

TOD STORIES

The following interviews are from people in the Bay Area who live and work in TOD sites and can be used to advocate for more transit oriented neighborhoods and compact development. The interviews include a full story detailing the person's experiences, a short summary paragraph, and a key quote.

All of the people interviewed are enthusiastic advocates of walkable healthy communities, and have volunteered to be "TOD messengers" for the Great Community Collaborative (GCC). Their stories will help emphasize the need for the policies which the GCC is advocating for in station area processes, and will be helpful tools for communicating with media, public officials, and community members.

To speak with these "TOD messengers", contact your local Great Communities Collaborative core partners from Greenbelt Alliance, TALC and Urban Habitat.

- 1. Laurette Willkom, Walnut Creek**
Single mother, immigrated from Philippines
- 2. Steve Price, El Cerrito**
Graphic design business owner
- 3. Susan Dalludung, Hayward**
Director of Community and Economic Development Department
- 4. Maria Martinez, Fruitvale**
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Mother, immigrated from Nicaragua
- 6. Julie Wong, Richmond**
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- 11. Hugo Guerrero, Fruitvale**
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- 12. Tanya Narath, Santa Rosa**
Rides bike to work downtown

Laurette Willkom

Walnut Creek

**Single mother, immigrated from
Philippines**

For Laurette, public transportation was an important part of her transition into her life in the U.S. When she first moved from the Philippines to Hayward about 14 years ago, she didn't have a driver's license, so her job search was limited to places reachable by BART and bus. "I wasn't sure how to get around, nor even how to count money accurately. I learned quickly how to budget money, and to navigate wherever I wanted to go." Most poignant for Laurette was integrating into her new culturally diverse community. "At first I was intimidated by strangers from different cultures. But public transportation taught me to trust and interact with different communities all around me."



When Laurette moved from Hayward to live in San Jose, she became entirely dependent on driving. The three properties she managed were 10 miles apart, most part of her working hours are on the road, and she had to drive her children everywhere. "I felt it was unsafe to let them even to let them walk by themselves to the end of the block."

Now in downtown Walnut Creek, Laurette's children, ages 16 and 17, have the freedom to go where they want. "They take the free downtown bus shuttle to the high school. After school, they walk or bike around downtown with school friends, go to the movies, or wherever they want. There are short distances between everything, it is completely safe. I want to always live where it is diverse, and where there is good, reliable public transportation."

Laurette emphasizes how healthy she feels "shopping and working in the same city where I live. Living locally means the money I spend stays in my city and helps me and my neighbors." She has a 10 minute commute to work, where she manages affordable housing developments, and can take the free shuttle or walk 5 blocks to the Trader Joes, Safeway, and all other downtown shops. "You just step outside and everything is right here. It's so easy!"

Living in downtown next to BART also connects her family in a way that wouldn't be possible without safe public transportation. While Laurette is working, her children can go by themselves to visit their cousins in Castro Valley or Hayward. "If it weren't for living so close to BART and downtown, they wouldn't have much independence or get to see their family very much. I can trust that they are safe, and it's so important knowing we have an extended and accessible community."

Short Summary:

When she first moved from the Philippines 14 years ago, "public transportation taught me to trust and interact with different communities all around me (and) to navigate wherever I wanted to go." Now, Laurette and her 2 teenagers live in downtown Walnut Creek, across the street from the BART and bus station, and 5 blocks from an extensive shopping center. Her teens have the

freedom to “walk or bike around downtown with school friends, go to the movies, or wherever they want.” And while Laurette is managing a nearby senior housing development, her children can go by themselves to visit their cousins in Castro Valley or Hayward. “If it weren’t for living so close to BART and downtown, they wouldn’t have much independence or get to see their family very much. I can trust that they are safe, and it’s so important knowing we have an extended and accessible community.”

