

YOUNG PROFESSIONALS FORUM

[KEY FINDINGS]

Segment Definition

Career-based classification of university students and early-career adults navigating building a career locally in Modesto, CA.

Meeting Context

Location: 231 Magnolia Drive Modesto, CA 95351

Date: August 4, 2022

Time: 6:00pm - 7:30pm

Attendees: 12 Total (12 English; 0 Spanish)

Topline Findings

Question 1:

What do you like most about Modesto?

The most popular responses shared by young professionals were:

- (1) The small town feel makes it comfortable. An affordable cost of living, relatively close airport for travel, diversity of cultures, budding entrepreneurial “vibe,” and easy access to the outdoors make Modesto a good place to live.
- (2) Modesto’s social sector provides a strong sense of community. Being part of different leadership networks, such as the Latino Leadership Network, American Leadership Forum, New Leadership Network, NextGen OnBoard, and various nonprofit boards around the city, has made them feel “at home.”
- (3) Local changes make young professionals feel hopeful. Many stated that downtown having more restaurants, murals, and evening concerts have created a “buzz” in the city that they enjoy. They also shared that seeing more people of color and young people running for local political offices makes them more interested in getting involved civically.

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 young professionals:

- (1) They have difficulty navigating the start of a career. Career building is patch-worked and riddled with trial and error. From taking on volunteer hours to build resumes and portfolios to deciding to commute out of the county for better work opportunities, young professionals feel there is no support during their time in higher education and after graduation to enter local

fields. This group expressed the need for more significant support from educational systems and employers to hire locally.

(2) There is a lack of awareness of how to enter Modesto's legacy industries that can support a local career. They have expressed not knowing the hiring process or how to get a job with local corporations and feel disillusioned by the hiring process: they sense that Modesto's large local corporations prefer outside talent and do not look locally when hiring, especially when it comes to hiring people of color.

(3) Community revitalization is viewed as helping grow, attract, and keep businesses and young people in Modesto. This demographic desires more entertainment and recreational activities, entertainment options (e.g., more restaurants, nightclubs and bars, and car drag strips), and more options for teenagers who they believe want to leave the area because there are no leisure options. Young professionals also pointed to closed storefronts, lack of maintained public spaces, and dirty streets that prevent business growth and push businesses out of lower-income areas of the city. They stated that these areas could be revitalized to provide chic and more affordable housing to people their age.

Question 3:

What is most important to young people when they think about staying in Modesto after school? What types of jobs do Modesto students want after school? Are there enough job opportunities for you, your friends, and family in Modesto?

Most responses were related to three critical considerations shared by young professionals:

(1) Family obligations and a desire to stay near aging parents were common responses to why many young professionals stay in Modesto. Many said that this disposition is even more pronounced for people of color.

(2) Many feel unsatisfied with how they started their careers after graduating college. Before graduation, the lack of job prospects caused them to take local low-paying, entry-level work that they felt overqualified for, and they were frustrated with their work. Though they now have more clarity about their careers, they do not know how to shift positions, reskill, or build their professional network.

(3) Building generational wealth is a priority for this demographic. Pathways to good jobs are essential for them. They are willing to move out of the city if job opportunities are unavailable and are disappointed in the "professional" career options in Modesto. They have a sense that professional options are limited to being a lawyer, which they feel has become oversaturated and has hurt the downtown with too many small law firms. Some said more affordable home prices are an attractive reason to stay. Many expressed an interest in entrepreneurialism because they feel Modesto is a "sandbox" to test new ideas. Others think they are too debt burdened to take on the risk of entrepreneurship after finishing college.

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?

Young professionals discussed housing expansion and development. Most felt that future expansion should focus on infill developments. The rationale was a concern that taking away farmland beyond the current city limit may have adverse effects on the local economy and legacy jobs. They pointed to growth opportunities in West and South Modesto for affordable housing as they feel those areas are not as up-to-date infrastructure-wise as other parts of the city. Building more housing in these areas may bring about updated infrastructure. They also spoke on the importance of city leaders considering future housing developments directed at young professionals and young families, such as upscale condominiums by the river, more downtown housing, and building for more density (“building upward”) near shopping centers (e.g., the mall or along McHenry Avenue).

