



EVERYDAY IMPACT  
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## Fresno Primer

Completed by MaiKa Yang and Elaine Abelaye-Mateo, [Everyday Impact Consulting](#)  
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### Introduction

In advance of The James Irvine Foundation's Board visit to Fresno, CA in October 2018, this Fresno Primer provides an overview of the city's history, geography, people, economy and community. Additionally, this report explores many of the assets that Fresno has to offer in the region and the state. Unless otherwise noted, all data points reflect the Fresno city area. When city level data is not available, county data is referenced.

Throughout this document, readers will also have an opportunity to explore key articles from local reporters. These additional materials are included to enrich the narrative and provide additional context and details.

The following topics are explored in this report; click on the headers below to skip to specific topics.

- [Executive Summary](#)
- [Situating Fresno in California](#)
  - [Early History](#)
  - [Early Immigrant Settlement](#)
  - [Geographic Sprawl and its Impact on Opportunity](#)
- [Fresno Today](#)
  - [A Growing and Diverse Population](#)
  - [Educational Attainment in Fresno](#)
  - [Unemployment, Income and Poverty](#)
  - [A Growing and Changing Economy](#)
  - [Housing](#)
  - [Civic Engagement](#)
- [Current Issues and Opportunities for Change](#)
  - [Education and Career Readiness](#)
  - [Community Development](#)
  - [Water](#)
- [Non-Profits and Philanthropy in Fresno](#)
  - [Non-Profit Infrastructure](#)
  - [Charitable Organizations](#)
- [Conclusion](#)
- [Endnotes](#)



## Executive Summary

The city of Fresno resides in the heart of California's San Joaquin Valley. Since it was established, Fresno has been critical to California's success and will continue to be one of the state's greatest, though often overlooked assets. For a region that has been historically under-resourced, Fresno offers tremendous potential for philanthropy, local communities and institutions to work collectively to address disparities and promote educational, economic, housing, and civic opportunities. This section offers important key take-aways from this report:

1. *Situating Fresno:* Fresno is a community with a long history of diversity. The city has always been home to immigrant and refugee populations seeking economic opportunities and pursuing the American dream. Unfortunately, much of Fresno's history is also checkered with the exploitation of immigrant and refugee labor, and these workers have been unable to share in the city's prosperity due to implicit and explicit biases, which have shown up in exclusionary and inequitable policies.
2. *Fresno Today:* Fresno continues to be a majority minority city with a growing, young population. While new residents continue to be drawn to the city because of comparatively affordable housing, wages remain low and businesses looking to expand are in industries that do not always create well-paying jobs (e.g. retail and hospitality). At the same time, many populations within the city remain excluded from prosperity. Local leaders need to ensure the future, diverse workforce is ready to meet the needs of employers. This includes improving historical inequities in educational attainment. To see the kind of inclusive opportunity and growth needed to secure a bright future for all residents, civic engagement and inclusive representation is also needed.
3. *Current Issues and Opportunity:* Fresno's sobering story of poverty, lower than expected educational attainment, poor health outcomes, and barriers to civic engagement are difficult conditions that hinder Fresno from realizing its potential. That said, Fresno residents exhibit an inspiring level of resiliency and commitment to creating a better future for their city. That resiliency is now contributing to a renewed commitment to collaborate and partner in new ways that may begin to address some of the long-standing inequities in the city.
4. *Non-Profits and Philanthropy in Fresno:* Fresno's nonprofit structure remains under-resourced, which limits nonprofits' abilities to meet demand and grow in scale. In response to this challenge, organizations and leaders remain resilient. They partner, collaborate, and extend themselves to support their community. While noble, this is not an effective strategy for long-term change. Despite the limited giving capacity of the region, there are several organizations and initiatives investing deeply in Fresno and they are transforming philanthropy in the region. These entities are increasing the resources being drawn to the communities of Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley. Growing this



intermediary capacity can help to further support the nonprofit community in their quest to do more for residents.

### Situating Fresno in California

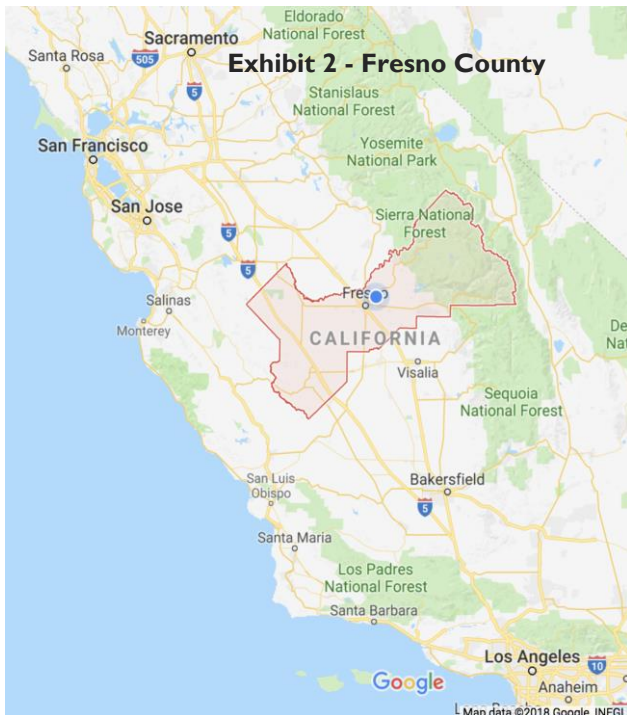
Located in a fertile and agriculturally rich region of California, Fresno is the 5<sup>th</sup> most populous city in the state,<sup>i</sup> with over half a million residents (see Exhibit 1). Fresno is located in Fresno County, which is the tenth-largest county in the state<sup>ii</sup>. Situated in what is commonly known as the San Joaquin or Central Valley region, Fresno County, the sixth-largest county in land area in the state, encompasses over 6,000 square miles.

Fresno shares its border with San Benito and Monterey counties to the west, Merced and Madera to the north, Mono and Inyo to the east, and Kings and Tulare to the south. It is also surrounded by four well known national and state parks: Yosemite, Sierra Nevada, Sequoia, and Kings Canyon. Due to its central location and the presence of long-haul

Exhibit 1 - Largest California Cities by Population (January 2018)	
City	Population
1. Los Angeles	4,054,400
2. San Diego	1,419,845
3. San Jose	1,051,316
4. San Francisco	883,963
5. Fresno	538,330

Source: California Department of Finance

roadways (Interstate 5 and Highway 99), Fresno County serves as an important transportation hub for the flow of goods to markets in major urban areas of the state (refer to Exhibit 2).



The county covers fifteen cities with the city of Fresno, the county seat, comprising the largest population (538,330 residents). The neighboring city of Clovis, the second largest city in the county (113,883 residents), is one of the state’s ten fastest growing cities with populations over 30,000. The city of San Joaquin has the smallest population in Fresno County (4,119)<sup>iii</sup>.

#### Early History

In 1872, Fresno city was established by the Central Pacific Railroad Company. The city’s roots in transportation continue to drive its role as a transportation hub for the rest of the state today. The site was originally selected to host the new train station, and soon followed the development of the Central California Colony, which parceled out 20-40 subdivision tracts south of Fresno<sup>iv</sup>. By 1903, over 48 tracts were settled by Scandinavian farmers who had



traveled west from across the nation. The Fresno County seat, established in 1874 in nearby Millerton located in the foothills, eventually moved into town.

