

Sac
Kids
First

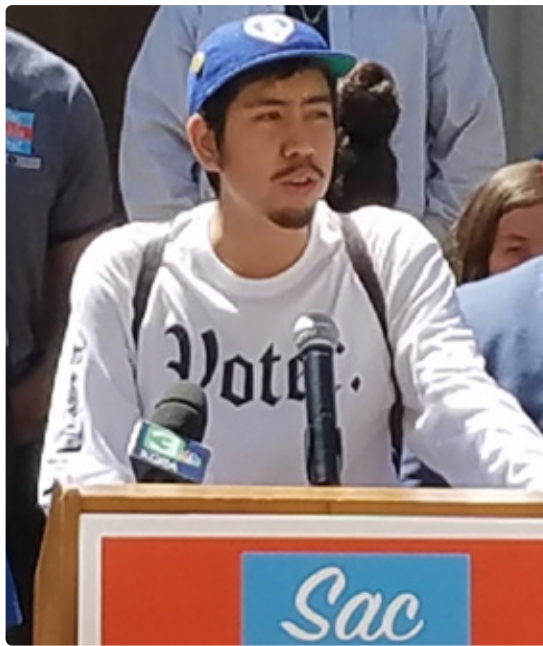


A Tale of Two Cities:

The Campaign for a Sacramento Children's Fund



SAC KIDS FIRST | MAY 11, 2020



This paper was written by Jim Keddy with editorial assistance from Dr. Flojaune Cofer and Malaki Seku Amen. Jim serves as the treasurer of **Sac Kids First** (www.sackidsfirst.org) and as the executive director of **Youth Forward** (www.youth-forward.org). Sac Kids First is part of **Funding the Next Generation**, a statewide network of child advocacy organizations (www.fundingthenextgeneration.org)

CONTENTS

Measure G	2
Who Voted For and Who Voted Against Measure G?	3
The Campaign Against Measure G	5
The Campaign For Measure G	8
The Public Debate Over Measure G	10
The Mayor’s Countermeasure	11
A Third Try	12
A Tale of Two Cities	13
Going Forward: Kids and the Coronavirus Pandemic	14
Endnotes	15

In this paper we explore the dynamics of race and class that were part of a 2020 ballot measure campaign that sought to stabilize and increase funding for children and youth services in the city of Sacramento. This analysis is meant to inform the ongoing debate in Sacramento regarding funding for youth services as well as to inform the various efforts underway in California and in the country to establish children’s funds in the budgets of local governments.

It is well-documented that California has an underfunded public infrastructure for children and youth, including underfunded public schools, child care, enrichment activities, afterschool and summer programs and youth development supports.¹ By analyzing the Measure G campaign, we are able to shed some light as to why this situation persists decade after decade, and why child advocates face a daunting, uphill struggle when it comes to winning new youth investments. At the end of the paper, we offer some reflections on Measure G in light of the recent coronavirus pandemic.

It is well-documented that California has an underfunded public infrastructure for children and youth, including underfunded public schools, child care, enrichment activities, afterschool and summer programs and youth development supports.



MEASURE G

On March 3rd, 2020, Sacramento voters had the opportunity to vote for or against the Children’s Fund Act of 2020, also known as Measure G.

Measure G proposed to significantly increase investments in children and youth, with a priority given to children and youth most impacted by poverty, violence and trauma.

Because of its focus on social and racial equity, the measure would have steered resources toward the most vulnerable youth, including youth of color, low-income youth, LGBT youth, foster youth and homeless young people. The measure also would have created a strategic planning and evaluation process, led by an oversight committee, to determine how to best invest the new funding.

Measure G did not raise taxes. Instead, it would have required the City of Sacramento to set aside 2.5% of general fund revenues for children and youth and to not cut children’s services (below existing funding levels) during an economic downturn. The measure would have required the City to do some reprioritization of its existing funding. Measure G was not

approved by voters, with 54% of voters in opposition and 45% of voters in support.

Voters across the city received considerable information about Measure G. In addition to the arguments for and against in the county’s voter pamphlet, voters received four pieces of mail from the opposition campaign and three mailers from the yes campaign. The yes campaign also ran digital ads. Volunteers canvassed door to door, phone banked and put up close to 1,000 lawn signs. The proponents argued that Measure G would stabilize and increase funding for youth services without raising taxes and that given the significant growth in the city budget over the last several years, the City could afford to spend more on children and youth.²

The opponents sought to depict the measure as dangerous, potentially limiting the city’s ability to respond to a natural disaster and causing cuts to police, fire, libraries and other city services.³ Mayor Darrell Steinberg, a long-standing, well-regarded political leader in the region and a state leader on the homeless

crisis, opposed the measure, citing the following rationale: 1). The city already spends a lot of funding on youth 2). The measure would cut into the city’s ability to fund essential services and to respond to the affordable housing and homeless crisis and 3). He would create a better way through passing his own

youth-focused ballot measure in the fall. Mayor Steinberg and his allies saw Measure G as a potential threat to their plans to issue bonds to create an affordable housing trust fund. The firefighters union established the opposition committee and made the largest contribution to the no campaign.

