



Life in Santa Cruz County

Community Assessment Project
Comprehensive Report

Year 6, 2000

Community Assessment Project Products

The Community Assessment Project's Year 6/2000 Comprehensive Report – hundreds of pages of data and survey results is available for \$25.00 at the United Way Office, 1220 41st Avenue, Capitola, CA 95010. Tel: 831-479-5466 Fax: 831-479-5477.

Customized reports, tailored to geographic, issue related and demographic specifications, are available by contacting Applied Survey Research.

Also available at no charge are the Community Report Card and a sixteen-page color magazine (Summary Report) of the Year Six, Community Assessment Project findings.

The report is also available on the World Wide Web at:
<http://www.appliedsurveyresearch.org> and <http://iccs.monterey.edu>.

About the Researcher

Applied Survey Research (ASR) is a nonprofit, social research firm dedicated to helping people build better communities by collecting meaningful data, facilitating information-based planning and developing custom strategies. The firm was founded on the principle that community improvement initiative sustainability and program success are closely tied to assessment of needs, evaluation of community goals and development of appropriate responses.

The Community Assessment Project is a prime example of a comprehensive evaluation of the needs of the community. Its goal is to stimulate dialogue about growing trends and to devise informed strategies for shaping future policies and effective actions.

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Table of Contents

Community Assessment Project Overview.....	v	Indicator 21..... Expenditures per Pupil	51
What’s New in 2000.....	viii	Indicator 22..... Test Scores – STAR	52
Legend.....	viii	Indicator 23..... Test Scores – Academic Performance Index (API)	57
Suggested Uses of this Report.....	ix	Indicator 24..... Test Scores – SAT	61
Acknowledgments.....	x	Indicator 25..... English Proficiency	63
2000 Community Goals & Heroes.....	xii	Indicator 26..... Ethnic Representation	65
Economic Issues.....	1	Indicator 27..... Bilingual Education	68
Legend	2	Indicator 28..... Expulsions	69
Community Goals & Key Indicators	3	Indicator 29..... High School Dropout Rates	70
Economic Summary	4	Indicator 30..... Satisfaction with Child’s Education	73
Indicator 1..... Economic Well-being	5	Indicator 31..... Satisfaction with Educational System	75
Indicator 2..... Retail Sales	8	Indicator 32..... Substance Abuse and Prevention Programs	79
Indicator 3..... Building Permit Valuation	11	Indicator 33..... School Safety	80
Indicator 4..... New Business	12	Indicator 34..... Parent Participation	81
Indicator 5..... Agricultural Production	13	Indicator 35..... Child care Enrollment	82
Indicator 6..... Tourism and Related Impacts	15	Indicator 36..... Child care	86
Indicator 7..... Net Job Growth	16	Indicator 37..... College Preparation Courses	88
Indicator 8..... Annual Unemployment Rates	18	Indicator 38..... Community College Attendance	90
Indicator 9..... Job Opportunities	19	Indicator 39..... College Attendance	92
Indicator 10..... Annual Payroll	21	Indicator 40..... Adult Education Course Enrollments	94
Indicator 11..... Median Wages for Selected Occupations	22	Indicator 41..... Job Training	96
Indicator 12..... Household Income	24	Indicator 42..... Education Level	97
Indicator 13..... Self Sufficiency Income Standards	26	Indicator 43..... Educational Attainment – 1990	98
Indicator 14..... Housing Affordability	27	Indicator 44..... Library Use	99
Indicator 15..... Poverty Level	35	Indicator 45..... Computer Use	101
Indicator 16..... Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) / CalWorks	39	Indicator 46..... Literacy	103
Indicator 17..... Government Financed or Nonprofit Housing	40	Health Issues.....	107
Indicator 18..... Child Support Collections	42	Legend	108
Education Issues.....	45	Community Goals & Key Indicators	109
Legend	46	Health Summary	110
Community Goals & Key Indicators	47	Indicator 47..... Access to Health Care	111
Education Summary	48	Indicator 48..... Low Income Health Care	115
Indicator 19..... Education Enrollment	49	Indicator 49..... Health Insurance	120
Indicator 20..... Student Demographics	50	Indicator 50..... Dental Care	123
		Indicator 51..... Dientes Community Dental Clinic	125
		Indicator 52..... Births	126
		Indicator 53..... Teen Births	127
		Indicator 54..... Prenatal Care Initiated in 1 st Trimester	129
		Indicator 55..... Prenatal Care Initiated in 1 st Trimester - Teens	131

