



EQUITY ON THE ROAD 2024

A SUMMARY OF RESIDENT POLICY PRIORITIES

San Joaquin Valley Health Fund (SJVHF), in partnership with its policy committee and community partners, embarked this year on Equity on the Road, a new and exciting iteration of our annual Equity on the Mall event. From April 17 through April 19, SJVHF hosted three regional town halls in Bakersfield, Madera and Stockton. The decision to take our annual signature event on the road enabled us to meet people where they are and eliminate common barriers, like missing work with out-of-area travel or having to find a trusted childcare provider.

The three consecutive events were community-centered, with activities for children (e.g. art, coloring, crafts) and opportunities for community partners and residents to engage in authentic dialogue with their local and state representatives. Approximately 1,300 people attended the event over three days. Postcards were distributed to each attendee to capture timely feedback on what they wanted their elected officials to act on. A total of 119 postcards were collected and the aggregate responses by town hall are reflected in the three graphs below.

BAKERSFIELD TOWN HALL PRIORITIES

Figure 1

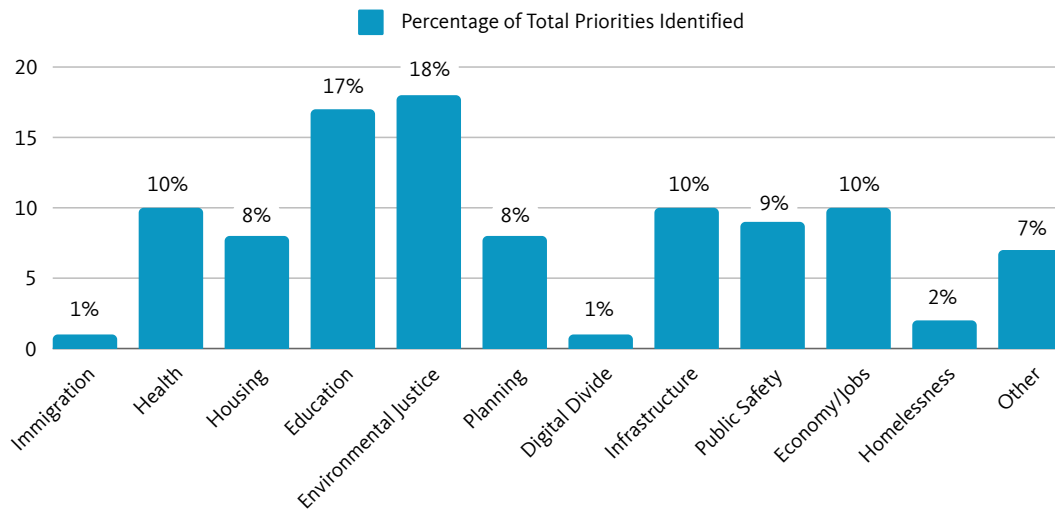


Figure 1 illustrates the 50 postcard responses from the Bakersfield town hall on April 17. Residents came from the three most southern San Joaquin Valley counties (Kern, Tulare and Kings) representing urban, rural and unincorporated communities of Arvin, Bakersfield, Delano, Lamont, Kettleman City, Lindsay, Porterville, Shafter, Tulare, Visalia, Wasco and Woodlake.



Bakersfield residents listen to community-based organization leaders and resident leaders as they provide community calls to action.

Of the 11 issues identified in Bakersfield, the top two issue areas were **environmental justice** and **education**. Of the 50 respondents, **18%** stated that **environmental justice** was their number one priority and **17%** said it was **education**. Issue area responses align closely with SJVHF’s Policy Committee-driven IHHEEL policy priorities—**Immigration, Health, Housing, Education, Environmental Justice, Land Use and Planning, and the Digital Divide**—as evidenced by 63% of cited issues falling into one of the IHHEEL areas of focus. “Aire limpia y agua limpia” (clean air and clean water) and protection from pesticides were frequently identified as policy priority needs. These issues were more prevalent among residents in Bakersfield, Delano, Shafter and Arvin. Residents from Woodlake and Arvin identified the need for more resources and programs for students falling behind academically. Issues related to health, economy/jobs (e.g., low wages and rising inflation), public safety (e.g., lack of safe streets and anxiety about crime) made up the additional priorities.

Organizations in attendance in Bakersfield included: Dolores Huerta Foundation, South Kern Sol Building Healthy Communities, Sequoia Riverlands Trust, Californians for Pesticide Reform, Greenaction for Health and Environmental Justice, The Source LGBT+ Center, Alianza Ecologista, Lideres Campesinas, Community Interventions, San Joaquin Valley Housing Collaborative, Immigrant Youth Justice Alliance, Reading and Beyond, Radio Bilingue, Central Valley Empowerment Alliance, Greenfield Walking Group, Center for Race Poverty and Environment, Central Valley Air Quality Coalition, Faith in the Valley and more.

