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## California's Capital Region: A Place In Progress

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Healthy Youth/ Health Regions draws on data from the nine counties that surround Sacramento, the capital of California. The nine were initially selected because parts of each of these counties are within a 45 minute drive of the Sacramento headquarters of the Sierra Health Foundation, the primary sponsor of this research.<sup>1</sup> While they share this geographic proximity, and are served by Sacramento-based print, radio, and television outlets, whether and how these nine counties form a coherent region with an ability to act on common interests—such as the well-being of youth—is an open question.<sup>2</sup> Significant forces fragment the nine-county region socially, economically, and politically. Given these forces, developing a regional identity and the institutions and processes of regional cooperation or governance is exceedingly difficult.

Why should this matter? Commentators in a variety of fields—including planning, geography, political science, and economic development—argue that regions are the proper unit of analysis for thinking about how to develop and support thriving economies and how to solve the various spillover problems that cross the borders of city or county jurisdictions (Benner et al. 2010; Benner and Pastor 2008; Pastor, Benner, and Matsuoka 2009; Pierce, Johnson, and Hall 1993). Regions are where human, physical, social, and fiscal capital come together to create jobs, economic opportunity, and a preferred quality of life. They are also a potentially valuable construct for bringing people together around innovative agendas and to address patterns of disparity across population and place.

Less emphasized, but equally important, is how regions provide an important context for youth well-being. As described in London et al., (2010), improving youth outcomes is essential to support a region's social and economic health, and conversely, youth health and well-being depend, in important ways, on the resources and institutions of a healthy region. However, as Rios, Campbell and Romero (2010) note, there are many forces that cut against the coming together of the California Capital region to nurture its young people.

Part of the challenge of coordinated action is based on the lack of cohesion within California's Capital region. Though Sacramento often sees itself as the byproduct of forces outside of its immediate control, or as a step-child of the Bay Area, it both deserves and needs to view itself with a greater degree of identity and autonomy. It is the capital region of a state with one of the world's largest economies. It is an economic hub with influence up and down the Great Central Valley and

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<sup>1</sup> Driving time has been used in other attempts to conceptualize a region, notably those classifying the Northern California "mega-region" (Metcalf & Terplan, 2007). They use driving time to draw boundaries around different tiers of the Northern California mega-region in an acknowledgment of the way that activity links places through commuting for work and recreation.

<sup>2</sup> There is no exact science in defining regions, and efforts to achieve the benefits of a regional perspective are constrained by existing conceptions of place and existing jurisdictions. See Benner (2010) for background on defining regions for this study. Depending on the purpose, it may make sense to select different configurations of counties (or other jurisdictions) as the starting point for conversations in the capital region. For example, the six-county area included in the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG) may make a more appropriate starting point for regional planning, given the important role it has already played.

throughout northern California. It is a socially diverse setting that is the destination for people from around the globe. Its economic, social, and political importance cries out for more secure methods for addressing issues and pursuing opportunities at a regional scale.

A central premise of Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions is that framing youth issues at the regional scale has the potential to reveal the inter-dependence of youth and regional well-being and to inform policy and community change strategies that address patterns of disparity and build on regional assets and strengths. But to be effective, would-be change agents must understand not merely the state of youth well-being across and within the region, but also the region's overall character and the dynamic forces, historical and current, which shape its politics and culture.

What follows is a brief introduction to some key regional characteristics, with an emphasis on three broad areas in which forces of fragmentation and connection can be observed: 1) people and cultures (particularly in light of historic and recent patterns of immigration); 2) economy and environment; and 3) political structures and dynamics. In our discussion of each of these areas, we describe forces which simultaneously connect the region to outside influences while setting the stage for internal tension driven by important racial, class, and political divisions. These divisions, in turn, have major implications in driving the sharp disparities in youth opportunities and outcomes that are described in other elements of the Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions report. We end by considering what can be learned from previous efforts at regional collaboration, in order to inform future strategies to improve youth equity and well-being. At stake is not only the well-being of individual youth but the economic and social vitality of the region as a place to live, work, learn and raise families.

The Capital Region is a cross-section of California's unique topography: from the low crests of the coastal range to the west, to the high peaks of the Sierra Nevada to the east, with the wide expanse of the Central Valley in between. On a clear day, the vista from east to west suggests a strong sense of a single place, a verdant valley nestled between mountain ranges whose rivers feed agricultural and urban users alike. At other times, a murkier vista prevails, in which the two mountain ranges and valley appear dimly to one another. Hidden from view are the cultural, economic, and political factors that divide this region against itself and other regions of the state, nation, and globe, while simultaneously linking the region to these broader landscapes.

Before turning to an analysis of some of the dynamics that unite and divide the region, some basic description of the region will help set the stage.

On the west side of the region, many Solano County residents consider themselves—with ample justification—more a part of the Bay Area than the Capital Region. Yet many parts of the county are agricultural and many residents commute east to the city of Sacramento. On the region's east side, Nevada, Placer, El Dorado and Amador counties all span the ridge of the Sierra Nevada Mountains and, except for Amador County, abut the state of Nevada. These “foothill and mountain counties,” are characterized by ranching, mining, open spaces, public land and the legacy of the Gold Rush. Historically considered rural, recent trends in land use and economic development as well as demographic patterns have led some to refer to the foothills as part of “ex-urbia,” a “third space” that is neither urban nor rural (Beebe, 2010; Walker and Fortmann, 2004; Smethhurst, Walker and Fortmann, 1998)<sup>3</sup>. This ex-urban form is especially prevalent along the western edges of Placer and El Dorado counties where development along the east-west I-80 and US-50 corridors has extended the suburban sphere of the city of Sacramento. Similar population clusters exist around Grass Valley in Nevada County and South Lake Tahoe in El Dorado County.

Of the Capital Region's 2.8 million people, just over half are non-Hispanic whites, nearly one in five are Hispanics, one in ten are Asian, and over 7% are African-American. This racial and ethnic profile diverges from the state as a whole, in which only 41% are non-Hispanic whites and 37% are Hispanic. This racial and ethnic profile varies widely across the region, with several Sierra Foothill counties including Amador, El Dorado, Nevada, and Placer with a population of 80-90% non-Hispanic whites compared to counties such as Sacramento, Solano in which non-Hispanic whites make up less than half of the population, and therefore reflect the state's overall profile.

Income in the Capital Region generally lags behind the state as a whole, with all but three of the region's counties (the foothill counties of El Dorado, Placer and Nevada) having per capita incomes below the state's, and one county (Yuba) with a per capita income over \$16,000 less than the state's. On the other hand, unemployment and child poverty rates more closely mirror that state's.

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<sup>3</sup> The exurbia of the foothill is defined in contrast to the urban built and social environments. While it has the lower-density settlement of rural areas, it increasingly lacks heavy dependence on the natural-resource based economy that defines the rural (Beebe 2010).

