City of Palo Alto

YOUTH MASTER PLAN REPORT



February 4, 2003

VISION STATEMENT

Our vision is that all youth in Palo Alto will have safe, healthy, positive experiences that support them in the development of behaviours, skills, attitudes, knowledge, and values necessary to realize their full potential.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The City of Palo Alto youth want and deserve a voice in their community. Although youth are frequently seen as problems, they can be assets and resources, especially when officials are seeking effective solutions to community problems. Our youth are the foremost experts on their experiences, needs, and interactions with other segments of the community. Involving youth in local decision-making taps this important knowledge and promotes their full and healthy development. The City, by adding teens to key decision-making bodies, can give teens a direct role in establishing local policies and setting city priorities.

Promoting the engagement and involvement of youth in our community should include hosting a youth forum for discussions, appointing youth to local boards or commissions, and the continuation of a youth council and advisory board for middle and high school youth. These opportunities may only reach a small percentage of a city's youth, but they make a powerful statement to all young people and adults that youth are valued members of the community. Several of these elements can be combined to create a multi-tier framework for youth participation and involvement, allowing large numbers of youth to become involved in civic activities. Young people themselves will help to define and refine the vision for youth participation and involvement in our community and local government.

The following report highlights these important aspects of community involvement in developing and implementing a Youth Master Plan. The efforts of the Youth Master Plan Steering Committee supported the teens in creating a youth-driven plan.

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PARTICIPANTS

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1.0 BACKGROUND

he impetus for creating a Youth Master Plan (YMP) originated from a joint study Session of the Palo Alto Youth Council and the City Council in March 2000, whereby the YMP was defined as a process to develop a focused and organized approach to the delivery of programs and services to youth and their families.

It was then determined that a Youth Master Plan would benefit the entire community in many ways, including determining existing services and overlaps; identifying service gaps and addressing the needs of all youth and evaluating personal assets and skills needed by youth to grow into healthy adults.

In October 2000, a Youth Master Plan Steering Committee was formed and included approximately 40 committee members from the following agencies: Palo Alto City Council, Parks and Recreations Commission, Community Services Department Staff, Police Department Staff, Youth Council, Youth Advisory Board, Palo Alto Unified School District Board and Administration, Palo Alto schools, Parent Teacher Association (PTA), Stanford University, all major youth serving agencies, youth sports agencies, business community, faith community, and health care agencies.

The Steering Committee began its efforts to define the basic components of a Youth Master Plan which included: establishing a vision for youth in Palo Alto, conducting a needs assessment and contracting a facilitator to create a document.

The committee agreed to hire a facilitator, to guide the committee through the process in the most efficient and cost effective manner. However, this youth-driven process and training approach became lengthy and costly. A decision was made to work with a short-term volunteer consultant to assist the committee with the planning process, including grant preparation. The initial goal was to obtain grant funding as well as obtain financial support from the City's budget and those agencies serving on the Steering Committee. Unfortunately, after grant proposals were submitted, funding was denied and no City funds were available to facilitate the on-going process.



2.0 PLANNING PROCESS

The Youth Master Plan Steering Committee began with a primary objective to carry out a youth-driven process to determine what services are available that support youth in leading healthy and productive lives, which services are needed and how to achieve the needed services.

The secondary objective was to educate community leaders and youth service organizations about youth needs and how to support them in developing healthier lives and becoming effective community members.

The YMP Steering Committee approached the planning process by asking the question, "How well are Palo Alto's youth doing?" Are the financial resources allocated to the appropriate areas for the positive development of youth and teens in our community?

A definition for youth to be served was defined by the committee in January 2001. The target age group for the plan was identified as 11 years-18 years old.

In order to begin an education and outreach process, the City needed a mechanism to survey the development skills of youth and teens. A tested measurement process would be required, with an aspect that could establish statistically what major categories were needed to develop a healthy child. The Search Institute Survey could provide this measurement tool. Discussion of a survey process continued throughout the planning sessions.

The expectation is not to see instant growth in a youth's asset skills, but to increase Development Asset experiences. The evaluation process keeps the program's focus on the larger purpose of a youth plan – to strengthen personal skills by increasing Developmental Assets.