Community Assessment Project Overview

Over the past six years, a consortium of public and private health, education, human service and civic organizations convened by the United Way of Santa Cruz County has sponsored the Community Assessment Project of Santa Cruz County (CAP), a collaborative project to measure and improve the quality of life in Santa Cruz County over a ten year period.

The goals of the CAP project are to continually improve the quality of life for Santa Cruz County residents, by:

- Raising public awareness of human needs, changing trends, emerging issues, and community problems;
- Providing accurate, credible and valid information on an ongoing basis to human service planners and those providing funds;
- Providing information for individual institutions to guide decision-making about creation, management and redesign of programs;
- Setting community goals using measurable quality of life indicators that will lead to positive, healthy development for individuals, families, and communities;
- Supporting and assisting with the establishment of collaborative action plans to achieve the community goals.

The CAP steering committee intends to provide the most relevant insights about the needs of residents which is necessary to point our community toward specific initiatives that will positively impact all residents.

Applied Survey Research (ASR), a not-for-profit social research firm was contracted by the United Way to incorporate best practices from other assessment efforts across the nation into a community assessment model that would provide public and private interests with clear information about past trends and current realities. Under the guidance of the CAP Steering Committee, ASR continues to manage

the project, collecting secondary (pre-existing) data and conducting the annual community survey for primary (public opinion) data.

The CAP community assessment model, now implemented for its sixth year, provides a comprehensive view of the quality of life in Santa Cruz County. It is based on credible primary (original) data and secondary (pre-existing) data that are gathered for a series of indicators in six areas: the Economy, Education, Health, Public Safety, the Natural Environment, and the Social Environment. The Comprehensive Report is a tool for concerned citizens from the private and public sectors to come together to review the numbers and turn them into a picture of where our county is headed. While the Comprehensive Report is the culmination of one year's activity, it outlines the trends over time and helps to lay the groundwork for planning and community action.

The CAP has nurtured and encouraged a common community focus by establishing Community Goals for the year 2004. There are two to three goals for each of the six topical areas of Economy, Education, Health, Public Safety, the Natural Environment, and the Social Environment. Progress toward these goals is tracked each year through measurable quality of life indicators.

As mentioned previously, one of the primary purposes of the CAP is to encourage collaborative community action that will positively impact Community Goals. In Year 6, we are pleased to note that community action has occurred at the individual organizational level as well as at the community group level.

Particularly noteworthy is the formation of new groups to address community improvement. One example has been the formation of the Investing in Children and Families – What Works!, an initiative that seeks to identify effective strategies, services and activities that support the CAP community goal of keeping children safe in their families and communities.

Other community initiatives include the formation of Together for Youth/Unidos Para Nuestros Jovenes coalition to develop a comprehensive prevention plan to reduce Santa Cruz County youth alcohol and drug use. Yet another example has been the establishment of the Latino Strategic Planning Collaborative focusing on the achievement of CAP goals within the Latino community.

Most recently, CAP results regarding housing and homelessness in Santa Cruz County led to the development of the Homeless 2000 Committee. This committee convened to gain a deeper understanding of homelessness in Santa Cruz County, by commissioning an in-depth Homeless 2000 Census and Needs Assessment. The final report was released in August, 2000.

The CAP annually honors community heroes, special individuals whose efforts help move Santa Cruz County toward the achievement of the community goals. These true-life heroes can be found throughout the community and are wonderful examples of “where the action is” in Santa Cruz County. This year’s heroes are highlighted on page xiii of this section

Methodology

Quality of Life Indicators

The CAP community assessment model relies on indicators as the primary measures to illustrate the status of a system or issue that might otherwise be too large and complex to understand. As an example, we might ask ourselves, “Do people have adequate access to health care?” Increasing use of the emergency room for non-emergency purposes could be an indicator that they do not.