**Table 1. Key Indicators in the Greater Sacramento Region and State**

County	Population (2008) <sup>1</sup>	Per Capita Personal Income <sup>2</sup> (2008)	Child Poverty Rate <sup>3</sup> (2008)	Unemployment Rate <sup>4</sup>				
				2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Amador	37,937	\$36,707	5.70%	5.6%	5.3%	5.8%	7.6%	11.7%
El Dorado	180,316	\$49,844	10.70%	4.8%	4.6%	5.1%	6.9%	11.3%
Nevada	98,959	\$45,708	10.20%	4.8%	4.4%	4.8%	6.5%	10.7%
Placer	338,506	\$47,195	5.60%	4.3%	4.2%	4.7%	6.4%	10.6%
Sacramento	1,427,094	\$39,076	17.80%	5.0%	4.8%	5.4%	7.2%	11.3%
Solano	425,785	\$39,442	12.60%	5.4%*	4.9%*	5.3%*	6.8%	10.9%
Sutter	96,095	\$33,301	18.30%	9.7%	9.0%	9.6%	12.3%	17.0%
Yolo	199,930	\$37,132	15.30%	5.6%	5.2%	5.7%	7.3%	11.3%
Yuba	72,553	\$27,099	24.90%	9.7%	8.8%	9.2%	11.8%	17.3%
California	38,134,496	\$43,852	17.90%	5.4%	4.9%	5.3%	7.2%	11.4%

<sup>1</sup>Source: E-3 California County Race/Ethnic Population Estimates and Components by Year, July 1, 2000-2008

<sup>2</sup>Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Economic Analysis

<sup>3</sup>From 2006-2008 ACS 3-year estimate, (percentage of people under 18 whose income in the last 12 months is below the poverty level)

<sup>4</sup>Source: California Employment Development Department - Labor Market info

The 154,000 students enrolled in grades 9-12 in the Capital Region more closely mirror the state profile as “minority-majority” (i.e., 52% non-white, including 20% Hispanic) with 15% classified as English Language Learners (ELLs). The racial and ethnic enrollment in the regions’ schools vary greatly, with the foothill counties enrolling less than 7% ELLs compared to counties as such Sacramento, Yolo, and Yuba that have approximately 20% ELLs.

**Table 2. Population by Race and Ethnicity in HY/HR Region (2008)**

	White	Black	Native Amer.	Asian	Pacific Islander	Multirace	Hispanic	TOTAL
Amador	30,822	1,413	595	325	32	660	4,091	37,937
El Dorado	147,181	765	1,431	3,969	187	3,654	23,129	180,316
Nevada	88,859	245	767	741	78	2,139	6,129	98,959
Placer	268,298	1,991	1,936	16,063	365	7,397	42,457	338,506
Sacramento	690,120	138,046	11,102	191,005	14,750	85,417	296,654	1,427,094
Solano	182,284	63,632	2,605	60,874	3,247	20,060	93,084	425,785
Sutter	49,832	1,448	1,064	11,850	156	2,459	29,286	96,095
Yolo	105,150	3,780	1,401	21,798	585	6,428	60,788	199,930
Yuba	45,643	1,906	1,535	4,762	114	2,928	15,664	72,553
Region	1,608,189	213,225	22,436	311,387	19,514	131,142	571,282	2,877,175
State	15,568,730	2,229,046	211,623	4,727,855	140,917	1,058,412	14,197,914	38,134,496
Percentages								
Amador	81.2%	3.7%	1.6%	0.9%	0.1%	1.7%	10.8%	100.0%
El Dorado	81.6%	0.4%	0.8%	2.2%	0.1%	2.0%	12.8%	100.0%
Nevada	89.8%	0.2%	0.8%	0.7%	0.1%	2.2%	6.2%	100.0%
Placer	79.3%	0.6%	0.6%	4.7%	0.1%	2.2%	12.5%	100.0%
Sacramento	48.4%	9.7%	0.8%	13.4%	1.0%	6.0%	20.8%	100.0%
Solano	42.8%	14.9%	0.6%	14.3%	0.8%	4.7%	21.9%	100.0%
Sutter	51.9%	1.5%	1.1%	12.3%	0.2%	2.6%	30.5%	100.0%
Yolo	52.6%	1.9%	0.7%	10.9%	0.3%	3.2%	30.4%	100.0%
Yuba	62.9%	2.6%	2.1%	6.6%	0.2%	4.0%	21.6%	100.0%
Region	55.9%	7.4%	0.8%	10.8%	0.7%	4.6%	19.9%	100.0%
State	40.8%	5.8%	0.6%	12.4%	0.4%	2.8%	37.2%	100.0%

Source: State of California, Department of Finance, California County Race / Ethnic Population Estimates and Components of Change by Year, July 1, 2000–2008. Sacramento, California, June 2010

The Capital Region has emerged as a major metropolitan region more recently than the San Francisco Bay Area and Los Angeles, with large areas developed only in the past several decades. As Figure 1 illustrates, much of this growth has occurred on the eastern sub-urban and ex-urban flanks of the region. This growth pattern with its associated concentration of public and private investment, has driven a series of social conflicts over development and access to resources by the various jurisdictions in the region. These conflicts as well as efforts to bridge these divides are the subject of the body of the paper.

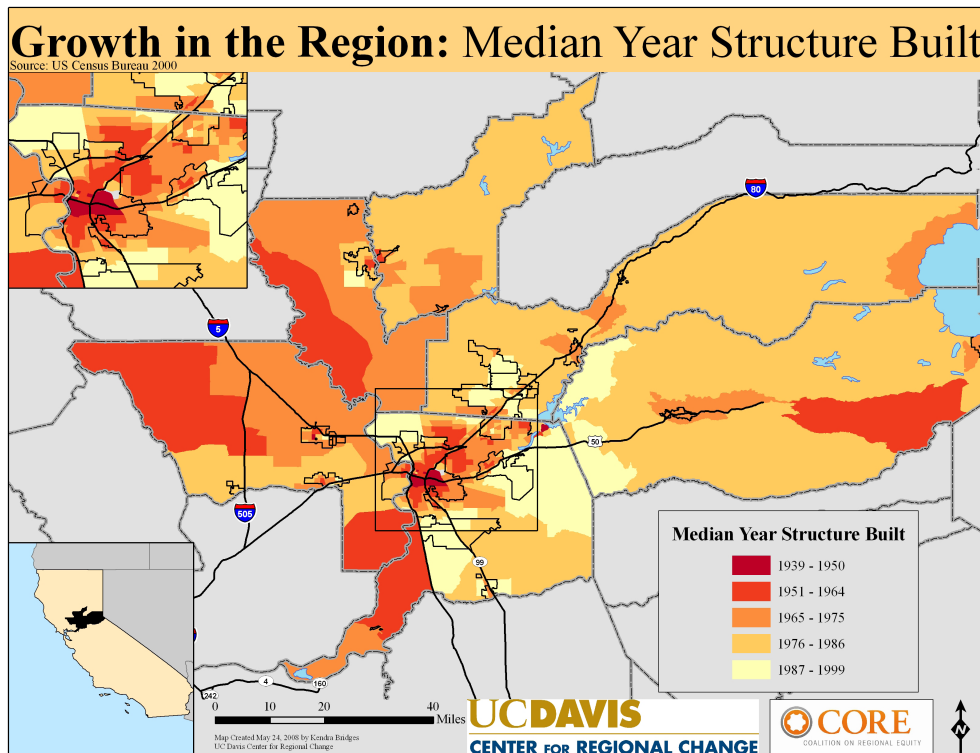


Figure 1. Median year Structures were Built, SCORECARD project.



