

Would you be surprised to learn that a runaway, defiant teen who dropped out of high school is going to develop an award-winning program that works with hundreds of young people to set them on a pathway to opportunity? Or, that a homeless, incarcerated man in recovery will run a major chain restaurant, hire scores of formerly incarcerated workers, and dramatically improve a restaurant's national ranking? JobTrain graduates, Davida and Jeff have done just that.

People like Davida and Jeff, loaded with potential, exist in our communities but are too often overlooked. Why? Because while talented, capable and determined, they simply don't have the skills employers need. *What if we can get those skills into their hands?*

In the San Francisco Bay Area, 1.6 million people live in poverty, even with half of them actually working. In a region with all-time historic low unemployment, many families still can't make ends meet, even with multiple jobs. These are hardworking, talented people like you and me, who face big challenges getting access to the training they need for the jobs that lead to financial security. And it's clear that, in today's economy, employers need these hardworking people now more than ever.

JobTrain sets people on a pathway to gaining these high-wage jobs. And through them, economic stability. And once they've become stable, it opens up a whole new future.

JobTrain delivers the "steps to stability" model to meet clients where they are. The model begins with stabilization services and access to benefits that address basic needs. At the next level, JobTrain offers skills upgrade programs like *ESL*, *GED* and *digital skills* to give residents a competitive advantage and prepare them for rigorous career pathway training. Finally, JobTrain provides intensive training for high demand and emerging career pathways including healthcare, construction, culinary arts, and technology. These three steps to stability—stabilization services, skills programs and intensive training, create a kind of onramp to high-wage jobs. To stay relevant, JobTrain continuously evolves training to match the needs of our residents, meet economic trends, and best impact San Mateo County residents.

And it works! In 2018 alone, 500 students received career training and nearly 80% of those who graduated secured jobs earning an average of \$45,000 per year. And 81% will have a job one year later. And many of those will earn promotions.

Remember Davida and Jeff?

At 17-years-old, Davida dropped out of high school and ran away from home, and quickly found her options diminishing and hope disappearing. She was encouraged to look to JobTrain for options. Davida enrolled in JobTrain's culinary arts program and graduated at the top of her class. She entered into a work internship and very quickly found stable work. Once stable, Davida was able to start dreaming about what her future could look like? She realized that what she most wanted was to work with young people just like herself. She found a job at a local continuation school and is now delivering an award-winning program that she designed to help other young people just like her.

Jeff attended JobTrain’s culinary program through a work furlough program while he was incarcerated. He got a job with Panera Bread in San Francisco while still incarcerated and was released during the day to work. Once released, he stayed with Panera and quickly identified himself as an innovative, hardworking member of the team. Jeff was promoted the store’s General Manager and proceeded to hire scores JobTrain culinary graduates. Under his leadership and with the help of other JobTrain graduates, they *increased* the rating of the San Francisco restaurant from #834 in the county to #3. Stability for Jeff meant paying it forward and offering pathways for stability to others.

There are thousands of JobTrain graduates like Davida and Jeff now supporting themselves and their families and contributing to the region’s economic success. This success produces an ROI for the community that would catch the eye of any investor. Just in the first year after graduation, for every dollar invested in JobTrain, almost \$2 are returned to the community through wages earned by our graduates and savings in government spending. Coupled with the fact that 70% of JobTrain graduates are still working 10 years later, the ROI is compounding year-over-year.

Bay Area residents deserve great jobs and Bay Area employers deserve great employees. With support, education and collaboration, together we can ensure that nobody is left out of the tremendous opportunity our region offers.

“The size of your dreams must always exceed your current capacity to achieve them. If your dreams do not scare you, they are not big enough.”

- Ellen Johnson Sirleaf





HON. NANCY MAGEE

SUPERINTENDENT

SAN MATEO COUNTY OFFICE OF EDUCATION

Working Together for School Safety

A sobering reality of our contemporary society is mass casualty violence. If that weren't tragic enough, a sizeable share of that violence is perpetrated by youth against other youth and carried out on school campuses impacting thousands of American students and their families and communities.

And while it's unsettling to talk about, leaders across the San Mateo County education community are not burying our heads in the sand. We are working *together* with our local partners in law enforcement, fire, mental health, and other government agencies on efforts to both reduce the risk and prepare our schools should an emergency occur on campus. We are actively putting in place and strengthening safety nets for students resulting in safer schools and communities.

Before I dig into the great work happening in San Mateo County, I want to share a personal story that underscores the urgency of this work.

For the first half of my career in education, I was a high school English teacher in San Diego. After 17 years of enjoying a wonderful and rewarding routine that included teaching students, coaching athletes, and mentoring fellow teachers, all of that changed on March 5, 2001. On that Monday morning, a 15-year old freshman walked onto our school campus – his school campus – with his father's loaded gun and began shooting indiscriminately. Fifteen minutes later, two students were dead – one a senior, one a freshman; 13 others wounded; and an entire community was heart-broken and shattered.