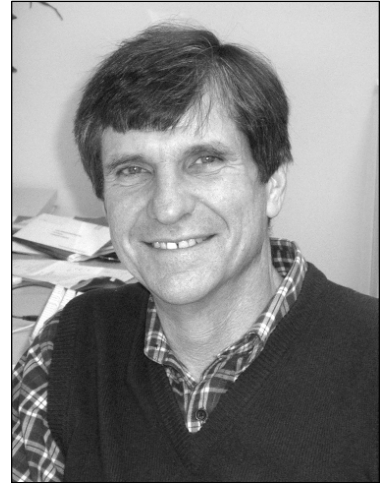
Quote:

“If it weren’t for living so close to BART and downtown, my kids wouldn’t have much independence or get to see their family very much. I can trust that they are safe, and it’s so important knowing we have an extended and accessible community.”

Steve Price

El Cerrito

Graphic Design Business Owner



As a child, Steve Price watched southern California's open space disappear and get taken over by roads and shopping malls. Now living in the Bay Area, Steve doesn't want to see the same thing happen in his new home.

Steve started his graphic design business from his home, but soon needed to expand to a new space. He relocated his office to the vivacious environment of downtown Berkeley, because of its convenient commute and its fully functioning mixed-use neighborhood. There is a spectrum of amenities all around his office, including copy shops, a drug store, hardware store, bookstores and computer stores. "Before I had to spend a couple of hours running across town to the computer store, and now I just have to walk next door. By having a range of stores so close, I save so much time and free up my weekends." Steve also sees the health benefits in his commute. He walks to and from BART, or bikes along the Ohlone Greenway. "After I began to incorporate regular exercise into my daily life, I saw immediate health improvements."

For Steve, being able to walk and bike to his destinations isn't just for environmental reasons, but to foster community and learning. "People need to be living in close proximity so that they can experience each other face to face. We are social beings and need to learn about life via observation."

He and his wife have owned the same car for 10 years but rarely use it. "I go places I know I can reach by transit or with my bike." He can walk to the Ohlone Greenway, the AC Transit Rapid Bus on San Pablo Avenue, and the El Cerrito Del Norte BART in under eight minutes. This opens up a rich world of Bay Area urban centers.

As people start to support "good urbanism" more, and as "cities develop regulations to address the needs of our times", Steve also hopes that his neighborhood continues to improve. "I'd like to see more walking destinations, (and) more development around the Del Norte BART station. I want a coffee shop I can walk to in the evenings."

By having stores, work spaces, parks and homes in attractive neighborhoods and within walking distance, "people will interact with their immediate surroundings. They neglect the landscape if there is no interaction. You have to be able to smell the smells." For Steve, BART and other public transportation has brought him new connections to people and friendships. "In public spaces, we learn to be more empathetic and understand other people."

Short Summary:

When Steve's computer imaging business got too large for his home, he moved his office to the center of downtown Berkeley so that he could more easily access all of the shops and services he needed. By shopping close to work, "I save so much time and free up my weekends." He bikes along the Ohlone Greenway or walks to BART for his daily commute, enjoying both the social and

health benefits of being out in his community. “In public spaces, we learn to be more empathetic and understand other people.”

Quote:

“Before I had to spend a couple of hours running across town to the computer store, and now I just have to walk next door. By having a range of stores so close, I save so much time and free up my weekends.”

Susan Daluddung

Hayward

**Director of Community and Economic
Development Department**



Before moving to Hayward, Susan Daluddung, Ph.D. lived in a single family home in Ventura. Although there was a neighborhood shopping center, it was too far to walk, and she had to drive to most places. Now, Susan can see her condominium from her office window. She walks to work, goes to the dentist, hairdresser, grocery shops, and dry cleaners all in the shopping center across the street. “It is amazing to be so close to so many services. Plus, my husband and I can go anywhere in any direction at any time. We have BART (so) I almost never have to use my car.”

As the Director of Community and Economic Development in Hayward, Susan advocates for continuous improvements in her community. To make it even more complete as a downtown, Susan would like to see more new housing, office spaces, fun places to go out at night, and services such as bookstores. “We have to be creative and meet the needs of people for all income levels and a diversity of people.”