Attempts to understand the region's divisions and connections must be informed by its history as a global crossroads for immigrants. To recall key events in the region's history—Native American settlement, Spanish/ Mexican and then Anglo colonization, the Gold Rush, statehood, development of the transcontinental railroad, Japanese internment, post-WWII suburbanization, industrialization of agriculture, and a recent surge in immigrants from coastal California and all points on the globe—is to bring to mind a past replete with social and cultural dominance and resistance. Current patterns of disparity and fragmentation, of connection and mobilization, emerge out of this history of rapid and often disruptive social and economic change, and the political decisions which shaped and accompanied that change.

### *Early Settlement*

Before the arrival of Western settlers the nine-county region included tribal territories of the Wintun, Miwok, Maidu (Nisenan and Cancow), Pomo, and Washo (Krober, 1925). While large portions of these tribes were decimated by disease, violence, and expropriation of land and resources by white settlers and governments, Native Americans from all of these tribes along with members of tribes from across the country continue to reside in the region (Sarris, 1997; also *News from Native California*). Tribal-run casinos in the Capay Valley and in the Sierra Foothills represent significant land use and economic development engines and provide resources for increased political clout by California tribes (Goldberg and Champagne, 2002; Koenig, 2002).

The modern development of the region is traced to the Spanish land-grants and missions in the 1700s, and then the Gold Rush, prompted by the accidental discovery of gold in what is today El Dorado County. Between 1848 and 1860, the non-Indian population of California increased from 14,000 to 380,000 (Isenberg, 2005, p. 23). The rapid growth, combined with the speculative and city-building efforts of California businessmen, led to the development of key settlements in Sacramento, Marysville and Stockton (the latter just south of the nine-county Capital Region).

Early immigrants to the region included not just Europeans but many from Asia and Latin America (Datel & Dingemans, 2008, p. 173). In the late 1800s, Chinese immigrants arrived in California to work on the railroads for low wages. Like the gold prospectors before them, many stayed to become farmers, taking advantage of the completion of the transcontinental railroad to become exporters of fresh fruit and produce to eastern markets (Campbell and Feenstra, 2001). But unlike their American-born counterparts, these immigrant workers soon faced active discrimination. The Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 prohibited immigration from China and the Alien Land Act of 1913 prohibited Asian immigrants from owning land.<sup>4</sup> This anti-Chinese sentiment is reflective of broader patterns of what Almaguer (1994) calls California's history of "white supremacy."

<sup>4</sup>

See [http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/themed\\_collections/subtopic2a.html](http://www.calisphere.universityofcalifornia.edu/themed_collections/subtopic2a.html)



## Recent Immigration

In the last two decades a new wave of immigration has occurred, spurred by disruptive events around the globe and abetted by a relatively well-developed infrastructure of refugee resettlement programs in and around Sacramento. A prominent example is the large Ukrainian immigration spawned by the breakup of the Soviet Union, but the list of sending countries is long and varied. Citing data from the Harvard University Civil Rights Project, a 2002 *Time Magazine* article declared Sacramento the most integrated place in the country, attributing the spatially dispersed housing patterns to affordable housing, innovative housing programs for low-income families, and the presence of state agencies and colleges to provide various and dispersed employment possibilities (Stodghill & Bower, 2002).

While the city of Sacramento was 10th among American cities in number of refugees resettled between 1983 and 2004 (Datel & Dingemans, 2008), it has also been a site for re-location by refugees who have first settled elsewhere. For example, this secondary migration fueled the growth of Sacramento city's "Little Saigon." The Pacific Plaza there was started by 1980s Vietnamese refugees who, after first building successful restaurant enterprises in San Francisco, chose to invest in Sacramento because of its growing Asian population and cheap property (Datel & Dingemans, 2008).

The greater Capital Region is rich in the cultural wealth brought by immigrant groups (as well as non-immigrant groups such as Native Americans and long-time African-American populations). Cultural events, such as one of the largest Sikh festivals outside of India (held in Yuba City), as well as festivals by groups ranging from the Hmong, to Mexican, to Portuguese, to Greek, enliven the regional landscape (Fujimoto & Sandoval, 2006; California Travel News, 2010).

Immigrants certainly have changed the racial and ethnic make-up of the region, but some argue that "they have enriched the cultural geography of the suburbs, while essentially leaving intact its socioeconomic cleavages" (Datel & Dingemans, 2008, p. 172). The prevalence of English-language learners in schools across the region maps closely with schools where poverty and low student achievement are the norm (see table 3). In addition to English and Spanish, students in Sacramento County schools speak more than 52 languages (Datel & Dingemans, 2008, p. 191).

On the whole, Asian immigrants have fared better economically and socially than other groups, rivaling whites in their levels of educational achievement, for example. But the overall trends hide sharp disparities.

**Table 3. Dropout Rates and % English Learners**

County	Overall rate	Dropout Rate 2007-08 <sup>1</sup>					English Learners as percent of enrollment <sup>2</sup>
		Latino	African Amer	White	Asian	Other	
Amador	2.93%	1.8%	0.0%	2.8%	0.0%	4.6%	3.9%
El Dorado	3.70%	9.9%	24.3%	2.4%	4.8%	2.6%	6.3%
Nevada	2.21%	5.5%	2.9%	1.9%	2.6%	4.1%	1.7%
Placer	2.23%	4.9%	2.5%	1.8%	1.8%	2.6%	7.1%
Sacramento	5.63%	7.1%	8.8%	4.2%	3.1%	10.0%	18.4%
Solano	5.86%	7.3%	8.7%	3.7%	4.3%	7.2%	14.3%
Sutter	5.41%	5.4%	18.0%	4.8%	4.7%	5.1%	17.2%
Yolo	6.10%	7.7%	26.4%	3.4%	3.1%	18.5%	22.5%
Yuba	9.08%	12.1%	12.9%	8.4%	3.3%	11.0%	18.4%
Region	5.06%	7.2%	9.2%	3.5%	3.3%	7.2%	na

<sup>1</sup>Source: Colorado Department of Education (adjusted by Educating for Equity team - see paper for explanation)

<sup>2</sup>Source: California Dept of Education, Educational Demographics Office (language census, elsch09 8/19/09).

