

## **SOUTH MODESTO FORUM**

### **[KEY FINDINGS]**

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#### **Segment Definition**

Geographic classification of community members who live in zip codes 95358 and 95351 (South Modesto) and have a vested interest in their neighborhood's health, well-being, advancement, and success.

#### **Meeting Context**

Location: The Center Church, 2019 Frazier Street, Modesto, CA 95358

Date: July 19, 2022

Time: 6pm - 8pm

Attendees: 8 Total (6 English; 2 Spanish)

#### **Topline Findings**

##### Question 1:

*What are the top three things about Modesto that residents appreciate most?*

The most popular responses shared by multiple Spanish and English-speaking community members were:

- (1) How welcoming the city and its neighborhoods are, meaning that they feel safe, have a sense of belonging and “home,” and are free to move about the city as they please. Spanish-speaking community members also expressed how they feel the city and the South Modesto area are safer than some areas in bigger cities, like Stockton or Sacramento.
- (2) The city's diversity was used to describe its assortment of eateries to enjoy, but also the different cultures and ethnicities that make up Modesto, making it a place where heterogeneity exists. Some community members expressed a desire to have this diversity “celebrated” and “shared” in more ways.
- (3) Community members feel a strong connection to their community both in the homogeneity of the South Modesto neighborhood, as it has a high concentration of inhabitants of Latin descent who speak Spanish, and in the opportunities to join grassroots community-based organizations that exist.

*What are the top three things about Modesto that businesses appreciate most?*

Community members shared the following responses:

- (1) The neighborhood supports emerging small businesses like “La Placita” (neighborhood food court) and “El Rematito” (South Modesto flea market) because they visit these locations

frequently. Another community member shared that she had assisted a local florist every summer since she was in high school.

(2) Spanish-speaking community members shared the value proposition of the city's growth potential as an opportunity for local businesses. With more commuters from the Bay Area moving into the city and new establishments opening, like the new Super Walmart in Ceres, community members described growth as favorable for local businesses.

(3) English-speaking community members expressed difficulty answering the question as none of them were business owners.

### Question 2:

*What would you like to see changed in Modesto to make it a better place to live and work?*

Most responses were related to three critical improvements shared by community members:

(1) Job opportunities, especially for youth, are a crucial barrier to creating a good quality of life. English-speaking community members described how difficult it is for first-generation college graduates from South Modesto to find employment that pays enough for them to live independently and pay bills. Given these limitations, young people who do not have a degree or did not go to college encounter even greater difficulties.

(2) The lack of affordable housing was a common concern shared by community members: rental rates are increasing, forcing more families to share single homes to pay bills in South Modesto. This is further illustrated by how many cars are parked in front of homes in the neighborhood. Community members also described the intertwined relationship between poor job opportunities and the lack of affordable housing.

(3) There is a need for improved infrastructure in South Modesto, expressed as the lack of sidewalks and lighting, poor road quality, and need for speed bumps. As an example, residents shared how street and driveway flooding in the winter, combined with the lack of sidewalks, lead to students walking in the middle of the road to get to school, which is not safe.

### Question 3:

*Senate Bill 1000 requires the City to improve a range of conditions in disadvantaged communities. Specifically, we need to develop policies to address the topics listed below. What do you see as the key issues related to these six topics in Modesto?*

**Pollution Exposure and Air Quality:** Community members shared that poor air quality in South Modesto makes it hard for people with asthma, and they were concerned about poor working conditions for laborers and field workers due to the air.

**Public Facilities and Services:** Discussion in the English-speaking group involved the river, with all community members sharing that they do not visit it due to a lack of parking, safety concerns, and poor signage on how to visit. Additional public facilities and services recommendations were to develop drop-in youth centers and address other infrastructure-related needs including bathrooms at parks, potholes on roads, access to community swimming pools, and garbage pick-up services.

**Food Access:** Community members forecasted that the need for food would increase due to inflation, so more access to food pantries will be necessary. Also, there was group agreement that South Modesto lacks healthy food options.

**Safe and Sanitary Homes:** Community members shared that there are more abandoned houses than ever, and owners fail to maintain properties. There was a belief that this leads to the perception of increased violence in the area. Also, there was a specific concern for the elderly living in substandard housing on Olivero Road.

**Physical Activity:** Community members stated that there is more physical activity than ever as people are walking around the neighborhood for exercise, but there are concerns over stray dogs. In addition, residents noted that the area lacks a gym.

**Community Engagement:** Community members shared that access to information is difficult, and planning sessions are not attractive because many people want to see action rather than plans.

Question 4:

*Rank issues in order of importance for the General Plan Update to address.*

See individual rankings in the attached spreadsheet.