All full-time recreation program managers, coordinators and support staff would be trained in a general course on the Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets, which are factors that most people recognize as important for healthy development.

Each program manager and coordinator would be required to identify the Developmental Assets that are applicable to their program or project. A more intensive training would be given to program managers and coordinators on the identification of Developmental Assets, interpretation of the statistical results and how to communicate with parents, youth and community members regarding the value of asset building. Hourly staff would be trained periodically throughout the year, with those in lead positions attending specific trainings. At Summer-in-Service training, a two-hour training would be provided to all new and returning seasonal hourly staff on Developmental Assets.

Several organizations like YMCA and YWCA are already utilizing Developmental Assets as a core of curriculum designs. Excellent partnerships are developed when working with Developmental Assets organizations. The similar curriculum philosophy reduces conflicts in joint program design.

Palo Alto City Staff investigated "The Cornerstone Project" implemented in Santa Clara County. "The Cornerstone Project" is based on the 40 Developmental Assets researched and created by the Search Institute of Minneapolis. "The Cornerstone Project" was a collaboration of community leaders and organizations from throughout Santa Clara County. The survey conducted by "The Cornerstone Project" details the information received from nearly 7,000 local 7th to 12th graders as they tell how adults are doing in guiding them to adulthood. The survey results call for everyone to begin working together to

support young people to build the developmental assets that are the cornerstones of healthy youth development and a strong community.

As a result of the investigation into "The Cornerstone Project," two City of Palo Alto CSD staff, Debbie Moore, Positive Alternatives for Youth Manager (2000-2002) and Patrick Larkin, Supervisor of Recreation were sent to the Search Institute in Minneapolis, for training in the 40 Developmental Assets. Bobbi Ross, Positive Alternatives for Youth Manager (2002 to present) has trained the ACS Board of Directors on the 40 Developmental Assets.

In addition to the 40 Developmental Assets, the City of Palo Alto recognized that "Youth Development Competencies" would play an important role in the process of creating a **Youth Master Plan**.

2.1 Proposed Work Plan

- Identify and contact consultants and other cities that have conducted a Youth Master Plan process to make recommendations on proceeding with the YMP process by October 15, 2001.
- Create a project plan and timeline.
- Gather existing data on youth needs, behaviors, attitudes, etc. and current available services to incorporate into the YMP process by November 15, 2001.
- Request and obtain commitments of collaborative partners to provide monies toward the cost of hiring a consultant by November 15, 2001.
- Develop an RFP and submit to the Purchasing Department to identify a consultant by November 30, 2001.
- Hire a consultant by February 15, 2002.

2. Sub-Committees

The planning process consisted of a needs assessment, data analysis and development of a plan. Sub-committees, made up of members of the YMP Steering Committee, were formed and met on an individual basis. Each sub-committee had primary responsibility for collecting, analyzing, and presenting the information it collected.

- Mission/Vision Sub-Committee: Responsible for developing the Vision and Mission Statement for the YMP and presenting to the YMP Steering Committee for approval.
- **Data Collection Sub-Committee:** Responsible for obtaining existing data, surveys, reports, etc. pertaining to issues and needs of youth and information on existing resources, programs, and services for youth in Palo Alto and presenting information to the Youth Master Plan Steering Committee for approval.

The Human Services Department with the support of Family Resources, and the sub-committee were able to compile a Community Resource database (Attachment I). The list was reviewed and studied by the YMP Steering Committee and then sent on to the Youth Assessment and Marketing Committees.

- Assessment Sub-Committee: Responsible for researching and recommending potential survey methods (such as written and/or phone surveys, focus groups, public forums) that will assist in identifying issues, needs and gaps in service to the youth of Palo Alto. And will present the information to the YMP Steering Committee for approval. The sub-committee worked closely with the Data Collection Sub-Committee to prevent duplication of work(s) already completed.
- Facilitator Sub-Committee: Responsible for determining if there is a need for a facilitator to assist in the YMP process and if so, identifying and interviewing potential facilitators. The subcommittee made a recommendation to the YMP Steering Committee for approval.
- Marketing Sub-Committee: Responsible for developing a plan to inform the community on a Youth Master Plan and the process for completing the YMP, as well as how to "market" the finished product to the community. Members of the sub-committee may also participate in the marketing strategy (i.e., writing newspaper articles, participating in the cable TV productions, etc.). The sub-committee presented their plan to the YMP Steering Committee for approval.
- Funding/Finance Sub-Committee: Responsible for researching potential funding sources to finance the cost of completing the YMP process (including facilitator, survey, printing costs, etc.) and made recommendations to the YMP Steering Committee.