This is the kind of experience that blindsides you, knocks you down so hard, you don't think you will ever get up again. It was 18 years ago, but the pain from that day remains lodged inside me.

Sadly, that story has repeated itself again and again in our country, which brings me to another date: December 14, 2012. Gun violence reached a new depth as 20 six- and seven-year-olds and six educators on the Sandy Hook school campus in Newtown, Connecticut were lost forever in a senseless act of violence. With the news from Newtown, San Mateo County drew a line in the sand and committed to working together in order to ensure our schools remain as safe as possible for students to learn and thrive.

A cross section of leaders from all disciplines, including school district superintendents, the sheriff, chiefs of every law enforcement agency and fire department, mental health professionals, and our legal counsel embarked on a collaborative effort. One of the most impactful results of that work was the creation of the *Coalition for Safe Schools and Communities*, a living and dynamic body of cross sector partners who work closely together providing structure, leadership, and vision for improving school safety.

The *Coalition* represents regionalism at its finest. United by a shared vision of safe schools and communities, the *Coalition* has created a common language and set of protocols for addressing school emergencies across the county. The *Big Five*, a coordinated set of emergency response protocols, is now practiced by every school district across the county with the support of local emergency response agencies and has been adopted by the county and other agencies. Businesses and organizations have

also requested and received training in the *Big Five*. They share the *Coalition’s* vision that only by working together as a county, do we have a real chance at improving safety.

Another of the *Coalition’s* important safety nets is the *Student Threat Assessment Protocol*, whose goal is to identify students who may pose a threat to themselves and/or their school and make sure the student, family, and school district receive proper supports to keep the situation from escalating and help the student’s healing. As part of the threat assessment process, school leaders can meet with the “Level Two” team comprised of experts from the County Office of Education, mental health, law enforcement, and other agencies to review the situation and provide the needed support or interventions. Started two years ago, the county threat assessment team has worked with schools on more than 35 “Level Two” cases, helping keep violence from escalating on campuses across the county.

The *Big Five* and the *Student Threat Assessment Protocol* are only two of the programs the *Coalition* has put in place. Common among all these efforts, however, is San Mateo County’s shared commitment to being proactive, working together, sharing information, and continuously improving. We can’t guarantee we won’t have emergencies, but by working *together* we can reduce the odds that random acts of violence shatter our San Mateo County community.

“You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view...until you climb into his skin and walk around in it.”

- Atticus Finch
in Harper Lee’s
To Kill a Mockingbird





REV. DR. G. PENNY NIXON

SENIOR MINISTER CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH OF SAN MATEO

“Out beyond our ideas of right doing and wrong doing, there’s a field. I’ll meet you there.” This invitation from the 13th century Sufi poet Rumi, may be as pertinent in the 21st century as the 13th century! What would it be like to foster conversations that begin beyond our polarizing ideas of right and wrong, conservative and liberal, profit and non-profit? Conversations that start with a desire to connect as human beings who may actually care about similar things.

A few months ago, when I sat down for coffee with Rosanne Foust, President of SAMCEDA, I think we ended up in Rumi’s field for a time. We talked about things that mattered to us. We listened to each other. We connected as two people who deeply care about the well-being of our neighbors and of our county.

We shared personal perspectives from our different communities, the faith community and the business community, and imagined those two communities being in conversation and breaking the silence that is often between us.

I happen to be part of the faith community and for me that can be distilled down to my commitment to treat people with kindness and respect and to lift up the common good for all. I witness many people in the business community striving for the same thing by embracing the values of kindness and respect and by holding the same ideal of the common good.

However, faith communities can miss the mark and business communities can miss the mark. Sometimes we get so internally focused on our product, our brand, our message or our profit, that we neglect our humanity and the humanity of others.

When any of us stray from those personal and civil aspirations, we are less than who we want to be, and we need each other’s support to return to our highest resolves. *What if we supported each other more? What if we were bold enough to release long entrenched stereotypes and simply did good work together for the common good?*

Three years ago, a group of us formed the *Peninsula Solidarity Cohort*. As a coalition of diverse faith leaders, we unite for formation, reflection, and collective action. We are rooted in the common good, and we aspire to be a compassionate moral compass for San Mateo County. We hold ourselves accountable to the power of radical love. We seek to help create communities of belonging. We want to be at the table for a prosperous and inclusive San Mateo County. We want to help heal some of the divisions among us and help bridge some of the gaps that are widening between us.

How powerful would it be for the *Solidarity Cohort* to be in deeper relationship with SAMCEDA in particular and the business community in general? How could we partner with each other to bring out the best in each other and by so doing, enhance the common good for all residents of San Mateo County?

The common good is a political philosophy going back to the time of Aristotle and one woven into the fabric of our democratic ideal. It is also a spiritual and ethical philosophy,

found in some form in every religious tradition. At its most basic, the common good is the whole network of social conditions which enable humans and groups to flourish. All are responsible for all.

In this polarizing time, the common good in San Mateo is too often left out of the social equation. I think it is fair to say that the sense of community solidarity is frayed and that we are prone to categorize and label people in ways that diminish us rather than humanize us.

