

# Pleasanton

Youth Master Plan

Appendix

# A



## Environmental Scan Summary



## INTRODUCTION

The City of Pleasanton facilitated a community-based planning process to update its Youth Master Plan (YMP), a comprehensive plan to address the needs and interests of Pleasanton's youth ages 0 to 19. This Environmental Scan Summary presents the results of the research and outreach process, the objectives of which were to solicit community input on assets, challenges and opportunities related to youth development in the City of Pleasanton. It also briefly describes conditions and trends in the community which have occurred since the previous Master Plan was completed in 2001, which may influence youth needs and interests and how they are met.

To generate this information, the Project Team, which included City staff and members of the Youth Master Plan Implementation Committee (YMPIC), with assistance from planning consultants MIG, Inc. (MIG), conducted a variety of community outreach environmental scan activities involving youth, parents, educators, community organizations, policy-makers, businesses, and many other stakeholders. Environmental Scan activities included 30 focus groups with a wide range of community members, nearly 30 interviews with key decision makers and opinion leaders, and an online youth and adult survey with 357 youth and adult respondents.

This summary outlines the major themes that emerged from the environmental scan activities and sets the foundation for the development of a strategic framework for the YMP.

### Project Overview

Pleasanton residents are very engaged and active in their community, especially on youth-related issues. In response to this, the City developed a process that relied heavily on community participation and input. Youth and adult members of the YMPIC were hands-on in the development of this process. The process was divided into three distinct phases. The first phase was to conduct an Environmental Scan that included extensive public participation and review and analysis of data describing community conditions and trends. This document summarizes Phase One.

Phase Two focused on the development of a strategic planning framework and documenting community meeting results. The strategic planning framework functions as the

Youth Master Plan's organizing structure. It identifies a guiding vision statement, supported by goals and strategies that illustrate the major actions necessary to move the City and School District towards realizing its vision for Pleasanton youth. Phase Three is the development of the Master Plan document, the Draft Master Plan community review period, the presentation of the Master Plan to the City Council and the Pleasanton Unified School District (PUSD) School Board, and the finalization and publication of the Youth Master Plan.

### Environmental Scan Activities

The project team solicited input through a broad range of activities. City staff and MIG project team members met regularly to coordinate the planning process and environmental scan activities. The environmental scan phase included the following activities:

- **YMPIC and Ad Hoc Committee** – The YMPIC Ad Hoc Committee devoted its meeting agendas for the project period to guiding the Master Plan process. The Ad Hoc Committee was very involved in the development of the Plan. Ad Hoc Committee members provided direct feedback and review assistance on the Plan process and outreach materials prior to the YMPIC. YMPIC members participated in training activities and conducted outreach activities. The Ad Hoc Committee provided additional review assistance on Plan activities and made recommendations to the YMPIC.
- **Stakeholder Interviews** were conducted with key decision makers and opinion leaders regarding the Plan. Interviewees were selected based on recommendations from the Ad Hoc Committee. Participants interviewed included: a City Council member, the Mayor, the City Manager, the School Board President, the School Superintendent, Commission members, City staff from various youth-serving departments, and teachers and counselors from a variety of schools.
- **Web survey** for youth (up to the age of 22) and adult (over the age of 22) community members hosted on the City's website. The survey captured the opinions of 357 community members in Pleasanton, including 164 youth and 193 adults. The purpose of the web survey was to

determine the needs of Pleasanton youth and compare and contrast perceptions between youth and adults. The survey was available July 31 through September 30, 2009.

- **Focus Groups** were held with 30 groups in Pleasanton during May through August, 2009. Participants included teens, summer campers, YMPIC youth and adult members, youth music groups, Youth Commission members, child care providers, teachers and school administrators, and parent groups. Groups consisted of 3 to 17 people, and more than 170 community members participated in these discussions. YMPIC members led focus groups, took detailed notes of the discussions, and helped to recruit participating groups. Facilitation assistance was provided by City staff.

To support the key findings from the Environmental Scan activities, data from the Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative (TVAHI) Regional Research Findings Report, the Pleasanton Police Department 2009 Annual Report, the California Healthy Kids Survey, Alameda County Health Department reports, the PUSD School Accountability Report Cards, research conducted by the Search Institute, various youth-oriented research journals and reports, and other City data are referenced in the document.

This Environmental Scan is organized into four main sections:

## **I. Assessing Pleasanton's Children, Youth and the Community**

The first section of this document identifies the community assets, community characteristics, and trends in Pleasanton and how they relate to youth in the City.

## **II. Challenges Facing Pleasanton's Youth**

The second section of this Scan discusses the challenges faced by Pleasanton's youth identified through the environmental scan activities. Challenges include: social and mental health issues, limited opportunities for informal or unprogrammed activities, barriers to participation, and specific needs of youth and children.

## **III. Opportunities for Pleasanton's Youth**

Opportunities that should be considered as we plan for Pleasanton's youth are described in this section.

## **IV. Summary**

The final section of this Environmental Scan focuses on the next steps of the Youth Master Plan process.

## **I. ASSESSING PLEASANTON'S CHILDREN, YOUTH AND THE COMMUNITY**

The input of the Youth Master Plan Implementation Committee, City staff, web survey participants, focus groups, and stakeholder interview participants, as well as research and analysis of existing conditions in Pleasanton, was integral to the collection of information about the environment of today's youth in Pleasanton. Outreach participants and professional observation and analysis revealed the positive qualities and current conditions of Pleasanton's youth environment.

### **Community Assets**

Most outreach participants spoke highly of the quality of life and community in Pleasanton. Through the activities conducted for the Environmental Scan, outreach participants identified the elements and community and youth developmental assets that make Pleasanton a great place to live for residents of all ages. Children and youth need developmental assets such as common sense and constructive experiences to help them grow up healthy, caring, and responsible. These assets are described in a nationally accepted framework known as the 40 Developmental Assets.<sup>1</sup> Studies show that the more developmental assets young people have, the less likely they are to engage in a wide-range of high-risk behaviors and the more likely they are to thrive.<sup>2</sup>

Participants described Pleasanton's safe, small town atmosphere as wonderful for children, youth, and families. Several focus group and web survey participants noted the high quality schools and parks. Participants also noted the proactive nature of the School District and the adult education opportunities. There is a strong focus and commitment to academics among residents and the proximity of local schools to residential neighborhoods is also valued.

<sup>1</sup> Search Institute. *What Kids Need: Developmental Assets*. Minneapolis, Minnesota.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

Numerous focus group participants described the City’s sense of community and identified it as a key asset. The community is safe, supportive, and friendly. Participating residents appreciate the Police Department and the City service providers who create a secure, well-maintained, and clean environment.

Outreach participants spoke favorably of the location and design of the City. San Francisco, San Jose, and public transit providers such as BART and the Altamont Commuter Express train are easily accessible from Pleasanton. Community members appreciate the weather and the topography of the area, which provides popular hiking spots for residents and establishes a boundary for the City.

Participants identified activities and attractions within the City and nearby that contribute to the City’s quality of life such as the County fair and fairgrounds, shopping areas, the downtown area, and various museums. Participants also enjoy the variety of events that occur including the Farmer’s Market, Shakespeare in the Park, Soccer Parade, Band Reviews, 1st Wednesday Street Party, and Concerts in the Park. The City hosts a variety of sports programs and recreation opportunities, as well as extracurricular offerings that are well attended by residents. Some youth focus group participants expressed their gratitude for the freedom to do and be what they want to be in Pleasanton. Gyms and facilities, such as the Dolores Bengtson Aquatic Center and skate parks, were described as valuable assets to the community.