For Dr. Daluddung, walkable communities around station areas will soon be mainstream. “The American dream is no longer the same American Dream. People want to do their errands efficiently and they want short commutes in order to have time for more important activities in their lives.” For others, the demand for housing and the costs of transportation make living in transit areas the most economical and popular option. “It’s not just that it’s convenient to live by my office and BART. Finally, I am able to truly walk the talk and live lightly on the land.”

Short Summary:

Susan Daluddung, Ph.D., director of community and economic development in Hayward, has always advocated for walkable communities near transportation. But now, in her new condominium in downtown Hayward, Susan can finally “walk the talk and live lightly on the land”. She can see her condominium from her office window does all of her errands in the shopping center just across the street. “It is amazing to be so close to so many services. Plus, my husband and I can go anywhere in any direction at any time. We have BART (so) I almost never have to use my car.”

Quote:

“It’s not just that it’s convenient to live by my office and BART. Finally, I am able to truly walk the talk and live lightly on the land.”

Maria Martinez

Fruitvale

Cafe Owner, "Queen of Tamales"

Maria Martinez, the Bay Area's Tamale Queen, has lived in Fruitvale for 50 years. At age 72, she has owned 3 different businesses and is an active member of the community. "I don't ever see myself leaving. It is so full of history and memories for so many people here. My own building is the same one where I used to buy wine for my brother. I want more people to be able to experience the richness of this place."

Her current business, World Cup Coffee, is one block away from the recently built Fruitvale Transit Village and right off of International Blvd, one of Oakland's busiest streets. Over the years, Maria has seen the community go through many changes, overcoming economic slumps. With the opening of the Fruitvale Transit Village, she sees a rebirth "back into the beautiful and rich community that I remember. Now people all come ready to relax in my garden patio and eat my tamales."



While Maria has always had regular customers from the neighborhood, "being near the Transit Village has been wonderful. The neighborhood looks clean and welcoming and the stores attract new people. Now I have customers from all over the Bay Area." Furthermore, Maria enjoys being so close to BART and shops because "it's like a community magnet. The library is right around the corner and I get to make tamales for all of their fundraisers and the local festivals. Everything happens right here."

Being so close to downtown has not only helped facilitate opportunities for her business, but "it's wonderful for all the youth in the neighborhood." For many years, Maria's home and tamale shop was like a youth community center. She taught teenage girls how to sew clothing and organized fashion shows for them. "I want the teens to build self esteem and to be leaders in this community. Being so close to transportation and the town center exposes them to endless opportunities to learn about other communities and cultures."

Short Summary:

Maria Martinez is known as the Bay Area's Tamale Queen. Her popular cafe, World Cup Coffee, is busy at all times of day, with local residents, business people, and youth stopping by to relax in the garden patio. Maria has lived in the neighborhood for 50 years and has witnessed economic improvements and increased cultural diversity as a result of being near the Fruitvale Transit Village. "It has been wonderful. The neighborhood looks clean and welcoming and the stores attract new people. Now I have customers from all over the Bay Area." Furthermore, Maria enjoys being so close to the BART and shops because "it's like a community magnet. The library is right around the corner and I get to make tamales for all of their fundraisers and the local festivals. Everything happens right here."

Quote:

"Being near the BART and Fruitvale shopping center has been wonderful. The neighborhood looks clean and welcoming and the stores attract new people. Now I have customers from all over the Bay Area."

Karla Perez-Cordero

San Leandro

Mother, immigrated from Nicaragua

Every morning before work, Karla gets up a little early and takes her 7-month-old baby on BART from San Leandro to either Richmond or to South Hayward, where her mother-in-law and mother live. Both Karla and her husband work during the day, so they depend on family to help take care of Isaiah. After dropping Isaiah off, she takes BART to downtown Oakland where she

works as an administrative assistant for a non-profit organization. Karla admits that juggling a baby on BART during rush hours can be quite challenging, but it has kept her connected with both sides of her family. "If we didn't live so close to BART, Isaiah wouldn't be able to spend the day with his grandmas, and it would be really hard for me to get to work."



