



## **Sacramento ACT (Area Congregations Together) Theory of Change: Research Report November 2018**

### **Introduction**

In August of 2017, Sacramento ACT began a process to develop a new Theory of Change to guide our work for the next five years. We formed a team that included board members, staff and leaders. We designed questions for a research phase during which time we would seek to understand the political, economic and faith landscape of Sacramento, the major challenges facing our region, and the perception and role of ACT now and in the future.

The team conducted over 30 research meetings between September 2017 and March 2018 with public officials from both Sacramento city and county, representatives of 3 school districts, local activists and non-profits, members of the immigrant community, and representatives of the philanthropic, union, media, and business sectors. We also met with ACT's faith leader caucus, Local Organizing Committees, and brought findings for discussion to ACT leadership assemblies. This is the picture that emerged from our research.

Sacramento sits at a crossroads of identity. Will we become a city, county and region that prioritizes racial and economic equity, a region that is truly diverse with opportunities for all to participate? Or will we become a region dominated by the demands of the privileged? Poised on the edge of our future, we face choices. Sacramento can choose to become the city where there is inclusion of income diversity or it can push out current residents in favor of wealthier newcomers. Will Sacramento invest in all of its neighborhoods, with special attention to those who have experienced disinvestment? Or will resources be concentrated in the downtown core?

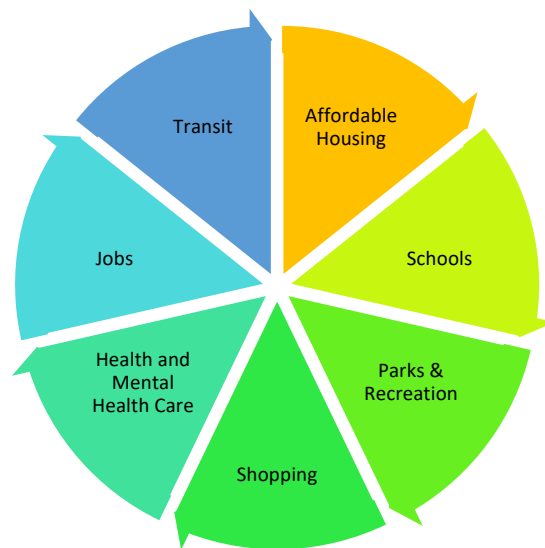
In February 2018, Policy Link published two important reports on Sacramento whose findings support our research: [Advancing Health Equity and Inclusive Growth in the Sacramento Region](#) and [Health Equity Now: Toward an All-In Sacramento](#).

## Our Moral and Economic Vision

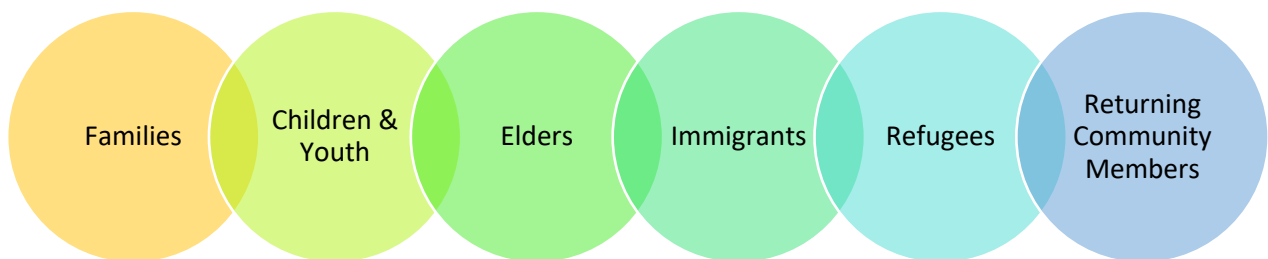
ACT's guiding moral and faith vision calls us to build a community that prioritizes racial and economic equity in all decision making and allocation of resources. We return to a guiding question of "how are the children?" as a basic indicator of regional health since upstream forces greatly impact children.

Our vision is for a Sacramento made up of thriving neighborhoods in which residents can work, go to school, shop and have opportunities for recreation. Neighborhoods are connected to each other and the urban core through excellent and affordable public transit. Neighborhoods include affordable housing that is distributed throughout the region. We envision fostering true public safety through equitable investments in these key elements: youth services, jobs and quality education for youth and adults, including community members returning after incarceration, immigrants, and refugees; health and mental health care; addiction treatment; re-entry services; and environmental health. Law enforcement is community-focused, accountable and transparent.