Additional Insights from Debrief’s Young Professional Partners

This section provides additional contextual understanding from Debrief’s community-based relationships and current project engagements.

- 1. Young entrepreneurs lack support.** Young people attempting to start companies are hindered because of a weak entrepreneurial ecosystem in Modesto: there is a lack of access to capital, coupled with a lack of professional and educational support to navigate the legal landscape and acquire customers (e.g., small business accelerators).
- 2. NextGen OnBoard and the Latino Leadership Initiative are the emergent pipelines for young professional leadership development.** The Stanislaus Community Foundation (NextGen OnBoard) and City Ministry Network (Latino Leadership Initiative) are creating pipelines for local businesses and nonprofit organizations to tap for talent.
- 3. There is budding advocacy for career development in local public schools.** Multiple parent groups have mobilized over their shared belief that career training happens too late in their children’s education journey in public schools, and they feel it is rushed at the university level. They believe this is hurting their child’s career opportunities after high school.

RAW MEETING RESPONSES

GROUP 1 - ENGLISH

Question #1	What do you like most about Modesto?		
Response	Centralized in California	Great place to be born and raised	Room to grow
	Parks	Sense of community	Lots of area with sub community personalities
	Ag presence nearby	Small town feel	Diversity

Question #2	What would you like to see changed in Modesto to make it a better place to live and work?		
Response	People of color representation in governance	Additional entrepreneurship / small business startup funding	More "career" jobs/ opportunities
	More Farm to Fork restaurants	Easier way to start a business - less fees - less__ management - more freedom	Nepotism - hiring
	Housing accessibility/affordable housing to purchase not rent	Employment opportunities (too much nepotism)	More urban gardens/ beautification of parks
	Making a drag strip in Modesto	Bridge the city for walks, bike rides, ect. Sidewalks + bike lanes or trails in all areas	Drug facility to help in the city
	More culture (cultural comm center)	Safe youthful entertainment	Access to civic engagement
	Higher pay for Mayor + City Council Members	Mentorship for youth	Improvement of parks
	Lack of sidewalks make it hard to stay connected to community	College degrees and still struggle to get jobs	Elephant in the room is the drug culture in parks
	More alignment with college and jobs that are available	More affordable housing (encouraging homeownership for younger generations)	Professionals careers (especially for POC aside from social work)
	More job opportunities for young people (College Grads)		

Question #3	What is most important to young people when they think about staying in Modesto after school? What types of jobs do Modesto students want after school? Are there enough job opportunities for you, your friends, and family in Modesto?			
	Family	Too expensive to move	Sense of fear to try	Sense of community
	IT/tech	Connected to people support system	Professional job focused on POC	Investment

Response	Ag/food	Entrepreneur	Representative policy making	Family and want a safe place for them
	Hope for improvement and opportunity to grow	Focused on making Modesto better	Sense of community	Came back family guilt to support family as a first gen
	Support system			
	Allowing POC to have influences in leadership in a professional space			

Question #4 Rank issues in order of importance for the General Plan Update to address.	
Individual Answers	
<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Issue</i>
Participant #1	
1	Housing availability and affordability
2	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)
3	Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations)
4	Job creation
5	Connections to open space
6	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
7	Community services and public safety
8	Other: Better roads and trimmed trees
<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Issue</i>
Participant #2	
1	Housing availability and affordability
2	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)
3	Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations)
4	Community services and public safety
5	Job creation
6	Connections to open space

Independent Response

	7	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>
Participant #3		
	1	Community services and public safety
	2	Housing availability and affordability
	3	Job creation
	4	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)
	5	Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations)
	6	Connections to open space
	7	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>
Participant #4		
	1	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)
	2	Housing availability and affordability
	3	Job creation
	4	Community services and public safety
	5	Connections to open space
	6	Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations)
	7	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
	8	Other: Cultural inclusion
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>
Participant #5		
	1	Community services and public safety
	2	Job creation
	3	Housing availability and affordability