Fresno's early settlers laid the foundation for what is now the nation's leading agricultural region through the introduction of irrigation, electricity and agriculture. Irrigation canals lead to the cultivation of wheat, grains and even cotton, which was at one point a major crop until drought and lower demand reduced its cultivation in the region.

### *Early Immigrant Settlement*

Following the introduction of the railroad, agricultural growth and high demand for farm commodities begged the need for an expanded labor force. Agricultural-related jobs that once relied on Asian and European immigrant laborers fell short due to the “Driving Out” period in which national discriminatory immigrant exclusion policies in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries<sup>v</sup> forced immigrant populations out of the county. After World War II, laborers from Mexico made up the majority of the agricultural labor force, a legacy of the bracero program<sup>vi</sup>, which led to the growth of the Latino population in Fresno today.

The fertile, arid land and warm weather attracted many early immigrants seeking new opportunities for a better life in California - these groups include German, Scandinavian, Portuguese, Italian, Greek, Chinese, Japanese, Mexicans, Armenian, Sikh, Hmong and Southeast Asian refugees, and more recently Syrian refugees. Fresno experienced significant population growth with the influx of almost 40,000 Southeast Asian refugees (Hmong, Cambodian, Laotian) between 1980 and 1992<sup>vii</sup>.

These immigration patterns continued to reshape the demographics of the Valley region and the city of Fresno. Today, Fresno is home to over 70 diverse ethnic and racial groups who have made tremendous contributions and helped transform the region's economy, government, public service sector, businesses, social, political and civic organizations, as well as emerging arts and cultural hubs<sup>viii</sup>.

### *Geographic Sprawl and Its Impact on Opportunity*

While immigrants perceived Fresno to be a place of opportunity, to be clear, immigrant communities were not welcomed. Chinese immigrants, who helped build the Central Pacific Railroad, were seen as outsiders and “foreigners” by local white residents. They were excluded from purchasing land east of the city's railroad tracks and forced to settle west of the tracks in an area now known as Chinatown. Many more immigrant groups—Japanese, Armenians, Mexicans, Russians and Italians—were also excluded and joined Chinese immigrants southwest

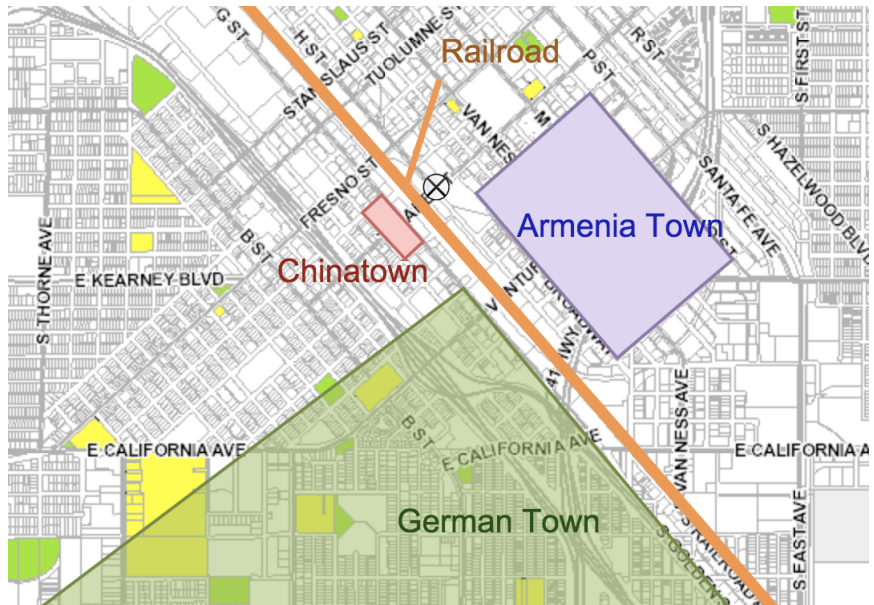


of the tracks in what was known as German Town and Armenia Town, now commonly referred to as southwest Fresno (see Exhibit 3)<sup>ix</sup>. From the early 1900s to the 1960s, Fresno's general plan would institutionalize residential segregation policies, followed by redlining policies, resulting in a concentration of industrial zoning in southwest Fresno<sup>x</sup>. At one point, almost all Black Americans, who moved to Fresno after World War II, were segregated to southwest Fresno.

During the 1970s, Fresno's population tripled and the land area more than doubled in size. The population increase created a major shift with the influx of migrants from Mexico and Latin America in the 1990s, and thus began the "white flight" away from central Fresno neighborhoods. Suburban sprawl, the development of major retail centers in north Fresno, coupled with the expansion of major freeways 41, 168 and 180 further divided the city and attracted white residents to more affluent neighborhoods in north Fresno and east to the city of Clovis, leaving immigrant and lower income Latino and Southeast Asian families to settle in older and more disinvested neighborhoods in central, southeast, and west Fresno<sup>xi</sup>.

A former City of Fresno Mayor used the term "A Tale of Two Cities" to describe the inequity in income, property values, economic investments, and growth between north and south Fresno (the geographic boundary is the split at Shaw Avenue and has now moved further north to Herndon Avenue). As resources shifted to the north, neighborhoods more populated by White residents experienced better health outcomes, more green spaces, better schools and increased economic development, while lack of investment in the southern neighborhoods, which were mainly populated by communities of color, resulted in increased poverty and fewer economic opportunities for Fresno residents of color.

**Exhibit 3 – Early Immigrant Communities**



Source: City of Fresno and Fulton Corridor Survey Report (Map not drawn to scale)

**READ MORE ABOUT  
FRESNO'S LEGACY OF  
DISCRIMINATION AND  
SEGREGATION**

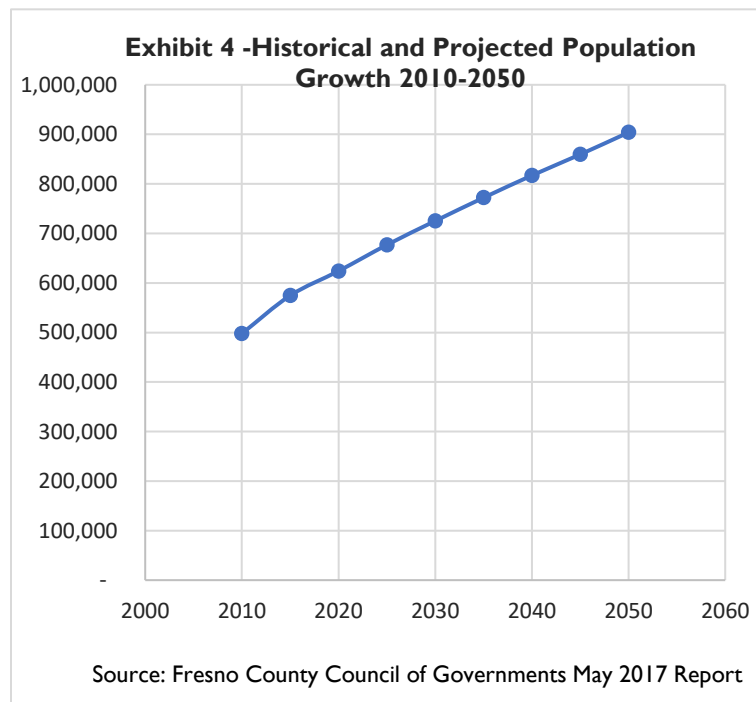


## Fresno Today

The people of the San Joaquin Valley, especially Fresno’s residents, experience limited economic mobility exacerbated by inequities in education, income, social supports, career opportunities, political engagement and representation. In a recent survey of California Workers completed by Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), findings indicate that many Fresno workers are struggling to make ends meet. Forty-three percent of respondents are working but struggling with poverty, compared to the state average of 31 percent<sup>xii</sup>. Moreover, nearly 80 percent of Fresno County respondents to the PRRI survey stated that they encouraged young people to leave the region for better opportunities, compared to the state response rate of 64 percent. Without a bright future, young people will continue to leave the region, leading to brain-drain and challenges making the city a vibrant, thriving community<sup>xiii</sup>.