Note: Some of the racial categories were collapsed because the numbers were so low in the individual ethnic categories in some counties. Asian combines Asian, Pacific Islander and Filipino, while Other combines American Indian/Alaskan Native, Multiple, a

Immigration from Southeast Asia increased dramatically after the end of the Vietnam War in the 1970s, particularly from Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. Hmong, Mien, Miao and other Southeast Asian youth from refugee backgrounds often struggle to find support within schools, health-care, and other institutions, given the paucity of adults who can understand their culture and help them navigate available services and supports. As a result, many are dropping out or faring poorly in area schools, outcomes associated with poor economic, health, and developmental trajectories (Erbstein, Burciaga, and Rodriguez, 2010).

Immigration can be either a way to enrich the region through global connections and cultural diversity, or a source of fragmentation as some new immigrant groups turn inward for various forms of social support, often in the face of active discrimination and exclusion by others. Such discrimination hurts the immigrant populations in material and psychological ways, but also impoverishes the mainstream society that loses out on the community cultural wealth of these populations (Yosso, 2005). Building stronger regional connections requires processes that include all groups, including youth, in civic life and the development of individual and organizational relationships that bridge social and cultural differences. See Romero and London (2010) for a treatment of young adult voting behavior and civic engagement across the diverse cultures of the region.

An example of the latter is the effort of Sacramento Area Congregations Together, a faith-based community organization affiliated with PICO (People Improving Communities through Organizing) National Network, to build a coalition of Latino, Hmong, and African-American parents and other allies to improve graduation rates in the racially diverse Sacramento City Unified School District (Campbell et al., 2009).

### *California's front and back*

Patterns of division and linkage can be understood as partially rooted in a tension between California coastal areas and inland/valley communities or what Fujimoto and Sandoval (2005, p 1022) call the “front” and “back” of California. The “front” is the coast where wealth and power are concentrated and the Valley is the “back...where invisible stagehands move the props that produce the visible California front” (Fujimoto & Sandoval, 2005; p. 1022). Haslan (1994) refers to the greater Central Valley—of which the Sacramento Valley is the northern extent—as “the Other California” while Thayer (2003, p.30) describes popular conceptions of the Valley, with its vast, flat spaces, intense summer heat, winter tule fog, and rural poverty as a “‘negative’ space: a hot, boring, flat region to pass through on the way to somewhere else.” Cutting in the other direction is a kind of local pride that resists the perception of coastal arrogance and asserts the value of what is unique in the heritage of the inland region, including its agricultural riches and its history as a crossroads where various migrants groups meet, settle, and (sometimes) thrive.

### *Diverse Economic Drivers*

No single economic interest dominates the nine-county region, although government, retail and health care-related occupations are leading sources of jobs in most locales. As shown in Benner, Mazinga, and Huang (2010), Sacramento County is by far the region’s population and job center. As the seat of state government, jobs in the public sector represent a large share of employment, but significant economic diversification exists. The Sacramento Employment and Training Agency—which houses the local Workforce Investment Board—has identified nine critical economic clusters in the area: administrative and support services; architecture and engineering; construction; health care and support services; human services; information technology; installation, maintenance and repair; tourism and hospitality, and transportation and production.

The presence of two major universities (UC Davis and California State University, Sacramento) and seven highly regarded community colleges not only provides upward mobility opportunities for many of the region’s youth, but also spurs economic innovation and growth. Venture capital firms with links to these universities have created growing clusters in biotechnology and other technology-related industries.<sup>5</sup> In addition to providing thousands of jobs, the UC Davis Medical Center now provides services throughout northern and central California through its telemedicine program. Initiatives through CSU Sacramento, such as their new multi-million dollar smart-grid facility—a collaboration with the Sacramento Municipal Utility District (SMUD)—are driving green technology innovation.

The California Economic Strategy Panel divides the state into ten regional clusters of counties based on shared economic trends and conditions (California Economic Strategy Panel, 2008, see figure 1).

<sup>5</sup> According to the UC Innovation Access from 2003-2009, there were 25 start-ups with a focus on biotechnology, clean technology or high technology launched out of UC Davis: 7 of these located in the city of Davis. Kenney and Patton (<http://entregene.com/data/uc-davis/>) have developed a social network map of all the 48 UC Davis-derived start ups since the 1980s (Kenney & Patton, 2008).

Their classification carves the nine counties surrounding Sacramento into four different regional clusters, symptomatic of the overall pattern of fragmentation in the region. The six SACOG counties (El Dorado, Placer, Sacramento, Sutter, Yolo and Yuba) form the Greater Sacramento Region, while Nevada County joins other northern mountain counties in the Northern California Region, Amador is linked to the Central Sierra Region, and Solano is considered part of the Bay Area Region.

### *Agricultural Variety*

The common denominator linking these nine counties geographically is their relationship to the Great Central Valley, the traditional agricultural engine of the state. While agriculture (including forestry) is no longer the dominant employer in the Capital Region, it remains an important part of the economy in all nine counties and represents a significant land use, although to quite different degrees and with an emphasis on different crops. Apart from its value in generating revenue and jobs, agriculture remains a potent symbol of place and farmland protection provides a point of connection that animates many advocates of regional planning.

Richter (2009, 2010) has mapped detailed, field-level cropping patterns of agriculture in the Capital Region and has pointed to the implications for water use, labor processes, and economic development patterns. Cropping patterns contribute to the identity of particular counties and sub-regions. Foothill counties are known for timber, apples and now winemaking, along with rice production in western Placer County. Yuba is known as the “prune capital of the world” and competes with Sutter County each year for first place nationwide in prune and plum production. Sutter County is second in the nation for peaches, third for rice and seventh in tomato production. Yolo County’s highest value crops in 2008 were processing tomatoes, alfalfa hay, rice, wine grapes and seed crops (Center for Economic Development, 2009-2010a, 2009-2010b, 2009-2010e; California Farm Bureau Federation, 2008a).

Many of these agricultural commodities are produced by ethnically-specific farm owners and laborers. For example, many of the peaches and other stone fruit farms are owned by Sikhs from India; many dairies are owned by immigrants from the Portuguese Azores or from the Netherlands, and nearly all farm labor is supplied by immigrants from Mexico, including many of Mexican indigenous ethnicities (Fujimoto and Sandoval, 2006). As a result, the farm population in the region is decidedly more diverse ethnically than typical images of small farming might suggest.