Participants appreciate the City’s interest in the community and recognize how programs and policies change to fit residents and kids’ needs. City staff and elected officials are open to input and encourage civic engagement. In response, Pleasanton is a civic-minded and active community.

Pleasanton children and youth, generally, are well supported by external assets in their school, home and peer environments. The majority of PUSD fifth grade students experience a positive and supportive school environment (63 percent), home environment (86 percent), and peer environment (58 percent).<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> California Healthy Kids Survey. *Key Findings, 5th grade, Fall 2007, Pleasanton Unified.*

**Community Demographics**

Since the 2001 Youth Master Plan was completed, the Pleasanton community has grown and become more ethnically diverse. Between 2000 and 2008, the population of Pleasanton increased from 63,654 to 70,700. The City’s population is projected to increase to 73,767 by 2015.<sup>4</sup> In 2000, 74.6 percent of the City’s population identified themselves as White, 10.8 percent identified themselves as Asian, and 7.3 percent identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino. The number of residents who identify themselves as Asian and Latino or Hispanic increased between 2000 and 2008.<sup>5</sup> These changes are detailed in Table 1.

Table 1. Ethnic Composition in Pleasanton from 2000 to 2008<sup>6</sup>

Ethnicity	Percentage of Pleasanton Population	
	2000	2008
White or Caucasian	74.6%	61.6%
Asian	10.8%	17.7%
Latino or Hispanic	7.3%	9.6%
Black or African American	1.3%	1.9%
Other Race	6.0%	9.2%

Comparatively, the PUSD student body’s ethnic composition in 2010, as described in Table 2 on the next page, varies from the citywide ethnic characteristics. The PUSD student body includes a larger percentage of people who identify themselves as Asian and a smaller percentage of people who identify as White or Caucasian and Latino or Hispanic than citywide.

<sup>4</sup> City of Pleasanton. *General Plan 2005-2025.*

<sup>5</sup> American Community Survey, Pleasanton, California 2006-2008.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

**Table 2. Ethnic Composition in Enrolled PUSD Students (2010)<sup>7</sup>**

Ethnicity	Percentage of Student Body (2010)
White or Caucasian	56.7%
Asian	30.7%
Latino or Hispanic	8.4%
Black or African American	2.2%
Other Race	2.0%

Demographic changes in Pleasanton may affect programming choices, interests and participation. Outreach participants suggested, based on personal opinions, that the income gap between low-income and middle income households appears to be widening. These comments may be reflective of the fluctuating economic conditions occurring during Plan development. Since the 2001 Youth Master Plan was completed, the City of Pleasanton has generally experienced a stable and healthy economy with an average unemployment rate of 2.1 percent, as compared to the unemployment rate of 4.5 percent for Alameda County. Information provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics indicates that these conditions have been changing since 2008, with the unemployment rate trending upward. As of March 2010, the City’s unemployment rate was 6.1 percent and the unemployment rate for Alameda County was 11.5 percent. Some participants further suggested this may lead to increased demand for scholarships and free or reduced price programming.

### Crime and Safety

Pleasanton is considered and continues to be a safe place to live. The City of Pleasanton Police Department Annual Report (2009) celebrates another very low crime rate in 2009. The City experienced 19.5 Part I crimes per 1,000 population, the lowest per capita crime rate in 22 years.<sup>8</sup>

Some outreach participants noted that there was some level of gang activity in the community. For example, in October 2004, the Police Department separated the City’s first street

gang by arresting seven members.<sup>9</sup> One year later, the Pleasanton Police Department and the Pleasanton Unified School District held a workshop to heighten awareness of gang activity.<sup>10</sup> Though the level of gang activity is minimal compared to other communities, several participants noted it was important that action is taken and continually monitored to ensure that gangs do not gain a foothold in the City. The Police Department actively participates in several youth outreach and education programs to help prevent crime, such as In-House Juvenile Diversion Program, DARE, and Teen Academy, among several others.<sup>11</sup>

### High Quality Education

Pleasanton provides excellent education opportunities. The Pleasanton Unified School District (PUSD) student Academic Performance Index (API) test scores consistently rate higher than County and State average scores.<sup>12</sup> In 2008, the PUSD graduation rate was 97.8 percent, compared to 82.8 percent in the County and 80.2 percent in the State.<sup>13</sup> A number of these graduates (61.5 percent) leave high school having taken University of California and/or California State University required courses, compared to 46.7 percent in the County and 33.9 percent in the State.<sup>14</sup>

The vast majority of Pleasanton high school graduates attend higher education. PUSD data indicate that approximately 60 percent of graduates attend a four-year college or university, 33 percent attend a two-year college or university, and less than one percent attend a trade school.

### Health and Fitness

The majority of Pleasanton children and youth are active and engage in a physically healthy lifestyle. Statewide studies indicate that the number of adolescents who are physically

<sup>7</sup> Pleasanton Unified School District. Data Processing Division. March 2010.

<sup>8</sup> Pleasanton Police Department. 2009 Annual Report.

<sup>9</sup> Cecilia M. Vega. *City’s big sweep for small gang*. San Francisco Chronicle. October 2, 2004.

<sup>10</sup> Lea Blevins. *Authorities talk about Valley’s gang activity*. Oakland Tribune. November 12, 2005.

<sup>11</sup> Pleasanton Police Department. 2009 Annual Report.

<sup>12</sup> California Department of Education Educational Demographics Unit (2009). *Pleasanton Unified School District Report*.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

inactive is increasing in California.<sup>15</sup> Regular physical activity and a healthy diet are important components in the fight against obesity and chronic conditions.<sup>16</sup> Fortunately, Pleasanton youth defy these statewide trends; the majority of youth in the community recreate and are in good health. Research indicates that 20 percent of 9th graders in Pleasanton are overweight and 23 percent are aerobically unfit.<sup>17</sup> When compared to the County or statewide averages, these percentages are relatively low. Over half of high school students in Pleasanton surveyed by the TVAHI (59 percent) see themselves as in-shape and 13 percent see themselves as obese.<sup>18</sup> These surveyed students are also quite active; 25 percent exercise four to six times per week outside of school and 28 percent exercise one to three times.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, 60 percent of TVAHI-surveyed fifth grade students exercise five days per week or more.<sup>20</sup> Despite the healthy physical condition of Pleasanton youth, it is important to continue to encourage and support physical activity and health among youth ages 0 to 19.

## 40 Developmental Assets

Defined by the Search Institute, the 40 Developmental Assets represent the relationships, opportunities, and personal qualities that young people need to avoid risks and to thrive.<sup>21</sup> The Search Institute's extensive research in youth development, resiliency, and prevention includes studies of more than 2.2 million youth. The 40 Developmental Assets are common sense, positive experiences and qualities that help influence choices young people make and help them become caring, responsible adults. Developmental assets are tailored to the following age groups: ages 3 to 5; ages 5 to 9; ages 8 to 12; and, ages 12 to 18. External assets include support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, and constructive use of

<sup>15</sup> Susan H. Babey, Allison L. Diamant, E. Richard Brown and Theresa Hastert. *California Adolescents Increasingly Inactive*. UCLA Health Policy Research Brief. April 2005.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative. *Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative Regional Research Findings Report*.