## Our Vision: Thriving Neighborhoods



## Thriving Neighborhoods: Who Belongs?



## **The Landscape**

### **Political Landscape and Power**

Mayor Darrell Steinberg is judged to be the key political player of this region. The power and influence of the County of Sacramento, while often overlooked, means that the County Board of Supervisors yields tremendous influence. Chief Daniel Hahn, Sheriff Scott Jones, and District Attorney Anne Marie Schubert are also powerful players. Chief Hahn is regarded as pushing his department to policing that is more responsive to the community with a broader view of public safety, while Sheriff Jones and DA Schubert are regarded as seeing public safety primarily through a law enforcement and incarceration lens.

Sacramento is the second most political city in the country, second to Washington, D.C. Politicians are aware of and are shaped by the pressures of their political future. Which decisions are politically viable? Which decisions are political career-ending? Sacramento politics are entrenched and everything in this area is political.

### **Economic Landscape and Power**

Economic power and influence in the region are concentrated in development, lobbying, the healthcare industry, financial institutions and the newest player for the city – marijuana speculators.

Downtown Sacramento is in the midst of what some describe as a renaissance, with new development pouring into downtown. The region is actively courting, and in some cases attracting, new business. The region is also attracting Bay Area and other transplants, lured by the relatively lower cost of living and expanding opportunities.

Development is focused in downtown, driving up rents and displacement. What will the long term impact of development around the arena be? Sacramento lacks investment in neighborhoods, investment which would benefit public safety. The region needs to continue to diversify the economy. The City, County and school districts are all feeling pressure around pension funding.

### **Faith Landscape and Power**

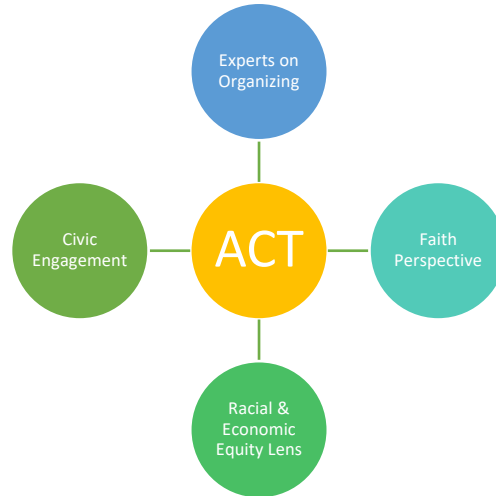
Faith communities continue to have power and influence through their moral leadership. Still, faith communities face challenges. Many congregations are shrinking, losing the change makers who are moving to “unaffiliated.” Faith leaders need to reach out to public officials, to get to know them, ask questions, and hold them accountable. As ACT looks ahead to the next five years, some questions arise. How can ACT reach out to disaffected evangelicals who feel pushed out of their tradition? How does ACT’s faith vision and narrative need to evolve to be truly multi-faith? How does ACT include people who do not identify with a congregation?

### **Other Influencers**

Other influencers include unions, philanthropy, parents, ethnic community leaders, neighborhood leaders and associations and community organizations, including ACT.

## Sacramento ACT

ACT is recognized as an expert at organizing. We amplify the voices and perspective of the faith community as moral leadership in the region. We organize and see the world through a racial and economic equity lens. We have skills and expertise in Civic Engagement.



## Biggest Challenges

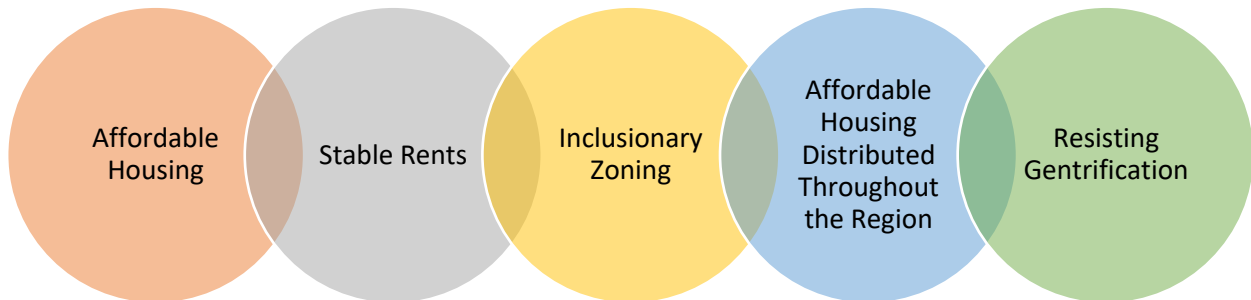
Racial and economic inequity are at the root of our challenges. Racialized land use and lending over the last century has resulted in the isolation of people of color in communities that lack healthy food options, adequate transit, quality schools, and are full of environmental hazards. Wealth-stripping has limited people of color's ability to finance education, small businesses, health-care, retirement, and home ownership. Lack of jobs, and access to public transit to access employment also perpetuates economic inequity.