### *Agriculture as Source of Wealth and Poverty*

In agriculture, “land owners developed an economic incentive to maintain the influx of newcomer farm workers to hold down their labor costs” (Martin 2003, p. 33), setting in place social structures characterized by “poverty amid prosperity” (Taylor, Martin & Fix, 1997 ). High levels of agricultural production with ready sources of cheap labor led to a “two-tiered system of farming” with the farmer accruing profitable work and the farm worker experiencing poverty and its related problems (Madison, 2002). Mechanization and globalization have exacerbated farm labor issues, causing devastating unemployment in some places, often as high as 20% in some rural counties (Thayer, 2003). Put differently, “the front of the Valley, visible to the outside, is its agricultural productivity, which is responsible for the Valley’s recognition as the richest farming region in the world. In the back is

a prevalence of low wage-earning agricultural workers, persistent inequalities, and, despite those negatives, remarkable cultural diversity” (Fujimoto & Sandoval, 2005).

During times when the overall state economy was expanding, some agricultural workers found jobs in the non-farm economy such as construction, landscaping and domestic labor. In tough times, and particularly in the more recent past when economic restructuring has meant declining wages for those with little education, finding a path to upward mobility has become more difficult. Anti-immigrant sentiment, fueled by racism and xenophobia has also contributed to a constriction of economic and political opportunities. This is particularly true for immigrant groups whose culture and language are considered more “foreign” relative to the European norm (Martin 2003, pp. 180-81).

### *Pursuing and contesting sustainable development*

Agricultural and forestry practices, along with those of other extractive industries such as mining, prompt environmental disputes and raise questions about how the region can maintain working landscapes while honoring the environmental amenities—land, air, water, and species—that make it a desirable place to live. Learning how to do this does not come easily, as those affected by disputes over the northern spotted owl, rice burning, mercury contamination, or ongoing water wars can attest. Out of these disputes new regional connections are being made and a still embryonic vision of sustainable development is being nurtured (Walker and Fortmann, 2003; Walker and Hurlet, 2004; Kusel, 1996; Sierra Business Council, 1997; Sierra Business Council, 2010; Sierra Nevada Conservancy, 2009; Sierra Nevada Alliance, 2010; South Yuba River Citizens League, 2010).

### *Housing and the Political Economy of Regional Growth*

Efforts to promote sustainable development must confront the reality of a burgeoning population. Arguably, new houses are the most important “crop” in all the counties, as Sacramento and Bay Area commuters expand an ever-widening search for more affordable housing (see tables 4 and 5). Many new homes have sprouted along the I-80 and US 50 transportation corridors, which bisect the region from east to west and connect the Bay Area to popular tourist destinations in Lake Tahoe. Residents living near these corridors live with rapid development patterns that are similar to one another but often in sharp contrast to their fellow county residents who live at a greater distance north or south of the major east-west highways.

Despite the significant levels of immigration from beyond US borders, the single most significant source of new residents are individuals and families migrating from the

**Table 4. Total New Housing Units Authorized by Building Permits - California, 1994 to 2007**

Year	Ama- dor	E Dorado	Nevada	Placer	Sacra- mento	Solano	Sutter	Yolo	Yuba	Region	State
1994	163	1,024	737	2,861	5,129	1,501	463	683	155	12,716	97,047
1995	186	880	730	2,574	3,863	1,115	474	709	120	10,651	85,293
1996	140	1,486	599	2,847	3,870	1,737	287	798	118	11,882	94,283
1997	118	1,079	645	3,837	4,339	1,542	246	714	139	12,659	111,716
1998	157	1,172	668	5,206	6,842	2,204	208	1,591	153	18,201	125,707
1999	256	1,435	815	4,896	7,743	1,953	183	1,465	221	18,967	140,137
2000	274	1,562	847	6,379	7,750	2,346	249	1,216	84	20,707	148,540
2001	239	2,174	680	5,974	9,434	2,560	447	1,300	210	23,018	148,757
2002	315	1,947	912	7,188	12,854	2,461	658	1,389	376	28,100	167,761
2003	403	1,939	912	5,254	13,833	2,678	991	1,763	611	28,384	195,682
2004	541	2,196	979	4,894	12,962	3,022	1,300	2,215	1,697	29,806	212,960
2005	339	1,731	829	5,294	9,749	2,553	1,328	1,718	1,703	25,244	208,972
2006	219	1,189	639	3,205	6,663	1,300	360	1,270	1,006	15,851	164,280
2007	163	894	450	2,413	4,223	973	276	924	756	11,072	113,034

Source: Department of Finance, Economic Research Unit

Bay Area or other coastal California locations. These new residents sometimes identify more closely with the Bay Area than they do with their particular locale or with the Capital Region (Walker and Fortmann, 2004; Beebe, 2010). Flows of capital and people have spread from the Bay Area across the I-80 corridor and into the foothills. According to an IRS report, between 1990 and 1999 one in five people moving into the region were from the Bay Area (as cited in Leavenworth, 1999). Placer and El Dorado counties were at or near the top in their rate of growth among all California counties during the past two decades.<sup>6</sup>

**Table 5. Change in Population and Agricultural Land in HY/HR Region  
1990-2008**

County	Population <sup>1</sup>			Total agricultural lands (acres) <sup>2</sup>			
	1990	2008	Percent Change	1990	2008	Acres Lost	Percent Lost
Amador	30039	37,937	26.3%	203,575	198,392	5,183	2.5%
El Dorado	125,995	180,316	43.1%	273,429	259,884	13,545	5.0%
Nevada	78,510	98,959	26.0%	160,126	142,827	17,299	10.8%
Placer*	172,196	338,506	96.6%	203,047	158,370	44,677	22.0%
Sacramento	1,041,219	1,427,094	37.1%	419,620	369,264	50,356	12.0%
Solano	340,421	425,785	25.1%	383,187	357,816	25,371	6.6%
Sutter*	64,415	96,095	49.2%	362,288	343,639	18,649	5.1%
Yolo	141,092	199,930	41.7%	567,602	536,043	31,559	5.6%
Yuba*	58,228	72,553	24.6%	238,628	226,588	12,040	5.0%
Region	2,052,115	2,877,175	40.2%	2,811,502	2,592,823	218,679	7.8%

<sup>1</sup>Source: E-3 California County Race/Ethnic Population Estimates and Components by Year, July 1, 2000-2008

<sup>2</sup>Source: California Department of Conservation, Division of Land Resource Protection

\* Total Area inventoried changed in 2008 due to adoption of updated county boundary file; adjacent counties gained or lost corresponding acreages.

The trend toward foothill development began mid-century and has accelerated since. In the 1950s Charles Litton Sr. moved his high-tech Litton Industries from what would later become Silicon Valley to Grass Valley (Nevada County), initiating a series of high-tech relocations or branch openings (including Apple, Hewlett Packard, and Intel) in the Capital Region (Benner & Pastor Jr., 2008; Walters, 1992). Attracted by lower housing costs, the prospect of better schools, and (in some cases) by the region's natural amenities, new businesses and their employees have fueled rapid growth. They also bring new ideas. For example, many become proponents of farmland protection, stricter growth controls, and more coordinated regional planning, lest the region come to resemble the places they left behind (Beebe, 2010; Campbell and Feenstra, 2001; Walker and Fortmann, 2004).