3. Action Teams

Palo Alto Youth Council

Palo Alto Youth Council (PAYC) is a group of fifteen high school students from the Palo Alto area. The Council was created to serve as a task force to identify and address the issues that face teens in the community.

One of the first YMP projects was to survey 500 Palo Alto Youth on the need for a teen center verses the need for additional teen programs and services. The results of the survey indicated that the teen populations desire was to have more teen programs rather than a teen center. A request was made to City Council to lease the proposed teen center space with 75% of revenue going into the teen program account and new recreational and social programs created by teens for teens (ideas generated through Youth Council and other Teen Advisory Boards). (Attachment 2)

The youth driven process moved to analyze and identify areas of interest. The research established the following findings: Palo Alto had many resources for middle school and high school youth. The Palo Alto Youth needed target marketing for these existing resources.

The PAYC's largest accomplishment is the teen activity database (Attachment 3) that was compiled in conjunction with the YMP. The PAYC survey (Attachment) addressed the recreational needs of teens in Palo Alto. The results of the survey found there is not a lack of activities for teens in the community, but a lack of awareness of the activities. Over the course of a year, they researched and collected information on teen activities, programs, and teen oriented businesses and organized the information into categories (i.e., sports, community, restaurants, clubs, billiards, movies, and general recreation). The database, with over 55 entries, was submitted to the Palo Alto Weekly News to raise awareness in local teens.

Based on PAYC survey results, it was determined that the following areas were priorities for teen engagement in the community:

- Advertisement and awareness of teen oriented programs and activities.
- Developing relationships with other local youth groups for joint projects.
- Support and volunteering in the community.

These priorities were addressed by PAYC. The action team contributed articles written and produced by youth to the local papers (Attachment 4). Members of the PAYC volunteered to serve in several public events, including the Palo alto Weekly's Moonlight Run, ticket takers and food servers at the Senior New Year's Eve Day Bash, operate craft and game booths at the winter Solstice and Winter Fest Celebrations and the Hippity Hop Easter Celebration, and helped at the Break Dance Competitions.

The PAYC put youth representation in several of the City planning committees and projects that would affect youth in the near future. In addition to the Youth Master Plan, youth served on the Mitchell Park Community Center/Library Project Site Committee, and the Main Library and Art Center Project Committee to provide a younger voice in these normally adult-dominated groups.

Positive Alternatives For Youth

Positive Alternatives for Youth provides programs that improve school performance, strengthen life skills and social adjustment, and decrease criminal involvement, through collaborative community efforts.

The Positive Alternatives for Youth (PAY) Program is a collaborative effort of various agencies (Attachment 5) to offer youth a future life alternative by providing participants with academic support, job coaching, mentoring, and other youth services.

Participants, in addition to having a chance to talk with other teens and work on creative problem solving, are connected with reliable trustworthy adults who are interested in talking and helping them face challenges. They are urged to set high standards for themselves and to take their participation in the program seriously. Participants gain competence, confidence and self-reliance through guided group discussions and learn the skills needed to launch a successful future. They are encouraged to learn from one another, to appreciate one another, and to treat their PAY match as a caring partner.

Youth Community Service

Youth Community Service (YCS) promotes the ethic of service, fosters youth leadership, builds community and enhances education by providing community service, service learning, and leadership activities to East Palo Alto, Menlo park, and Palo Alto young people in grades K-12.

Since 1990,YCS has engaged young people in service opportunities that allow them to learn more about themselves and their community. YCS has grown from 200 students in its first year to over 2,000 students who participate in both one-time and on-going service experiences in and out of the classroom.

YCS is a local collaboration that unites young people across cities, school districts, and counties. Ravenswood City School District, Palo Alto Unified School District, City of Palo Alto, City of East Palo Alto and YWCA of the Mid-Peninsula sponsor the YCS collaboration. The Palo Alto Rotary Club and Haas Center for Public Service at Stanford University are supporting partners.