### Challenge: Housing and Homelessness

Nearly every person we interviewed cited homelessness and the lack of affordable housing as one of the greatest challenges facing the Sacramento Region. We have an “epic” crisis with skyrocketing rates of rents and homelessness. Gentrification and Bay Area migration are driving up rents and prices and displacement. We do not have enough housing stock.

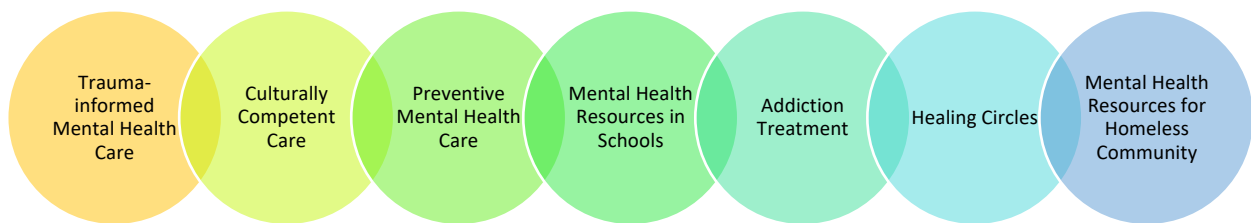
### Our Vision: Investing in Housing



### Challenge: Mental Health & Addiction Treatment

Violence greatly impacts the culture and psyche of neighborhoods and we lack trauma-informed mental health care. We lack enough capacity for addiction treatment and mental health care in general, with a particular lack of preventive mental health care services. Sacramento City Unified School District lacks mental health resources for children, while Elk Grove Unified has prioritized this.

### Our Vision: Investing in Mental Health and Health Care

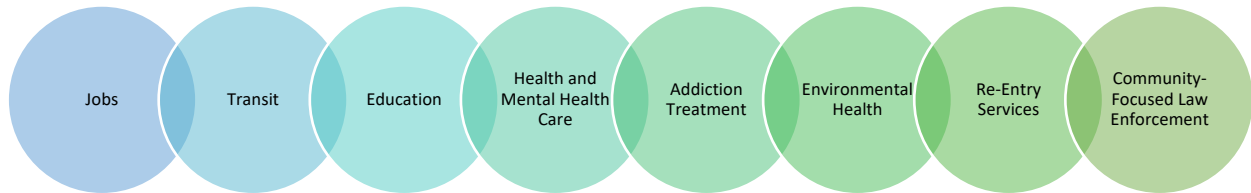


### Challenge: Public Safety

There is a growing climate of fear and criminalization which feeds prioritizing county investment in prosecuting crime and incarceration over prevention, re-entry, treatment, education, and job readiness. Our Public Defender’s office is under resourced. The community needs transparency and accountability from law enforcement which will require a change in the culture of policing and a commitment to less lethal forms of enforcement. In addition to prevention, we need to create a

path to welcome our returning community members home after incarceration which includes support for re-entry, jobs, housing and health and mental health care.

### **Our Vision: Investing in True Public Safety**

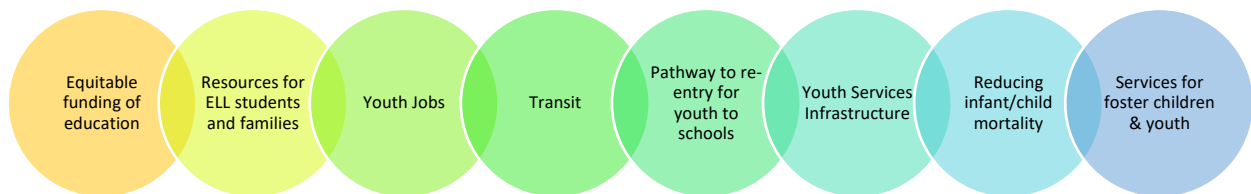


### **Challenge: Children and Youth**

We need to move from the school to prison pipeline to the cradle to career pipeline. There is a huge disparity between opportunity for children and youth from well-resourced communities and families, and for children and youth who do not have resources. Right now, education is under-resourced and inequitably funded. English language learner resources have not been funded adequately in many years and the lack of Spanish speaking personnel in schools and in the Probation department limits parents’ ability to engage. We have high infant and child mortality rates in poor neighborhoods. Investing in young children is the most preventive investment that we can make.