WHO VOTED FOR AND WHO VOTED AGAINST MEASURE G?

An analysis of the votes for and against Measure G reveals some stark differences. In general, neighborhoods that have a larger white population than the city average, and that also have a below average poverty rate overwhelmingly opposed Measure G. In contrast, neighborhoods with a smaller white population and a larger

population of people of color, and that also have higher than average poverty rates, strongly supported the measure.⁴ In the table at left below are precinct data from the Sacramento County Registrar of Voters that show how voters from affluent neighborhoods with an above average white population voted on Measure G.

Neighborhood	Precint #	YES Vote	NO Vote
Land Park	44105	34	65
	44520	28	71
	44562	28	71
	44625	30	69
East Sacramento	42016	36	63
	42258	32	67
	42605	28	71
	43148	29	70
Pocket	47302	31	68
	47411	32	67
	47436	32	67
	47712	33	66
North Natomas	12669	25	74
	12733	41	58
	12747	37	62
	14502	33	66

Neighborhood	Precint #	YES Vote	NO Vote
Del Paso Heights	16836	68	31
	16869	62	37
	19319	61	38
	19622	60	39
Meadowview	48243	61	38
	48447	64	35
	48475	62	37
	48703	61	38
Oak Park	45314	61	38
	45140	66	33
	45015	59	40
Fruitridge	46618	54	45
	45736	54	45
Avondale/ Glen Elder	46690	61	38
Valley High	49457	66	33
	49870	56	43

In contrast, voters in lower income neighborhoods of color supported Measure G (see table on right).

For those not familiar with the geography of Sacramento, it's worth noting how the neighborhoods that strongly opposed Measure G are typically adjacent to those that supported the measure. One can drive for only five minutes, from the mostly white and affluent neighborhood of Land Park, in which voters opposed Measure G two-to-one, to the brown and black neighborhood of Oak Park, a few miles down the road, in which voters supported Measure G two-to-one. The same dynamic exists further south in the Pocket neighborhood

(more white and affluent, voted against G) which is a little down the road from Meadowview, a strong G supporter and a Black/Latinx/S.E. Asian neighborhood. Or in the northern part of the city, some parts of Natomas voted against Measure G,

while their neighbors a few miles east, in North Sacramento and Del Paso Heights, voted for the measure. Even within the same neighborhoods we can see this dynamic. For example, voters in South Natomas largely supported Measure G whereas voters in North Natomas vigorously opposed the measure.⁵

Given that voters in both types of neighborhoods largely received the same information about Measure G, we can see how these voters, who live literally down the road from one another, bring very different perspectives to priorities for the city of

Sacramento. One would think that voters in the lower-income parts of the city would be more receptive to the opposition argument regarding possible future cuts to public services or a potential threat to the building of affordable housing, since these voters are likely in greater need of those services than those in the affluent neighborhoods. Yet these voters did not follow the mayor and supported Measure G.

While various factors influence how people vote, the consistent contrast in voting patterns

suggests that race and income played a major factor in the election outcome. White people are often quick to dismiss the notion that race continues to play a significant role in how society functions.⁶ Yet, these data suggest a clear racial dynamic

One can drive for only five minutes, from the mostly white and affluent neighborhood of Land Park, in which voters opposed Measure G two-to-one, to the brown and black neighborhood of Oak Park, a few miles down the road, in which voters supported Measure G two-to-one.

in how people voted on Measure G. People of color in Sacramento have experienced historic and current day discrimination, oppression and disinvestment. The difference in experience between voters of color and white voters influences how these groups of voters view policy issues such as those represented by Measure G.

Incidents like the 2018 shooting of Stephon Clark reveal this vast difference in experience between the white community and communities of color. In 2018, Sacramento made the national news when two police officers shot and killed Stephon Clark, an unarmed black man, in the backyard

of his grandmother’s home. The police officers were not charged and remain on the police force today. The shooting exacerbated the already existing trauma and fear in Sacramento’s communities of color, particularly the black community. The shooting also had a direct impact on the city budget. The Clark family was awarded a \$2.4 million settlement.⁷ And, when police arrested 84 people during a peaceful protest in East Sacramento after no charges were brought against the officers, 84 people were wrongfully detained and arrested. Several weeks before the election, the City of Sacramento agreed to a \$550,000 settlement to compensate the victims.⁸ This shooting cost the city almost \$3 million in direct payouts in addition to huge additional costs in police and city staff overtime.



THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST MEASURE G

Just as we see a stark difference in race and income among voters who supported the measure and those who opposed, we see a similar difference in who led and funded the campaigns for and against Measure G.

The campaign against Measure G was funded by some of the city’s most powerful and well-funded interest groups, business leaders and developers:⁹

Organization	Donations to No on G
Sacramento Area Firefighters Union	\$40,000
Sacramento Police Officers Union	\$31,000
Plumbers Union	\$10,000
Mayor Darrell Steinberg	\$15,000
Sheet Metal Workers Union	\$10,000
Councilmember Angelique Ashby	\$5,000
Councilmember Steve Hansen	\$5,000
Building Trades Council	\$10,000
California Apartment Association	\$5,000

Organization	Donations to No on G
Electrical Workers Union	\$10,000
Building Industry Association	\$10,000
Park West Casinos	\$10,000
Kevin Nagle, CEO Sac Republic	\$10,000
Pacific Coast Companies (David Luccheti)	\$10,000
CC Yin (owner of 32 McDonalds franchises)	\$6,000
1801 L (luxury apartment development)	\$5,000

The donations reveal a striking pattern, the most obvious of which is that no one outside the insider world of Sacramento power politics donated to the campaign against Measure G. In reviewing the donor list, it may strike some as curious that the police and fire unions and individuals such as Kevin Nagle, the CEO of the Sacramento soccer team, and wealthy developers, would choose to get involved in opposing a children's measure. However, it becomes less curious when one takes into account that the measure could have potentially impacted their financial interests with the City of Sacramento. Police and fire budgets account for roughly two-thirds of the city's general fund. While Measure G only would have directed a small amount of additional funding (2.5%) to youth services, it is likely that the police and fire unions viewed this minor reprioritization of city spending as a threat to their financial position.¹⁰

Business interests are also heavily engaged in city finances. For example, in November of last year, the City Council approved \$27 million to subsidize the construction of the new soccer stadium for Mr. Nagle's team.¹⁰ Business leaders, construction unions and developers may have opposed Measure G because of their belief that the measure might have impeded future plans to build affordable housing in the city. And, of course, housing construction financially benefits these same interest groups.

A significant part of the opposition campaign was led by a Sacramento newspaper, *Inside Publications*. *Inside Publications* ran three opposition articles by reporter R. E. Graswich, an op-ed and a paid ad, all against Measure G, as well as one op-ed authored by the proponents.¹¹ *Inside Publications* serves the more affluent and white neighborhoods of Land Park, Curtis Park and East Sacramento and caters to the lifestyle and real estate interests of well-to-do Sacramentans. It typically features

articles on the arts, gardening, luxury home design, restaurants, charitable efforts and neighborhood challenges such as homelessness and neighborhood development.

In his articles regarding Measure G, R.E. Graswich ran a smear campaign against the measure by implying that criminal nonprofits would profit from the measure and use the funding to benefit themselves, not youth. In his first article, months prior to the election, he labeled the proposed measure as a "nonprofit boondoggle" and focused on EBAYC, the organization that works with Southeast Asian youth in North and South Sacramento. In his next two articles, he associated the Measure G campaign with some financial mismanagement that took place several years ago by a Measure G supporter, the Roberts Family Development Center (RFDC).¹² The RFDC is a black-led organization that works successfully with youth of color in Sacramento's most impoverished neighborhood. In his articles, Graswich sought to discredit the numerous youth-serving nonprofits and partners leading the Measure G campaign by vigorously attacking one organization.¹³

Media analysts refer to this sort of smear effort as a dog-whistle campaign.¹⁴ It is likely that these articles, appearing in a newspaper that primarily serves a white readership, served to trigger the conscious and subconscious fears and racial resentment of white voters toward people of color and toward organizations led by people of color. The white media has a long history of portraying people of color, particularly African Americans, as criminals and as untrustworthy. Graswich sought to create fear and scandal around Measure G and to move his readers to oppose the measure.

NO On Measure G

"Measure G would restrict the City's ability to respond to a natural disaster or improve emergency services, including fire services and 9-1-1 response."

Chris Andrew, President
Sacramento Area Fire Fighters

"The City already makes a strong commitment to youth with 7.5% of city funds going to youth programs that include after-school care, gang prevention and recreation."