YCS Programs are:

- Community Service and Leadership: Through this program YCS offers after-school service clubs for more than 200 students at 7 middle schools and 3 high schools in East Palo Alto, Menlo Park, and Palo Alto. The program includes YCS Fellows, an 8-month leadership course for 10 high school students that provides training and skills development to enable youth leaders to better engage their peers in service. YCS also sponsors numerous one-time service days throughout the school year, involving nearly 800 students in service on an annual basis.
- Service Learning: Offers support to teachers who are working to use service as a teaching tool to bring the real world into their classroom and make their curriculum more relevant. To this end, YCS provides training and technical assistance to teachers at the 25 elementary, middle and high schools in both the Ravenswood (East Palo Alto) and Palo Alto School Districts. In addition, YCS helps local teaches and community agency staff become better service learning leaders at their schools and agencies through the Service Learning Leadership Development Program and the national Kellogg Learning in Deed Initiative.
- Summer of Service (SOS): An 8-week summer camp, brings together over 60 local middle school students to contribute to the community, develop leadership skills, and make new friends. Students serve in small groups, addressing a variety of issues; the environment, poverty and homelessness, child development and health. Earlier this year, Summer of Service received the Award of Excellence, the highest award given by the California Parks and Recreation Society (CPRS) for quality youth programming.

Adolescent Counseling Services

Adolescent Counseling Services (ACS), founded in 1975, addresses the emotional and development needs of adolescents and their families in a changing society. ACS runs three programs: a residential treatment facility for teen girls; an outpatient adolescent substance abuse treatment program; and an on-campus counseling program.

ACS presented a 7-minute video from the Emerging Youth Issues Forum held November 8, 2000. The Forum brought together youth to identify issues that adolescents will be facing over the next 5 years. The video presented several teens talking about adolescent issues. The two main topics stressed by these teens were isolation and stress they felt in school and their home life.

In summary, members of the YMP Steering Committee, Palo Alto Youth Council and other community members came together to unite on common goals in order to support the Palo Alto community's middle and high school youth and their families. The objectives initiated by the youth, for the youth are clearly identified in the following Plan section of this report.

3.0 THE PLAN

The purpose of the Palo Alto Youth Master Plan is to engage and support the Palo Alto community's middle and high school youth and their families. The **objectives** initiated by the youth for the youth in the Youth Master Plan include:

- I. Encourage and continue to provide opportunities for youth participation in our community.
- 2. Improve communication and awareness of youth recreational and social programs.
- **3.** Ensure an **ongoing collaborative process** that coordinates, supports and monitors youth programs and services.

Each of the objectives is clearly identified in the short-term and long-term approaches. To be effective in reaching these objectives, the City of Palo Alto Recreation staff recommends that the City should continue to provide the following:

- Adequate/current staff support for planning and implementing the goals.
- Opportunities for youth to meet with City Council members and Commissions.
- Continuation of youth program development and evaluation of program effectiveness.
- Opportunities for addressing emerging and existing needs.

<u>Goal #1</u>: Encourage and continue to provide opportunities for youth participation in our community.

Young people need safe, healthy and fun activities where they can engage in positive behavior so that they can grow into healthy adults. Currently, there are a variety of programs and services available to the youth in the City of Palo Alto. However, youth do not always participate in these programs due to inconvenient scheduling, lack of transportation, lack of awareness, or cost of the program. New programs must be developed and implemented continuously to meet un-addressed and emerging needs, and to build on the strengths and abilities of the youth in our community.

IA. Desired Outcome

Every young person will have the opportunity to participate in recreational, social, educational, and enrichment programs offered in the Palo Alto community.

IB. Action Steps Completed 2000-2002

- The City of Palo Alto Youth Council (PAYC) promotes teen opportunities in the community in collaboration with the Palo Alto Weekly News, to create a teen activities database that can be accessed through Palo Alto Online.
- PAYC developed a documentary on "Teens and Stress in Palo Alto".

■ PAYC hosted a debate at the YAK ATTACK 2001 on religion in school.