The whole youth infrastructure needs to be rebuilt with stable revenues and include jobs for youth and support for youth returning from the juvenile justice system. Foster children and youth are particularly vulnerable and often voiceless.

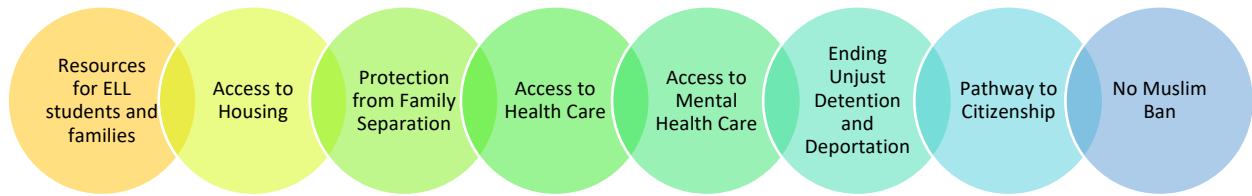
### **Our Vision: Investing in Children and Youth**



### **Challenge: Immigration**

Immigrants are suffering from the impact of criminalization and increasing deportations, and fear law enforcement. This climate of fear is negatively impacting mental health of both adults and children. Sacramento is also the number one refugee resettlement county in the country.

## Our Vision: Welcoming Immigrants and Refugees



### Intersections

The challenges Sacramento residents face do not exist in isolation from each other. In fact, they frequently intersect. To illustrate how these intersections impact families in Sacramento, here are three short profiles, all based in actual experiences.



After Michael’s father lost his job, he fell into a depression, but there were no mental health resources in the community. He began self-medicating with drugs, until he was arrested and sent to prison.

Michael and his sister had asthma which was aggravated by the air quality of their apartment’s location next to the freeway. By the time Michael started school, he had frequent absences for respiratory illnesses.

Michael’s mother struggled to care for her children as a recovering addict with few resources. The family lost their apartment and took turns staying with relatives and friends. Michael was often hungry and was teased at school for wearing the same clothes for days. Although Michael was very bright, he was angry and began to get into fights at school. In third grade he was suspended three times. The school knew that he needed counseling and support, but they had no counseling resources to provide. By fifth grade, he dropped out of school.

Michael’s brother began selling drugs, the main source of employment for young men in his neighborhood. Michael became his assistant and stole a car on a dare. He was arrested for the first time at age 12, and began years of bouncing between incarceration, foster care, and life on the streets.



Sam grew up in a big family and his older brother and two uncles were in prison. Sam had several interactions with law enforcement as a youth. After making a bad decision as a 17 year-old and committing armed robbery, Sam was incarcerated in adult prison for 8 years.

While Sam was in prison, he worked with a recovery program which helped him work through the pain of his youth. He took classes when offered and learned that he himself was a gifted writer. He created dreams of leaving prison to work with at-risk youth to prepare them for jobs as an alternative to prison.

When Sam was released, he returned to his family's home in his old neighborhood. It would have been better for him to start over away from the pressures of his old life, but he could not find housing with a felony record. Eager for a fresh start, Sam began applying for jobs. He had drive and skills so he caught the attention of employers. But even when he applied and passed the interview, employers changed their minds after his background check showed a felony.

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Alicia cleans houses 6 days per week and Julio works for a landscaper. They pay taxes and they are both undocumented. Julio has diabetes, but he does not have health insurance so manages as best as he can.

Alicia and her husband Julio live in a rented house with their 4 children. After her sister got evicted, she moved into the house with her 3 children, so there are 9 people sharing a 2- bedroom house. The house has mold issues, but their landlord threatens to report them to the authorities if they complain.

Alicia and Julio's oldest daughter, Marisol, has DACA and is enrolled in community college and working full-time. She would like to go to a 4-year college, to study engineering, but she is ineligible for the student loans that would help her attend.