The following sections offers a description of the Fresno community by exploring topics such as demographic changes, educational attainment, employment, economic growth, housing, and civic engagement.

### *A Growing and Diverse Population*



Fresno’s population is projected to grow by 57 percent over the next 35 years, reaching 900,000 by 2050 (see Exhibit 4).<sup>xiv</sup> Increases in the city’s population are expected to occur as a result of an influx of non-native residents seeking a lower cost of living from other parts of the state.

Notably, the city’s growing population is relatively young—in 2016, the median age was 30 years compared to 36 years statewide and 38 years nationwide<sup>xv</sup>. If the current trend continues, by 2050, a large segment of Fresno’s population will be dominated by the 25-34 age group, followed by age groups 6-14 years and 35-44

years.<sup>xvi</sup> Fresno’s younger population is also largely Latino, with the majority under the age of 25<sup>xvii</sup>. This population is expected to continue to grow over the next 35 years<sup>xviii</sup>.



The city’s diversity is further exemplified by the number of dual language or monolingual, non-English speakers. Nearly 43 percent of Fresno’s population ages 5 years and older speak a language other than English at home<sup>xix</sup>. Over 29 percent of Fresno’s total population live in households where Spanish is the primary language. Spanish is spoken by nearly 81 percent of Fresno Unified English learner students.

Demographic and population changes in Fresno are exemplative of the changes that the rest of the state and nation will soon undergo. Understanding these demographic changes is key to providing leadership in navigating diversity and fully realizing Fresno’s potential. Fresno’s diversity can continue to be its biggest asset, but only if Fresno’s leadership fully embraces its diversity and works toward developing the appropriate systems and policies to remove barriers and reduce inequities, unlocking opportunities for Fresno’s young, multi-ethnic populations.

*Educational Attainment in Fresno*

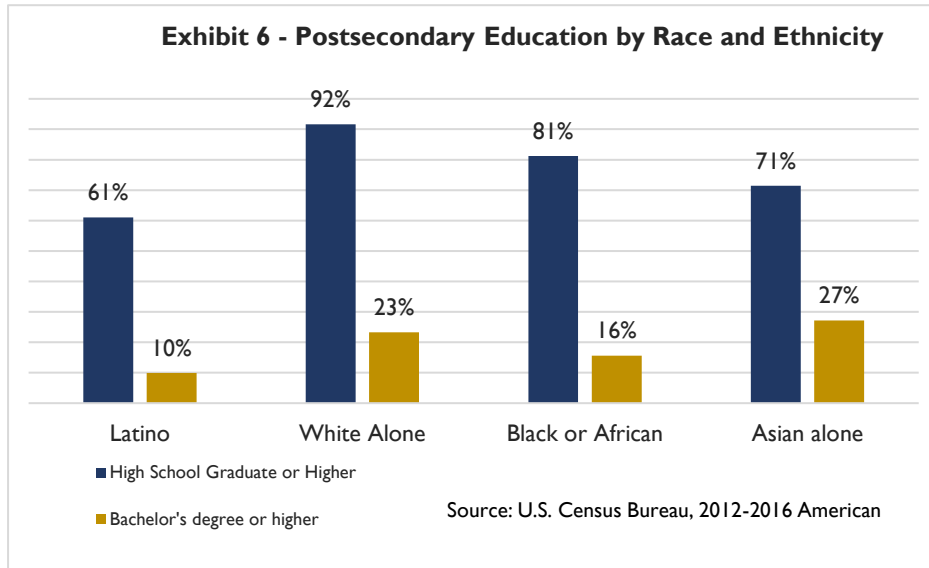
Fresno Unified School District is a critical institution in preparing the future workforce and leadership pipelines for the city. Fresno Unified is one of the top four largest school districts in the state and is the largest district in the County. Fresno Unified has an annual operating budget of \$801 million and serves 74,000 students from preschool through grade 12 at 11 elementary schools, 15 middle schools, 9 high schools, 3 special education schools and one adult school. There are approximately 16,000 English learner students (22 percent) and a majority of students live in poverty (88 percent). Fresno Unified’s diverse student population speaks over 59 languages and the majority of students identify as Latino (68 percent), followed by Asian (11 percent), White (10 percent), and African American (9 percent).

Exhibit 5 - Educational Attainment in Population 18 Years and Over		
	California	Fresno
High school graduate	82 percent	75 percent
Bachelor’s degree or higher	32 percent	21 percent

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2012-2016 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

While educational attainment is trending up in Fresno, it historically lags behind the state. During the 2016-17 school year, Fresno Unified boasted a nearly 86 percent graduation rate (up from 73 percent in 2010-11) with a 49 percent A-G completion rate<sup>xx</sup>. But, as shown in Exhibit 5, of the total population ages 18 and older, 75 percent have a High School degree or higher (82 percent statewide) and 21 percent have a bachelor’s degree or higher (32 percent statewide)<sup>xxi</sup>. As seen in exhibit 6, racial gaps in educational attainment remain as Latinos had the lowest rate of High School graduates (61 percent) and Bachelor’s degrees attained (10 percent) compared to all other ethnic groups in the city.

Fresno Unified and other educational stakeholders recognize that Fresno’s history of educational disparities plays a large role in the current opportunity gap. Systemic changes to Fresno Unified’s education system have been focused on the preparation of a strong Fresno workforce. Investment of resources must continue to prioritize and foster pathways to ensure



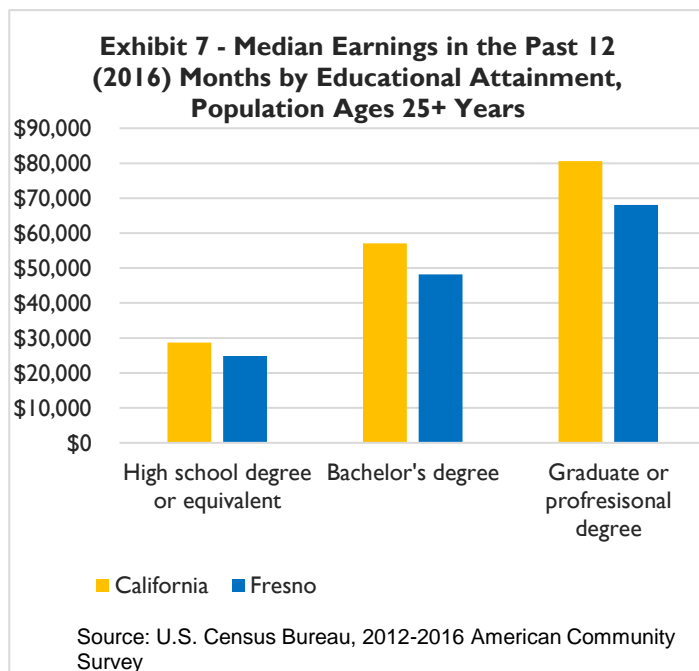
Fresno's youth graduate from high school and have access to equitable opportunities to pursue postsecondary education or quality careers through technical and vocational training. Additionally, political leaders must be conscious of the racial inequities that exist in educational attainment and develop sound

policies to address the achievement gap. Most importantly, leaders must work collectively with institutions to expand opportunities that incentivize young people to stay and work in Fresno.