Question 5:

*Should future development be focused as infill development (i.e., to already developed areas), or should it be allowed to extend beyond the current city limit? If beyond the city limit, where should that be allowed?*

Spanish-speaking community members had specific recommendations on expansion, primarily towards where current expansion is taking place on Mitchell Road near the airport, as Hatch Road and Mitchell Road are key shopping districts for community members in South Modesto. Additionally, they made recommendations for expansion near Carpenter Road and Whitmore

Avenue for housing and business development; other recommendations for housing and business development included Claribel Road toward Riverbank. Prioritizing future housing expansion was critical for community members in South Modesto. The English-speaking community members were not focused on the distinction between infill development versus outward expansion of development into greenfield space, and they were primarily interested in improving the quality of existing development before building new development.

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### **Additional Insights from Debrief's South Modesto Partners**

This section provides additional contextual understanding from Debrief's community-based relationships in South Modesto and current project engagements in the area.

- 1. Infrastructure improvements through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) in unincorporated areas will not meet neighborhood expectations.** The determination of a \$50 million fund allocation is countywide and based on priority; there is not enough accessible funding at the moment to make significant infrastructure improvements in the short term in unincorporated parts of South Modesto.
- 2. Definition of a "good job" to meet the needs of community members' concerns.** From our work with Stanislaus 2030, there is a shortfall of "good jobs," which are defined as jobs meeting the following three criteria:
  - a. Offers medical benefits,
  - b. Has opportunities for advancement and promotion, and
  - c. Provides minimum earnings of \$28.58/hour.
- 3. Four new affordable housing developments are being built in Modesto, but none near South Modesto.** Stanislaus Equity Partners (STEP) is a community development corporation leading affordable housing advocacy in the county. Currently, their projects are outside South Modesto, with the closest being an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) in West Modesto.

# **RAW MEETING RESPONSES**

# ENGLISH

Question #1a	What are the top three things about Modesto that residents appreciate most?		
Response	Welcoming	Diversity	Community
	Welcoming schools	Diversity in foods	Friendly neighborhoods
	Diversity	Space	Hardworking
	No drama	Connected to the community	Content
	Lively neighborhood	Downtown is relaxing	Different types of eatery

Question #1b	What are the top three things about Modesto that businesses appreciate most?		
Response	We are willing to support and help along the way	Support	Grants are given and help start along the way
	Food services	Party rental services	Pop up events
	Doesn't call the cops on them	Family businesses are always welcome	Help spread the word
	Support	Communication	

Question #2	What would you like to see changed in Modesto to make it a better place to live and work?		
Response	More jobs	More resources	Easier transportation
	Youth opportunities	Access to services	Affordable housing
	Something fun/space	Stores	Parks
	Less expensive houses to buy	Better paying jobs	Infrastructure
	Affordable housing		

Question #3	Senate Bill 1000 requires the City to improve a range of conditions in disadvantaged communities. Specifically, we need to develop policies to address the topics listed below. What do you see as the key issues related to these six topics in Modesto? Are there other aspects to environmental justice you would like to see the General Plan address?		
	<u>Pollution exposure and air quality</u>		
	Dirty alleys - the issue improved		
	Poor air quality - bad for people with asthma		
	Poor working conditions and bad air quality		
	Lack of access to information		
	Bad for field laborers		
	The freeways		
	The buses and semis		
	<u>Public Facilities / Services</u>		
	More signs and parking at the river		
	Don't know how to access river		
	Scared to go into river		

Response

Drop in center for youth would be helpful
Community swimming pools
Not much access to public facilities
The bus system need shade and cleanliness
Bathrooms at parks for homeless
Being able to use parks and facilities safely
Certain areas - potholes, garbage pickup, and stray dogs.
<u>Food Access</u>
Access to to grocery stores and flea market
Some people don't "care" to get healthy
Food pantries are available
The need for food has doubled
Since inflation the need is greater
Lack of healthy food options
A lot of diversity in food areas
Food apartheid
<u>Safety</u>
Abandoned houses
Elderly safety - poor housing (Olivero Road)
Owners don't keep up housing
Violence is slowly rising
Improved from the past safety wise (somewhat)
Expands outside of community to city (on safety)
Homes in certain locations need to be renovated and inspected
A lot of abandoned homes have cockroaches and rats/mice
The homeless need homes, and can use abandoned homes
<u>Physical Activity</u>
No gyms
People like to walk (dogs are dangerous)
Sports for kids can be expensive
Need diversity in sports
Adult sports
Equipment at parks is available for free
Stray dogs chase you
The Red Cross is the only available pool and capacity is 60
<u>Community engagement</u>
Transportation services
More into action not planning
Time constraints to participate in meetings due to work
The ability for us to be able to have information is not there - like with apps or flyers

<b>Question #4</b>	<b>Rank the following issues in order of importance for the General Plan Update to address.</b>	
	<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Issue</i>
	Participant #1	
	1	Housing availability and affordability