Angelique Ashby
Sacramento Mayor Pro Tem

"Should Measure G pass, it would negate the city's ability to increase essential city services like parks programming, library hours, fire service, and 9-1-1 emergency response."

Rivkah Sass, Director
Sacramento Public Library

"Measure G would change our city charter and can only be undone by another costly ballot measure."

Rita Gallardo Good, Chair
Parks & Community Enrichment Commission

"Measure G is ballot box budgeting at its worst. It ties the hands of the city and gives authority to a committee with no budget expertise or accountability to voters."

Jeff Harris
Sacramento Vice Mayor

Visit ProtectingSacramento.org to learn more.

Ad paid for by Protecting Sacramento, Vote No on Measure G, Sponsored by Sacramento Area Firefighters Local 522



Vote NO ON SACRAMENTO MEASURE G

Like the proponents of Measure G, we are committed to investing in our kids. But Measure G will cause more problems than it solves.

HERE ARE THE FACTS:

- #1 Measure G restricts the City from increasing essential services like parks, library hours, fire service and 9-1-1 emergency response.
- #2 Measure G would negatively impact the City's ability to fund much needed housing and homeless programs, as well as infrastructure needs.
- #3 Measure G gives authority to a committee with no budget expertise or accountability to voters while tying the hands of City government.
- #4 Measure G is unnecessary. The City currently spends \$36 million—7.5% of our budget—on youth services including after-school care, violence prevention, recreation and youth employment.

Ad Paid for By 2020 FPPC ID# 1381344

JOIN US IN VOTING NO ON MEASURE G



Darrell Steinberg, Mayor
Jeff Harris, Vice Mayor
Angelique Ashby, Mayor Pro Tem
Cecily Hastings, Inside Sacramento

Larry Carr, City Council Member
Rivkah Sass, Director Sacramento Public Library
Chris Andrew, President Sacramento Area Fire Fighters
Heather Fargo, Sacramento Mayor Retired

Rita Gallardo Good, Chair
Parks & Community Enrichment Commission

For more information visit ProtectingSacramento.org

No on Measure G



An Important Message From Mayor Darrell Steinberg

Dear Neighbors,

I am deeply committed to our youth. In Sacramento, we are investing unprecedented resources on young people.

I oppose Measure G because it would jeopardize key elements of our plan for the city, namely our drive to build more affordable housing, fund homeless services and revitalize our neighborhoods.

Measure G would restrict the city's ability to increase essential services like 9-1-1 emergency response, fire services, parks programming and library hours.

Measure G takes millions off the top of the city budget and puts spending in the hands of a large unselected commission.

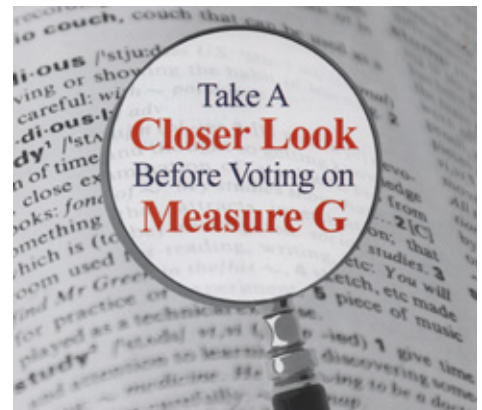
I propose a Better Way. My alternative plan allocates 20 percent of the city's annual revenue GROWTH to youth programs. During an economic downturn, any budget cuts to youth programs would have to be proportionate to those in other city programs.

The Better Way will not lock the city into spending a set percentage of the budget without regard to what happens in an emergency, natural disaster or recession.

I will always fight for more youth funding. *There is a Better Way!*

Darrell Steinberg
Mayor Darrell Steinberg

There is a Better Way





The Sacramento Kids First Coalition currently consists of 24 organizations that have come together to advocate for low-income youth and youth of color throughout the city. The vast majority of organizations in the Sac Kids First Coalition are led by people of color.

THE CAMPAIGN FOR MEASURE G

The campaign for Measure G was initiated by Southeast Asian youth leaders in South Sacramento and Del Paso/North Sacramento in 2016. These youth leaders, supported by the nonprofit organization EBAYC, carried out a survey of 1,500 low-income youth and youth of color, including young people incarcerated in the juvenile justice system, to better understand the situation and needs of Sacramento youth. At the same time these young people and their adult supporters began the process of building the Sacramento Kids First Coalition, a new effort determined to increase supports for vulnerable youth.