### *Unemployment, Income and Poverty*

As Fresno considers ways to keep its talented youth and homegrown workforce in the city, it is important to recognize that many current Fresno residents live without a steady income and remain unemployed. As of July 2018, the unemployment rate for Fresno is 6.4 percent, which is higher than the 4 percent state average rate. Unemployment rates for surrounding cities range from as high as 17 percent in Mendota, a rural farming community west of Fresno, to as low as 5 percent in Clovis.

Too many Fresno residents live in poverty with self-sufficiency far outside of their reach. As reported by the American Community Survey, median earnings within the past 12 months by educational attainment



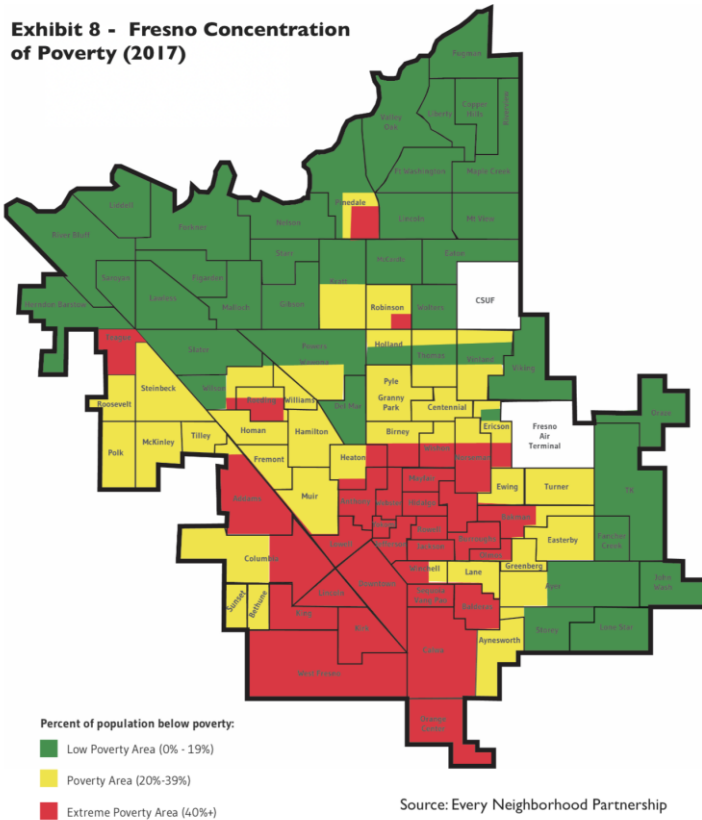
were lower overall than the state for Fresno's population ages 25 years and older (as shown in





Exhibit 7). Fresno city residents earned an average income of \$60,500 per household, which is lower than the county average of \$63,000, and 67 percent of the state average<sup>xxii</sup>.

**Exhibit 8 - Fresno Concentration of Poverty (2017)**



Approximately 40 percent of Fresno households earn less than \$35,000 annually and are unable to afford housing and basic goods and services. More than 30 percent of residents earn incomes below the federal poverty rate.

Exhibit 8 sheds light on areas where poverty is most concentrated in Fresno. As the map indicates, poverty is most acute in neighborhoods that have been historically left behind - central and southwest Fresno.

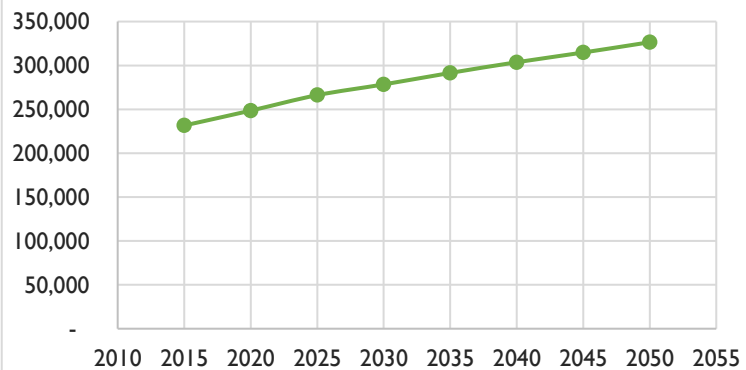
### A Growing and Changing Economy

As a significant part of the San Joaquin Valley regional economy, Fresno is impacted by regional, state, and national trends. How Fresno positions itself in the broader economic landscape is important for

its future, as well as the future of the region, and will have a substantial impact on the state's overall economic health.

Over the next 35 years Fresno County's share of Valley jobs is projected to be at 26 percent, which is not an insignificant figure<sup>xxiii</sup>. Fresno's total jobs will reach 326,450 by 2050 at growth rates between four and seven percent<sup>xxiv</sup> (see Exhibit 9). While this rate of growth appears strong, further analysis is required by community leaders to determine whether projected job growth will sufficiently meet the city's

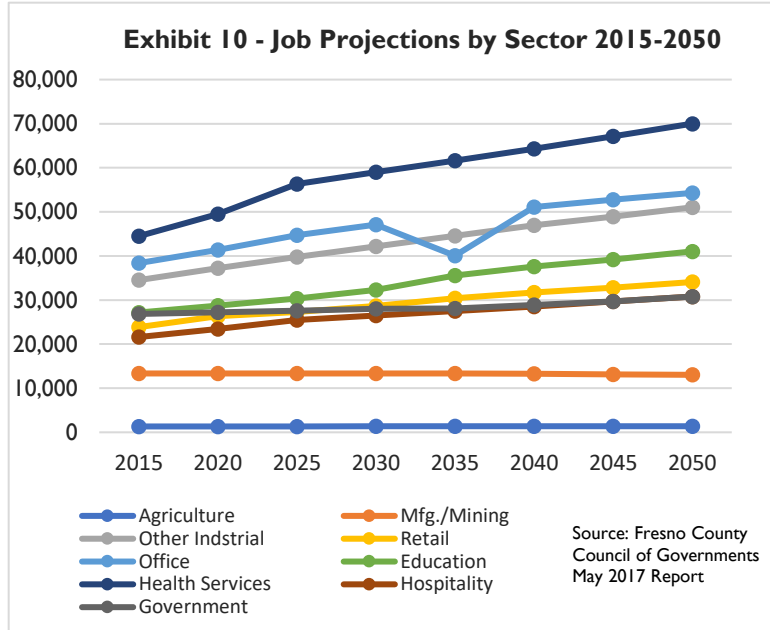
**Exhibit 9 - Jobs Growth Projections 2010 -2050**



Source: Fresno County Council of Governments May 2017 Report



expected population increases and whether the quality and pay these jobs will provide a level of self-sufficiency to residents.