It has always been important for Karla and her family to live near convenient shops and public transit. Until she was 10 years old, Karla lived in Nicaragua and was accustomed to getting around on foot, because her school, grocery stores and even her relatives lived near by. She would also take the bus with her mother and grandmother to other parts of the city. This was mainly possible because the bus stop was located right in front of her house. "Taking the bus was so empowering because I learned to be responsible and know my way around my neighborhood. I learned safety skills and I was exposed to all the different kinds of people who live in the big city."

After moving from Nicaragua, Karla and her family moved to San Francisco's Mission District, where they found that all the stores and services they needed were all conveniently located in her neighborhood. She lived half a block away from a bus stop, walked to school and took Muni all across the city. In high school, Karla was the first to teach her friends how to take public transit in the city. She showed them how to get around without cars and dispelled their fears of the public busses. "When I showed my friends how easy it was to ride the bus, it became like an adventure for them."

Now, Karla, her husband, and Isaiah live in Bay Fair, with grocery stores, public services and transportation within a short distance. She lives one block away from a major bus route and a 10 minute walk from the Bay Fair BART station. "I love the convenience and not having to depend on my car." In the future, Karla hopes that there will be a Bus Rapid Transit system for Isaiah to use. "Just as I always had independence to go wherever I needed, I want the same for my son. I want him to have a good connection to the people in the neighborhood, independence to get to where he needs to go, to value transportation and to understand his impact on the earth."

Short Summary:

Both Karla and her husband work during the day, so Karla depends on her mother-in-law and her mother take care of Isaiah, her 6 month-old baby. Each morning, Karla does a double commute, taking BART from San Leandro to drop Isaiah off in either Richmond or South Hayward, and then

to downtown Oakland, where she works as an administrative assistant at a non-profit organization. "If we didn't live so close to BART, Isaiah wouldn't be able to spend the day with his grandmas, and it would be really hard for me to get to work." Karla has always been an advocate of living close to the stores she needs and public transportation. "When I was 10 and living in Nicaragua, I walked to the grocery store and took the bus to school by myself. It was so empowering because I learned to be responsible and could get around my neighborhood by myself." Everything she and her family needed was close by, so now, "I want the same opportunity for Isaiah. I want him to have the "independence to get to where he needs to go, to value transportation and to understand his impact on the earth."

Quote:

"If we didn't live so close to BART, Isaiah wouldn't be able to spend the day with his grandmas, and it would be really hard for me to get to work."

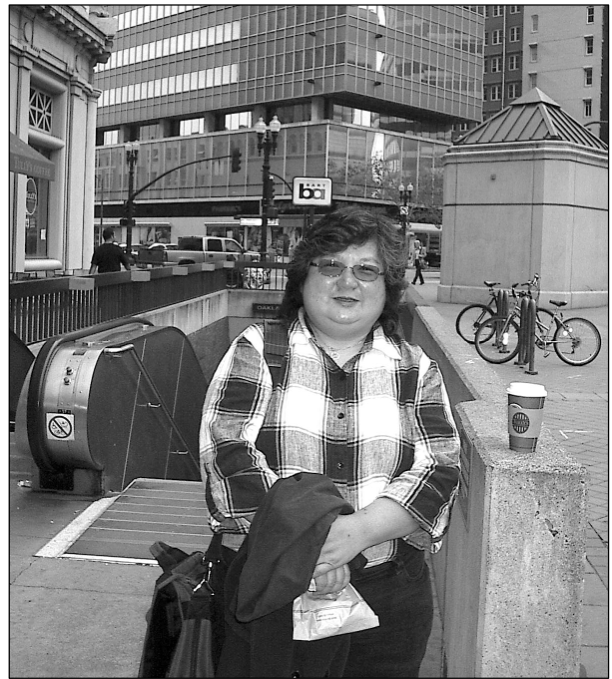
Julie Wong

Richmond

Immigrated from Hong Kong

Julie grew up in the high rises of Hong Kong, where public transportation and convenient stores were mainstream. She walked a block to school, only had to walk downstairs to go to the grocery store, and rode the train everywhere. “No one had cars. It just wasn’t necessary.”