When we are at our best, we are people who are committed to the common good that reaches beyond private interest, transcends sectarian commitments, and offers human solidarity.

When I reflect back on my conversation with Rosanne, one thing that stands out is that we each wanted the best for our neighbors and for our county. It was uplifting and hopeful. So now one of my aspirations is that the faith communities and the business communities build intentional relationships to support each other in being our best, and is so doing, become better as individuals and better collectively, and together embrace the common good as our common ideal. Let's begin with a cup of coffee in Rumi's field.

“Out beyond
our ideas of
right doing
and wrong doing,
there's a field.
I'll meet you there.”

- Rumi





NICOLE SANDKULLA

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER/GENERAL MANAGER
BAY AREA WATER SUPPLY AND CONSERVATION AGENCY

A Reliable Water Supply is Essential for Life, a Healthy Community, and a Thriving Economy

SAMCEDA and the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA) were created to represent the interests of very important groups in San Mateo County – SAMCEDA for business interests and BAWSCA for the regional water interests of residents, businesses, and communities in San Mateo as well as Alameda, and Santa Clara counties.

BAWSCA's goal is to ensure a reliable supply of high-quality water at a fair price, and San Mateo County has a history of engaging on water-supply issues.

LOCAL ACTION HELPS TO ENSURE A RELIABLE WATER SUPPLY

In 2002, California Assembly Member Lou Papan from Millbrae decided that the continued availability of that water supply was a paramount issue for residents, businesses and communities in his home county and the two neighboring counties served by the *San Francisco Regional (Hetch Hetchy) Water System (System)*. The old *System* was at risk of a catastrophic collapse after an earthquake.

Mr. Papan introduced two legislative bills. AB 1823 forces the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission (SFPUC) to rebuild its *System*, and AB 2058 created BAWSCA to represent the water interests of 1.8 million residents and 40,000 businesses and community organizations in the three counties.

Then State Senator Jackie Speier introduced SB 1870 to provide financing with revenue bonds if necessary.

San Francisco's \$4.8 billion *Water System Improvement Program* is almost finished, but there are several important projects still under construction. Importantly, there are still vitally important drought year water-supply projects that remain to be completed.

LOCAL LEGISLATORS ASSIST IN EXTENDING STATE OVERSIGHT

Senator Jerry Hill introduced SB 699 this year to extend both AB 1823 and SB 1870, and with support from Assembly Members Kevin Mullin, Bill Quirk, and Marc Berman, it became law in 2019 without a dissenting vote. This law continues oversight of the *System* by the Legislature and the California Department of Health Services to ensure that the interests of the water customers continues to be protected.

MORE ACTION IS NECESSARY TO ENSURE A RELIABLE WATER SUPPLY FOR THE FUTURE

There is a new water-supply challenge from the *Bay-Delta Plan*, approved by the State Water Resources Control Board last year which, if implemented, is estimated to require mandatory 50% water-use reductions during multi-year droughts. That *Plan*, which will provide more water for fish in the Bay-Delta and its tributaries, will result in significantly less water during future droughts for the water customers that BAWSCA represents. BAWSCA supports the objectives of the Plan but cannot support the *Plan* as adopted.

BAWSCA strongly supports Governor Newsom & his water team in their efforts to negotiate a voluntary settlement agreement for the Bay-Delta. BAWSCA, San Francisco, legislators, and others believe there is a better, voluntary agreement to protect the fish and people.

BAWSCA is also urging the SFPUC to immediately expand its water-supply planning work to address this increased water-supply challenge. The SFPUC has estimated that implementation of the *Bay-Delta Plan* could cause the loss of up to 93 million gallons of water a day during extended drought periods, which would have to be replaced from other sources. Our region has some of the lowest water use per person in the State and is committed to long-term water conservation. Unfortunately, this problem cannot be solved by increased water conservation alone.

The SFPUC should prepare a strategic plan to identify and develop new sources of water to meet its legal obligations and to deliver a reliable water supply to its wholesale customers that BAWSCA represents.

SUPPORT FOR EFFORTS TO ENSURE A RELIABLE WATER SUPPLY IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

Recently, I have discussed this matter with the SFPUC urging them to follow State law and identify progress in finding new supplemental water resources every year under the provisions of AB 1823.

Several Commission members responded to my requests very positively, and I am now in discussions with SFPUC General Manager Harlan Kelly and his staff, who understand the challenge. Mr. Kelly indicates that his organization will develop a major program with a dedicated, high-level staff and budget to meet the legislature’s requirements.

The need for SAMCEDA’S strategic support for BAWSCA’s water-supply efforts remains. BAWSCA will continue to support the Governor’s leadership to negotiate a voluntary settlement for the Bay-Delta. BAWSCA also will be pushing hard for San Francisco to identify and develop the new water sources that the situation requires. BAWSCA urges SAMCEDA to continue to play a leading role in San Mateo County to make this happen.

“The difficult we do immediately; the impossible takes a little longer.”

(Exact source unknown, but it is attributed to the US Armed Forces in WWII)





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