Fresno is thought to rely mostly on an agricultural-based economy, but that reality is no longer true. Fresno has seen growth in other industries including manufacturing, healthcare services, government, retail, construction, trade, transportation, professional and business services. *Employment is anticipated to shift away from agriculture, and healthcare will see the highest growth rate, followed by nonmanufacturing industrial jobs, retail and education (as shown in Exhibit 10).*

The city of Fresno’s central location and convenient access to major transportation routes, reasonably affordable real estate market, low cost of living and cheaper labor force, when compared to the Bay Area and Southern California, have put Fresno on the map as a desirable location for new businesses. Over the last several years, Fresno has attracted e-commerce and shipping businesses, such as high-tech distributor, Amazon and cosmetics company, Ulta Beauty. Both companies have opened up locations in Fresno bringing in an estimated 3,500 new jobs to the area<sup>xxv</sup>. Moreover, the neighboring city of Hanford was recently selected for electric car startup Faraday Future’s new production site, which will inevitably create more employment opportunities for Fresno residents.

Other economic development opportunities for Fresno residents are tied to the county, which include high-speed rail construction, water conservation technology and alternative energy innovations, expansion of renewable energy projects and continued growth of the health care industry. Fresno’s economy is fast-changing, and the city will need a strategy to leverage all of the opportunities ahead as well as manage the growth of the changing workforce to promote quality jobs in the emerging sectors. By doing so, Fresno can provide viable jobs for its residents and ensure a thriving local economy.

### Housing

As a result of Fresno’s economic growth, the city remains an attraction to an increasing number of residents from outside of the area. Bay Area and Southern California families also look to Fresno as a viable housing option when considering the state’s rising housing costs. A year ago,



median rent was \$901, compared to the statewide \$1,300, while the median mortgage was \$1,505<sup>xxvi</sup>. The city’s overall median price was \$187,500, as reported by recent Census data<sup>xxvii</sup>.

The current demand for housing has put a strain on supply as housing construction has not quite reached its level of production from five years ago. A recent 2015 housing needs assessment estimates 28,000 more housing units are needed to fulfill Fresno’s housing demand by 2023 for all income levels<sup>xxviii</sup>. *This competition for housing is contributing to families living in some of Fresno’s poorer neighborhoods, such as in southeast Fresno, being classified as “housing burdened” or paying more than 30 percent of their income for housing costs<sup>xxix</sup>.*

More challenging to Fresno is the lack of affordable and quality housing for older neighborhoods in central and southern parts of the city. Blight and unsafe living conditions tend to overtake lower-income neighborhoods where families are more likely to be renters rather than homeowners. Recently, community advocates working in housing have had some success. In 2017, housing advocates had a huge win as they pressured the Fresno City Council to adopt the [Rental Housing Improvement Act](#), which is designed to establish a mandatory registry of all rental properties as well as a baseline inspection of rental properties within the city<sup>xxx</sup>. Additionally, for the first time in Fresno's history, these inspections will provide a full picture of all substandard properties within city limits and encourage Code Enforcement staff to be more diligent with interventions on housing units that need upkeep. Shifts in housing demands and changing policies have created unique opportunities for Fresno residents and advocates to make positive gains toward more affordable and equitable housing in Fresno.

### Civic Engagement

Research shows an important connection between civic participation and opportunity within communities. This is because local representatives determine the deployment of resources and

Exhibit 11 – Fresno Voter Turnout		
Neighborhood	Eligible Voters	Voter Turnout
North Fresno	92 percent	38 percent
Southwest Fresno	69 percent	22 percent
Source: Central Valley Health Policy Institute		

can help increase access to opportunities through policy choices in areas like education and community development.

In Fresno, the physical division of north Fresno and south Fresno mimics the inherent gap between the political power of these two regions in the city. Fresno’s political inequity is evidenced by the disparity of voting rates among advantaged and disadvantaged neighborhoods. More eligible voters reside in north Fresno compared to other parts of the city and, consequently, have easier access to decision-makers than other neighborhoods. In neighborhoods such as north Fresno, there are higher numbers of eligible voters (92 percent)



## THIS STORY FROM [THE KNOW](#) YOUTH MEDIA PROVIDES A COMMUNITY PERSPECTIVE ON HOUSING IN FRESNO



as compared to southwest Fresno (69 percent). Advantaged neighborhoods, like north Fresno, also tend to have higher rates of voter turnout (38 percent), compared to disadvantaged neighborhoods such as southwest Fresno (22 percent)<sup>xxxi</sup> (see Exhibit 11). It is important to note these rates of participation are correlated with outcomes related to prosperity.

The city and county also trend more conservative because of who turns out to vote. While voter registration tends to favor Democrats (as seen in Exhibit 11), California state representatives for this region have been predominantly Republican. Currently, between the five combined California Senate and Assembly legislative districts, only two districts are represented by Democrats. Only one U.S. congressional district is represented by a Democrat amongst the four districts. Considering these results, more Republican voters are voting than Democratic or Independent voters.

**THIS STORY SHOWS  
HOW EMERGING  
LEADERS ARE SHIFTING  
POWER IN FRESNO**

And while Fresno prides itself on its diversity, there is an apparent lack of representation of Fresno's diverse communities in local elected offices. For example, in the city of Fresno's history, there has only been one Asian American ever elected to the City Council, former Councilmember Blong Xiong (Hmong American). In general, nearly all of Fresno's mayors have been white males with the exception of two white females, and no person of color has ever been elected to serve as Mayor. The majority of the council members have also been white males with the exception of a few Latino and African American members elected (represented by southeast and west Fresno's Latino and African American populations). Similarly, Fresno County's Board of Supervisors has had few persons of color elected. Many nonprofit organizations in Fresno are working with community residents to increase voter registration and turnout in the city to help ensure that Fresno's diversity is represented at the ballot box. As Fresno continues to grow and diversity remains a cornerstone for the city, it becomes even more critical that Fresno's elected officials are truly representative of the diversity of the city and can develop meaningful policies and resource allocations that are equitable and accessible for all Fresno residents.

## **Current Issues and Opportunities for Change**

Fresno's sobering story of poverty, lower than expected educational attainment, poor health outcomes, and barriers to civic engagement are difficult conditions that hinder Fresno from realizing its full potential. However, Fresno residents exhibit an inspiring level of resiliency and commitment to creating a better future for their city. This section explores current issues faced by Fresno residents, and the many ways that they are creating systemic and sustainable solutions through collaboration, inclusion, and policy change.