When she and her mother initially immigrated to the United States 30 years ago, they first lived in San Francisco’s Chinatown. Unable to afford the rent, they moved to San Leandro. While there was public transportation via BART, they lived far from the station and any stores. “The move was not good for my mom. She didn’t speak any English, couldn’t drive, and there weren’t enough buses. She couldn’t get around anywhere and was trapped in the house like a prisoner.” For Julie and her family, living in a more suburban area was difficult. “It was a hassle to get anywhere. I am much more likely to go out if it’s close by.”



Now Julie lives in Richmond’s new transit village, MetroWalk. Julie just has to walk across the street to get to the shopping center and BART station for her commute to San Francisco, where she works as a paralegal. “It’s perfect. We can own a home, it is right next to a hospital, has a public park, and stores nearby. But one of the best parts of living in this community is that no one really needs cars. It’s so easy to get around, we can leave the car in the garage. I can get anywhere, anytime, and don’t have to worry about being in traffic. It’s like being back at home.”

In addition to the conveniences of living downtown, Julie enjoys being involved in her surrounding community. She serves on the Home Owners Association’s board of directors, and works together with her neighbors to organize community events. “We work together to stay updated on what is going on in my neighborhood. I want to make sure that as development continues, we will have a more extensive downtown at our fingertips, one which will benefit my neighborhood. It’s what I’m used to and what I love.”

Short Summary:

Julie grew up in downtown Hong Kong, with public transportation and stores at every corner. Now, she and her husband live in Richmond’s new transit village, Metro Walk. “It’s so easy to get around, we can leave the car the garage. I can get anywhere, anytime, and don’t have to worry about being in traffic.” It is not only across the street from a shopping center and park, but for her daily commute to San Francisco, Julie only has to walk 5 minutes to the Richmond BART station. In addition to the convenience of living downtown, she enjoys being an active member in her community and with the Home Owners Association. “I want to make sure that as development continues, we will have a more extensive downtown at our fingertips, one which will benefit my neighborhood. It’s what I’m used to and what I love.”

Quote:

“It's perfect. We can own a home, and it is right next to a hospital, has a public park, and stores nearby. It's so easy to get around, we can leave the car the garage. I can get anywhere, anytime, and don't have to worry about being in traffic.”

Louise Turner

Dublin

Formerly homeless, Caretaker

Louise has been living in Camellia Place, across the street from the Dublin/Pleasanton BART Station, since February of 2007. Since then, her life has completely blossomed from one of dependence to one of independence. "I'm finally in a place I can truly call my own."



Because of the convenience of BART and different bus systems, Louise is able to easily travel to Union City to visit her mother. "She is physically disabled, and needs my assistance. If it weren't for BART I would have no way to help my mom."

Additionally, Louise emphasizes how her new living situation has been her key to healthy living. "Connection in one form allows for connection in other forms. It is the key for my life." She lives a block from the Dublin BART, next to several bus lines, and minutes away from a shopping center where she buys groceries. "I use buses and BART to go wherever I want, including doctor's appointments, and it's all without any stress."

Louise's security and freedom to go where she needs is a monumental turn-around from what has been an immense struggle. After serving for 9 years in the Navy, Louise was diagnosed with a post-traumatic stress disorder. Life was not easy- she lived on the streets for 10 years while struggling with a drug addiction, and was completely disconnected from her family. When Louise hit rock bottom, she began her path to recovery. She became involved in the local church, finished a rehabilitation program and moved in with her brother. Although she was clean and off the streets, "I needed my privacy and not to have to depend on my brother to get around. I needed my life back."

Now, in her new apartment and next to public transportation, she has found her balance. "This is my reward: privacy and freedom to get to where I need to go. My health, independence and happiness depend on living near all those buses. I have my home, family, health. I'm alive and happy; what else is there?"

