

CAP Data Analysis Team Report

Community Portrait

The data contained in the 2001 *Comprehensive Report* of the Nevada County Community Assessment Project (CAP) generates a complex self-portrait of our community. Nevada County is many things to its citizens. For some it is a physical location, for others a state of mind. For some it is a place to retire and enjoy their later years, for others it is a great place to start and raise families. For some it is a place to do business, for others it is the leisure life that matters most. For some it represents a new home, a new place to live, while others have been here for generations. These many points of view result in a community with diverse perspectives and definitions on what is or is not important about our quality of life.

The Data Analysis Team (DAT) has carefully analyzed the CAP data, considered the many points of view expressed in the document and attempted to articulate how our community looks to itself. This portrait represents the work of six citizens, and though we analyzed the data as comprehensively as we could, our final product does not represent a definitive portrait. This portrait should be considered as a starting point for a community-wide conversation which clarifies, validates, or invalidates our work. Ultimately some form of agreement needs to be reached that will result in community goals being established that provide a focus for the application of resources.

To create this initial community portrait, we have looked at what is going well in our community, reviewed the year 2000 Community goals, and identified eight issue areas that cut across the six categories of data in the *Comprehensive Report*.

What is going well

The data in this document indicates that the Quality of Life in Nevada County is good for most citizens. People here value the quality of life offered by the geographical location of our county. Natural beauty, wilderness, mountains, rivers, and wildlife all rated high as contributors to individuals' quality of life. Community members also valued low population, open space and the small rural town environment as well as community, family, friends and a slow pace.

About three fourths of the survey participants agreed the natural environment was being adequately protected. Additionally 16% reported they were very satisfied with land use decisions and 57% were somewhat satisfied. Though these numbers do not tell the whole story, they appear to indicate that many of the quality of life items identified as valuable are perceived to be protected.

Schools also appear to be working well with very high-test scores and high levels of parent participation and satisfaction. Law Enforcement, and fire protection are also seen as doing well with almost 48% of our citizens seeing law enforcement as very effective and 81% of citizens feeling very safe.

Citizen participation is a good quality of life indicator. People here are willing to contribute significant personal resources for the benefit of the community. Volunteerism numbers are very high, as are numbers for those who make charitable contributions. Voter registration is high and turn out is very good. Few people surveyed reported discrimination. Nevada County appears to

be a good place to live for families and seniors-- provided they have incomes adequate to provide housing.

2000 Community Goals

A review of the preliminary community goals identified as a result of the 1999 *Comprehensive Report* shows some accomplishments in meeting the goals. In some cases other data not reflected in the CAP indicators may be available to demonstrate accomplishments. Nonetheless, that this much could be accomplished in a single year of focusing resources indicates there is great benefit in using the CAP to identify community-wide goals. With data spanning an additional 2-year period since the 1999 *Report* and a broad-based community consensus, these preliminary goals can be reaffirmed or modified. Continued focus could create even greater accomplishments in meeting goals in coming years.

- **Goal: Increase the percentage of families who spend less than 1/3 of their income on housing.**
 - 6% increase in the number of families who report spending more than a 1/3 of their income on housing. *Overall: 46%; Western County: 45%, Eastern County: 55%; Under 65: 54%, 65 and over: 27%; senior face to face: 40%*
- **Goal: Increase services for infant and preschool children and their families.**
 - First trimester prenatal care is up
 - More Head Start and subsidized child care spaces
 - Licensed child care meets only a small fraction of the need in Nevada County
 - Total number of children ages 0-5: 5,322; 878 (17%) live in poverty
- **Goal: Increase by 20% the number of children with all required immunizations.**
 - Appears to have been accomplished. *86% of kindergartners have all the required immunizations*
 - Very high rate of parental exemptions for immunizations
- **Goal: Reduce the percentage of people who engage in “at risk” behavior.**
 - Negligible decrease in those who see drug and alcohol abuse as a very significant problem
 -
 - Slight increase in reported alcohol use
 - Decrease in teen pregnancies
- **Goal: Decrease family violence, sexual assault, and elder abuse.**
 - Domestic violence reports down but use of weapons in domestic violence up.
 - Child abuse reports up over 17%
 - Sexual assault reports down except in Truckee
 - Elder abuse reports up 49%
- **Goal: Increased participation in activities for school aged children**
 - 85% of school parents believe after school programs are adequate
 - 40+% believe youth need more programs

- Large percentage do not know if programs are adequate

Community Issues

The following eight areas of concern were identified as key community issues. These issues cross over or have impact on the five areas of CAP indicators: Economic, Education, Health, Public Safety, Social Natural Environment as well as the Senior Issues which were reported on in the 2001 *Report*.