<sup>18</sup> Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative. *Summary of Pleasanton Data from the 2006 Tri-Valley Student Health Survey*.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> California Healthy Kids Survey. *Key Findings, 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Fall 2007, Pleasanton Unified*.

<sup>21</sup> Search Institute. *What Kids Need: Developmental Assets*. Minneapolis, Minnesota.

time. Internal assets include commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity.<sup>22</sup>

## II. CHALLENGES FACING PLEASANTON'S YOUTH

Pleasanton is a strong community poised to address opportunities for improvement, particularly in providing for the health, safety, and well-being of the community's youth today and into the future. The following list of concerns and issues for Pleasanton's youth were developed based on a review and analysis of community input and of demographic, health, and youth-oriented research (such as the California Healthy Kids Survey, the Search Institute, and the TVAHI). The following concerns were identified by adult and youth participants as significant and of great priority and include: social and mental health issues; limited opportunities for informal or unprogrammed activities; evolving economic conditions; transportation; income and affordability; job availability and career development; and programs and services for children and youth.

### Social and Mental Health Issues

Environmental Scan outreach and research activities and materials revealed social and mental health challenges that Pleasanton youth face including: achievement pressures, anxiety and depression, bullying or discrimination, drug and alcohol abuse, difficult relationships between youth and adults, and risky sexual activity.

#### *Achievement Pressures*

Within the Pleasanton community, the pressure to achieve is high and pervades youth residents' daily life. Over half of secondary school students surveyed by the California Healthy Kids Survey (seventh, ninth, and eleventh grades) experience a school environment with high expectations and less than one fourth feel they meaningfully participate in school.<sup>23</sup> Several interview participants commented on the priority that parents and adults place on higher education and noted that youth feel pressured to succeed. Along with this feeling comes

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> California Healthy Kids Survey. *Key Findings, Secondary, Fall 2007, Pleasanton Unified*.

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a fear of failure that can be highly stressful for youth. It was suggested that some adults begin pressuring youth to prepare for the college admissions process as early as middle school. This is accomplished by maintaining a rigorous calendar of extracurricular activities, community service, and other skill-building activities. Youth web survey participants indicated they do not participate in programs and activities in the City because they do not have enough time.

Focus group participants believe that stress about school is a tremendous challenge for youth in Pleasanton. The vast majority of high school students in Pleasanton surveyed by the TVAHI identified academics as the biggest cause of stress in their lives (82 percent); the future is another cause of stress in over half (56 percent) of students' lives.<sup>24</sup> The pressure to achieve has increased over the years and the standards have changed; youth are now pressured to overachieve. Youth are overloaded with homework, class load and related stress during the school year, forcing many of them to consider summer school. Students also report experiencing stress related to fitting in. Some participants reported that Village High School has a higher teacher-to-student ratio, enabling more students to succeed.

### *Anxiety and Depression*

Pleasanton's youth population faces anxiety, stress, and depression. Most web survey and focus group participants cited anxiety and depression issues as one of the most important issues or challenges facing youth. One quarter (25 percent) of high school students in Pleasanton surveyed by the TVAHI report that they never seek counseling for issues such as stress, depression or family problems; 23 percent sought help in the past year.<sup>25</sup>

In Pleasanton, the proportion of students who identified their future as a major cause of stress in their lives increased with grade level (from 29 percent among 6th graders to 63 percent of 12th graders).<sup>26</sup> Some stakeholder interview participants commented that many children and youth suffer

mental health issues related to achievement pressures. Those working with children and youth in the schools noted that anxiety and depression appear to be common ailments among Pleasanton teens. Those counseling youth commented that anxiety and depression is on the increase in teens in general. Some participants noted they are also seeing elementary school age children in Pleasanton with these ailments and related achievement pressures. Although Pleasanton youth are active and engaged in recreation activities, a few youth focus group participants experience depression as a result of obesity and not enough time spent outside. Self-inflicted injury hospitalization is high among females 15 to 24 years of age in Alameda County.<sup>27</sup> Several interview participants mentioned there were two suicides in 2007. They also spoke favorably of actions taken by the School District to reach out to the community and increase awareness of potential warning signs. Some focus group participants, however, were critical of PUSD's inability to address students' struggles and recognize mental health issues. This could, in part, be due to the District's counselor-to-student ratio; in most cases one counselor is assigned to over 400 students. PUSD counselor-to-student ratios are identified by grade level as follows:

- High school – 1 counselor: 463 students;
- Alternative education – 1 counselor: 220 students;
- Middle school – 1 counselor: 469 students; and
- Elementary school – 1 counselor: 1,374 students.<sup>28</sup>

Some focus group participants are concerned that the school counselors and teachers may not fully recognize students with mental health symptoms and the students may be treated as if their issues are behavioral or social problems. These students may be periodically transferred to a different school to address these problems instead of the students receiving counseling services or related support earlier.

<sup>24</sup> Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative. Summary of Pleasanton Data from the 2006 Tri-Valley Student Health Survey.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative. Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative Regional Research Findings Report.

<sup>27</sup> Alameda County Public Health Department. *Alameda County Health Status Report 2006*. May 2006.

<sup>28</sup> Pleasanton Unified School District. 2009-2010 Enrollment and Counseling data.

## *Bullying or Discrimination*

While Pleasanton is a safe place for children, youth, and teens, many outreach participants identified bullying as a major challenge for the City's young people. Pushing behavior is a form of harassment or bullying commonly used among elementary level youth.<sup>29</sup> Bullying was identified as a major issue by male youth web survey participants ages 8 to 13 and youth participating in outreach focus groups. Some participants reported bullying in middle school to be a prevalent problem. A focus group including middle school youth confirmed this by citing bullying and harassment as the biggest issue they face. Over one-third (38 percent) of fifth grade students have been bullied and a small percentage brought a gun or knife to school in the past year.<sup>30</sup> Nearly one-third (28 percent) of seventh grade students surveyed by the California Healthy Kids Survey have been harassed, 19 percent had been in a fight, and 21 percent were afraid of being beaten up at school in the last 12 months.<sup>31</sup>

Some high school students believe bullying is more likely to go unreported in high school. The vast majority of high school students surveyed by the TVAHI (84 percent) feel that the majority of students at their school generally accept them for who they are.<sup>32</sup> These respondents, though, report experiencing discrimination at school based on race/ethnicity (22 percent), appearance (28 percent), and social group (23 percent). Adult web survey participants appeared to be less aware of bullying than youth web survey participants.

Some outreach participants identified a lack of awareness about diversity and racism as major issues among Pleasanton youth. Although Pleasanton's demographics are changing, some outreach participants expressed concern that having a limited understanding of cultural differences can lead to stereotyping.

<sup>29</sup> California Healthy Kids Survey. *Key Findings, 5<sup>th</sup> grade, Fall 2007, Pleasanton Unified.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> California Healthy Kids Survey. *Key Findings, Secondary, Fall 2007, Pleasanton Unified.*

<sup>32</sup> Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative. Summary of Pleasanton Data from the 2006 Tri-Valley Student Health Survey.