Short Summary:

Life has not always been easy for Louise. After serving 9 years in the Navy, Louise was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and, unable to meet finances, became homeless. Now, however, Louise is healthy and secure in "a place I can truly call my own." She lives in Camellia Place, across the street from the Dublin/Pleasanton BART and bus station, and within walking distance of a myriad of stores. "I use buses and BART to go wherever I want, including doctor's appointments, and it's all without any stress." Even more important to Louise is her reconnection with her family. "My mom is physically disabled, and often needs assistance. If we didn't both live so close to BART, I would have no way to help (her)." Now, Louise has found the balance she wanted. "I have my home, family and health. What else is there?"

Quote:

“My health, independence and happiness depend on living near all those buses. I have my home, family, health. I’m alive and happy; what else is there?”

yJoseph McKelvin

Dublin

Developmentally Disabled, lives independently

Joseph and his twin brother Josh are developmentally disabled, 25 years old, best friends, and now, only a bus ride away.

For most of their lives, Joseph and Josh have lived with their parents in Danville, dependent on them for everything. Over the years, Joseph and his brother progressed towards living independently and moved to various independent living centers and group homes. For Joseph, even though he was pleased to be independent and move out of his parent's house, the separation from home was difficult. "I never saw my parents. My homes were too far away for them to drive to, and there were no buses that could get me to their house. I was stuck."



Recently, Joseph moved into his own apartment in Camilia Place in Dublin. His brother Josh moved to a new group home, only a 10 minute bus ride away. Joseph was all smiles as he praised his new home. "It's great to be so close to my family. Now that I am independent, I am more myself and the whole family is happier." Josh and Joseph visit each other several times a week by taking the bus across town. "I have to visit my twin. Without him, my life wouldn't be complete."

Joseph and Josh both emphasize that they enjoy living near the downtown and near busses so that they can travel easily to the nearby park. Both are active athletes, and play on a Special Olympic softball team coached by their father. "I love being able to get outside and run around; Every Tuesday I join my dad and friends, and I get to exercise." Living near a large shopping center has also made a large difference for Joseph. "I have so much freedom. All I have to do is catch the bus #10 and I can get to my job at Safeway in 3 minutes, and can do all my shopping right after work. I think everyone should be able to live in a place like this, to go where they want without a car, and to really be independent."

Short Summary:

Joseph, who was born developmentally disabled, lived with his parents and in group homes for most of his life. Now, he lives independently in his own apartment at Camilia Place in Dublin. With the BART and bus station across the street, his twin brother a 10 minute bus ride away, and his parents able to visit weekly, "I am more myself and the whole family is happier." Every Tuesday, Joseph travels to the nearby park to play on his father's Special Olympics softball team. On other days, he takes the bus to the shopping center down the street where he works part-time. "I can get to my job at Safeway in 3 minutes and can do all my shopping after work. I think everyone should be able to live in a place like this, to go where they want without a car, and to really be independent."

Quote:

"I think everyone should be able to live in a place like this, to go where they want without a car, and to really be independent."

Irvin Dawid

Palo Alto

Sierra Club volunteer

After living in a ‘granny unit’ in a residential enclave in Palo Alto for seven years, Irvin was ready for a more convenient living situation. “I wanted more than just one bus route to get around and one coffee shop to walk to. I was ready to try living in a more urban environment.”

Irvin has lived in Alma Place, an affordable, mixed-use building in downtown Palo Alto since it opened in 1998. “My whole lifestyle is enabled by sidewalks and bike lanes. The best perk is that I’m around the block from Whole Foods and two and a half short blocks from the train. It’s perfect.” Irvin works as a volunteer for the Sierra Club, commuting daily to their headquarters in San Francisco using Caltrain and MUNI and occasionally taking his bike on the train. “I can walk out my door and be on the platform in less than five minutes. And thanks to the ‘baby bullet’ commute-hour service, I’m a quick, three stops and 40 minutes away from the City.”



What Irvin can’t find in his own neighborhood, he can find right outside his office door at work. “My living and working arrangement is the best combination. Transportation is easy, and at work, I walk out the door and everything I need, and more, is within one block!”

In addition to working with the Sierra Club’s headquarters and the Loma Prieta chapter, Irvin is also active within his community. “I like living here, and as it grows, I want to help preserve the best parts and guide development. With more homes that we can afford and stores next door, people can stay in the community. We want to put out a welcome-mat to new residents and show the Bay Area that we are living responsibly.”