MADERA TOWN HALL PRIORITIES

Figure 2

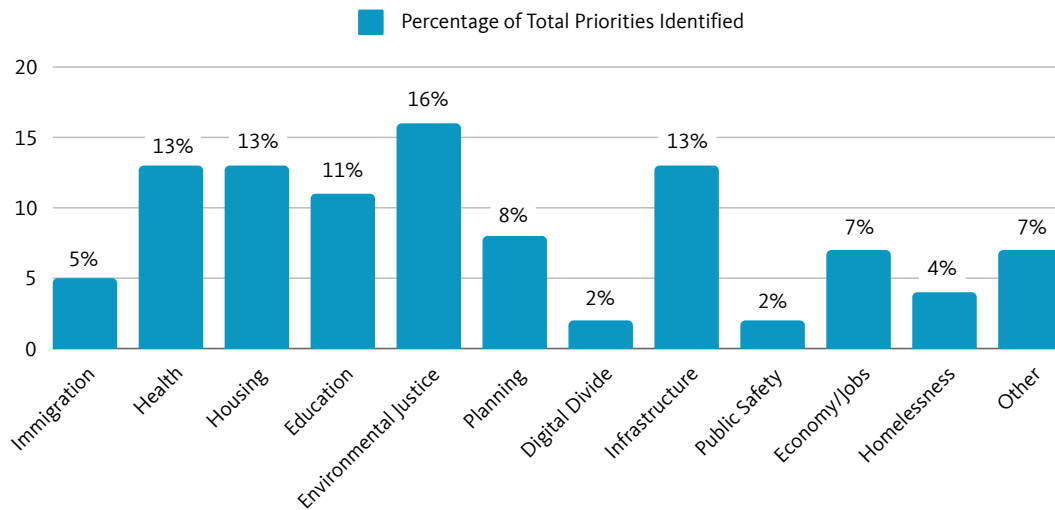


Figure 2 depicts the 47 postcard responses from the Madera town hall on April 18. Residents came from the central San Joaquin Valley counties (Fresno, Madera and Merced) representing urban, rural and unincorporated communities of Cantua Creek, Fresno, Huron, Livingston, Madera, Merced and Planada.

As in Bakersfield, participants at Madera’s town hall called out the same 11 issues with the top priorities being **environmental justice (16%)**, **health (13%)** and **housing (13%)**. IHHEEL issues were listed in 68% of the total responses. Residents in Cantua Creek, Huron and Fresno identified the same policy needs as in Bakersfield around clean water and air, and protection from pesticides. Residents shared a need to “address drinking water contaminants” and “cuidar el ambiente” (protect the environment). Additionally, increasing affordable housing, healthcare coverage and access to healthcare were other areas of great concern, with 26% stating these issues were their top priorities.



Madera resident participates in the town hall.

For concerns not related to IHHEEL priorities, residents listed topics related to the built environment, such as improved streets, public lighting, traffic measures and sidewalks, as some of their most pressing priorities. Infrastructure and safety priorities were also discussed during the question-and-answer portion of the program, with residents directing their questions at present elected representatives: Assemblymember Esmeralda Soria, Assemblymember Dr. Joaquin Arambula and Senator Caballero’s office representative Arturo Martinez.

Organizations in attendance in Madera included: Central California Environmental Justice Network, Madera Coalition for Community Justice, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, Central Valley Partnership, Centro La Familia Advocacy Services, Children Now, Hlub Hmong Center, Jakara Movement, SIREN, Leadership Counsel for Justice and Accountability, Cultiva La Salud, Cultiva La Salud Central Valley, Fresno Interdenominational Refugee Ministries, The Fresno Center, The LEAP Institute, A Hopeful Encounter,

Youth Leadership Institute, Radio Bilingüe, Familias en Acción and more.



Policy Committee members provide the audience with updates on the IHHEEL Policy Platform. From Left to Right: Lourdes Medina (SIREN), Nora Zaragoza (Cento La Familia Advocacy Services), Christine Barker (FIRM), Deep Singh (Jakara Movement), Nayamin Martinez (CCEJN) and Daniel O'Connell (Central Valley Partnership).