## *Drug and Alcohol Abuse*

Many outreach participants identified the accessibility of drugs and alcohol as a top challenge for Pleasanton's youth. High school students identify alcohol and drug use (52 percent) and driving under the influence (58 percent) as very important health topics in Pleasanton.<sup>33</sup> Over half (56 percent) of PUSD eleventh grade students have consumed at least one alcoholic drink in their life and nearly one third (28 percent) have tried marijuana.<sup>34</sup> Nearly one-fifth (19 percent) of PUSD eleventh grade students surveyed by the California Healthy Kids Survey binge drank alcohol within the last month.<sup>35</sup>

Youth web survey and focus group participants cited boredom as a major gateway to drug and alcohol use. High school students in Pleasanton surveyed by the TVAHI believe that teens use drugs and/or alcohol because they enjoy the feeling it gives them (67 percent), want to fit in (51 percent), and are stressed and/or bored (46 percent).<sup>36</sup> Youth focus group participants described parties as being rambunctious and difficult to avoid for fear of social rejection. Interview participants who worked closely with youth and parents of youth talked about how Pleasanton youth are regularly exposed to drugs and alcohol. They explained that there are sometimes few consequences for getting caught with drugs and alcohol.

There are frequent opportunities for youth to drink alcohol and gain access to drugs. Fortunately, interview participants who work with youth estimate the number of youth who abuse drugs and alcohol to be a small percentage of the youth population. These participants noted that most adults would be surprised by how readily available alcohol and drugs, especially marijuana, are in the community. They described harder drugs as available, but not as readily. They also cited examples of absentee parents who pay little attention to their kids' behavior or parents who believe that providing a safe place for teens to drink is a responsible way to manage underage drinking. Participants who work with youth in the schools noted that crime statistics do not fully reflect incidents of drug

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> California Healthy Kids Survey. *Key Findings, Secondary, Fall 2007, Pleasanton Unified.*

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative. Summary of Pleasanton Data from the 2006 Tri-Valley Student Health Survey.

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or alcohol abuse since these statistics reflect reported crimes, not the actual incidents that occur.

### *Difficult Relationships Between Youth and Adults*

A number of youth outreach participants described their relationship with their family as difficult and described family stress and relationships as a key issue or challenge. Youth web survey participants described getting along with parents or family members as a top issue facing Pleasanton's youth. Focus group participants described parents as overworked, leaving them with little time available for family.

Outreach participants recognized the need for youth to find their identity and develop independence from their parents. They identified a lack of skills among parents in dealing with the challenges of raising children. Some parents struggle with communicating face-to-face about sensitive topics with their children. Youth participants report that they struggle to gain their parents' trust.

### *Risky Sexual Activity*

A few outreach participants mentioned parental denial about sexual activity as an important issue facing youth today. They also report sexual activity, pregnancy, and sexually transmitted diseases as important issues among Pleasanton youth. High school students in Pleasanton surveyed by the TVAHI rate birth control and sexually-transmitted infections (STIs) as very important health topics in Pleasanton.<sup>37</sup> According to participants, there is pressure among Pleasanton youth to engage in sexual activity. One focus group cited a high level of sexual activity among eighth grade students in Pleasanton.

Though not called out by a significant number of outreach participants, local data suggests this topic should be included in this report. Tri-Valley youth note the importance of waiting to have sex; however, many feel uncertain that they could say "no" to a partner who wanted to have sex.<sup>38</sup> Between 2000 and 2002, there were 218 births to Tri-Valley teenage mothers.<sup>39</sup> This represents three percent of the countywide birth

rate. The teen birth rate in the Tri-Valley was 14 births for every 1,000 females ages 15 to 19 (1.4 percent per 1,000).<sup>40</sup> The Alameda County teen birth rate was 33.6 per 1,000. Both rates are lower than the California rate of 45 births per 1,000 (4.5 percent per 1,000).<sup>41</sup>

The rate of STIs is much lower in the Tri-Valley than that of Alameda County (less than one-third of the county rate). The rate, however, has been increasing in the Tri-Valley and decreasing in the County in recent years.<sup>42</sup> In California, one-fourth of teens have been sexually active and, of these, nearly half did not use a condom the first time they had sex.<sup>43</sup> While the rate of teen births and STIs is declining, risky sexual activity remains an issue facing Pleasanton youth.

### **Limited Opportunities for Informal or Unprogrammed Activities**

Participants shared that many youth believe "there is nothing to do" in Pleasanton. By this they mean that outside of programmed sports and activities, the community has little to offer children and youth. Pleasanton does not have a movie theater, bowling alley or other spaces that serve youth.

There are few options available for children and youth who are not active in team sports and organized activities. City staff participants described some success they have had with engaging youth interested in performance in more individualized activities such as improvisational theater and open mic performances. These activities encourage regular participation but do not require one to be a member of a team, league or club. Many participants discussed the need for a teen center or a gathering space for youth. They called out that the City has limited gathering spaces for youth, whether they are publicly or privately owned. Other communities such as Dublin and Livermore were named as having youth centers or downtown community spaces or businesses where youth are welcome and which are youth-friendly.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> Alameda County Public Health Department. *Alameda County Health Status Report 2006*. May 2006.

<sup>42</sup> Alameda County Public Health Department. *Tri-Valley Health Profile 2005*.

<sup>43</sup> California Health Interview Survey Ask CHIS Data Query System, copyright 2003 by the Regents of the University of California, all rights reserved.

<sup>37</sup> Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative. Summary of Pleasanton Data from the 2006 Tri-Valley Student Health Survey.

<sup>38</sup> Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative. Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative Regional Research Findings Report.

<sup>39</sup> Alameda County Public Health Department. *Tri-Valley Health Profile 2005*.

## *Play Skills to Improve Youth and Adult Interactions*

Play or free time is a proven catalyst to personal happiness, productivity, creativity, and innovation.<sup>44</sup> The properties of play include: apparent purposeless, voluntary, inherent action, freedom from time, diminished consciousness of self, improvisational potential, and continuation desire. Learning how to stay playful in an age-appropriate way, while taking on adult responsibilities, is one of the most important tasks during adolescence.<sup>45</sup>

Outreach participants provided a wealth of ideas to meet the play needs of Pleasanton youth. Participants suggested providing more art programs including: art facilities for children and youth such as drop-in art studios, interactive art programs, and a graffiti art mural project. Other suggested classes included: cooking, gardening, line dancing, and break dancing.

Focus group participants described Pleasanton students as being over-scheduled, short on free time, and lacking balance in their lives. Nearly half of high school students in Pleasanton surveyed by the TVAHI report a lack of free time as a big cause of stress in their lives.<sup>46</sup> Several participants stated that they believed that many parents and children and youth lack play skills. Many parents are not familiar with what they might do when spending unprogrammed time with their child. Youth are often quick to resist new suggestions, and instead seek the comfort of video games or television. Parents want their children to be successful and make sure their free time is well-used. They often believe that structured activities are the most important way to achieve success. Some outreach participants suggested that parenting classes or training activities be provided to help teach parents how to interact with their children. These classes could help parents understand the role of play in youth development and stimulate some ideas for initiating different activities. Many parents also support programs to help them deal with youth of differ-

ent ages and suggest methods to successfully bring the family together.

## **Evolving Economic Conditions**

While the unemployment rate in Pleasanton in August 2009 was 5.9 percent, lower than in the County (11.7 percent) and the State (12.2 percent)<sup>47</sup>, the rate is double what it has been in the recent past (3.1 percent in 2008 and 2.3 percent in 2007). The City, along with the rest of the state and country, is experiencing an economic downturn. Across the United States, tax revenue is down and the housing market is slow. This has created uncertainty and economic instability in many communities. In Pleasanton, some two-income households are relying on one income, forcing parents to tighten spending on non-essential items. In some cases, this may include recreation programs, league fees, social activities, and various services. Focus group participants report that economic conditions impact stability at home.