This intra-state migration caused housing prices to skyrocket in the nine county region. Traditionally known for having relatively affordable housing, Sacramento became one of the least affordable markets in the United States during the early 2000s: "From 1996 to 2005, the median price of a home tripled, yet the median income only increased by slightly more than one-third" (Sacramento Mutual Housing Association, 2010). A dramatic decline in housing values during the most recent few years has helped return prices to more reasonable levels.

<sup>6</sup> There are indications this trend may be changing. El Dorado county actually lost 284 households in 2006-2007, the first time in ten years that net migration was negative (Center for Economic Development, 2009-2010a).

The region has fared less well than other parts of the state during the recent recession. Over-expansion of speculative housing, coupled with over-extension of credit and questionable loan practices have resulted in a foreclosure crisis that has impacted thousands of homeowners (Kolko, 2008; Kasler, 2007; Lopez, 2008). The spill-over from being near the epicenter for the home mortgage crisis (in the Stockton/ Modesto area) and dramatic cutbacks in state and local government employment as the state fiscal crisis deepens, have led to high unemployment and extreme fiscal stress on individuals, businesses, and local governments.

As social need becomes further concentrated spatially, residents who have housing choices available to them choose less-impooverished locales. At the same time, communities where poverty is concentrated are challenged to attract investment, a major limitation that only continues their cycle of decline (Orfield, 2002). Residential choices today—and limits on those choices in the past—play a considerable role in shaping youth opportunities.



## Political Structures and Dynamics as Drivers of Youth Disparities

The nature of youth disparities in the region and the role of regional dynamics in creating or ameliorating these disparities is the focus of the entire Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions study. Other elements of the report describe and assess how these dynamics play out in four critical areas: education, labor market attachment, civic engagement, and health. In this section, we briefly consider the consequences of regional fragmentation in exacerbating political divisions which drive youth disparities in all four of these areas.

### *Political fragmentation from above and below*

In the U.S. political system, regions are a challenging scale for action and cooperation, nested uneasily between local governments and state or federal jurisdictions, but without their formal powers and authority (Orfield, 2002; Pastor, Benner and Matsuoka, 2009). The nine-county Capital Region is no exception. There is no single stage on which proponents of regional collaboration can make their voices heard. Instead, successful efforts to overcome regional fragmentation must cajole often reluctant partners to join a chorus that performs infrequently and with little practice.

From above, state Assembly, state Senate, and U.S. Congressional districts carve up the region into gerrymandered enclaves that reinforce political differences (for example, between urban, suburban, and rural) and frustrate efforts to represent the collective interests of the region as a whole (for example, in a thriving regional economy supported by strong and equitable educational achievement). Of five State Senate Districts, nine Assembly Districts and seven Congressional Districts that share terrain with the nine-county Capital Region, only one Senate District, three Assembly Districts and one Congressional District are completely nestled within it.

From below, the region is divided into many small-scale localities which prize local control and autonomy. In the nine-county region there are 38 incorporated cities and towns, 47 unincorporated communities, nine county governments, 111 school districts, and 424 special districts. Research suggests that while small jurisdictions often develop inter-local agreements that facilitate the delivery of municipal services, their parochial interests typically impede cooperation on more contentious spillover issues such as mass transit, environmental protection, fair share housing, and sprawl (Howell-Moroney, 2008).

Ideological divides add to political fragmentation. The urban center in Sacramento is historically Democratic, as is the university town of Davis. But as one moves into many suburban and rural communities Republican voting patterns are more typical. Basic differences over taxes and the role of government often make it difficult to craft regional solutions with broad appeal. In particular, a libertarian streak in many rural areas of the region cuts against public investments in education, social service and related infrastructure. A growing number of “decline to state” voters, particularly among younger adults, could play a role in shifting this pattern in the future.

### *Consequences of political fragmentation for youth disparity*

As in other areas across the U.S., post-WWII suburbanization created patterns of racial and class

segregation in the Capital Region, resulting in disparate access to good schools, healthcare, housing, and related civic amenities. As one scholar recently put it, “municipal boundaries not only reflect clusters of similarly situated people, they also serve to restrict access to opportunity structures, protecting the advantages of children who are lucky enough to grow up in the right communities and severely reducing the life chances for success in others” (Howell-Moroney, 2008, p. 101; see also Galster and Keeney, 1988; Powell, 2002).

The California Reinvestment Coalition determined in 2001 that Sacramento was one of the major California cities facing “racial and spatial subprime loan concentration” (Hernandez, 2009, pp. 301–301). This concentration is traceable to past policies and practices of racial exclusion, including the redlining of Sacramento’s West End in the 1940s (where racial minorities were highly concentrated), followed by urban renewal and highway construction in the 1950s. These events displaced the majority of the area’s non-white populations, many to the south side of the city and into unincorporated communities in the county where racially restrictive covenants were not as common (but where physical infrastructure, transportation, and services often lag behind incorporated areas). Patterns of subprime lending in the last ten years follow the same geography, concentrated spatially and racially in these same neighborhoods (Hernandez, 2009).

Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that the nearly unanimous answer to the question “Is this region a good place for youth to grow up?” when we interviewed regional leaders of youth-serving institutions was “It depends on where.” For every El Dorado Hills, where the per capita personal income is \$44,721, there are communities like Esparto in Yolo County where the corresponding figure is \$27,466 (American Community Survey, 2006–08 estimates in 2008 inflation-adjusted dollars).

Poorer communities and neighborhoods often lack the resources to develop and sustain high quality institutions supporting youth development, such as libraries, sports leagues, arts programs, youth-serving nonprofits, or youth commissions (Connell et al., 1995). After amassing data showing that high school sports teams from higher income communities routinely prevail over those from lower income communities, *The Sacramento Bee* editorial page put it bluntly:

First, let us dispense with the myth—if anybody still subscribes to it—that California’s public schools are a land of equal opportunity. They are not. A child’s address, placing her in a poor neighborhood or an affluent one, is often the primary determinant of the quality of her education—of whether she has decent textbooks, a capable teacher, a functioning restroom (“Haves and Have-nots” 2005, p. B6).

This portrait is consistent with the “neighborhood effects” literature, which argues that increased concentrations of poverty are associated with failing schools, high crime, high dropout rates, and increased risk of childhood death (Jencks & Mayer, 1990; Massey, 1990). As Orfield writes, “whether poor or middle class, young people who live amid concentrated poverty are far more likely to become pregnant as teenagers, drop out of high school, and remain jobless than their counterparts in socioeconomically mixed neighborhoods” (Orfield, 2002, p. 54). Literature on the social and spatial determinants of health (Mormot, 2005; Lee, 2005; Williams and Collins, 1995, 2001; Yen and Syme, 1999; Evans and Kantrowitz, 2002) also affirm the salience of physical, social, and political factors—and emphasizes that disparities related to race, ethnicity and class affect health status to a much

larger degree than access to health care alone.