### *Education and Career Readiness*



Fresno residents understand the economic imperative their region faces when it comes to developing a ready and capable workforce for California’s future jobs. There are several collaborative efforts between local agencies and community groups working together to increase access to education and workforce readiness for Fresno residents. Below is a description of some of the initiatives underway that are working toward creating solutions to various inequities in education, workforce development, and environment:

a. Fresno Building Healthy Communities (Fresno BHC) and Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF)

The [Fresno Building Healthy Communities \(Fresno BHC\)](#) initiative mobilizes parents, students and community groups to take part in the Fresno Unified School District Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) budget process and holds school officials accountable for the appropriate allocation of funding and resources to close the achievement gap for low-income, foster youth, and English learner students. The effort is designed to engage student and parent voices, especially those who have not typically engaged in the decision-making process, to determine how student achievement goals are established and achieved through equitable funding for students most in need.

b. Fresno Unified School District College Making It Happen (CMIH)

The [Fresno Unified School District](#) and [California State University, Fresno](#) (Fresno State) partner to implement the College Making It Happen program, which aims to increase graduation rates and college-readiness amongst the school district’s 74,000 students. The partnership is focused on sharing resources, promoting a college-going culture, and preparing graduates for careers. These resources include shared costs for a counselor liaison to promote programs between middle and high school students who share important information, and support services such as “How to Get to College,” financial aid planning, and targeted outreach to disadvantaged students and families with a goal to encourage 90 percent of Fresno Unified students to apply to attend Fresno State.

c. Linked Learning and Career Technical Education (CTE)

Fresno Unified School District offers the [Linked Learning: Pathways](#) program at eight of its high schools and provides students opportunities to gain hands-on and work-based training through technical courses combined with rigorous academics. Training emphasizes career pathways in health care, law and social justice and manufacturing as a means to expose students to college and career opportunities and prepare them to meet local employer workforce demands.

d. Fresno County Office of Education Career Technical Education Charter High School

Another promising example of preparing the future workforce is The Fresno County Office of Education’s [Career Technical Education Charter High School](#) (CTEC), which provides career technical education and offers high school students dual enrollment in college courses at [Fresno City College](#). Students are awarded both college credit and high school credit, and can earn an Associate’s degree upon completion. CTEC engages students in project-based learning in



partnership with the City of Fresno Revitalization Division and industry partners (Blue Dolphin, Harris Construction, E&J Gallo, Lennar, etc.).

e. *Fresno's Cradle to Career (C2C) Partnership*

The [Cradle to Career \(C2C\) Partnership](#) was established two years ago and has grown into a network of over 64 leaders from across the area's K-12 school districts, early learning, higher education, health, civic, justice, business, nonprofit and philanthropic organizations. C2C aims to shift policies and practices that address the education and achievement gaps for improved outcomes for Fresno's children from birth to career. Key success milestones identified for this effort include: pre-school readiness, early interventions that keep children on track to read by the third grade and graduate from high school, college enrollment and completion, workforce readiness, and access to employment and support systems that create stable quality of life. C2C is working in partnership with several partners to increase post-secondary access, enrollment and completion, including: Fresno Compact, GO Public Schools, Fresno State, State Center Community College District, Fresno City College, Central Valley Higher Education Consortium, Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, Central Valley Community Foundation and other education stakeholders.

f. *State Center Community College District (SCCCD) Measure C*

In 2016, voters in Fresno County passed a \$485 million bond measure proposed by the [State Center Community College District \(SCCCD\)](#), which would fund local community college classroom repairs and job training improvements across its five community college campuses in the Fresno area. The measure prioritized basic repairs, building and enhancing job training facilities, campus safety, support services for Veterans, expansion of job training and workforce preparation, and provision of low-cost, high quality education for all students. The measure will also support district-wide technology and infrastructure improvements, accessibility and ADA improvements. Most importantly, Measure C allows SCCCDC to invest in the build-out of a new satellite site in Southwest Fresno, which will bring a state-of-the-art CTE training facility to Southwest Fresno residents.

g. *Central Valley Higher Education Consortium (CVHEC)*

Founded in 2000 by former Fresno State President John D. Welty and 18 college and university leaders, the [Central Valley Higher Education Consortium \(CVHEC\)](#), comprised of accredited public and private colleges, universities, and community college district members from Stockton to Bakersfield, is bringing together leaders for a regional effort aimed at implementing several strategies to ensure a pathway to college success for students. Some of these strategies include full-time student enrollment incentives, acceleration of English remediation in the community colleges, mathematics course completion and requirements, increases in degree attainment, integration of support services to help students, and financial aid assistance.

h. *Central California Workforce Collaborative (CCWC)*

Another workgroup, the [Central California Workforce Collaborative \(CCWC\)](#), led by Fresno, is a partnership between the workforce development boards (WDBs) and represents San



Joaquin, Stanislaus, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, Kings, Kern/Inyo/Mono, and Mother Lode counties. The CCWC created the California Workforce Investment Board Slingshot, which has generated approximately \$1 million for the San Joaquin Valley to fund several workforce development strategies. These strategies address the needs of industry-related training, credentials/certificates, and career pathways; shared existing curriculum, and prior learning assessment and credit through the collaboration of local community colleges, economic development agencies, and employers in the manufacturing and construction/trades industries etc. Such funds have supported the development of local pre-apprenticeships and related public infrastructure job training programs through partnerships between the Fresno Workforce Development Board and the building and construction trades groups. These programs prepare individuals to enter the trades apprenticeships and generate a pool of eligible workers trained for public infrastructure jobs, such as the high-speed rail.

Each of the above-described initiatives demonstrate the existing partnerships and collaboration among various education, workforce, and community stakeholders. The collaborative nature of the initiatives also exhibits Fresno's ability to leverage resources, data, and information to increase impact and ensure sustainability in the education and workforce sectors.

### *Community Development*

In addition to preparing Fresno's future workforce, there are several efforts addressing community development in the city and the region. Fresno recently went through an extensive strategic planning process to revamp its land use and zoning plan, which has catalyzed new investments in Fresno's Downtown area. The community is also taking steps to tax itself to generate new revenues which will expand access to green space.

Additionally, the development of California's High-Speed Rail is a new economic driver for the city and region, which will bring new jobs and industries to Fresno residents. Finally, state investments in the city to offset environmental damage is an important opportunity for community residents most impacted by poor health outcomes to determine projects that will most significantly improve the community's economic and health outcomes.

Below are a few highlights of notable economic development opportunities:

#### *a. Fresno Downtown Revitalization*

Over the years, there have been many attempts to revive downtown Fresno, an area that is often stigmatized with a negative reputation. Downtown Fresno is commonly perceived as a place people do not trek to after the workday ends and even its downtown workers flee to





their homes in north Fresno at the end of their workday. However, the perception of this part of Fresno is changing as more state and federal resources have been leveraged to revitalize the area. The [Downtown Fresno Partnership](#) reported that since 2010, there have been 550 units of residential housing developed, equal to \$81 million and over \$100 million either under construction or completed projects with more than \$67 million in planned development in downtown Fresno.

Within the last year, the revitalization of Fulton Mall (previously a pedestrian mall) was completed, which opened up street access to attract more patrons to downtown. The revitalization of downtown Fresno has also sparked an unprecedented growth of the technology industry, with [Bitwise Industries](#) at the forefront as, “The mothership of technological education, collaboration and innovation in Fresno”<sup>xxxii</sup> (see Exhibit 12). Bitwise is not only in the technology development business, but also retrofits once abandoned warehouses to stylish shared work spaces attracting various types of companies to downtown, including education, start-up tech companies, private and nonprofit organizations.

*b. Fresno Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Initiative*

Fresno ranks 94 out of the 100 largest U.S. cities for park space on [The National Public Land Trust ParkScore](#) index for 2018 measuring acreage, investment, amenities, and access to park space. Nearly 40 percent of Fresno residents do not have access to a park space within a 10-minute walk from home.