## *Impacts on Education*

Pleasanton has long been known for its high-quality schools. However, in the current budget climate, the PUSD had to make significant budget reductions for the 2009-2010 school year. Program reductions included the following: student academic intervention programs; restructuring of athletic/student activities/enrichment programs; increases in class size from 20 to 25 students; and the elimination of some Counselor, Counseling Assistant, Reading Specialist, and Administrator positions. Some of the positions were restored for the 2009-2010 school year with the use of one-time funding sources.<sup>48</sup> For the 2010-2011 academic school year, employee concessions (teachers, classified staff, and management) enabled the District to continue to operate most of the programs provided during the 2009-2010 school year. In addition, community and school site fundraising efforts to support student programs are ongoing.<sup>49</sup>

It was suggested by interview participants that both youth and adults are experiencing anxiety driven by economic concerns. Several focus group participants expressed concern regarding

<sup>44</sup> Brown, MD, Stuart. *Play – How it Shapes the Brain, Opens the Imagination, and Invigorates the Soul*. New York: Penguin Publications. 2009.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup> Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative. Summary of Pleasanton Data from the 2006 Tri-Valley Student Health Survey.

<sup>47</sup> California Economic Development Department. Labor Force and Unemployment Data. September 2009.

<sup>48</sup> Pleasanton Unified School District. 2009-2010 Budget.

<sup>49</sup> Pleasanton Unified School District. 2010-2011 Budget.

## Appendix A

the issuance of pink slips by the School District and the loss of quality teachers.

### *Increased Demand for Assistance*

The current economic downturn is impacting the lives of Pleasanton youth. At least one percent of the student body at all PUSD schools qualifies for free or reduced price lunch; Valley View Elementary School (11 percent), Village High School (14 percent), and Fairlands Elementary School (6 percent) report the highest percentage of students qualifying for the program.<sup>50</sup> Focus group participants reported that some social events, such as prom and recreation activities, are too expensive for many youth. Participants from the Valley Bible Community Church indicate that there are several families below the poverty level who need basic food assistance in Pleasanton. As of summer 2009, the Church's food pantry was serving 16 families.

Between 2008 and 2009, the City received increased grant funding requests for mental health services, youth disabled programs, and health and wellness programs for adolescents.<sup>51</sup> The number of scholarships awarded increased 25 percent between 2004 and 2009 and doubled between 2007 and 2009.<sup>52</sup> Similarly, the Tri-Valley YMCA, the One-Stop Career Center and Axis Community Health received more funding between 2007 and 2009 than previous years for youth and teen programs and services. The Tri-Valley YMCA enhanced the Teen Health and Wellness Initiative by preparing an adolescent mental health needs assessment to better understand the mental health needs of Pleasanton's youth. It also offers College Planning for High School Students. The One-Stop Career Center offered a Youth Development Program, and Axis Community Health and the School District invested in their School Based Counseling Services.<sup>53</sup>

### **Barriers to Participation**

There are several factors contributing to Pleasanton youth's inability to take advantage of the wealth of opportunities in Pleasanton. Participation in youth-related activities and programs are sometimes stymied by various factors including experience, transportation, and affordability.

### *Career Development and Job Availability*

Limited career development and employment opportunities prevent Pleasanton adolescents 13-17 and young adults ages 18-19 from working and developing independence from their family. Outreach participants described the difficulty youth experience in seeking, preparing, and getting a job in Pleasanton. Youth-oriented jobs would provide an opportunity for youth to gain responsibility and economic freedom.

The County of Alameda Workforce Investment Board is a resource center for youth seeking employment programs and opportunities, such as the Tri-Valley Community Foundation, which hosts programs at Horizon and Village High Schools.<sup>54</sup> However, these are continuation high schools that include a small portion of the total high school students in Pleasanton.<sup>55</sup> Alameda County provides independent living skills programs through Project HOPE.<sup>56</sup> Most of those interviewed and electronically surveyed through outreach activities, however, did not refer to these or other career development or employment programs. Geographic analysis reveals that programs are not available within the City or in close proximity, rendering them largely inaccessible for Pleasanton youth.

While there are some part-time jobs available for Pleasanton's employment-ready youth, these jobs tend to be offered by retail stores and other specialty service industries such as retail and photography.<sup>57</sup> Outreach participants requested a variety of skill developing employment opportunities for Pleasanton youth, such as trade positions and internships.

<sup>50</sup> Pleasanton Unified School District. *2007-2008 School Accountability Report Card*. January 2009.

<sup>51</sup> City of Pleasanton. *City Grant Program Quarterly Commissions' Project Review*. January 2008 through September 2009.

<sup>52</sup> City of Pleasanton, CAFR, Operating Indicators by Function Last Eight Fiscal Years. June 2009.

<sup>53</sup> City of Pleasanton. Conversation with Kathleen Yurchak, Community Services Manager. September 30, 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Alameda County Workforce Investment Board. *Employment Plus Youth Programs*.

<sup>55</sup> California Department of Education Educational Demographics Unit (2009). *Pleasanton Unified School District Report*.

<sup>56</sup> Alameda County. *Independent Living Skills Program*.

<sup>57</sup> Groovejobs.com. *Pleasanton Jobs: Summer, Teen, Part-Time Jobs in Pleasanton, California*.

*Transportation*

Lack of transportation can limit a young person’s ability to travel to health services, recreation opportunities, and programs. Youth web survey and focus group respondents who are too young to drive or do not have access to a vehicle report that transportation is a challenge or a barrier that prevents them from participating in programs and services in the City.

Pleasanton high school age TVAHI respondents report that transportation sometimes keeps them from doing what they need or want to do (48 percent). Over half of the TVAHI survey respondents would not walk more than 10 minutes or at all to access confidential health and wellness services and nearly 40 percent would not ride a bus.<sup>58</sup> Most of these survey respondents would, however, drive 20 minutes (54 percent) and 10 minutes (35 percent) to services.<sup>59</sup>

Adult focus group participants also report that crossing streets safely in Pleasanton is a challenge for them as they walk or bicycle with their children through town. They noted the intersection of Peters and West Angela as being particularly challenging.

*Income and Affordability*

Current economic conditions have impacted families in Pleasanton. Whether a member of the family has lost a job or the family is tightening its budget, the current economic downturn affects residents’ income and what is considered affordable. For example, some interview participants commented that many parents will be unable to pay the \$250/child fees to participate in City sports leagues this year, and further reported that during April 2009, registrations for some sports leagues were down.

Some youth and adult web survey participants do not participate in programs and services in the City because they consider the fees too high. Some participants predicted that the City is likely to see declining participation in some fee-based activities during the upcoming year and an increase in demand for recreation alternatives that are free or very low cost. Between 2007 and 2009, the number of people who

played golf and attended performances at the Amador Theater declined.<sup>60</sup>

**Programs and Services for Children and Youth**

While most participants focused their comments on teens and young adults, it is important not to overlook the needs of young children in Pleasanton. Parents with young children identified a specific group of services they need. They described child care opportunities for infants as limited. Parents of multiple age young children expressed an interest in programs for young children ages (0 to 6) to be available while their older children are at play, school, and/or pre-school. However, most parents of children in this age group are prone to self-organizing and finding activities that work for them.