	4	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)
	5	Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations)
	6	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
	7	Connections to open space
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>
Participant #6		
	1	Job creation
	2	Housing availability and affordability
	3	Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations)
	4	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)
	5	Connections to open space
	6	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
	7	Community services and public safety
	8	Other: Entrepreneurship
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>
Participant #7		
	1	Job creation
	2	Housing availability and affordability
	3	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)
	4	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
	5	Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations)
	6	Community services and public safety
	7	Connections to open space

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?
Response	Infill
	Gentrification in building
	Grow outwards in West and South Modesto affordable housing

GROUP 2 - ENGLISH

Question #1	What do you like most about Modesto?		
Response	The culture of American Graffiti Parade	All resources and how accessible they are	Location
	Community (service programs) organizations	Location	Community and traditions
	Location	Proximity to the Bay Area	Cost of living
	Proximity to other places (mountains and beach)	Cost of living	Houses are more affordable here
	Friends and family live here		

Question #2	What would you like to see changed in Modesto to make it a better place to live and work?		
Response	Better jobs and schools	Representation on City Council, police leadership, Planning Commission need to reflect our community	More attention to the environment, green space, and recycling
	Competitive jobs/pay	More diversity in all spaces	Developing Tuolumne River trail under 9th street
	More trails like Virginia Corridor	More jobs employment here (Gallo is bussing people from the Bay; Valley is bussing people to the Bay)	Resources equally distributed across Modesto
	Better roads	Connecting highways in towns	Affordable housing
	More: housing, job creation, outdoor spaces, better leadership, rehabilitation, beautification, removing blight, education		

Question #3	What is most important to young people when they think about staying in Modesto after school? What types of jobs do Modesto students want after school? Are there enough job opportunities for you, your friends, and family in Modesto?

Response	Jobs and housing	Goodpaying tech jobs	More transparency of what is available and can help professional development growth	Educational and career development
	Does the pay reflect the work considering the cost of living?	Many low paying "careers"	Nursing innovation	Modesto Junior College has a bad reputation
	Support and knowledge of the college process	Good salary and benefits with opportunities to advance	Access to a good paying paying jobs	There are not enough job opportunities in Modesto

Question #4	Rank issues in order of importance for the General Plan Update to address.
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Individual Answers	
<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Issue</i>
Participant #1	
1	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)
2	Job creation
3	Housing availability and affordability <input type="checkbox"/>
4	Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations) <input type="checkbox"/>
5	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails <input type="checkbox"/>
6	Connections to open space <input type="checkbox"/>
7	Other: Education
8	Community services and public safety <input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Ranking</i>	<i>Issue</i>
Participant #2	
1	Job creation
2	Housing availability and affordability
3	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)
4	Connections to open space
5	Community services and public safety
6	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
7	Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations)

Independent Response

	8	Other: Language justice
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>
Participant #3		
	1	Job creation
	2	Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations)
	3	Housing availability and affordability
	4	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)
	5	Community services and public safety
	6	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
	7	Connections to open space
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>
Participant #4		
	1	Job creation
	2	Housing availability and affordability
	3	Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations)
	4	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)
	5	Community services and public safety
	6	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails
	7	Connections to open space
<i>Ranking</i>		<i>Issue</i>
Participant #5		
	1	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)
	2	Job creation
	3	Housing availability and affordability
	4	Growth management (balancing urban and service expansions with demand, accommodating the continuation of viable agricultural operations)
	5	Community services and public safety

	6	Connections to open space
	7	Safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian circulation and recreational trails

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?
Response	Growth in every area in South Modesto
	Road management better sidewalks
	Improvement better grocery stores improvement

Small Group Discussion Questions

- 1 What do you like most about Modesto?
- 2 What would you like to see changed in Modesto to make it a better place to live and work?
What is most important to young people when they think about staying in Modesto after school? What types of jobs do Modesto students want after school?
- 3 Are there enough job opportunities for you, your friends, and family in Modesto?
- 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?