Alicia's son struggled in school. Alicia wanted to help her son but when she went to the school, there were no bilingual staff to help her understand her son's struggles. Her son was sent to a continuation high school. Alicia worries about her him, but feels unable to help.

The whole family is afraid that Alicia, Julio and Marisol could be deported. When Julio had his wallet stolen, he did not report it to the police for fear that it could lead to him being deported. The stress takes a toll on their mental health, but there are no mental health resources available to them.



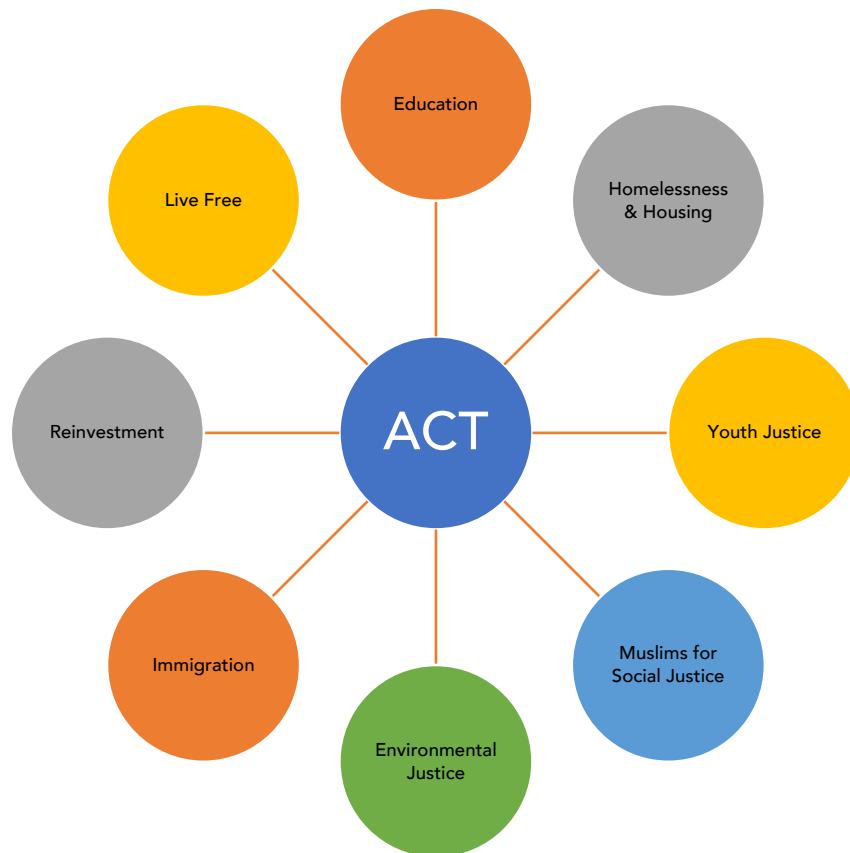
## Moving Forward: The Next 5 Years

As we look forward to the next 5 years, we are committed to building power to ensure that these community priorities become our city and county and regional priorities. We are committed to equity in systems, policy, and resource allocation.

Understanding that people lead intersectional lives, each of our local organizing committees (LOC) will look at the ways that their issue areas intersect with the challenge areas highlighted in this process: homelessness and housing, mental health and health care, public safety, children and youth, immigration. This will inform how we choose to focus strategy and specific issue campaigns.

ACT's current local organizing committees are:

- Education
- Environmental Justice
- Homelessness and Housing
- Immigration
- Live Free (Police Accountability and Transparency)
- Muslims for Social Justice
- Reinvestment (Investing in Prevention and Re-Entry)
- Youth Justice



ACT recognizes our niche as bridge builders. We are committed to bringing people together to find solutions to the challenges that face us, and to encourage unlikely partners to work together with common purpose.

We will continue to work with congregations to bring the voices of the faith community into public discourse, to shape a moral vision and calls to action based on our shared faith values.

Recognizing that we do not touch every impacted community, we are committed to ensuring that community partners have a better understanding of how organizing can be a tool for structural change, and how we can work together for the change we seek. We will share our expertise in organizing as allies to community partners.

Finally, we will continue our work in civic engagement, encouraging voter registration, educating voters on local and state issues, and working to Get Out the Vote.

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SACRAMENTO ACT  
EMPOWERS ORDINARY PEOPLE

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*to*

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*the* CONDITIONS

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*that*

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& racial injustice.

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Our shared faith  
values call us *to*

ENVISION *and* BUILD

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*a*

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