For the purposes of this project, special groups known as Technical Advisory Committees (TAC’s) developed over one hundred quality of life indicators. These committees were represented by a rich mixture of professionals, advocates, and community volunteers, all of whom were experts in the respective areas under review.

The TAC’s used special criteria to develop the quality of life indicators used for this project. These criteria stipulated that indicators

need to be understandable to the general user and the public, responsive quickly and noticeable to real changes, relevant for policy decisions, and available annually.

Key Quality of Life Indicators

In addition to quality of life indicators, this community assessment model also uses Key Indicators to present a snapshot of the changing conditions in each area. This snapshot is meant to be readily understood by the general public. The Key Indicators are not necessarily the most important quality of life indicators but the most indicative of the overall condition of that particular subject area. If Key Indicators are improving or worsening, it is likely that trends in the whole area are moving in the same direction.

Primary Data

Measures of community progress depend upon consistent, reliable, and scientifically accurate sources of data. As noted previously, one of the types of data gathered for this project is primary (original) data. The central primary data is a telephone survey of a sample of Santa Cruz County residents. There is much to be learned from people’s perceptions of their community, especially when those perceptions contradict the empirical evidence about its conditions. For instance, in the area of public safety, crime rates may be going down while perceptions of danger are going up.

For this reason, each March, Applied Survey Research conducts a telephone survey, in both English and Spanish, with over 600 randomly selected county residents. The intent of the survey is to measure the opinions, attitudes, desires, and needs of a demographically representative sample of the county’s residents. Respondents are asked open-ended questions as well as questions which present confined options.

We are 95% confident that the opinions of survey respondents do not differ from those of the general population by more than +/- 3.9%. This “margin of error” is useful in assessing whether observed sample differences are likely to be found in the population. In the event that the difference between, for example, male and female respondents is

smaller than the margin of error, then one cannot conclude that there is any difference in the population. Further, the margin of error is increased as the sample size is reduced. Thus, focusing on particular breakdowns or subpopulations means that even wider differences have to be observed in the sample in order for population differences to be inferable from sample data.

Chi square tests were used on the cross tabulations to determine whether significant differences exist between the groups being examined (for instance, is there a significant difference between the number of men who responded "yes" or "no" compared to the number of women who responded "yes" or "no"). An icon indicates the significant survey data for 2000 in the demographic respondent sections. Chi square tests were not computed for multiple response questions, however, because a requirement of chi square tests is that each respondent provide only one response. Furthermore, for any questions in which "don't know" responses were provided, these

responses were not included in the chi square test, because in most instances these responses are not informative.

It is important to note that all surveys have subtle and inherent biases. ASR has worked diligently with the project committee to reduce risks of bias, and to eliminate identifiable biases. One remaining bias in this study appears in the area of respondent self-selection, the capturing of opinions only of those willing to contribute 30 minutes of their time to participate in this community survey.

Secondary Data

Secondary (pre-existing) data is collected from a variety of sources, including but not limited to: the U.S. Census; federal, state, and local government agencies; academic institutions; economic development groups; health care institutions; libraries; schools; local police, sheriff and fire departments; and computerized sources through online databases and the Internet.

What's New in 2000

Although it is a longitudinal study focusing on comparisons over time, the ten-year Community Assessment Project (CAP) for Santa Cruz County has continued to grow and improve with each year. During the sixth year, the Steering Committee took steps to improve the survey instrument, data collection, and presentation of results.

A record 658 respondents completed the telephone survey, an increase of 97 respondents. The survey instrument included a number of new questions, many of which generated interesting results. Continuing a revision phase begun during the 1999 CAP – the mid-point of the ten-year project – the Committee this year added new Quality of Life Indicators to the Economics, Education, and Natural Environment sections.

The report itself includes a number of new features, including a landscape layout that allows easier display of maps and tabular comparisons. It also includes several useful icons to indicate statistical matters, such as the statistical significance of many of the results. (See Legend on next page.) A County demographic section was also created

with city and overall population and demographic data from the survey and the Department of Finance.

