

Great Communities Take Care of Children and Families

All Bay Area families are stretched by increased housing prices and transportation costs. Families with children also have to juggle looking for high quality neighborhood schools and childcare. The search drives many families to leave urban areas for suburban life, seeking larger backyards, cul-de-sacs and quality schools. They often find that they are also spending more time in traffic, spending more money on transportation and less time with their families.

Great Communities near transit need to accommodate specific needs of children by planning for both neighborhood schools and childcare services within walking distance of our homes.

Schools Close to Home

BETTER STUDENT OUTCOMES

Smaller neighborhood schools support small classroom sizes, which results in increased teacher-student interactions. This results are better grades, higher test scores, improved attendance, higher graduation rates, and higher educational attainment.

HEALTHIER KIDS; CLEANER AIR

Today, less than 15 percent of children walk to school, compared to 70% a generation ago. But neighborhood schools can reverse that trend, reduce air pollution and increase physical activity. Children are more likely to walk when school is close by and there are safe routes to get there. Almost one-third (31%) of children who live within a mile of school, walk to school, compared to only 2% of children living one to two miles away.

MORE PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

Parental involvement is crucial to a child's academic success, but the farther a child lives from school, the less likely parents will be involved.

HEALTHIER NEIGHBORHOODS

Neighborhood schools help children form meaningful social bonds with adults and other children. Children who must be driven long distances to school are rarely in classes with their neighbors. The time spent in cars limits their after-school interactions. But with neighborhood schools, foster a sense of belonging and create a network for emotional and material support, nurturing social and mental health.



Students at Peralta Elementary School in Berkeley that live close enough could participate in International Walk/Bike to School Day, 2007.

Neighborhood Schools Can Benefit Everyone

Schools are a community asset and should be open to everyone in the evening, on weekends and during vacations. Neighborhood schools should have multi-use facilities that allow space for pre-school, after-school programs, community recreation facilities, neighborhood groups, and community serving non-profits. Also, schools and athletic leagues tend to use fields at different times, making it logical to share the resource. This concept, called joint-use, is increasingly popular.

Everyone saves money when we share facilities. Both construction and maintenance costs can be split between school districts and local governments.

Families are moving out of the communities where the cost of living is most expensive, creating long commutes for parents. In California, the top 7 counties with the greatest percentage of domestic migration out of the state were all in the Bay Area.

These moves have impacted the number of California workers traveling an hour or more to work—an increase of 34% between 1990 and 2000.

Child Care Close to Home

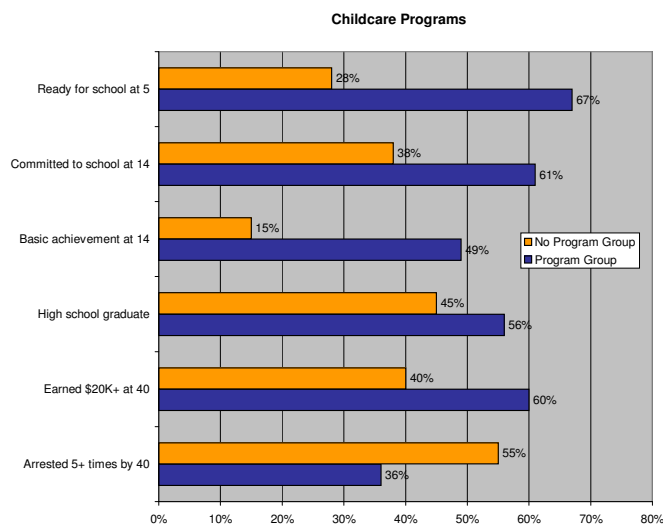
As with neighborhood schools, the availability of conveniently located childcare is a major concern for families who would rather live in more urban areas and be able to walk to daily destinations. Dropping off and picking kids up from childcare prevents many parents from using transit because the linkages between pairing the needs of transit and childcare has been traditionally overlooked. Fortunately Local Investment In Child Care (LINCC) has studied the impact of child care locations on parents' use of public transit. Please see our policy fact sheet for detailed information on this study.

FAMILIES LACK CONVENIENT ACCESS TO QUALITY CHILD CARE

Finding licensed care is a challenge, especially for infants. Licensed child care is available for only 26% of children between birth and 13 years with parents in California's workforce. More critically, 64% of the licensed child care slots are in centers, but only 6% of the center slots are available for children under 2.

CHILDREN IN QUALITY CHILD CARE HAVE BETTER LIFE OUTCOMES

A recently completed study found that youth who attended preschool classes not only do better in school, they continue to better throughout their life. The study randomly assigned 120 three and four year-olds to get pre-school classes or not. The children who received preschool were more prepared for school at age five, did better in middle school, and were more likely to graduate high school. As adults they made more money and were less likely to have been arrested multiple times.



This diagram illustrates the difference between children who attended pre-school child care programs and those who didn't and the resulting impact on their adult lives.

EDUCATION PAYS IN HIGHER EARNINGS AND LOWER UNEMPLOYMENT RATES.

When students are better educated, they earn more money and are less likely to be unemployed. The unemployment rate for people with less than a high school degree is almost 3 times higher than someone with a bachelor's degree

PROVIDING CHILD CARE HELPS OUR ECONOMY

The statewide Economic Impact of Child Care report estimated that Californians are able to earn an additional \$13 billion annually because of the licensed child care sector. Considering the numbers of working parents, usage of licensed care versus other options, average family earnings, and costs of child care. These wages then generate other indirect effects through the state economy, including an additional \$44 billion in labor income, \$65 billion in contribution to the Gross State Product, and almost \$5 billion in tax receipts.

Other studies of pre-kindergarten program effects have shown savings to society in the form of reduced crime, unemployment and greater wealth for those who benefitted from these programs through adulthood.

FRANK G. MAR COMMUNITY HOUSING Oakland Chinatown, CA



This housing development includes a Head Start Childcare Center that is open to the residents and the surrounding community.

How to support schools and child care facilities in walkable neighborhoods near transit.

- Make sure zoning codes allow for a variety of childcare facilities. Reduce fees for establishing neighborhood childcare centers.
- State legislation provides density bonuses for residential developments that include child care space (Ca. Government Code §65915)