- Teen Recreation staff created a Youth Drop-In Center at Mitchell Park Community Center (MPCC) to engage youth in after-school recreational, social and enrichment programming.
- City staff coordinated shuttle service from Jordan Middle School to the new Drop-in Center at MPCC.
- Collaborated with the Mitchell Park Library staff to offer after-school homework help opportunities for students.
- Recreation staff created a Junior Advisory Board comprised of ten middle school students to advise recreation staff on program interests and needs to offer for middle school youth.
- City staff implemented a Middle School Dance program to include all PAUSD middle school youth.
- Recreation Division program staff implemented new break dance practice workshops targeting middle and high school youth.
- City staff coordinated shuttle service for after-school transportation from Gunn and Palo Alto High School.
- Recreation Division recruits teen volunteers to participate and help in implementing citywide special events.
- Created and implemented "Teen Band Night" a program for high school youth.
- City of Palo Alto provides a Counselor-In-Training (CIT) program for middle school age students.
- Collaborated with PAUSD to implement,"Summer Survivor" and "Camp at the Drop," two middle school summer camp programs.
- Recreation Division program staff implemented new break dance practice workshops targeting middle and high school youth.
- Teen Recreation staff collaborated with the YMCA and the Ventura community, to approve a portable skate park at Ventura Neighborhood Center for teens.

- Teen Recreation staff attended job fairs at the high schools for summer staff recruitments.
- The Recreation staff collaborates and participates on (Youth Community Services) YCS steering committee to offer numerous service projects for teens at schools throughout the community.
- Positive Alternatives for Youth (PAY) provide leadership training and community service internship opportunities for middle school youth.
- Youth Council representatives participated on the Mitchell Park Community Center /Library Project Site Committee.

NOTE: The Fee Waiver Program continues to be available for all recreation-sponsored activities as well as for participation in community youth sports leagues.

IC. Short-term Action Steps

- The PAYC is in the process of completing a documentary on the "Top Ten Fun Things For Teens To Do in Palo Alto."
- Recreation staff and Youth Council Advisor are investigating the opportunity for a Youth-produced TV show.
- City staff is exploring the development of new funding/grant opportunities (corporate sponsors) for youth development programming.
- City staff will evaluate youth access to public transportation.
- City staff will assess the effectiveness of the fee waiver program.
- City staff will work collaboratively with Youth and Teen Recreation Services (YTRS) to evaluate best practices relating to teen programming.
- Staff will maintain an open dialog between city businesses, the Palo Alto Police Dept. and all youth-related businesses in the community.

ID. Long-term Action Steps

- Promote recognition celebration for youth volunteers (Youth Council, Teen Advisory Board, Junior Advisory Board, YCS, YMCA, PAY Community Intern Program, CIT, etc.)
- Develop innovative marketing strategies targeting teens in order to increase participation in teen programs.

<u>Goal #2</u>: Improve communication and awareness of youth recreational and social programs.

Many youth and families are not using available resources due to communication barriers, which include not being aware of existing youth programs and difficulties in accessing information and services due to language and/or cultural barriers.

2A. Desired Outcome

Mass Communication is key in promoting opportunities for youth and teens. The city must target market to youth and teens to get the message out through unconventional methods that will attract this population to the programs and services available.

A community able to provide a wide-range of diverse and appropriate print and non-print media to inform all residents of the full range of programs available to teens is needed.

2B. Action Steps Completed 2000-2002

- YMP Steering Committee will continue its support of the Youth Master Plan and open up opportunities for teens to accomplish their goals as sited in the Plan.
- Staff will establish two-way communication with Junior Advisory Board to promote discussion on interests and activities needed for middle school youth in our community.
- YMP Marketing Committee teen member had written recognition of peer accomplishments in a local newspaper article.
- Collaborated with MPACC to enable teens to develop skills in the media that will teach them how to express their thoughts to the public.
- PAYC developed a PAYC Web Site, which will continue to highlight current PAYC projects and programs.
- PAYC worked with the Palo Alto Weekly News to update and create a website for teen activities on Palo Alto Online.
- Recreation and PAUSD will continue to collaborate and market new and innovative programs for teens during the summer months.
- Teen Representatives should continue to be identified for participation on all committees relating to projects or services affecting teens (i.e., MPCC/Library Project).