Children 7 to 12 years of age are seeking opportunities and safe places to hang out, but opportunities are limited. Most parents are not comfortable having this age group unsupervised or involved in unprogrammed activities. Some parents tend to have a high level of involvement in their children’s lives and are already starting to add to achievement pressures. Many parents are uncertain about how to spend unprogrammed time with their children or how to have experiences that include children of different ages.

**III. OPPORTUNITIES FOR PLEASANTON’S YOUTH**

During the Environmental Scan outreach process, participants shared their ideas to enhance Pleasanton’s assets and confront challenges for children and youth in the future. There are numerous opportunities to enhance programs and services, facilities, and policies that can make Pleasanton a better place for children, youth, and teens to live, play, develop and prosper. Many participants were willing to suggest ways the City and PUSD could address these issues. The following opportunities have been identified based on a review of ideas suggested by outreach participants and best practices from neighboring communities in California such as Dublin and Livermore.

<sup>58</sup> Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative. Summary of Pleasanton Data from the 2006 Tri-Valley Student Health Survey.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>60</sup> City of Pleasanton, CAFR, Operating Indicators by Function Last Eight Fiscal Years. June 2009.

## Social and Mental Health Issues

Although a number of Pleasanton children and youth face social and mental health challenges, there are numerous opportunities to support and care for children and youth struggling with these issues.

### *Achievement Pressure*

Pleasanton youth have expressed a strong desire to excel and be successful in their careers and personal life. At the same time, they feel pressured by the consistent stress these goals can create. While it is unlikely the City is in a position to remove these pressures, there were several opportunities identified that could help youth better acknowledge and manage these stressful conditions.

Focus group participants suggested SAT/ACT support groups for students to exchange studying tips and encourage each other during the stressful college application process. The City and School District could partner with existing tutoring and homework organizations to expand their ability to support youth experiencing achievement pressure. Other communities have created teacher education programs that teach awareness of the stress on students in balancing school workload and extra-curricular activities.

Research demonstrates that external assets (such as support, empowerment, boundaries and expectations, constructive use of time) and internal assets (such as commitment to learning, positive values, social competencies, and positive identity) could provide an atmosphere that lessens achievement pressures. Examples of positive assets include family support, a caring school climate, family and school boundaries, time to participate in creative activities, time at home with nothing to do, strong personal power, self-esteem, and a sense of purpose, among others.<sup>61</sup> There is an opportunity to use the Search Institute's philosophy and resources to help adults and communities create an external and internal environment that reduces achievement pressures on youth.

### *Anxiety and Depression*

Adult and youth participants note that anxiety and depression is a prevailing issue for young people in Pleasanton. Mental

health issues are caused by a number of factors including school pressure and family life, among others. Overall, participants recommended more counseling and support services for the community's youth population suffering from anxiety and depression.

Focus group participants suggested increasing the number of mental health services that help with stress, mental, and social issues. They recommended that services be provided by an experienced individual who has dealt with similar issues and concerns. This individual could be an adult role model or high school senior role model. High school students in Pleasanton surveyed by the TVAHI said they would talk to friends (74 percent) and parents/guardians (67 percent) about major health issues/concerns.<sup>62</sup>

One interview participant suggested that mental health centers be located in schools to provide students direct access to mental health care. These facilities could pool existing resources and streamline referrals from the School District to public agencies, such as Axis Community Health. Locating facilities within schools would make it easier for youth to get help while problems were still relatively manageable.

In addition to existing counseling services, PUSD and Axis Community Health partner to provide mental health services at school sites with the greatest need (Alisal Elementary and Village High School) as determined by PUSD's Pupil Services Department. The program places interns who are nearing completion of their Credential in Marriage Family and Child Counseling (MFCC) for ten hours per week at each school site. A grant-funded program also supports drug counseling services for five hours per week at Village High School.

The City of Pleasanton's website provides a directory of resources for youth experiencing anxiety and depression. Best practices in other communities reveal these opportunities: licensed therapists available in middle schools; and counselor-led groups that focus on families/suicide/eating disorders and are part of the Safe Passages Program. Similarly, PUSD and the City offer community forums, parenting resource classes, and adult education classes to help parents deal with problems and mental health issues. The District refers students to

<sup>61</sup> Search Institute. *What Kids Need: Developmental Assets*. Minneapolis, Minnesota.

<sup>62</sup> Tri-Valley Adolescent Health Initiative. Summary of Pleasanton Data from the 2006 Tri-Valley Student Health Survey.

individual counseling sessions and the need for these counseling services increased between 2007 and 2009 (increasing from 189 referrals to 273 referrals).<sup>63</sup> Due to recent budget reductions, the number of counseling sessions per referral has been reduced within the School District in an effort to serve the largest number of students in need.

Youth-led peer education and outreach programs teach students how to support and approach their peers around teen issues, such as substance abuse, sexual activity and mental health. In Pleasanton, youth-led and counseling programs that support teen health and wellness include: support groups at the elementary, middle school, and high school level; a youth mentor program; 40 Developmental Assets training; the Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) mentor program; 4-year Plan Development; a Suicide Prevention Program; and an anonymous student support tip-line.<sup>64</sup> Additionally, the NAMI Tri-Valley National Alliance on Mental Illness serves Pleasanton and provides resources and support for families and their members diagnosed with serious and persistent mental illnesses.

### *Bullying or Discrimination*

Pleasanton youth report experiencing bullying or discrimination; youth in middle school tend to suffer the most from being teased and physically harassed. Participants suggested increasing awareness among community members about diversity and cultural differences to reduce incidents related to discrimination. Schools tend to segregate students who are developmentally different. Some outreach participants suggested integrating classrooms, regardless of learning abilities, so that youth learn from each other's differences and further develop social skills. Participants suggested modifying the community and school character programs to include a statement specific to diversity. They also suggested partnering with the Police Department to promote physical safety in schools and safe spaces for youth to gather.

In addition to reducing achievement pressures, the Search Institute provides ideas and resources to help adults

and communities work with youth to create an external and internal environment that addresses bullying and discrimination. For example, the Institute suggests refraining from showing anger or fear to youth experiencing a hostile school environment. Instead, it suggests adults listen and develop a solution with the youth who feels threatened.<sup>65</sup> There is an opportunity to use the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets to provide support for youth and enable them to address bullying and discrimination.

### *Drug and Alcohol Abuse*

Drug and alcohol use is low in Pleasanton, yet there is a portion of the youth population that engages in substance abuse. Drug and alcohol abuse is an issue among a portion of Pleasanton youth. In partnership with Axis Community Health, the School District offers a Drug and Alcohol Workshop for students with substance abuse issues; the workshop is a four-series program attended by youth and at least one parent.<sup>66</sup> Participants suggested heightening drug and alcohol use and abuse awareness, and providing alternative activities for youth residents. Focus groups recommended more education programs about drug and alcohol use and abuse effects throughout their high school career and to begin earlier. In order to meet the needs of young adults, youth and adult web survey participants suggested providing substance-free social alternatives to drug and alcohol use, such as dances and music.

Best practices in other communities reveal these opportunities: coordinating with student health educators to provide real, compelling and facts-based information about substance use consequences, and stress sound decision-making; making drug and alcohol support services available to 9<sup>th</sup> grade students to help identify early symptoms of abuse. Scare tactics, such as speakers who have experienced the impact of alcohol and drug use, expose youth to potential consequences of their actions. Other communities strictly enforce driving under the influence and underage drinking laws, penalizing youth who use drugs and alcohol.

<sup>63</sup> Pleasanton Unified School District. Pupil Services Counseling referral data.