Some of these issues have shown up in other community processes as key issues, which tends to validate the DAT arriving at the same conclusions. All of the issues are complicated without any simple answer. It is, however, the Data Team's belief that these are among the defining issues of our community that can either vastly improve or adversely impact the quality of life in Nevada County.

1. Affordable Housing
2. Educational/vocational Training
3. Substance Abuse
4. Wages and Work Opportunities
5. Social/Recreational Programs
6. Family Violence
7. Health Services Availability
8. Transportation

Issue #1 Lack of Affordable Housing

The lack of affordable and work force housing is a crucial issue affecting every sector of our community.

The economic impact is best understood in terms of adequate workforce housing. It is reasonable to assume that it will become increasingly difficult for service workers, health care workers, public safety employees, teachers and government employees to find adequate housing. This could cause a migration out of our county of a critical level of service providers. The lack of affordable workforce housing will also limit the number of people who will be willing to move here and take jobs in our community.

There is also concern that affordable housing will not be available for seniors who may for health reasons need to leave more outlying or rural environments to spend there later years in town. Even if they are able to sell outlying properties before moving to town, only limited housing is available.

Another important aspect of a lack of housing diversity is the loss of multigenerational families that are a part of our community's history and fabric. Without the opportunity for younger families to purchase homes or find affordable rents, a disruption in multiple generations of families is likely to occur as starter homes are sought elsewhere.

Nearly half the households report that they spend more than 1/3 of their income on housing and 28% say that the cost of housing has a big impact on their household. With a high portion of

household income going to housing costs, less funds are available for food, clothing, transportation, medical needs, social activities, and amenities.

Many organizations have identified affordable housing and work force housing as critical areas of concern for our community. We, too, recommend that this be considered a top issue for our entire community. This issue affects most citizens, directly or indirectly. Without a conscious effort to provide a full spectrum of housing options in our community we will lose the benefits of a diverse society and economy. The impact on quality of life will be high.

Issue # 2 Educational/vocational Training

Educational/Vocational training is an important community issue. We need skilled crafts persons and trained service workers. We can anticipate an increasing need for home services as our senior population ages.

There is an apparent shortage of vocational training opportunities as an alternate to college preparatory classes for teens. We do not have a full range of vocational training services that will support career development and work force reentry as well as personal enrichment. It would also appear that there would be opportunities in our community to provide training for locally available vocations in forestry, ranching, agriculture, vita culture, software development, health services, construction, and automotive repair.

Vocational training opportunities do not need to be seen solely as a product of the educational system but could be offered by local businesses as an employee development strategy, by trade unions as apprenticeship programs, and by police and fire departments via training academies.

Issue # 3 Substance Abuse

Substance abuse has surfaced as a top community issue that crosses all areas of concern.

Over 92% of residents surveyed believe that drug and alcohol abuse is a very significant (41%) or somewhat significant (51%) problem in our community. From school students and parents to seniors, concern is expressed about the use of alcohol and drugs at every level of our community.

Substance abuse in the work force impacts efficiency and economics by increasing absenteeism, affecting quality control, and creating a higher cost for benefits programs. People who cannot pass drug tests are not employable. Substance abuse by students affects the ability to learn, brings crime onto school campuses, and has health and safety consequences. Often health costs associated with substance abuse are paid by all of us through public assistance programs. Higher crime rates are directly related to substance abuse issues. Theft, burglary, violence, family violence, and drunk driving are often rooted in substance abuse.

This is an issue that is pervasive, with 6% more residents identifying it as a problem than in 1999. There are many organizations, groups, and agencies working on this issue. Perhaps the questions we most need to ask are; Are we focused? And are we doing enough to prevent abuse?

Issue # 4 Wages and Work Opportunities

Concerns about wages and work opportunities became an issue when we noted that jobs with high-end salaries, like technology, and manufacturing have decreased while service workers and tourism jobs with lower end salaries have increased.

The self-sufficiency standard for Nevada County in 2000 was \$16,000 for one adult, and \$45,955 for 2 adults with 2 young children. The median family income was \$48,800. On the income side, the average annual pay in 1999 ranged from \$18,000 in retail trade to \$38,000 in manufacturing industries.

While 60% of residents reported having opportunities to work in their preferred fields, 20% said they did not. For professionals, it is sometimes difficult for both adults in a household to find career opportunities here. There may not be similar opportunities if a worker loses a job with an employer.

Thirty percent of the revenues in our community come from retirements, dividends and stocks. Presumably most of these revenues are going to seniors. If that 30% of revenues is removed from the total revenues in our community it seems likely that even larger numbers of individuals and families are living on the margins of sufficiency.

An important factor is that overall wages in our county has increased 1.5% while the cost of living has increased 3%. With the increases in housing costs and the cost of living, a situation exists where more people who work have less money to spend. This is coupled with the large number of seniors who report that their stocks, retirements and dividends have decreased in value and believe there is less money to spend.