The Sacramento Kids First Coalition currently consists of 24 organizations that have come

together to advocate for low-income youth and youth of color throughout the city.¹⁵ Both young people and adults lead the effort. The vast majority of organizations in the Sac Kids First Coalition are led by people of color. Over 150 youth and young adults volunteered during the signature gathering phase and the campaign itself. The coalition has 1,200 individual supporters. In addition to nonprofits that serve youth, the coalition includes the Sacramento City Teachers Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics. On the following page is a list of member organizations.

EBAVC
Youth Forward
Sol Collective
Greater Sacramento NAACP
PRO Youth and Families
The Sacramento LGBT Center
United Latinos
La Familia Counseling Center
Sacramento Area Congregations Together
Roberts Family Development Center
Improve Your Tomorrow
Blacks Making a Difference
Brown Issues Forum
The Center at Sierra Health Foundation
California Urban Partnership
GreenTech Education and Employment
Health Education Council
South Sacramento Christian Center
Rose Family Creative Empowerment Center
The California Center for Civic Participation
A.E.S/Sac Youth Alliance
Hmong Innovating Politics
Sacramento City Teachers Association
California Chapter 1, American Academy of Pediatrics

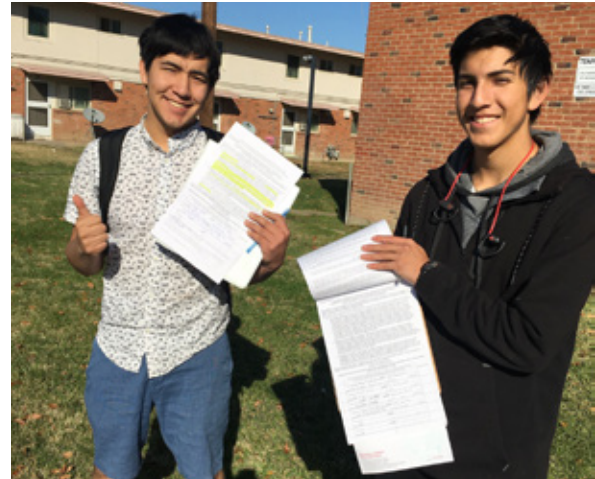
The Coalition initiated signature gathering for the Children’s Fund Act of 2020 in the Fall of 2018. In April of 2019, the Coalition submitted 39,000 valid signatures to the City Clerk. In November of 2019, the City Council placed the measure on the March 2020 ballot. During the campaign, young leaders of color gathered signatures, canvassed, phone banked, distributed lawn signs and spoke at City Council meetings.

The campaign also benefitted from the endorsements of elected officials including Assemblymember Kevin McCarty and three city councilmembers. Among elected officials, Councilmember Jay Schenirer stepped forward as the strongest supporter of the effort; he appeared in digital ads and in Yes on G mailers, and led the push to have the measure placed on the March ballot. The city’s largest daily newspaper, *The Sacramento Bee*, endorsed the measure.¹⁶

The majority of the funding for the Yes on Measure G campaign came from the member organizations of the coalition and from two prominent child advocates.¹⁷ In addition to the large contributions listed on the following page, Measure G received 178 donations in smaller amounts from individuals and community organizations since the inception of the overall campaign.



Organization	Donations to Yes on G
EBAYC	\$60,410
Youth Forward	\$42,000
The California Urban Partnership	\$30,000
Child Advocate	\$25,000
Child Advocate	\$25,000
GreenTech Education and Employment	\$20,000
Roberts Family Development Center	\$15,000



THE PUBLIC DEBATE OVER MEASURE G

As with the prior examples, the public debate over Measure G exposed the racial and economic fault lines of the city. During the campaign, Measure G was both supported and opposed by local elected officials. This opposition and support largely broke down along racial and economic lines. Three City Councilmembers (Ashby, Harris and Carr) signed the ballot argument against the measure while three signed the measure in favor (Warren, Schenirer and Guerra).¹⁸ Ashby and Harris represent two of the most affluent districts while Warren, Schenirer and Guerra represent districts with a higher percentage of low-income residents and residents of color. Councilmember Hansen, also an opponent, represents the wealthy neighborhood of Land Park. The one exception to this pattern is Councilmember Larry Carr, who opposed the measure due to his concern for ballot box budgeting; he represents the lower-income Meadowview district. Among the leading non-incumbent candidates running for council seats on the March 2020 ballot, all three candidates were people of color and all three supported Measure G (Katie Valenzuela, Mai Vang and Pastor Les Simmons).

At the February 25th City Council meeting, Mayor Steinberg circumvented council protocol and rushed through his counterproposal to Measure G, winning a 7-2 council vote to place his alternative measure on the November 2020 ballot. The Mayor introduced his countermeasure as part of his campaign to defeat Measure G. He made the argument to voters, in voter mail and an opinion piece in *The Sacramento Bee*, that his measure was the “better way.” He urged voters to oppose Measure G and to support his measure in November, reassuring voters that even if Measure G failed, there would still be progress for kids.