Short Summary:

After living in a residential enclave in Palo Alto for seven years, Irvin was ready for a more convenient living situation. “I wanted more than just one bus route to get around and one coffee shop to walk to. I was ready to try living in a more urban environment.” Now, Irvin has lived in Alma Place, a mixed-use building in downtown Palo Alto, since it opened in 1998. “My whole lifestyle is enabled by sidewalks, bike lanes. The best perk is that I’m around the block from Whole Foods and two and a half short blocks from the station. It’s perfect.” Irvin works as a volunteer for the Sierra Club, commuting daily to their headquarters in San Francisco using Caltrain and MUNI, and occasionally taking his bike on the train. “I can walk out my door and be on the platform in less than five minutes. And thanks to the ‘baby bullet’ commute-hour service, I’m a quick, three stops and 40 minutes away from the City.”

Quote:

"I want options, so I prefer living in a downtown area where I have everything and can get around without needing a car. Now, I'm two and a half short blocks from the Caltrain Station and around the block from Whole Foods. It's perfect."

Gladwyn d'Souza

Belmont

Father, Advocates walking to school

When Gladwyn started walking his 10 year old daughter to school, they were the only ones on the uneven sidewalks. Now, the pair has collected a team of other students who want to walk with them. “Other parents notice us and other families are now starting to walk to school too.”



“We walk because everything we need is so close by.” In fact, the convenient connections to Caltrain, schools, and stores were the reasons Gladwyn moved to Belmont from Los Gatos. Now he lives a block and a half from Safeway, Longs Drugs, and a myriad of other stores. “Within a circle of 6 blocks I can find any services I am looking for.” Even his dentist and doctor are within a short 20 minute bus ride.

Living within walking distance from stores allows his children to run errands to the store. “They are getting exercise while learning to consume only what they really need, because anything extra they buy is excess weight that they have to carry home.” But for Gladwyn, the biggest benefit of living close to shops and services is that “the family has more time together and gets to be outside.”

Gladwyn, whose walking has inspired several other families to start walking to and from school and the shopping center, wants to see more improvements made to sidewalks. “My 90 year old next door neighbor used to walk to the park, but after breaking her hip, she can’t go anywhere because the sidewalks are too broken up. She shouldn’t have to drive her wheelchair in the street, and the children should have room to walk in groups without overflowing into the street.” For Gladwyn, “wider sidewalks for people instead of wider streets for cars will help us continue to build healthier communities.”

Short Summary:

When Gladwyn first started walking with his 10 year old daughter to school, they were the only ones. Now, however, many of the neighborhood families are following his example and walking together in the mornings and afternoons. “We walk because everything we need is so close by. Within a circle of 6 blocks I can find any services I am looking for,” and it’s safe for his children to go the stores by themselves. But for Gladwyn, the biggest benefit of living close to shops and services is that “the family has more time together and gets to be outside.”

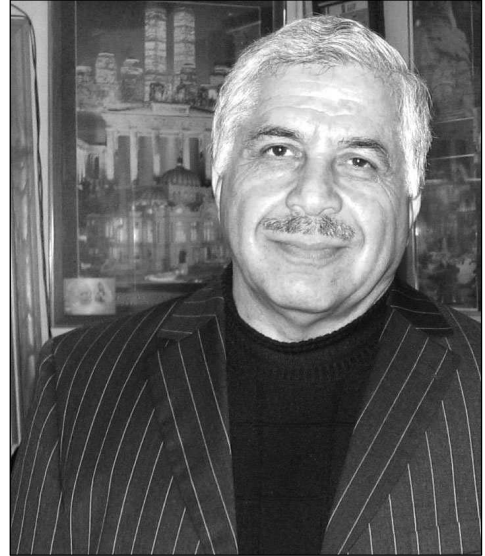
Quote:

“Wider sidewalks for people instead of wider streets for cars will help us continue to build healthier communities.”

