



Assessing the Needs and Assets of San Bernardino County Families

Victorville – High Desert Region

December 2013



Between March and November 2013

Harder+Company Community Research

conducted eight community asset-mapping sessions throughout San Bernardino County with the goal of better understanding the needs, assets, resources, and gaps in services that families with young children in San Bernardino County face. Each session consisted of interactive activities for parents, community residents and local service providers that focused on a broad range of topics, from early education and medical resources to places where children can be active and community sources of pride. This report presents the findings from the Victorville Asset Mapping session conducted on March 14, 2013.

The Approach: Asset Mapping

For this project, First 5 San Bernardino and Harder+Company Community Research adopted asset mapping as an approach to understanding community needs for this project. Asset mapping has at least two important advantages over other traditional needs assessment approaches that made it well-suited to meet First 5 San Bernardino’s goals: it is strengths-based and inclusive.

Asset mapping focuses first on what is available and working in a community. These resources can then be leveraged to help address the needs of that same community – allowing for a strengths-based approach to problem solving. Simply put, being aware of both the resources and needs of a community allows for the development of more strategic solutions that have a higher likelihood of achieving outcomes. Traditional needs assessment focuses primarily on what’s missing from a community.

Second, asset mapping is inclusive – the technique makes it possible for a diverse group of people to work together to describe and understand the community. First 5 San Bernardino was eager to include a strong parent perspective in this project alongside the professional knowledge that service providers and leaders bring. Anyone who lives in a community is well-positioned to participate in asset mapping regardless of education, literacy level, language spoken or prior experience with this type of activity. Asset mapping truly allows a seat at the table for anyone with firsthand knowledge of the community.

Asset mapping sessions resulted in lively discussions and debates about every community we conducted them in. We hope the information in this brief report conveys the passion that community members brought to the session. We are indebted to them for their time and participation in this process.

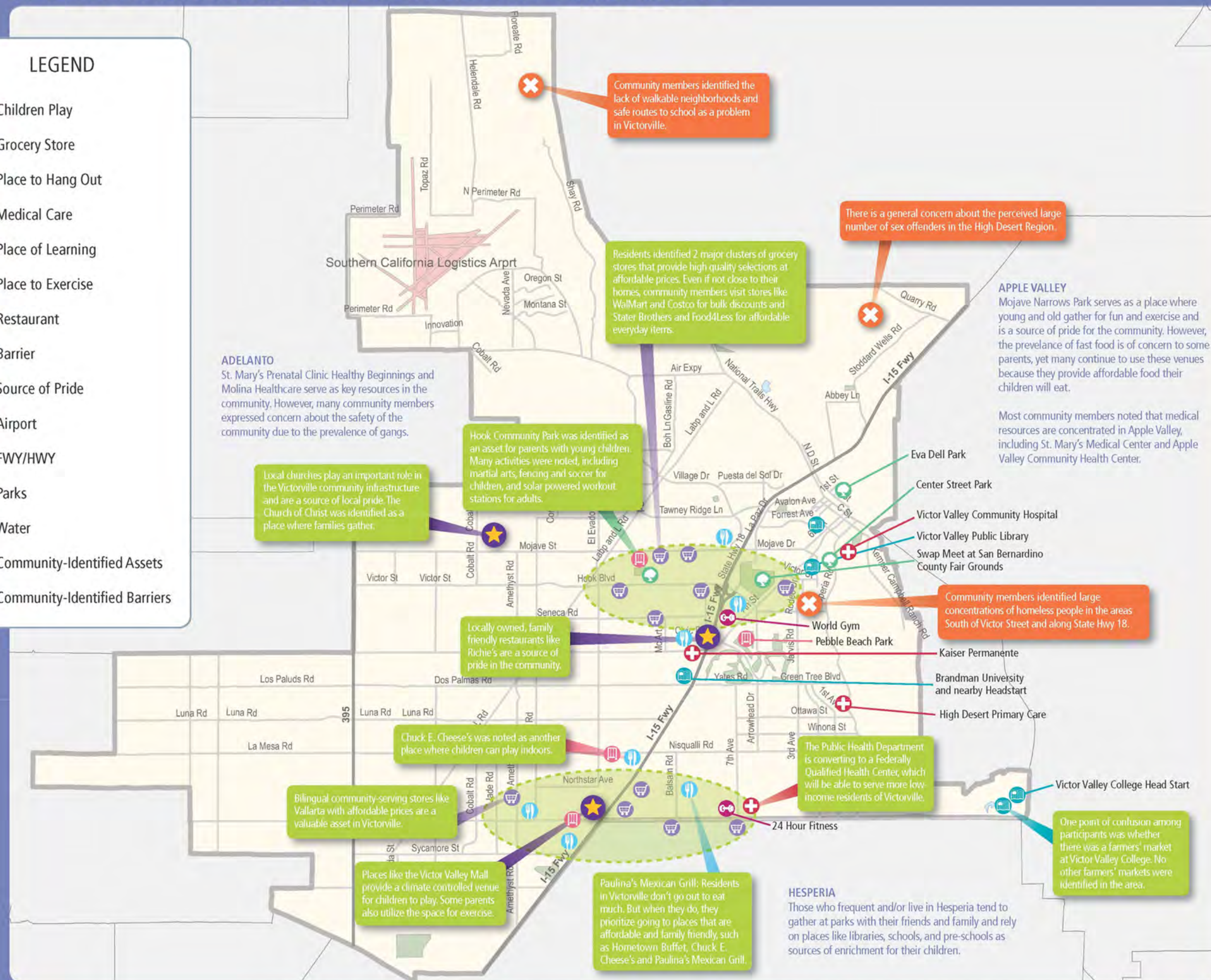
About this report:

The fold out map to the right provides an overview of the *mappable* assets and needs in Victorville. The report that follows provides more detailed information about the community-identified assets and needs.

MAPPING SAN BERNARDINO COUNTY'S NEEDS AND ASSETS

LEGEND

- Children Play
- Grocery Store
- Place to Hang Out
- Medical Care
- Place of Learning
- Place to Exercise
- Restaurant
- Barrier
- Source of Pride
- Airport
- FWY/HWY
- Parks
- Water
- Community-Identified Assets
- Community-Identified Barriers



Victorville Asset Mapping

This summary map shows community-identified assets and needs in the Victorville community. During the asset mapping workshop a mix of about 15-25 local parents, residents, and service providers worked together in various activities to identify current community strengths and challenges. Participants discussed a broad range of assets including schools, child care, food outlets and health care facilities. Although this is not an exhaustive list, First 5 San Bernardino and key community partners can use this map to build on existing resources and strengthen the foundation of services for children 0-5 and their families.

Key Findings:

- + Many community members feel that Victorville lacks resources and infrastructure required to meet basic needs and create a thriving community. Community members often travel outside the Victorville areas to access services and resources, including their work and key medical resources for their children.
- + Childcare and early education resources, including preschools, were identified as a major need in Victorville. Although some resources are available, they are concentrated in neighboring Apple Valley.
- + Youth enrichment programs are a key priority for many Victorville residents.
- + The lack of walkable neighborhoods and little public transportation create a sense of unsafety and isolation for many community members.

MARCH 2013

What does everyday life look like for parents and community members in Victorville?

Most community members in Victorville and the High Desert Region travel to several cities on a daily basis for things like work, groceries, finding children’s activities and obtaining resources to maintain their family’s health and safety. About half of the asset mapping participants live and work in different cities, and most noted that many of their friends travel “down the hill” to San Bernardino (and surrounding cities) for work. This means many parents spend a great deal of time commuting between Victorville and other cities. Most participants felt there is not one particular industry in the High Desert that employs people, and those who do work in the High Desert often do so at fast food restaurants.



Parents mapped out where they grocery shop, take their children to school and receive medical care.



Access to healthy affordable food continues to be a challenge for many families.