At the February 25th Council debate, the vast majority of proponents of the Mayor’s countermeasure (and opponents to Measure G) were white (white labor leaders, white representatives of the real estate industry, etc.).¹⁹ In contrast, almost all of the speakers expressing support for Measure G, and concern and opposition to the Mayor’s effort to undermine the measure, were young people of color.²⁰ This racial dynamic with opponents

and supporters played out in other debate forums, such as the Measure G debate held

by the Sacramento Democratic Party Central Committee on January 9th, 2020.²¹

THE MAYOR'S COUNTERMEASURE

Significant differences exist between the alternative measure proposed by Mayor Steinberg at the February 25th City Council meeting and Measure G. First, the alternative measure does not include any language that would prioritize the most vulnerable children and youth in the city.²² As such, the measure does not explicitly seek to increase racial equity and to close racial gaps when it comes to life opportunities for children and youth in Sacramento.²³

Secondly, the measure proposes to set aside a smaller amount of additional funding for youth services than Measure G and does not create a stable funding source for youth services. The measure would set aside 20% of growth in the city budget each year for the youth fund, which would be on average \$2.5 million per year, or less than one percent of the general fund. During a flat year or economic downturn, there would be no additional funding for youth services.

Finally, Mayor Steinberg, in developing his new measure, neglected to notify or consult with any of the organizations or young people who

had been leading a campaign for a youth fund since 2016. The pursuit of racial equity entails not only distributing resources differently, but also directly engaging those marginalized communities affected by the issue in developing solutions.²⁴ The Mayor also went against the city's own youth development plan, passed by the Council in 2017, which has as a guiding principle, "Nothing about us without us."²⁵ By adopting this principle, city leaders took the stance that in developing policy that affects youth, they should consult and engage young people in the policy development process.

Several youth speakers at the February 25th City Council meeting expressed their dismay and anger that they had not been consulted in the development of the new measure.

Following the vote to place the

alternative measure on the November 2020 ballot, the Mayor and Council vowed to return to a discussion of the alternative measure, to receive public feedback, and to potentially amend the measure. Councilmember Jay Schenirer brought forward recommendations to amend the measure and to bring the measure

The vast majority of proponents of the Mayor's countermeasure (and opponents to Measure G) were white. In contrast, almost all of the speakers expressing support for Measure G, and concern and opposition to the Mayor's effort to undermine the measure, were young people of color.

closer to Measure G, including equity language that would prioritize children most affected by poverty, violence and trauma, as found in Measure G. The Mayor responded positively to this recommendation. Councilmember Allen Warren spoke strongly in support of Measure G and in support of the need for greater attention

A THIRD TRY

Measure G represents the third attempt by children’s advocates, educators and city leaders in 4 years to pass a children’s funding ballot measure. Each of these attempts has failed. In June of 2016, Councilmember Jay Schenirer attempted to create a children’s fund in the city budget by increasing city taxes on marijuana businesses. In November of 2016, the Sacramento City Unified Board of Education sought to pass a school parcel tax to increase enrichment activities and supports for at-risk youth on school campuses. Both of these measures would have required a two-thirds vote to pass and both lost narrowly (65.86% and 66.2% respectively). Each faced opposition, but nowhere near the opposition mounted against the Measure G campaign. Many of the community groups that belong to the Sac Kids First coalition spent countless hours supporting these campaigns, turning out volunteers to phone bank and canvass. The Sacramento City Teachers Association, a Measure G supporter, also backed the 2016 measure.

Some of the city’s political, business and union leadership supported the above efforts, some opposed and some stayed on the sidelines. From the election outcomes, it’s clear that there has yet to be an effort large enough, and united enough, to win. While there has yet to be a united effort in support of kids, the city’s leaders have proven their ability to get things

to racial equity. The Council has until early summer to amend the ballot proposal prior to the November election, though it is unclear how this timeline may be affected by the statewide shelter in place directive in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

done in other areas. Over the last several years, city leaders have built a new basketball arena and entertainment center, laid the plans to build a new soccer arena and have filled the city with attractive restaurants, art spaces and new market rate housing. From reviewing this history to date, one may conclude that few, if any, of the interests that drive the city budget and development projects, treat low-income children and children of color as a priority. Poor children have no significant financial interest advocating for them in the political arena.