Fragmented governance institutions weaken the sense of collective responsibility for overcoming these disparities. Through suburban incorporation, exclusionary zoning, and related mechanisms, wealthier segments of society often do not share a common local government with their poorer neighbors, making it easier to deny a sense of shared destiny or responsibility.<sup>7</sup> Datel and Dingemans note that “Sacramentans are sorting themselves politically as they make residential choices” (2008, p. 182) and a *Sacramento Bee* report on political enclaves in the region concludes that “Discord and ideological differences between the Sacramento area’s urban and suburban communities have for years hampered efforts to solve regional problems ranging from low-income housing to crowded freeways” (Sanders, 2004).

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<sup>7</sup> Incorporation can be a boon for residents of the new city, who receive better public services and often will pay more taxes to receive them. However, it can add to the service-providing burden of county government, as its tax base shrinks and the population needing service becomes more spatially fragmented and thus harder and more expensive to serve. Sacramento County—with seven incorporated cities (three of which have incorporated in the last 13 years) has been especially affected by these dynamics and faces another possible incorporation move by the residents of Arden-Arcade.

Given the portrait of the region we have just sketched, what are the prospects for crafting strategies that advance a regional youth equity and well-being agenda? While the forces generating fragmentation are powerful, various shared interests and concerns also create opportunities for fruitful regional connections. Some of these may be spurred by the efforts of actors within the region, while others will result from federal or state policies that provide mandates or incentives to spur planning at the regional scale, such as are included in federal transportation policy or recent state legislation to promote regional planning (SB375).

Not all successful strategies will necessarily involve a regional approach. For example, while the tendency of local officials to be parochial cannot be overstated, it can also be used to advantage. Voters can be surprisingly open-minded in approving taxes as long as the revenue stays local and supports their own youth and community. For example, a recent poll of residents in the city of Sacramento, commissioned by Sierra Health Foundation, found strong support for a parcel tax to fund positive youth development programs such as job training, educational-enrichment, and gang prevention. While a proposal to place this tax on the November 2010 ballot was rejected by the Sacramento City Council, these results indicate that it might be possible to advance tax proposals to support youth programs in multiple local jurisdictions, while drawing on some sort of regional overlay (e.g., conversations, advice, and logistical help) for strategic support. The difficulty would be in ensuring that this strategy actually impacted regional equity, given the tendency of youth and school tax measures to fare better in more advantaged communities.

In crafting strategies to improve regional youth equity and well-being, leaders can learn from the successes and limitations of recent efforts. In this section, we consider a cross-section of strategies that suggest lessons for future work. The examples we consider all impact youth and families, although some do so in a much more direct fashion and with potentially greater impacts on youth equity.

Transportation planning is the policy arena where regionalism is perhaps at its most advanced and in this respect the most important regional institution is the Sacramento Area Council of Governments (SACOG). Made up of representatives from six counties and 22 cities, SACOG “provides transportation planning and funding for the region, and serves as a forum for the study and resolution of regional issues. In addition to preparing the region’s long-range transportation plan, SACOG approves the distribution of affordable housing in the region and assists in planning for transit, bicycle networks, clean air and airport land uses” (website description, 5/12/10).<sup>8</sup>

SACOG’s “Blueprint” initiative is perhaps the area’s most widely-known example of regional-scale planning. The process informed SACOG’s formal Metropolitan Transportation Plan by providing a vision for growth in the six-county Sacramento region through 2050. SACOG convened community workshops with over 5,000 people to determine the “Preferred Case” scenario for future growth. Approved unanimously by SACOG’s board at the end of 2004, the Blueprint serves today as a framework to inform local planners and governments as they make land use and related decisions. It is considered a national exemplar for regional planning that integrates land use and transportation through a rigorous, data-driven, and participatory approach.

Because of its direct link to commute patterns, job availability, and quality of the built environment, transportation planning has large implications for youth well-being. Youth and adults interviewed for the Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions study identified transportation as a key area of concern, particularly given the relatively low quality of public transportation options on which low income communities depend. As one way in which transportation issues affects young people, parents who must commute long distances are less available to support youth in their own or other families (Kuhns, 2010).

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<sup>8</sup> Counties included in SACOG are El Dorado, Placer, Yuba, Sutter, Sacramento and Yolo. Of the nine counties in our study, Amador, Nevada, and Solano counties are not in the SACOG region.

Workforce development is another policy arena in which efforts to think and plan with the regional scale in mind are prominent, driven by the importance of regional economic clusters. These clusters—such as health care, construction, information technology, or green industries—need skilled workers and hold the promise for the area’s youth of attractive career ladders with living wages and health benefits. Significant organizational and collaborative infrastructure already exists in the region, much of it organized by local Workforce Investment Boards and their partners.

While community colleges are viewed as major contributors to this effort, a good deal of concern surrounds the prevailing disconnect between K-12 schooling and workforce development. This disconnect is seen by many as a major cause of high dropout rates and related problems (Breslau et. al, 2010). A variety of experiments in re-envisioning that connection (variously termed vocational education, career technical education, multiple pathways, linked learning, etc.) are underway, and could be monitored to ascertain their effect on youth equity and their viability in both urban and rural contexts (see Rios, Campbell, and Romero, 2010). The growing and related service learning movement is another important locus of recent activity and potential investment and evaluation.

In an era where traditional youth jobs are increasingly being taken by older workers, finding ways to build workforce skills in the context of existing youth activities such as school becomes critically important. Expanding or reinvesting in summer youth job programs is another area where public investments are needed.

Affordable housing advocates have made regional equity organizing a priority, as indicated by the emergence of the Sacramento Housing Alliance's Coalition on Regional Equity (CORE). CORE formed in 2007 out of a diverse coalition of community groups that had united to move forward a plan for affordable housing. CORE ([www.equitycoalition.org](http://www.equitycoalition.org)) is based on the notion that multiple movements for social justice (including affordable housing, transit, civil rights, environmentalism, labor and others) can, in the words of Legal Services of Northern California co-director, Bill Kennedy, "march under their own banners, but in the same direction: towards regional equity."

Youth issues are not often considered in these types of discussions, but as our Healthy Youth/Healthy Regions work suggests, clearly deserve increased consideration as part of a multi-faceted approach to regional equity.



As detailed in the working paper on Challenging Assumptions, Revealing Community Cultural Wealth (Burciaga and Erbstein, 2010), as well as Owens et al., 2010 informal social networks are often an important source of connection and support for youth in the region. Within these networks youth find adult allies who reinforce their cultural identities and help them navigate mainstream institutions and systems. Ethnic associations, religious groups, or organizations linking individuals of particular nationalities are examples, but sometimes the support can be less formal, as when a neighbor or social worker makes it a point to connect with a particular youth. Although they are often ignored in policy discussions, a more intentional effort to understand, support, and strengthen these networks has promise as part of a larger youth equity strategy.