Currently, most participants go to places like *Vallarta*, *Food 4 Less*, *Pueblo Market* and *Stater Bros* for groceries as those places often have specials or less expensive food items. Most community members noted that even when they go to other places to buy groceries they utilize *Vallarta* and *Pueblo Market* as their primary source for fruits and vegetables because the produce is less expensive and of better quality. One point of confusion among participants was whether there are farmers markets located in or near Victorville. One participant felt very sure that there are farmers markets at the local community college while others said there used to be but no longer are. In either case, no participant mentioned obtaining their fruits and vegetable from farmers markets. Several families noted going to *Wal-Mart* or *Costco* to buy products in bulk. Most importantly, parents seek places where they can purchase healthy foods at affordable prices. In order to meet this goal, parents visit multiple stores and travel long distances.

When participants were asked to identify resources lacking in Victorville which make it difficult to raise a child the most frequent responses included food, homes, and jobs.

“None of the neighborhoods [are] walkable... there are lot of empty spaces and nothing for kids to do.”

~Victorville Resident



Community members value places where they can gather and exercise.

Places like *Hook Community Park* and *Victor Valley Mall* play multiple and important roles for parents with young children. *Hook Community Park* serves as a safe place for parents and children to play and exercise; one community member even noted the solar powered exercise equipment as a great asset for the community. Other parks, such as *Eva Dell Park* and *Center Street Park* were noted as places to exercise and gather. Although most parents don't bring their children to these parks during the summer due to the high temperatures in the High Desert Region. Air conditioned indoor places are highly valued by families who want a safe place to gather where their children can exercise and play. Consequently, *Victor Valley Mall* is a great source of pride for many families; it is frequented often by many families, even if just to walk around inside.

Although some of the parks in the High Desert Region are valued by community members, most are still concerned that there is not much for their children to do. Another area of concern is the lack of afterschool activities or places to gather for youth. Parents and youth alike felt the lack of activities for them often leads youth to engage in risky and unsafe behavior.



Parents mapped where their children obtain exercise by using stickers.

How do parents care for their families' health?



Routine and prenatal medical care is accessible in the region, however parents continue to travel long distances for specialized care. *St. Mary*

Medical Center, located in both Adelanto and Apple Valley, is a valued resource for many parents who have received and continue to receive primary care and prenatal services there. Community members also noted receiving services from *Kaiser* and *Victor Valley Medical Center* (both are located in Victorville). Parents voiced concerns about the **lack of accessible pediatric specialists** in the region.

Most community members have to travel to San Bernardino or Fontana to see medical specialists or for emergency services. This daunting task may serve as a barrier to health care access for two reasons: 1) households with two working parents may have difficulty getting time off work and 2) many High Desert families have limited access to transportation. One of the major challenges in the High Desert Region shared by many community members is the lack of reliable and efficient public transportation.

Two additional healthcare resources are anticipated to open in Victorville. The first is Molina Healthcare's new medical center, which will provide services primarily to low income residents. Some of the services offered will be at no cost to its members. The second anticipated health care resource is the conversion of Victorville's Public Health Care Department to a Federally Qualified Health Care (FQHC)¹ center which will increase access to care for those families with Medi-Cal.



Ensuring children practice good oral health is a priority for parents. However, most parents feel there is a lack of services and education to support them and their children.

Every participant indicated they attempt to instill good oral health habits in their children, including brushing their teeth, flossing, and using mouthwash daily. However, many parents continue to face challenges in ensuring their children maintain good oral health. Two parents acknowledged they take their children to the dentist every six months. Most other parents did so far less often and many cited a lack of pediatric dentists in the area as the reasons for less frequent dental visits. Some community members rely exclusively on community-provided dental care (such as school-based dental fairs) and several parents reported that their children had bad

¹ FQHCs are community-based organizations that provide comprehensive primary care and preventive care, including health, oral, and mental health/substance abuse services to persons of all ages, regardless of their ability to pay or health insurance status.

experiences visiting dentists who seemed to lack adequate training in pediatric dental care.

Parents are eager to receive practical information to help them develop good oral health habits in their young children but feel sources of obtaining this information are limited in the region. Some parents reported receiving information from their dentists, but the majority of parents rely on resources from their children's schools and community events such as health fairs.

Supporting healthy & thriving FAMILIES!