A TALE OF TWO CITIES

This paper has described the dynamics of the Measure G campaign in order to lift up the racial and economic fault lines that divide the city. Children and youth across the city experience growing up in Sacramento quite differently based on their race and family income level. For example, more affluent parents are able to navigate the school system to locate their children in the best public schools or they place their children in private schools. Low-income children of color often attend public schools with fewer resources and lower academic rigor and with student populations with greater needs resulting from community traumas and concentrated poverty. These differences

are further compounded by the disparity in extracurricular youth supports. In the more white and affluent neighborhoods, parents typically have the resources to place their children in summer and afterschool enrichment programs that further their education. Low-income children often have little or no access to such programs and fall behind academically during the summer months.

In an unpublished op-ed submitted to the *Sacramento Bee*, Dexter Niskala, a Southeast Asian young adult active in EBAYC, shared why he got involved in the youth fund campaign as a 17 year-old at Luther Burbank High School:

“



My mother brought me to Sacramento’s Meadowview neighborhood from North Carolina when I was an 8-year-old to start a new life away from addiction and domestic turmoil. My parents have long struggled with jobs that didn’t pay enough to keep us in a stable home. By the time I got to Fern Bacon Middle School, we lost our home and we bounced from house-to-house with friends and family until we exhausted our welcome. We ended up living on the streets. One 2:00 am morning, police found me asleep alone at a church parking lot and I was sent to a children’s receiving home for four months before I was reunited with my family.

Child poverty is real and it’s widespread in Sacramento. Living in poverty impacts how young people feel about themselves and the choices they make. I know a lot of youth who live with a lot of

trauma. And if not addressed, this often leads to depression, anger, violence, addiction, and more poverty.

This is why I helped to create Measure G—Sacramento Children’s Fund Act of 2020—so that a small portion of city revenue is invested in helping children and youth most impacted by poverty, violence, and trauma.”

Dexter has been involved in all 3 campaigns to win an increase in funding for youth services over the last 4 years.

GOING FORWARD: KIDS AND THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

Suddenly, within days following the election, we found ourselves in the midst of the coronavirus pandemic which is changing the policy, economic and political landscape in dramatic, unpredictable ways. Voters were becoming aware of the looming pandemic in the days prior to the March 3rd election, which may have depressed support for Measure G, and other youth and school measures around the state.²⁶

The pandemic brings uncertainty to all prior city plans for future investments in housing and economic development, as well as the plan for a November children's fund ballot measure as proposed by Mayor Steinberg. It's unclear how the pandemic will affect the economy, and the city's revenue picture over the long-term. It is possible that there will be a return to some degree of normalcy later in the year, but the path forward is unknown.

What is clear is that regardless of how long the pandemic lasts, the tale of two cities will continue. The families and children in the neighborhoods that supported Measure G are bearing the brunt of the pandemic-induced downturn and will likely be affected over the long-term by the crisis. Large numbers of parents who are hourly, low-wage workers have lost their jobs and may not immediately resume work once the shelter in place directive is lifted and schools and businesses resume usual functions. The lengthy closure of schools will have a disparate

impact on low-income children. Families are struggling to pay rent and are at even greater risk of homelessness. Parents are in even greater need of the supports for their children that would have been funded by Measure G.

Fortunately, at the February 25th City Council meeting, Mayor Steinberg and the Council committed themselves to leading a campaign to

establish a children and youth fund. In a letter mailed to voters across the city, Mayor Steinberg promised to lead an effort to increase funding for youth services and to ensure that, during a future downturn, budget cuts would not disproportionately impact youth

programs more than other city services.

Given this commitment, city leaders, child advocates, youth leaders and educators will have to work together to overcome the inherent challenges to expanding the public infrastructure for children and youth as described in this analysis. These challenges include the differences in voter perceptions across the city and the tendency among some of the city's economic and political elites to oppose such measures, or to sit out. While the youth and adult community leaders who led Measure G did not accomplish their goal in the March 3rd election, they may have set the stage to shift these patterns going forward, and to win an expansion in opportunities and supports for vulnerable children and youth in the years to come.

The families and children in the neighborhoods that supported Measure G are bearing the brunt of the pandemic-induced downturn and will likely be affected over the long-term by the crisis.