2C. Short-term Action Steps

- Community youth organizations will utilize the Youth Council and other teen action groups as two-way channels of communication.
- PAYC will work with the Palo Alto Weekly on developing a teen activities link to Palo Alto Online.
- City staff will collaborate with local agencies to get information on services offered that will be of interest to teens and improve their socialization skills.
- City staff will work collaboratively with PAUSD to create and implement safe and enriching experiences for teens during the summer months.
- Teen Forums will take place annually beginning April 2003, which will discuss topics that relate to current teen, issues affecting Palo Alto youth.

2D. Long-term Action Steps

- Teen Advisory Board (TAB) will promote positive teen contributions to the community through news media coverage.
- TAB will work to create a documentary educating parents and teens, highlighting fun and interesting activities for youth in our community.
- PAYC will work with City Council on an annual basis to discuss the role of teens regarding the decision-making processes that relate to the teens in Palo Alto.
- A Palo Alto teen representative appointed to every Commission related to issues and activities for this age group (i.e., PARC, HRC, etc.)

Goal #3: Ensure an ongoing collaborative process that coordinates, supports and monitors youth programs and services.

The Youth Master Plan will be evaluated and revised by the Palo Alto Youth Council and other teen advisory boards, and reviewed by appropriate City Commissions and advisory groups as needed. A diverse selection of strong activities and programs enables youth to develop into well-rounded members of the



community and maintain productive, healthy lifestyles.

3A. Desired Outcome

Community agencies and organization collaborate in order to provide multiple youth services addressing the needs of teens and to leverage community resources for the benefit of the teens.

3B. Action Steps Completed 2000-2002

- Collaboration established with the Mitchell Park Library staff and Recreation Center staff to offer an after-school drop-in program, which will include a homework help and recreation socialization component.
- City Staff implemented "Summer Survivor Camp" for middle school students in collaboration with the PAUSD in summer of 2001 and 2002.
- City staff and PAUSD staff collaborated and implemented "Camp at the Drop," a program targeting middle school age youth for the summer of 2002.
- Recreation Division has expanded their offerings for teens, including tennis lessons provided by a senior community volunteer, city-wide middle school dances, Monday night Break Dance practices, Dance Classes provided by volunteer professionals, implemented a new drop-in center, implemented the new teen band nights program, the annual Break Dance Contest, implementing additional summer camps targeting middle school youth, and created Junior Advisory Board for Middle School youth.



■ Collaboration with Recreation staff, the YMCA and the Ventura Community to develop skateboarding elements placed at the Ventura Neighborhood Center.

3C. Short-term Action Steps

- Continue to develop a relationship with the school district staff and other local youth serving agencies to enhance and enrich the quality of services offered to youth in Palo Alto.
- City staff, PAYC will develop a relationship with Human Relations Commission in order to support teens to address their concerns in a safe and caring environment through a teen forum.

- Work with agencies that provide a variety of services for youth in order to provide a holistic approach to teen services.
- Establish collaboration with the Lucie Packard Children's Hospital and their health out reach program to implement a teen forum focusing on teen related issues.

3D. Long-term Action Steps

- The Youth Council will refer to the YMP annually and implement collaborative projects using existing resources related to the goals of the plan.
- Continue collaborations with community agencies serving youth and teens in Palo Alto.
- Bi-annually, the Youth Council will evaluate the YMP to determine the overall effectiveness of the action items identified in the plan to make adjustments based on the current trends and issues involving this age group.

4.0 SUMMARY

The Youth Master Plan incorporates the successes of present youth programming, and identifies the short-term action projects without a need for additional funding resources. The long-term action items could require future funding sources. These additional funds could become available through the Council's agreement to return a net income from the leasing of the parking garage (originally the teen center) back to teen programs.

The Youth Master Plan documents what we as a City and Community are successfully accomplishing for our teens. This approach will now be evaluated and reviewed on an annual basis by the City's Youth Council and Teen Advisory Boards and City Council. Our commitment as a City is for the Plan to become a living document that is passed on from year to year with continued support for engaging youth in our community.



ATTACHMENTS

1.

Youth Master Plan Database

2

Teen Center Needs Assessment

3.

Teen Activity Database

4

Articles Published

5.

Positive Alternatives for Youth