Tells us about yourselves :

Age: _____
How many children live with you? _____ How many are under 5? _____
Are you a: _____ Parent _____ Grandparent _____ Service Provider
_____ Foster Parent _____ Other: _____

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What kinds of dental health activities does your family practice regularly?
Ex: Brushing teeth daily, flossing, etc.:

What are some of the difficulties to maintaining good dental health?

To keep my family healthy, the three most important things are:

Where do you get information about your child's dental health? Ex: Community events, medical clinics, dentist, family, etc.

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Identifying parent's practice and knowledge:

Community members utilized "placemats", like the one pictured here, and worked in teams to identify dental health practices, challenges, and gaps in services.

What learning opportunities are available for young children and their families?



Local preschools are highly valued but childcare for younger children is a substantial need.

Preschools in Victorville as well as Hesperia and Apple Valley were noted as having high quality educational services for young children. Most parents whose children attend those preschools consider them a great asset for the community. However, many parents are forced to rely on friends, family and neighbors to care for children less than three years of age as there is a lack of affordable center-based care for children in this age group. This presents a great challenge for parents who have to work and who have no informal childcare.

Affordable childcare was noted as the largest need for parents with children 0-5.



Adults value parenting education and opportunities to learn with their children.

All the parent participants reported that they regularly engage in educational activities with their children; this includes reading to them, practicing the alphabet, and singing songs together. However, most **parents are interested in attending parent workshops to learn more about their child's development** and how parents can best support learning. Workshops requested by parents included parenting skills, health care, healthy eating, and information about how to navigate schools and advocate for their children.

Community Desires for the High Desert Region

The word cloud below illustrates resources participants most desire for Victorville and surrounding cities. Participants were asked to name some things they would like to see in their community. Words appearing in larger type appeared more frequently in their responses. Overall community members desire more **parent workshops and better public transportation.**



Summary of community-identified needs in Victorville and the High Desert Region

- Residents report a lack of resources to meet basic needs as well as infrastructure to create a thriving community. Community members often travel outside the Victorville area to access services and resources, including to find work and to access medical care for their children. This includes traveling to other areas in the High Desert Region (commonly Adelanto and Hesperia) and sometime traveling more than 40 miles to the City of San Bernardino.
- Childcare and early education resources, including preschools, were identified as a major need in Victorville. Although some resources are available in the High Desert, they are concentrated in neighboring Apple Valley. Cost to access these services is a major barrier for most working families.
- Youth enrichment programs are a key priority for many Victorville residents. Currently, most residents felt youth have few productive options for using out-of-school time, which has often led youth to engage in high-risk behavior.
- A lack of walkable neighborhoods and scarcity of public transportation in Victorville cause many community members to feel isolated and unsafe in their own neighborhoods.

Summary of needs in the High Desert*

*Community members were asked to name some things that families with young children need that currently are not available in the region. The “word cloud” to the right illustrates their responses. Words appearing in larger type appeared more frequently in their responses. Overall **childcare** and **healthcare** appear to be the largest needs for families in the High Desert Region.



Summary and conclusions

The community of Victorville cares deeply about the well-being of young children and their families. Increasing the number of resources available to children 0 to 5 in Victorville as well as increasing awareness of and access to the resources that currently exist can strengthen families of young children. Asset mapping session participants also acknowledged the importance of addressing the needs of older children and youth in the High Desert as well – ultimately it will strengthen the community for all children and families.

THANK YOU!

Many thanks to the community residents who attended this event and worked diligently to identify their community's needs and assets. We also want to thank local non-profits and churches that helped recruit community members and provided their knowledge and support every step of the way.



First 5 San Bernardino was created in December, 1998 in order to realize the benefits of Proposition 10 (California Children and Families Act) for the County's youngest residents and their families. The act created a program for the purpose of promoting, supporting, and improving the early development of children from the prenatal stage to five years of age.

Vision – All children in San Bernardino County are healthy, safe, nurtured, eager to learn and ready to succeed.

Mission – Promote, support and enhance the health and early development of children prenatal through age five and their families and communities.



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