ENDNOTES

- 1 See the annual California Children’s Report Card developed by Children Now at www.childrennow.org.
- 2 At the March 10th City Council meeting, the consulting firm Management Partners presented its findings from an efficiency assessment of various city processes to the Council. The firm identified ways in which the city could save between \$69 million and \$79 million in ongoing savings if it were to address issues such as the use of overtime by city staff (particularly fire and police), and the large number of vacant positions in city departments. These potential savings are far greater than the growth in the city’s pension costs, meaning that if the city were to operate more efficiently it would have excess revenue. This assessment was released post-election but if it had been released prior to March 3rd, it would have bolstered the case made by the proponents regarding the city’s ability to increase and stabilize funding for children and youth. The Management Partners report may be found at: https://sacramento.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=22&clip_id=4576&meta_id=579137.
- 3 When it comes to ballot measures, opposition campaigns typically seek to create fear, doubt and confusion in the minds of voters, and to move voters who would support the measure to a no vote. The Measure G opposition campaign, for example, sought to create fear and doubt through claiming in its mail pieces that the measure would “put spending in the hands of a large unelected commission.” Measure G would have created an oversight commission with the responsibility of developing a strategic plan that would have required approval by the mayor and city council. The mayor and council would have retained their decision-making authority over city spending.
- 4 In developing this analysis, we relied on two data sources. For final election results, we drew from the Sacramento County Registrar of Voters website (www.elections.saccounty.net). For census tract data on race/ethnicity and on income, we turned to data the American Community Survey, which may be found at www.censusreporter.org. It’s important to note that the geography of precincts is not identical to that of census tracts. In looking for race/ethnicity and income data, we matched precincts with census tracts, though in many cases the census tract was larger than the precinct. What we are lifting up here is a general pattern. All the precincts listed above that voted against Measure G have a larger white population than the city average (above 31%) and a lower poverty rate than average (below 15.3%). The precincts in support of Measure G had a smaller white population (and an above average people of color population) and a higher poverty rate. To illustrate the sharp differences between neighborhoods, here’s an example. The Land Park precinct 44520 is 77% white and has a poverty rate of 3.4%. This neighborhood voted 71% against measure G. Just down the road is the Oak Park precinct 45140, which is 22% white and 78% people of color, with a poverty rate of 37.6% (more than double the city average of 15.3%). 66% of Oak Park voters supported Measure G.
- 5 The South Natomas precincts that supported Measure G include 18012 (63 yes, 36 no), 18175 (57/42), 18531 (52/47), 18436 (63/36) and 18659 (50/49).
- 6 See Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility: Why It’s So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism* (Beacon Press, 2018).
- 7 <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article240922951.html>
- 8 <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/crime/article241061801.html>
- 9 Information on donations to Measure G, pro and con, may be found at: <https://public.netfile.com/pub2/?aid=SAC>.
- 10 <https://www.sacbee.com/news/local/article237111284.html>
- 11 See www.insidesacramento.com.
- 12 See the February and March editions at www.insidesacramento.com.
- 13 Each Graswich article also contained factual inaccuracies and exaggerations. For example, in his first article published in the October 2019 issue of Inside Publications, Graswich referred to the measure as a “private revenue pool for youth-orientated nonprofit organizations.” At no point in the article does he acknowledge that the measure would fund nonprofits and public agencies, including city departments and that the City Council maintained ultimate approval over spending decisions. See www.insidesacramento.com.
- 14 See Ian Haney Lopez, *Dog Whistle Politics: How Coded Racial Appeals Have Reinvented Racism and Wrecked The Middle Class* (Oxford University Press, 2015).
- 15 See www.sackidsfirst.org.
- 16 <https://www.sacbee.com/opinion/election-endorsements/article240023298.html>
- 17 The list of large donations in the table below is from FPPC filings by the Yes on G campaign and does not include small donations, nor donations made during the signature gathering phase of the campaign.
- 18 <https://www.cityofsacramento.org/Clerk/Elections/3-Measure-Information>
- 19 At the February 25th City Council meeting, 12 out of 16 of those who approached the podium and spoke to the Council against Measure G and in favor of the Mayor’s proposal were white. In contrast, 15 of the 17 who spoke against the Mayor’s proposal and in support of Measure G were people of color, the majority being youth leaders.
- 20 To view the February 25th City Council meeting, go to: http://sacramento.granicus.com/ViewPublisher.php?view_id=22.
- 21 At this meeting of the Sacramento Democratic Party Central Committee, during the Measure G debate, all of the members in support of Measure G were black, while the opponents were predominantly white. The Democratic Central Committee chose to be neutral on the measure.
- 22 https://sacramento.granicus.com/MetaViewer.php?view_id=22&clip_id=4570&meta_id=578295
- 23 For a definition of racial equity, see <https://www.centerforsocialinclusion.org/our-work/what-is-racial-equity/>.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 <http://www.cityofsacramento.org/City-Manager/Divisions-Programs/Youth-Development>
- 26 <https://edsources.org/2020/why-bond-and-tax-measures-to-bolster-california-schools-struggled-to-pass-at-the-polls/624821>

A Tale of Two Cities:

The Campaign for a Sacramento Children's Fund