Recently, in a historic move, the Fresno City Council voted unanimously to put the Fresno For Parks Initiative on the November ballot. The initiative was brought forth by community stakeholders gathering 35,000 signatures to qualify for the ballot. With enough votes in November, the “[Fresno Clean and Safe Neighborhood Parks Initiative](#)” would raise an estimated initial \$38 million and more than \$1.1 billion in 30 years, providing a sustainable local funding source for Fresno parks. A large portion of the funds would go towards the update and maintenance of existing parks, the development of new parks and recreational facilities for most in need, followed by the expansion of and access to arts and cultural programs, beautification of trails, job training programs for youth, and afterschool programs.

*c. High Speed Rail*

The new bullet train promises to attract increased tourism and a renewed economic boom to

**THIS PODCAST HAS HELPFUL  
BACKGROUND INFORMATION  
ABOUT THE HISTORICAL  
TRANSFORMATION OF  
FULTON MALL**

the county and the region through its connection with northern and southern California, although continued delays and rising costs have stifled its progress. Due to its central location in the state, Fresno County Board of Supervisors and a coalition of 15 cities, including the City of Fresno, labor groups, and business and education leaders, seized the opportunity and proposed to the [California High Speed Rail](#)





[Authority](#) to serve as the hub for the heavy maintenance facility where train cars would be assembled and maintained in the county. The facility is expected to reign in \$300 million in new construction, create 1,500 jobs and boost local annual salaries of up to \$100 million<sup>xxxiii</sup>. At the time this report was written, no decision has been made as to the location of the maintenance facility. The High-Speed Rail Authority has prioritized construction projects throughout the San Joaquin Valley region, extending from the Bay Area, moving south through Fresno and onto Kern County towards southern California.

**[LEARN MORE ABOUT HOW  
FRESNO RESIDENTS SECURED \\$70  
MILLION TO INVEST IN THE CITY'S  
POOREST NEIGHBORHOODS](#)**

Currently, several construction projects are underway within the Fresno city limits, including a trench laid for the station stop near downtown Fresno, the expansion of Highway 99, and support structures in south and north Fresno. The high-speed rail station is conveniently located in downtown Fresno, a central location to entertainment centers such as the baseball park, government offices, and has easy access to local public transit, which increases connectivity to nearby national parks and other attractions in the region.

Notably, there remain concerns among residents about access and mobility options for all Fresno residents. Also, with the increased connectivity to the region, there is potential for more population growth that will drive up the demand for housing, thus increasing housing costs, and the cost of living for some of the city's already struggling families. Much of the opportunities and concerns described above will be considered as the City of Fresno finalizes the [Fresno Station District Master Plan](#). The plan is designed to coordinate ongoing projects, address accessibility, and position the city for economic vitality tied to ongoing Downtown Fresno revitalization efforts.

#### *d. Transformative Climate Communities Initiative*

The [Transformative Climate Communities](#) process began more than two years ago. In September 2016, Assembly Bill 2722 (Burke, Arambula) was championed by a Fresno-based organization Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability and the California Environmental Justice Alliance. This bill created the Transformative Climate Communities Program, encouraging the development and implementation of localized plans that reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve the economic, environmental, and health benefits of disadvantaged communities.

Leaders, residents, and multiple stakeholders worked alongside one another in a community-driven process engaging state and local decision-makers to ensure funds and program guidelines from the TCC program were designated to Fresno so that investments reached the



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communities with the most need, including southwest Fresno, which was identified as one of the most disadvantaged communities in the city based on the [CalEnviro Screening Tool](#). Of the \$140 million in TCC funds, \$70 million were earmarked for Fresno and the final TCC guidelines called for robust community engagement in crafting and implementing the Fresno TCC Plan. The process, at times challenging, brought together nontraditional stakeholders that included business and property owners with residents and allies living or working in southwest Fresno to determine project ideas submitted as part of the TCC application package. Investments will target Downtown Fresno, Chinatown and Southwest Fresno for economic and environmental improvements. Proposed projects included a greenhouse gas emissions reductions effort, a new community college satellite facility, street improvements, new parks, community gardens and green walkways.

### Water

While residents are leading initiatives to strengthen Fresno's environmental outcomes, challenges remain. Water-related issues are a threat to the San Joaquin Valley and the city's future prosperity because of its central role in the agriculture economy. Water is also a precious and scarce resource needed to meet the needs of the growing Fresno population.

Water issues remain a key quality of life issue for many of Fresno's poorest residents as many have struggled to gain access to safe, clean drinking water. Researchers have connected unsafe drinking water with poverty in the Valley. Many Fresno County and San Joaquin Valley rural, farming residents live in isolated and unincorporated communities served by smaller water districts that lack the resources and, sometimes, the expertise to address contamination. Not only do these residents face hazardous health risks from [drinking unsafe water](#), they also pay high water bills, and, at times, are forced to travel long distances to purchase expensive bottled water.

Recent legislation passed by California voters approved Proposition 68 allocating \$250 million for safe drinking water for disadvantaged communities. A second bond on the November ballot would provide an additional \$500 million toward safe drinking water for disadvantaged communities. In order to further address water distribution issues in the region, several

**THIS PODCAST EXPLAINS WHY  
ACCESS TO CLEAN DRINKING  
WATER REMAINS A PROBLEM FOR  
VALLEY RESIDENTS**

foundations, including The Central Valley Community Foundation, The California Endowment and the S. D. Bechtel, Jr. Foundation, have formed a partnership: the [Central Valley Leaders Effectively Addressing the Drought \(CV LEAD\)](#). The partnership has provided grantmaking support and capacity-building to nonprofit and community benefit

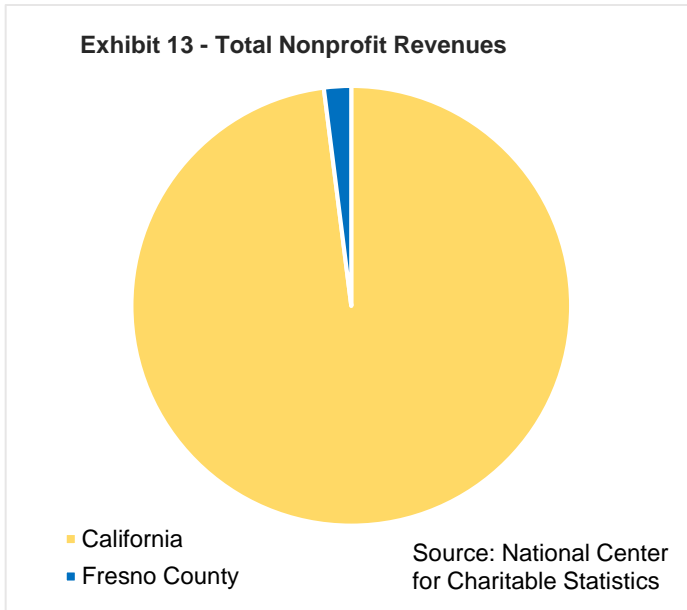
organizations in six counties (Mariposa, Merced, Madera, Fresno, Tulare, and Kings Counties). The initiative engages and strengthens the capacity of organizations in understanding and



addressing the long-term drought challenges and encourages collaboration and partnership to develop solutions and to ensure sustainability.

### Non-Profits and Philanthropy in Fresno

Fresno is a city ripe for investment. That being said, data continues to show that social movement efforts and non-profits are underinvested in when compared to other regions in the state. As philanthropy considers investments in Fresno, it should look for ways to work in partnership with the community to support those efforts they identify as necessary to building long-term capacity, strengthening assets, and ensuring access and inclusion for all.