<sup>64</sup> City of Pleasanton and PUSD. TVAHI HAP Program – Services Pleasanton Inventory. February 19, 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Search Institute. *What Kids Need: Developmental Assets*. Minneapolis, Minnesota.

<sup>66</sup> Pleasanton Unified School District. Pupil Services Division data.

Youth tend to avoid driving when intoxicated if alternative transportation is available. The Safe Rides program for youth in Pleasanton provides a guaranteed ride home for youth under the influence. Peer education on the need for designated drivers also helps support sober driving. Additionally, when students are involved in developing innovative ways to educate their peers about substance abuse, including games and video games, the message is strengthened.

### *Difficult Relationships between Youth and Adults*

Pleasanton youth report experiencing relationship challenges with adult family members. A number of factors could be contributing to this including: lack of time, financial responsibilities, and pressures and challenges in youth lives, among others.

While familial relationships can be difficult for a city to support, participants suggested providing opportunities for family interaction to balance academic expectations with programmed activities. Participants also suggested offering community programs and adult-only camps for parents to learn communication strategies and about youth interests and issues. Support services can provide parents with non-judgmental tools to communicate openly with their teens and learn how to react to specific situations in order to deal with issues that apply to teens.

The City offers education programs for adults and parents. The Pleasanton Police Department, in partnership with Pleasanton Unified School District Adult Education, provides the Parent Project, an interactive class that teaches parents skills to work with their adolescent children. Horizons Family Counseling and Axis Community Health provide family counseling resources for teens and parents.

Family support, positive family communication, other adult relationships, parent involvement with schooling, family boundaries, and interpersonal competencies contribute to supportive relationships between youth and adults. The Search Institute suggests adults speak positively and respect their youth, and be flexible when setting boundaries, among other suggestions.<sup>67</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Search Institute. *What Kids Need: Developmental Assets*. Minneapolis, Minnesota.

### *Risky Sexual Activity*

Although risky sexual activity did not surface as a key issue facing Pleasanton youth, participants recognized the general challenges of sexual activity and pressure among young people. To help youth handle these situations, participants suggested peer-to-peer mentorship and education for youth regarding sexual activity.

Restraint in youth is encouraged when adults speak honestly with their children, communicate expectations and boundaries, and support curbing risky sexual activity.<sup>68</sup>

### **Limited Opportunities for Informal or Unprogrammed Activities**

The Pleasanton community contains many resources, such as its parks and community spaces that can supply opportunities for informal or unprogrammed activities.

### *Play Skills*

Participants expressed a need for unstructured programs and activities. Pleasanton children, youth, and teens have highly scheduled lives; some youth and adults do not know how to fill unscheduled time in a fun and creative way. Participants recommended different types of activities and new facilities to host informal or unprogrammed activities.

### **Youth/Teen Center**

Most participants commented on the need for a youth/teen community center. Focus group participants recommended a center that includes a computer lab, kitchen, a lounge area, a gym, and facilities for music performance and recording. The center could host events such as dances and movie nights and could be open late to provide a safe space for teens to hang out after dark. Participants described the center as a safe, fun, and affordable place to hang out where youth can engage in cross-cultural activities and feel supported, loved and accepted by others. Focus group participants mentioned the YMCA in East Oakland as an example of such a facility.

Several interview participants described previous efforts to develop a youth center and discussed some of the barriers that prevented it from coming to fruition. Several participants commented that given the delays, some community mem-

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*

bers may be willing to support some variation on the original concept. It could be a new facility in the original location, a rehabilitation of an alternate building, or a combination of multiple facilities and on-line activities. A youth or community center is planned as part of the Bernal Property Project.

Dublin and Livermore recently completed new community centers that provide teen-oriented activities and programs. The City of Dublin Department of Parks and Community Services recently completed the Shannon Community Center. The 19,700 square foot facility includes a banquet hall, teaching kitchen, two preschool classrooms, flexible meeting rooms, and a demonstration garden to be used as a teaching school for nature camps.<sup>69</sup> In Livermore, the Elbow Room located in the Robert Livermore Community Center (RLCC) is open as a hang out space for children from 6th to 12th grade. The room is open during school breaks and has pool tables, air hockey, foosball and video games.<sup>70</sup> Tot Drop, also located in the RLCC, is a multi-age preschool that is available to children ages one to five.

The City of Pleasanton operates facilities that provide services for children and youth. City-managed preschool services are available at Gingerbread Preschool, a four-classroom facility. The City also provides opportunities for urban gardening and education. Val Vista Park includes a community garden and Alviso Adobe Community Park comprises volunteer-maintained planter boxes, which serve as a teaching tool for the City's Naturalist. Alviso Adobe Community Park also has a series of nature programs and camps for children and families.

### Youth-Friendly Spaces

In addition to a youth/teen or community center, participants recommended providing a variety of informal gathering spaces and venues for youth in Pleasanton. Youth web survey participants would like safe spaces for informal gathering or hanging out, job training and leadership skills. Adult respondents would like a space to recreate and gather with family and friends of all ages. Youth and adult respondents agree that a space for local musical performances would serve Pleasanton youth favorably.

<sup>69</sup> City of Dublin Department of Parks and Community Services.

<sup>70</sup> Livermore Area Recreation and Park District website.

One focus group recommended virtual teen centers, which entails a citywide program for youth-friendly businesses. These businesses could receive a certification or emblem that denotes their space as a virtual teen center where teens are welcome to hang out. The Firehouse Arts Center surfaced as another potential location for teen activities. One focus group suggested opening local school campuses during non-school hours and providing supervision in public spaces and school playgrounds. The fairgrounds may provide another opportunity by hosting youth-friendly events and programs.

The PUSD, in cooperation with several partners, created a 40 Developmental Assets Task Force and created a community initiative that supports the healthy development of youth in the community.<sup>71</sup> Through this Task Force, a Community Campaign is being developed to educate Pleasanton businesses and garner their support of the initiative. The Community Campaign could include efforts to provide youth-friendly spaces in local businesses.

### Informal and Unprogrammed Activities

The following were all suggested by participants as opportunities to expand activities for youth:

- Multi-cultural events
- Overnight and teen camp
- A place like Jump Sky High
- An arcade like Boomers
- Movie nights and movies in the park
- Community activities around environmental awareness and climate action

Participants recommended the following performance art opportunities:

- Children's theater
- Performance activities
- Children's orchestra
- Bands

<sup>71</sup> Pleasanton Unified School District, Pleasanton Service Learning Consortium, Amador Valley Adult Education, and Tri-Valley YMCA. *Got Assets? Youth and Adults United for a Healthy Community.*

# Appendix A

- Music concerts
- Karaoke bar
- Dances

Sports activities recommended by participants include:

- Youth golf
- Drop-in sports bike club
- Softball and soccer during the summer
- Tennis
- Day of Sports
- A bowling alley
- Swimming
- Ice skating/roller skating rink
- Water skiing and wakeboarding
- Indoor soccer
- Horseback riding
- Hockey
- Non-competitive sports including bocce ball, ping pong, kickball and badminton

## Barriers to Participation

### *Evolving Economic Conditions*

#### Impacts on Education

With the existing economic climate and the financial struggles of the PUSD, Pleasanton's high quality education may be starting to experience the consequences of funding shortfalls. In an effort to offset recent budget cuts and faculty layoffs, participants recommended augmenting school cutbacks by offering affordable programs such as music and instrument classes, tutoring or reading programs, language and instrument classes.