Finally, the demographic breakdowns of survey results will be presented on the web rather than in the report. (The overall results will continue to remain in the report, and demographic comparisons on key indicators appear throughout the document.) Question-by-question cross-tabulations for ethnicity, region, age, gender and income are available on the Applied Survey Research website at:

www.appliedsurveyresearch.org/cap6_report.htm.

For the future, ASR and the Committee are very interested in making these further revisions and improvements to the CAP effort:


- The report will be easier to consult on an ongoing basis,
- agencies can use this report as a reference in order to avoid a duplication of effort, and
- specific profiling of selected populations will be explored.


Legend

No. County North County – includes Bonny Doon, Capitola, Davenport, Santa Cruz, Scotts Valley and Soquel


So. County South County – includes Aptos, Corralitos, Freedom, La Selva Beach, Pajaro and Watsonville


SLV San Lorenzo Valley – includes Ben Lomond, Boulder Creek, Brookdale, Felton, Lompico, Mount Hermon and Zayante

 Indicates a question for which percentages do not total 100 because each respondent was allowed to select more than one answer

 Indicates statistically significant survey responses in the 2000 data

✓ Indicates a key indicator

 Provides a description of what the indicator means or measures. Note: not every indicator has a description

 Indicates no new data for a particular indicator is available

% Change Describes change in value between the current and previous year data

 Denotes a telephone survey question

 Indicates a respondent profile

Suggested Uses of this Report

Because the scope of the CAP is so broad, it may take a while to become familiar with the data and format of the report. These tips on using the information are offered to make the report more useful.

Overview of Quality of Life Issues in the County

It is best to review the first few pages of each of the six sections of the report—Economy, Education, Health, Public Safety, Natural Environment and Social Environment. Each of these sections begins by listing the Community Goals and Key Indicators established for the research area. A brief accompanying narrative details significant trends in each section. Knowledge of the icons above will be very useful to the reader as they are used throughout each section. The Legend on the previous page is at the beginning of each section.

Trends that may Impact a Business or Organization

Within each of the six research areas, there is a wealth of information on a wide range of issues. One of the most useful features of this report is the display of trend data, where it is available.

A tremendous amount of detailed information can be found that may help identify new customers or emerging needs, or explain changes in the local environment that will have future impacts. Whenever possible, demographic profiles by ethnicity, age, gender, income and geography have been included. Additional breakdowns are available online at www.appliedsurveyresearch.org.

Data to Support or Refine your Services and Products

This information is intended to be used in your own reports and proposals, and as a baseline for performance systems. Display graphics are available for much of the data, and there are trained presenters who can come and speak with groups about the information within and behind this report.

Data in this report can be mixed and matched to help agencies determine their clients needs. Special reports can be created to reflect targeted populations.

Acknowledgments

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Project Directors: Susan Brutschy, Kelly Pleskunas and Erica Wood.
Analysts and researchers: Lisa Colvig, Eric Berg, Nina Finn, Ellis Godard, Nick Manning, Jennifer Panetta, Abbie Robideaux, Stacy Scheel, and Chad Schrock.

Telephone interviewers: Sophia Anderson, Rozanne Anderson, Danielle Cotreau, Annie Gallo, Cindy Gjers, and Jeannette Reed.

Spanish language interviewers: Maribel Cuervo, Josie Knox, Tamara Lopez, and Maria Perez.

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Arcadio Viveros
Salud Para La Gente Inc.
George Wolfe, M.D.
Health Services Agency

A special thanks to all of those who contributed secondary data to this report.

Community Assessment Project Year 6 Financial Sponsors

Cabrillo College
California State University Monterey Bay
City of Capitola
City of Santa Cruz
City of Scotts Valley
City of Watsonville
Coast Commercial Bank
Community Action Board

The Community Foundation of Santa Cruz County
County of Santa Cruz
County Office of Education
Dominican Hospital
Food and Nutrition Services
Pacific Bell
PG&E
Santa Cruz Community Counseling Center

Seniors Council
Sutter Maternity & Surgery Center
United Way of Santa Cruz County
Volunteer Center
Waste Management of Santa Cruz County
Watsonville Community Hospital

2000 Community Goals & Heroes

Each year the Santa Cruz County Sentinel in association with the United Way seeks nominations from the public of people who have worked in the past year toward meeting the CAP community goals.