#### Non-Profit Infrastructure

City-level data about the non-profit sector is unavailable. Fresno County data shows 3,087 organizations registered with a total of \$4,661,701,842 in total revenue and \$7,397,270,405 in reported assets<sup>xxxiv</sup>. Compared to the state, Fresno County’s total nonprofit revenues account for just under 2 percent of the state’s total nonprofit revenue (as shown in Exhibit 13). Fresno County’s total nonprofit revenues are almost 13 percent of San Francisco County’s and nearly 8 percent of Los Angeles County’s total nonprofit revenues. With regard to nonprofit assets, Fresno’s total assets account for

1 percent of the state’s total assets, and 10 percent and almost 5 percent of San Francisco County and Los Angeles County’s total assets, respectively.

As the data confirms, Fresno’s nonprofit structure remains under-resourced, which limits nonprofits’ ability to meet demand and grow in scale. In response to this challenge, organizations and leaders remain resilient. They partner, collaborate, and extend themselves to support their community. While noble, this is not an effective strategy for long-term change. Organizations need financial support that is flexible and enables them to strengthen their operations and leadership.

#### Charitable Organizations

According to the National Center for Charitable Statistics, there are over 10,000 registered private foundations in the state of California with total revenues of over \$13 billion and over



\$106 billion in total assets<sup>xxxv</sup>. In Fresno County, however, there are only 101 registered private foundations who reported \$33,334,691 in revenue and \$136,746,803 in total assets – this accounts for 0.24 percent of the entire state foundation revenues and 0.128 percent of California’s total assets from foundations.

Despite the limited giving capacity for the region, there are several organizations and initiatives investing deeply in Fresno and transforming philanthropy in the region. These entities are increasing the resources being drawn to the communities of Fresno and the San Joaquin Valley. Growing this intermediary capacity can help to further support the nonprofit community in their quest to do more for residents. The following highlight some of the leading efforts:

a. *The Central Valley Community Foundation*

The [Central Valley Community Foundation](#) is the Fresno region’s local community foundation serving the counties of Fresno, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, Tulare and Kings. Established over fifty years ago in 1946, the Central Valley Community Foundation’s mission is to cultivate smart philanthropy, lead, and invest in solutions that build stronger communities.

The Central Valley Community Foundation (CVCF) is a member of the Council on Foundations and the League of California Community Foundations. In 2017, in partnership with the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and other donors, the CVCF awarded half a million dollars to seven local non-profit organizations doing work in the areas of youth development, health, and teen pregnancy prevention<sup>xxxvi</sup>. CVCF remains the largest philanthropic entity in the region and is committed to being a partner that helps to cultivate regional investments from local donors and outside funders. In 2017, CVCF awarded over \$14.4 million in grants across its service area (see Exhibit 14)<sup>xxxvii</sup>.

Exhibit 14

2017 Grantmaking Year by the Numbers	
Grants	Grants
746	13,876,305.4
Scholarships	Scholarships
262	\$612,650.00
Total	Total Awarded
1,008	\$14,488,955.40

Source: Central Valley Community Foundation

b. *The San Joaquin Valley Health Fund*

The [San Joaquin Valley Health Fund](#) launched in 2014 with funding partners committing more than \$6 million to 89 organizations in Fresno, Kern, Kings, Madera, Mariposa, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Tulare counties. Partners work to improve the health and well-being of residents by advancing programs and policy changes that promote community health and health equity for all. Grantees funded through this funder collaborative address critical issues, such as food security, air quality, clean drinking water, domestic violence, housing, health care, education, employment, immigrant rights, open space and neighborhood safety. In 2018, the San Joaquin Valley Health Fund granted over \$975,000 to 58 organizations working on policy and systems change to improve health outcomes in the San Joaquin Valley<sup>xxxviii</sup>.



The San Joaquin Valley Health Fund partners include:

1. Sierra Health Foundation
2. The California Endowment
3. Rosenberg Foundation
4. The California Wellness Foundation
5. W.K. Kellogg Foundation
6. Blue Shield of California Foundation
7. Wallace H. Coulter Foundation
8. Dignity Health
9. Tides
10. Hellman Foundation
11. Convergence Partnership
12. Health Net
13. The Grove Foundation
14. Werner-Kohnstamm Family Giving Fund

The 2018 San Joaquin Valley Health Fund Awards focused on the following priority areas:

- Protecting Immigrant’s Rights in the San Joaquin Valley
- Healthy Communities Cluster: Racial Equity and Community Mobilization to Improve the Health and Well-Being of Children

Additional descriptions about the funded grants can be found here: [2018 Partner Descriptions](#).

*c. The Latino Community Foundation*

The mission of the Latino Community Foundation is to unleash the power of Latinos in California by building a movement of civically engaged philanthropic leaders, investing in Latino-led organizations, and increasing political participation of Latinos in California. The [Latino Community Foundation](#) awarded over \$1M in 2017 to 64 Latino-led organizations in the Central Valley and Central Coast. The Foundation also hosted the first Latino Nonprofit Accelerator, designed to increase the impact and growth of Latino-led organizations throughout the state. Four organizations from the Central Valley, including a collaborative comprised of five organizations, are a part of the Accelerator program.

The Latino Community Foundation has identified the Central Valley as a focal point in its philanthropy. In 2017, the Foundation invested over 40 percent of its grantmaking in the Central Valley region and is making a concerted effort to increase resources and attention to the Central Valley region. The Foundation’s Central Valley Giving Circle is the largest and fastest growing in the state with 78 Latino donors. The Central Valley Giving Circles have granted \$112,000 to Latino-led nonprofits in the region to-date with plans to grow.



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*d. Fresno Building Healthy Communities (Fresno BHC) Initiative*

[Building Healthy Communities](#), a 10-year \$1 billion initiative funded by The California Endowment, works with 14 communities across the state to improve health outcomes for Californians. Together, they are mobilizing residents, youth, community groups and leaders, institutions and organizations to shift policies that have led to historic redlining, discriminatory practices, segregation, health and economic inequities. [Fresno BHC](#) partner organizations work towards increasing access to healthcare coverage, engaging parents and students in setting school district Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) budgets, improving neighborhood safety, green space access, quality and affordable housing, and reducing toxic waste and pollution, among other issues. The 10-year initiative will sunset in 2020 and, in anticipation of uncertain funding streams to sustain the momentum of existing work, Fresno BHC has already established itself as a nonprofit organization ready to move forward.

## Conclusion

Fresno is an incredibly complex city with its share of challenges and opportunities. But, it is also a place with a number of competitive advantages and is ripe for investment. With a younger workforce, diverse population, and an abundance of economic prospects, Fresno is an important city that has the key to unlocking all the potential that California has to offer. Community leaders and residents are building momentum for change and learning from previous efforts. This presents an opportunity for philanthropy to support that local momentum and help the community achieve its goals. Empowering and catalyzing Fresno's efforts will not only enable the community to improve opportunities for its residents, but more importantly become a leader in California's growth and sustainability.

**READ ["TO FRESNO, WITH LOVE"](#) TO  
FIND OUT WHY YOUNG PEOPLE LOVE  
FRESNO**



## Endnotes

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