The City of Pleasanton offers programs and classes including: cooking, photography, gymnastics, yoga and bridge, English as a Second Language (ESL), afterschool homework, reading enrichment, and etiquette training. These programs tend to be available during specific seasons and for specific age groups.

#### Increased Demand for Assistance

With growing scholarship and grant applications, library circulation, and interest in free programs, there is a need to provide for those who do not have the financial means to participate in fee-based programs, services, and activities. Participants suggested providing as many affordable and free programs for youth as possible. There is an opportunity to partner with the Tri-Valley YMCA to provide affordable programs in conjunction with the Teen Health and Wellness Initiative and the Mental Health Clinic for Adolescents and College Planning for High School Students.

A review of other communities indicated the opportunity to offer affordable programs for all youth such as an affordable summer-long playground program with entertainment including games, crafts, and sports. Some communities provide an opportunity for youth meeting income eligibility requirements to enroll in certain City programs for free or at reduced rates.

#### *Career Development and Job Availability*

A key challenge for adolescents ages 13-17 and young adults ages 18-19 is the need to be independent and to learn basic skills. Participants from each of the Environmental Scan activities highlighted career development and job availability as a potential growth area. Youth are interested in career development and job availability opportunities. Participants report that Pleasanton youth tend to lack the capacity to independently problem-solve and strategize, basic skills necessary for nearly every job.

Job training and internship options for Pleasanton's young people, including technical training, professional aptitude, and job seeking skills such as resume writing and interview skills, would enhance employment opportunities for Pleasanton's youth. Schools could host some of these opportunities by providing programs that target creativity, social skill development, and self-sufficiency. Focus group participants suggested programs in which youth can learn basic life skills, such as how to change a tire and how to mow a lawn. Participants also suggested providing services for youth who are not college bound.

Participants recommend creating jobs locally and advertising jobs through local job resources, such as [trivalleyjobs.com](http://trivalleyjobs.com). Participants suggest that the City might consider partnerships with the business community to meet the needs of youth ages 13 to 19 and to mentor young people as they discover their career options. The Parks and Community Services Department employs nearly 200 youth age 19 and under annually. The Valley Teen Job and Community Service Fair is an annual regional event for teens age 13 to 18 in Pleasanton, Dublin, Livermore, San Ramon, and Danville. The privately-operated Tri-Valley One Stop Career Center is located in Pleasanton and provides employment-related services for the community at-large five days per week and a youth counselor is available to the public every Monday afternoon.<sup>72</sup>

Participants reported that there is a need for more service projects and leadership opportunities for youth. Focus group participants suggested providing easier access to community service opportunities and a service organization for youth during the summer where they can give back to the community. Several participants offered to volunteer for violence prevention organizations in the region and host litter removal events. There is an opportunity to develop a city youth leadership academy using the adult chamber leadership model in Pleasanton, which identifies emerging community leaders and offers them broad exposure to issues considered vital to Pleasanton.

A review of other communities indicated the opportunity to develop a youth leadership team consisting of youth interested in taking an active role in the community. The City could assist team members in making significant contributions to solving problems within the community. Some communities host an annual Youth Summit which encourages and challenges young people to engage in meaningful dialogue with City leaders about youth-specific activities. The Summit can serve as a forum to discuss health, safety, education, and employment-related topics.

### *Transportation*

Lack of transportation serves as a barrier for Pleasanton youth who would like to travel to activities, friends' houses,

and local hang out spots. Transportation options for young people promote self-sufficiency and independence.

Participants recommended providing affordable, accessible and reliable transportation. The City currently provides the Rides to School Program designed to meet these needs. There is an opportunity to explore carpool options for youth who have similar interests and live in close proximity to one another. Outreach participants requested more bike lanes and pathways to promote the bicycle as a safe and viable transportation mode. The recently adopted Pleasanton Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan will enable the development of additional bike lanes and pathways in the City.<sup>73</sup>

### *Income and Affordability*

Income and affordability can limit Pleasanton youth's ability to participate in services and programs, attend entertainment performances and shows, and hang out in commercial areas. Focus group participants recommended providing low cost activities and incentives that are suitable for a youth budget, such as student discounts and two-for-one movie tickets/ events. Some high school students in Pleasanton identified a need for low-cost exercise classes.

Youth web survey participants also suggested providing financial literacy programs for youth to learn to understand finances and budget responsibly.

A review of other communities indicated the availability of opportunities such as: affordable exercise classes and recreation opportunities including yoga, dance, and kickboxing classes, among others, to promote healthy, active lifestyles; and affordable teen-oriented activities, such as extending City league sports teams to high school level or social functions. Several communities provide financial literacy programs for youth age 12 to 20 in an effort to provide young people the knowledge and confidence to manage their finances responsibly. Topics could range from budgeting and saving to credit cards, debt, and paying for college.

### **Programs and Services for Children and Youth**

Pleasanton children 0 to 12 years of age were largely represented by parents and mothers groups in the Environmental

<sup>72</sup> City of Pleasanton and PUSD. TVAHI HAP Program – Services Pleasanton Inventory. February 19, 2009.

<sup>73</sup> City of Pleasanton. Pedestrian and Bicycle Master Plan. June 2009.

# Appendix A

Scan process. Some parents shared that they struggle to meet the needs of their children.

Adult web survey participants shared that parenting skills, access to available, affordable and quality infant and toddler care, as well as preschools, and opportunities for exercise and physical activity are the greatest needs for youth ages 0 to 6.

Participants recommended providing Mommy and Me classes and drop-in play time for children and mothers to recreate and spend time together. They requested an indoor hang out space and programs for Pleasanton toddlers. Multi-generational opportunities include: programs in which seniors can interact with preschool or elementary school age kids, engage in story time, and garden together. Gingerbread Preschool in Pleasanton currently provides parent education and training for parents and guardians of children age two to five. There is an opportunity to create a space that is available for parents of young children to cooperatively care for each other's child; this space could also provide youth program services during the afternoon and evenings.

## Sources of Program and Services Information

Focus group participants underscored the importance of ensuring that youth are aware of available resources. Information and access to mental health and social health programs would be helpful.

Participants suggested that the City develop a place where all efforts, activities, and service projects in Pleasanton can be published together, such as an online community calendar.

Web survey participants considered the following places to be the best sources of information about current services on how best to help this age group grow healthy and be prepared for school: a hospital or medical office, their child(ren)'s school, and a local community center or library. These web survey participants were also supportive of information being available at one phone number to call or one website to visit, as well as one place in the community.

Youth and adult web survey participants think the best way to get information about local activities, events or programs of interest to them in Pleasanton is through friends/word-of-mouth, Facebook, and school announcements. Adult

respondents included the City Activities Guide, email, and websites/internet as other effective modes of communication.

## IV. SUMMARY

This Environmental Scan provides a foundation of data and community opinion that will be used by the Ad Hoc Committee, YMPIC and community members to create a framework for the City of Pleasanton Youth Master Plan. The information gathered through the Environmental Scan process identifies a number of themes that will be used to focus the topics and issues that should be addressed through the Plan's goals and strategic opportunities. The Environmental Scan serves also to identify programs that are already in place to meet these needs. However, as the results of some of the outreach activities indicate, some community members may not be fully aware of these resources or how best to access them. Current and future needs and existing and desired programs will be evaluated and the results used to help shape a Plan that responds to youth needs and community priorities.