Hugo Guerrero

Fruitvale

Travel Agency Owner, Founded Merchant Association



Hugo is known in the Fruitvale area as one of the community's strongest leaders. He has owned his travel agency for 23 years, and takes pride in Fruitvale's "power house of businesses." Hugo's own business is strong, drawing Latino clients from all over the area. "I fill a cultural niche that is unique in the travel agency market. With the Fruitvale BART right here, I can reach out to lots of communities, draw customers from all over the East Bay and let people know how amazing my services are here. I am lucky to have such a great location in this community." As a result of the increased traffic in the Fruitvale area, he has seen an increase in his clientele as "...more people are discovering the area; cultures are mixing together into one diverse marketplace."

Hugo doesn't just advocate for his own business; He also praises the effects that the Fruitvale Transit Village has had on the whole business community. "We all work together and want to show everyone that we have competitive services." In order for the businesses to benefit the community, in 1995, Hugo started the Oakland Businessmen and Professionals Association. With a membership of 73 different businesses around the Fruitvale station, the association is responsible for giving small business start-up loans and organizing local festivals, including the Cinco de Mayo festival. "We use our businesses as a way to help the community. The more customers we have and the better our businesses do, the more we can give back."

The association also supports local youth development by giving out academic scholarships every year and organizing "battle of the band" events for teenage musicians. "We want the youth to have opportunities. If they see different types of people who come through the Fruitvale Village, and have the chance to visit other communities easily, they will be self-motivated and learn to be great leaders. This brings strength to the community. Business and community; it's all connected."

Short Summary:

For Hugo, his travel agency is not just a business but also a key part of the Fruitvale community. As the founder of the Oakland Businessmen and Professionals Association, Hugo and other business owners help to support other local businesses, provide scholarships for motivated students, and organize the local festivals such as Cinco de Mayo. Being near the Fruitvale Village and BART has helped increase his clientele as "...more people are discovering the area...cultures are mixing together into one diverse marketplace." Besides helping his business expand, being close to BART has helped the local youth have "the chance to visit other communities easily, (to) be self-motivated and learn to be great leaders. This brings strength to the community. Business and community; it's all connected."

Quote:

"I fill a cultural niche that is unique in the travel agency market. With the Fruitvale BART right

here, I can reach out to lots of communities, draw customers from all over the East Bay and let people know how amazing my services are here."

Tanya Narath

Santa Rosa

Rides bike to work downtown

Tanya used to drive everywhere. When she worked for Hewlett Packard in Santa Rosa, the facilities were far from downtown, and there weren't any shops or restaurants nearby. There was one city bus that entered the property, but back then, there was very little promotion surrounding public transportation and Tanya "viewed the bus as an inconvenience."

Now, Tanya works in downtown Santa Rosa. "Working downtown has been a wonderful change. I can walk out the office door and get coffee, shop for gifts, and get food." She commutes to work by bus or rides her bike along the Prince Memorial Greenway.

Tanya is dedicated to riding her bike and taking public transportation whenever possible. After taking a transit tour put on by a local organization, Friends of SMART, she was exposed to different forms of transportation from across the Bay Area, and "how easy it really is to get to so many different places without a car."

The change from driving her car to using public transportation hasn't been inconvenient, but very enjoyable. It takes her the same 30 minutes on the bus as it does driving her car and finding parking. Furthermore, Tanya likes the feeling of independence from her car. "It's right for my health and everyone else's health." She looks forward to the current development of the SMART train, as "it will allow people to go to and from San Francisco without a car, and will also help bring people into our communities and the surrounding areas."

Short Summary:

After working at Hewlett Packard, far from any downtown stores, Tanya shifted her job to downtown Santa Rosa. The convenience of "working downtown has been a wonderful change. I can walk out the office door and get coffee, shop for gifts, and get food." Now Tanya can leave her car at home, and commute via bus or by bike in the same amount of time as it took to drive and park. "It's right for my health and everyone else's health."

Quote:

"Working downtown has been a wonderful change. I can walk out the office door and get coffee, shop for gifts, and get food."