The following community goals were selected by a broad cross-section of Santa Cruz County residents to guide decision-making, planning, and social action in the years to come. The purpose of these community goals is to focus attention and energy to improve the quality of life for the people of the county.

These community goals are necessarily broad in nature. Detailed action plans involving people from all sectors of the community must

Economy

Goal 1 By the year 2004, the number of jobs in Santa Cruz County will increase in proportion to the workforce.

STEVE BEEDLE
SANTA CRUZ TECHNOLOGY ALLIANCE, ZNA COMMUNICATIONS

Goal 2 By the year 2004, the County's unemployment rate will be at or below the State rate.

DENNIS OSMER
PROGRAM DIRECTOR, ENERGY SERVICES COMMUNITY ACTION BOARD

Goal 3 By the year 2004, more residents will have access to housing they can afford.

KATHY BERNARD
PAJARO VALLEY HOUSING CORPORATION

be developed to realize the community goals. In many ways, the community goals are interrelated. In some ways, they may even be in conflict or compete with each other for resources, energy, and attention.

These community goals are not intended to endorse or oppose any particular project or initiative. They do, however, chart the course for collective action for a better future for the people of Santa Cruz County.

Education

Goal 1 By the year 2004, more Santa Cruz County students will graduate from high school job-ready or prepared for higher education.

SIRI VAETH
BIG BROTHERS / BIG SISTERS

Goal 2 By the year 2004, elementary and middle school students will meet or exceed the average statewide test scores for academic success.

BRYAN LOEHR
PRINCIPAL OF REDWOOD ELEMENTARY

Goal 3 By the year 2004, Santa Cruz County children will enter kindergarten healthy and ready to learn.

PAM ELDERS
HEAD START
AND
VICKIE MORALES, BOARD MEMBER
SANTA CRUZ COMMUNITY COUNSELING CENTER
PROBATION DEPARTMENT

Health

Goal 1 By the year 2004, Santa Cruz County residents will have access to primary medical and dental care.

JAY BALZAR, DIRECTOR
DIENTES COMMUNITY DENTAL CLINIC

Goal 2 By the year 2004, Santa Cruz County youth alcohol and other drug use will be at or below statewide average.

NOAH BROWN
YOUTH SERVICES
AND
BOB MUNSEY
CROW'S NEST

Goal 3 By the year 2004, Santa Cruz County residents over age 60 will live healthy and independent lives.

RAMA KHALSA
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY HEALTH SERVICES AGENCY

Public Safety

Goal 1 By the year 2004, crime within Santa Cruz County will continue to decrease, and residents will have increased confidence in their personal safety at home and in the community.

JUDY COX
SANTA CRUZ COUNTY PROBATION DEPARTMENT

Goal 2 By the year 2004, children in Santa Cruz County will live in safe families and communities.

DEE O'BRIEN
WALNUT AVENUE WOMEN'S CENTER

Social Environment

Goal 1 By the year 2004, more residents will be engaged in community involvement to make Santa Cruz County a better place to live.

JANICE AND FRANCISCO JIMENEZ
STUDENTS OF MAGIC APPLE AFTERSCHOOL
AND
LAURA SEGURA-GALLARDO
WATSONVILLE PARKS AND RECREATION

Goal 2 By the year 2004, racism and discrimination in Santa Cruz County will be reduced.

GUILLERMO ARANDA
COMMUNITY VOLUNTEER

Goal 3 By the year 2004, children in Santa Cruz County will have access to affordable, high quality child care and after school/summer enrichment and recreation opportunities.

JANET BOSS
BOYS AND GIRLS CLUB OF SANTA CRUZ

Natural Environment

Goal 1 By the year 2004, water demand and supply will be in balance (sustainable yield).

Goal 2 By the year 2004, environmental stewardship will increase within Santa Cruz County.

SURFRIDER FOUNDATION

Goal 3 By the year 2004, open space, wetlands and protected habitats will be increased and improved.

LARRY TIERNEY, PARK MAINTENANCE SUPERVISOR
SUNSET STATE BEACH