STOCKTON TOWN HALL PRIORITIES

Figure 3

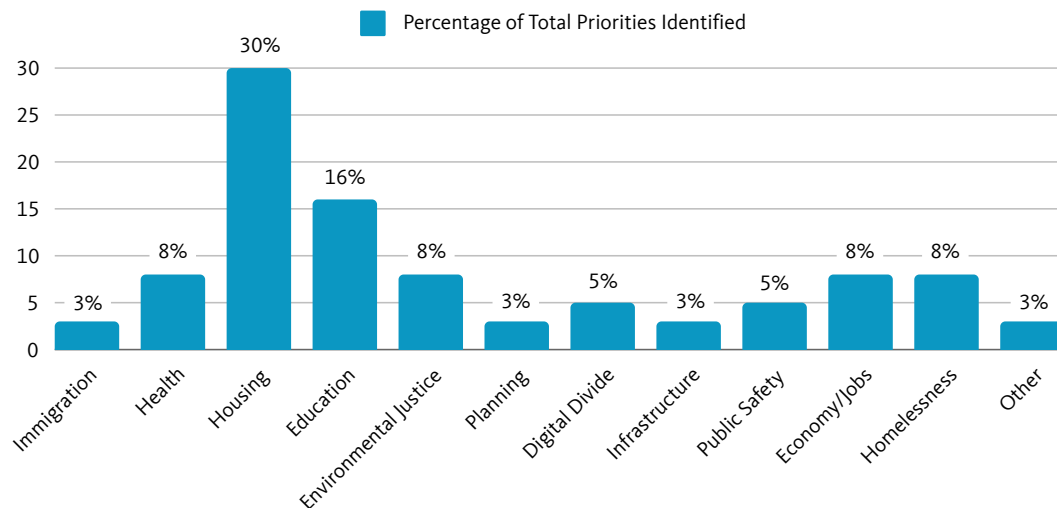


Figure 3 illustrates the 22 postcard responses from the third town hall in Stockton on April 19. Residents came from the two most northern counties of the San Joaquin Valley (Stanislaus and San Joaquin), representing Ceres, Modesto and Stockton.

In Stockton, **housing was the top priority by far, with 30% of respondents saying that it was their top priority**, followed by **education at 16%**. For education, residents expressed the need for improved school sites and more funding to improve access to higher education.

RC Thompson, Reinvent South Stockton's Executive Director, shared the need for more active engagement to change land use policies in Stockton that have effects on housing development: "We have real issues, and we need to continue to work on these issues in a collective and collaborative way. Looking at our Van Buskirk golf course, it has fallen into complete despair. The city finally got funding and we're not seeing plans that are moving forward to support the homes over there or that land."



Stockton residents engage in conversation at their town hall.

Of all the issues identified in Stockton, 76% were closely related to the IHHEEL policy priorities. One participant shared in a postcard, “Keep rent to a reasonable amount! Too many elders are losing their home and become homeless!” Another pleaded for leaders to “stop corporations from building unaffordable homes.” The feedback on housing aligns with a [2023 study ranking Stockton and Modesto 8th and 9th in cities with the highest cost of living in California.](#)

Organizations in attendance in Stockton included: West Modesto Community Collaborative, Reinvent South Stockton Coalition, Little Manila Rising, California Coalition for Rural Housing, California Rural Legal Assistance Foundation, Immigrant Legal Resource Center, The Utility Reform Network, Faith in the Valley, Amelia Ann Adams Whole Life Center, Invest in Me, Radio Bilingüe and more.



Community-based organization leaders and community leaders provide the audience with calls to action. From Left to Right: Perfecto Munoz (West Modesto Community Collaborative), Blanca Marin (West Modesto Community Collaborative), RC Thompson (Reinvent South Stockton), Patricia Miller (Centre Plate Farms) and Pat Barrett (San Joaquin County Housing Authority).

The vital feedback captured during the three Equity on the Road town halls represent the voices of hundreds of thousands of residents who experience deeply entrenched inequities and face an uncertain political and environmental landscape. SJVHF will continue to advocate for IHHEEL policy solutions to ensure that all San Joaquin Valley communities see a healthier, more equitable future.



Ballet Folklórico de Madera provides cultural entertainment at the Madera town hall.



SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY HEALTH FUND

The San Joaquin Valley Health Fund (SJVHF) is a place-based and community-driven advocacy network that spans issue areas. It is supported by a multi-racial, ethnic, and generational group of community members. Partners are united in advancing health and racial equity, in alignment with the IHHEEL Policy Platform, which covers Immigration, Health, Housing, Education, Environmental Justice, Land Use and Planning and Digital Divide. Since 2014, SJVHF has raised over \$35 million in resources from over 40+ philanthropic partners, which goes to support more than 170 community-based organizations. SJVHF is a program of The Center at Sierra Health Foundation. Learn more about SJVHF [here](#).



THE CENTER

The Center at Sierra Health Foundation is an independent 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization bringing people, ideas and infrastructure together to create a collective impact that reduces health disparities and improves community health for the underserved living in California. Learn more about The Center [here](#).