Within agriculture, one example of a regional-scale planning and mobilization is the Sacramento Food System Collaborative, funded by the California Endowment and led by Valley Vision, a Sacramento-based non-profit “committed to regional problem-solving as well as impartial research for sound decision-making” (Valley Vision web site). An “action tank” formed in 1994, Valley Vision seeks to partner with regional organizations and agencies to identify issues at a regional scale, serve as a “neutral convener,” and provide information and connection. In the Food System Collaborative, Valley Vision has brought together private, public and nonprofit groups to influence regional policies related to “food security and food access, land use planning, local food purchasing plans, and rural economic development” (Sacramento/Capital Region Food System Collaborative).

These efforts contribute to a broader effort to make nutritious food more available, including efforts to make this happen in low income neighborhoods (Crandall, 2010). The work takes on special importance given the widespread recognition of increased obesity in youth (Geraghty, 2010). These problems can be especially severe when family budgets force overreliance on cheap and available alternatives that are less nutritious, such as soft drinks or fast foods.

For environmentalists concerned with understanding the scale at which many environmental problems occur—watersheds, foodsheds, etc.—“the bioregion is emerging as the most logical locus and scale for a sustainable, regenerative community to take root and to take place” (Thayer, 2003, p. 3). An example of an effort to take this idea seriously is the UC Davis Putah-Cache Bioregion Project, which draws on “an integrated interdisciplinary suite of research and educational activities in the Putah and Cache Creek watersheds...to develop foundations for community planning, resource management, and partnerships in the watershed” (web site description, 5/12/10).<sup>9</sup> The project involves faculty, students, and staff from diverse UC Davis departments and connects with nonprofit and governmental organizations. As part of the work local youth gain greater knowledge about the heritage of the region and the environment in which they live.

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<sup>9</sup> For more information, see <http://bioregion.ucdavis.edu/who/overview.html>

Concerns for the well-being of children and youth have motivated some exemplary regional initiatives. For example, Healthy Kids, Healthy Futures joins five counties (including Colusa, Sacramento, Placer, El Dorado, and Yuba—the latter four from our nine county region) to enroll young children in health insurance programs for which they are eligible (California Children's Health Initiatives).<sup>10</sup> Since 2006, Sierra Health Foundation has committed almost \$5 million to nine community-based coalitions in which adults and youth work together to increase meaningful supports and opportunities for youth (focusing primarily on ages 10 to 15). These community action grants form the centerpiece of a larger funding strategy known as REACH, which has committed \$8 million over four years to support community youth development. In addition to building local infrastructure, two regional youth development conferences (and a third planned for November 2010) have highlighted the importance of youth development and fostered connections among a vibrant but traditionally loose knit group of youth service providers and other youth allies. The "Building Healthy Communities" program launched by The California Endowment has selected South Sacramento as one its 14 place-based sites for a 10-year investment to promote a comprehensive strategy integrating attention to livable communities, access to healthy food, violence prevention, and positive youth development to address the social determinates of health and health disparities.

<sup>10</sup> For more information see <http://www.cchi4kids.org/localchis.php>.

*Regional tax sharing* is one mechanism to offset fragmentation and temper the fiscalization of land use—the latter referring to the process by which jurisdictions compete for high sales tax, revenue-generating businesses like auto malls and big box retailers. Proponents of regional tax sharing argue it can lead to reinvestment in central cities and rural areas, help equalize services across a metropolitan area, and reduce unnecessary/wasteful competition between localities (Orfield, 2002). In 2002, such a plan for the Sacramento (SACOG) region passed the state Assembly, but failed in the state Senate. The proposal, spearheaded by then Assembly member and current Senate President Pro-Tem Darrell Steinberg (D-Sacramento), would have distributed sales tax revenues created by new growth across the SACOG six-county region. One-third of new, development-related sales tax dollars would remain in the place where it was generated, one-third would be distributed based on local population numbers, and one-third would be returned to the place where it was generated only if certain affordable housing and open-space preservation goals were met.

Critics of the plan included Dave Cox (R-Fair Oaks, Minority Leader) who argued: “This is a bill that literally wipes out local control. What it tells city councils and boards of supervisors is that (the Legislature) can do it better than you can, and therefore we ought to impose our will” (Sanders, 2002). Bee columnist Dan Walters described perceptions of the bill as a “money grab by a Democratic legislator for Democratic-voting Sacramento at the expense of Republican-oriented suburbs” (Walters, 2003). The SACOG Board took no official stand on the bill because its constituents were divided: representatives from Roseville, Elk Grove, West Sacramento and Folsom opposed it; while the city and county of Sacramento supported it (Vellinga, 2001).

*Children’s budgets.* Given the historically strong opposition to regional government, any realistic plan to confront intra-regional disparity in youth well-being will need to take local governments and their leaders seriously. Often these entities rely heavily on one-time grants to fund youth programs, an inherently fragile foundation for sustained effort and especially questionable in a region with comparatively few private foundations of any size. It also puts individual jurisdictions and youth serving entities in competition for limited grant funding, often enhancing turf issues and organizational tensions rather than fostering collaboration.

A different starting point might begin by noting that cities and counties spend an estimated 30% of their existing budgets on programs and services that directly or indirectly serve children and families, yet devote relatively little of their policy making to think about how those resources might be deployed more strategically (Gardner, 2005, p. 4). In fact, some have argued that the California state budget should be called a “children’s budget” because the majority of state spending either directly or indirectly affects youth well-being (including education, but also social and medical services, corrections, housing and so on). A few local governments such as Los Angeles and Contra Costa counties already have developed children’s budgets (Gardner, 2005). Related to the idea of children’s budgets are “youth impact assessments” that analyze the range of implications on youth of public and private projects such as housing, transportation, taxation, and other investments (Sylwander, 2001.)

## Conclusion: Beyond Fragmentation to Connection

As Gardner (2005) argues, there are both moral and self-interested reasons for all constituencies in the region to resist divisions and evasions and work collectively to improve youth well-being. By any moral yardstick, children and youth deserve interventions to help them cope with problems that are not of their own making. Furthermore—as the data included elsewhere in this report amply demonstrate—there are clear costs to the region of allowing continued disparity to stunt the development of large numbers of youth. The wealthy can do their best to insulate themselves from these costs, but they cannot escape them entirely and—at their best—do not wish to be part of a system that turns its back on needy youth.

In spite of the powerful forces of fragmentation, constructive collaboration at the regional scale is both possible and, in many cases, desirable. The Healthy Youth/ Healthy Regions project provides data to inform our understanding of the dramatic intraregional disparities in youth outcomes and opportunities. What might it mean to put youth in the center of a regional change strategy? How might such an effort pose distinctive challenges and present unique opportunities compared to previous regional initiatives? We hope this paper provides a base of information and a variety of perspectives that will shape this promising work in the years ahead.

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