**Independent  
Response**

	2	Environmental justice
	3	Growth management
	4	Job creation
	5	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
	6	Community services and public safety
		Connections to open space
		Other: Activities as group comming together in the community
	9	Undocumented/ help resorces
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>
Participant #2		
	1	Job creation
	2	Growth management
	3	Environmental justice
	4	Connections to open space
	5	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
	6	Housing availability and affordability
	7	Community services and public safety
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>
Participant #3		
	1	Housing availability and affordability
	2	Job creation
	3	Community services and public safety
	4	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
	5	{BLANK}
	6	{BLANK}
	7	{BLANK}
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>
Participant #4		
	1	Housing availability and affordability
	2	Environmental justice
	3	Community services and public safety
	4	Growth management
	5	Job creation
	6	Connections to open space
	7	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>
Participant #5		
	1	Housing availability and affordability
	2	Environmental justice
	3	Community services and public safety
	4	[BLANK]
	5	[BLANK]
	6	[BLANK]
	7	[BLANK]
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>



Participant #6	
1	Housing availability and affordability
2	Connections to open space
3	Environmental justice
4	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
5	Community services and public safety
6	Job creation
7	Growth management

<b>Question #5</b>	<b>Should future development be focused as infill development (i.e., to already developed areas), or should it be allowed to extend beyond the current city limit? If beyond the city limit, where should that be allowed?</b>
<b>Response</b>	For housing focus on outside
	To have fun you need to leave the community
	More attractions

**SPANISH**

Question #1a	What are the top three things about Modesto that residents appreciate most?
Response	The weather is better than LA or Fresno area
	Neighbors are friendly
	The community is walkable to a degree
	I came to Modesto because of the Arch (Positive/Inspirational message)
	Crime rate is better than Stockton or Sacramento
	Nearby areas have sidewalks

Question #1b	What are the top three things about Modesto that businesses appreciate most?
Response	The town is growing and developing
	Super walmarts recently opened
	There is sufficient stores, but could be more
	The Mall and the Swap Meet
	Modesto has the potential for growth

Question #2	What would you like to see changed in Modesto to make it a better place to live and work?
Response	Stray Dogs
	Broken street lighting
	Sidewalks
	Policing and Safety
	More job creation

Question #3	Senate Bill 1000 requires the City to improve a range of conditions in disadvantaged communities. Specifically, we need to develop policies to address the topics listed below. What do you see as the key issues related to these six topics in Modesto? Are there other aspects to environmental justice you would like to see the General Plan address?
Response	Pollution exposure and air quality
	Education and parent involvement also be included
	Safety in neighborhood
	Involved parenting
	Access to food and nutrition

Question #4	Rank the following issues in order of importance for the General Plan Update to address.	
Collective Response	<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Issue</i>
	1	Job creation
	2	Housing availability and affordability
	3	Community services and public safety
	4	Connections to open space
	5	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
	6	Growth management

	7	Environmental justice
	8	Other: Annexation
<b>Independent Response</b>	<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Issue</i>
	Participant #1	
	1	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
	2	Housing availability and affordability
	3	Community services and public safety
	4	Job creation
	5	Connections to open space
	6	Growth management
	7	Other: Annexation
	8	Environmental justice
	Participant #2	
	1	Job creation
	2	Growth management
	3	Environmental justice
	4	Connections to open space
	5	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
6	Housing availability and affordability	
7	Community services and public safety	

<b>Question #5</b>	<b>Should future development be focused as infill development (i.e., to already developed areas), or should it be allowed to extend beyond the current city limit? If beyond the city limit, where should that be allowed?</b>
<b>Response</b>	Extend the city outward
	They could expand towards Mitchell and Carpenter area
	Another spot they could expand towards is towards Riverbank and Claribel area
	The County pockets are in need
	More housing in the outside areas

## Small Group Discussion Questions

- 1 What do you like most about Modesto?
  - 1a. What are the top three things about Modesto that residents appreciate most?
  - 1b. What are the top three things about Modesto that businesses appreciate most?
- 2 What would you like to see changed in Modesto to make it a better place to live and work?
- 3 Senate Bill 1000 requires the City to improve a range of conditions in disadvantaged communities. Specifically, we need to develop policies to address:
  - Pollution exposure and air quality
  - Public facilities and services
  - Food access
  - Safe and sanitary homes
  - Physical activity
  - Community engagement

What do you see as the key issues related to these six topics in Modesto? Are there other aspects to environmental justice you would like to see the General Plan address?

- 4 Rank the following issues in order of importance for the General Plan Update to address:
  - Job creation
  - Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations)
  - Environmental justice (healthy food access, safe and sanitary housing, pollution exposure, public facilities, physical activity, community engagement, and prioritization of improvements addressing the needs of disadvantaged communities)
  - Connections to open space
  - Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
  - Housing availability and affordability
  - Community services and public safety
  - Other \_\_\_\_\_

- 5 Should future development be focused as infill development (i.e., to already developed areas), or should it be allowed to extend beyond the current city limit? If beyond the city limit, where should that be allowed?