A perception of less money to spend will affect retail sales and the service industry when fewer local residents make expenditures in the community. This could also impact the growth in the number of jobs available in the retail and service industry.

There is also a question as to whether the construction industry can continue to provide the same high level of salaries and benefits that they have over the past few years. Construction represents an area of job growth with high-end salaries. Construction is also responsible for a large segment of retail sales. Should a dip in construction occur the impact on our community and economy would be significant.

Tourist income is significant for the community, but increasing tourist income may erode the tranquility that contributes to the quality of life and further increase traffic which already detracts from the quality of life.

Other areas of concern that surfaced are the large number of eastern county jobs that are seasonal providing only low-end salaries for part of the year. There is also the issue of health benefits being available to those earning lower end salaries.

Issue # 5 Social /Recreational Programs

The perceived adequacy of social and recreational programs in our community decreased from 1999 to 2001. The greatest changes were in the opinions of adequacy of services for the disabled, vocational training, and seniors (down 39%, 19%, and 16% respectively).

There are new school programs that have begun to address the needs of youth and the 43% of residents rated these as adequate, up from 36% in 1999. However the question remains as to how well these programs are meeting the perceived need.

There appears to be a desire for structured programs at every level of our community. It would seem to follow that the desire for an increase in programs would also require an increase in facilities that would support these programs. Meeting rooms, gymnasiums and playing fields would likely be needed to support the desire for structured social and recreational programs.

Issue # 6 Family Violence

More than half of the residents surveyed think family violence is a problem in our community. The *Comprehensive Report* show high decreases in reported cases of adult abuse and child abuse referrals. However, the County reports a decrease in households reporting domestic violence, though the percent involving weapons has increased.

To better understand this issue, we need more information about how data collection was accomplished and whether there had been a change from how it had been collected in the past. Numbers of reported cases in elder abuse and child abuse have doubled in four years. These numbers should be of serious concern to every member of our community.

Issue # 7 Health Services Availability

The availability of health care shows up in three different ways. One concern is for the decline in those with a full range of health benefits including dental insurance. Another concern is for the number of people travelling out of the area for health care services.

Those traveling may include patients who have insurance providers that only offer services outside of the county, and those who travel to find doctors who will take Medi-care or Medi-cal insurance. Additionally it is thought that shortages of specialists in certain medical areas are causing people to leave the community to acquire adequate health care services.

Though quality health care services to exist in our community, creating a greater understanding of why people leave for health care outside the county would seem important.

The third concern is for the 10 % of those surveyed who reported that they did not have health insurance, and they did not have a regular source of primary care. Of the 7% who reported not getting the care that they or a household member needed, 30% said they could not afford it and 16 % said their insurance would not cover it.

Issue #8 Transportation/Traffic

Participants in the CAP have identified traffic congestion and the number of cars on the road as a threat to the quality of life in our community. Roads, traffic and traffic planning seem to be areas of concern as are reckless driving and dangerous roads.

It is also noted that there may exist a greater demand for a reliable local transportation system than is understood. Telecare vans are used extensively and the need of seniors requiring transportation may be on the increase.

More people moving here have increased traffic on roads that were not designed for the demand. Traffic congestion appears to be an ongoing concern of this community. There are no simple answers for this issue. However, it seems a critical area to focus in if we are interested in preserving our quality of life.

Data Analysis Team

Larry Channel

President, UWNC BOD
Lockheed Martin, retired
12974 Quaker Hill Road
Nevada City CA 95959
265-4464
Fax: 265-4464 Hm 265-4464
lchannel@pacbell.net

Ellen Fietz Hall

Community Initiatives Director
United Way of Nevada County
PO Box 2733
Grass Valley CA 95945
265-9082
Fax: 265-9237 Hm 478-5855
ellen@uwnc.org

Dee Mautino

City Council
City of Grass Valley
125 East Main Street
Grass Valley CA 95945
274-4310
cityofgv@nccn.net

Sophia Meyer

United Way Board of Directors
12806 Pasquale Road
Nevada City CA 95959
265-8555
smeyer@oro.net

Gary Petersen

Airport Manager
County of Nevada
950 Maidu Ave
Nevada City CA 95959
273-3374
Hm 470-0887
gary.petersen@co.nevada.ca.us

Alex Terrazas

Assistant to the Town Manager
Town of Truckee
10183 Truckee Airport Road
Truckee CA 96161-3306
530/582-7700
Fax: 530/582-7710 (fax) Hm
aterrazas@townoftruckee.com

Jim Young

Attorney, retired
14859 Hidden Rock Drive
Grass Valley CA 95949
274-7684
jpyoungs@nccn.net