

Today's Choices, Tomorrow's Future CAN Policy Forum

November 8, 2013



Approximately 200 people attended the CAN Policy Forum held on Friday, November 8, 2013 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at the UT Commons Learning Center, 10100 Burnet Road, Austin, Texas.

Welcome

Ashton Cumberbatch, CAN Board Chair and Vice President for Advocacy and Community Relations with the Seton Healthcare Network, welcomed participants to the event and provided a brief overview of the Community Advancement Network (CAN). As the Austin region continues to grow, it is important to consider what we can do to ensure this growth is sustainable and that the opportunity provided by growth is open to all. Cumberbatch explained that the morning and afternoon sessions would each begin with a keynote address followed with a local panel of experts who will explore the policies and strategies that can promote sustainable growth and a shared future of equity and opportunity.

The Suburbanization of Poverty

Elizabeth Kneebone, Metropolitan Policy Program Fellow with the Brookings Institution, shared a video and presentation on the suburbanization of poverty. While the Austin MSA, still has a greater number of urban poor than suburban poor, this is changing. The rate of growth of poverty is much greater in the suburbs. Current policies are not aligned with this new reality.

Some of the challenges of suburban poverty that were highlighted by Kneebone included:

- Limited transit access
- Dramatic increases and demographic shifts in suburban school populations
- Strained local services
- Fragmented and inflexible funding streams with multiple jurisdictions

Kneebone made several recommendations for addressing these issues:

- *Achieve scale*: Neighborhood Centers, Inc. in Houston has an annual budget of more than \$275 million of public and private funding with 70 locations and a staff of more than 1,000.
- *Collaborate and integrate*: Chicago Southland Housing and Community Development Collaborative represents 23 municipalities and breaks down policy and funding silos.
- *Fund strategically*: Denver Transit Oriented Development Fund makes capital available to purchase sites along rail and bus corridors for affordable housing.
- *Create new federal policy*: Create Metropolitan Opportunity Challenge grants that re-direct 5% of current anti-poverty funding to creative, collaborative metro-area responses.

Panel discussion: What strategies and policies can help us balance growth and affordability?

A panel discussion was moderated by John-Michael Cortez, CAN Chair-Elect and Community Involvement Manager for Capital Metro.

Panelists:

- Marc Holm, Mayor, City of Elgin
- Christy Moffett, Senior Planner, Travis County Health and Human Services and Veterans Services
- Betty Voights, Executive Director, Capital Area Council of Governments
- Matt Whelan, Principal, Live Oak Gottesman

Panelists discussed the challenges of regulating growth in unincorporated areas and the importance of regional plans in promoting more sustainable growth that links housing, transportation, jobs and services.

Participant Survey & Evaluation

Following the panel discussion and questions from the audience, participants were asked whether the morning session had increased their awareness of community issues such as the suburbanization of poverty and whether the session had increased their awareness of policies and strategies to help balance growth and affordability. Almost all participants agreed the keynote speech and the panel discussion had increased their awareness of issues and of the strategies and policies that can help our community balance growth and affordability.

Participants were asked to rank order the top 5 policies or strategies they believe are most important. Policies identified as “most important” by more than half of respondents were:

- **Consider housing and transportation policies together.** (This strategy was listed as the “most important” strategy by more participants than any other and was also ranked as the #1 most important by more people than any other.)
- **Implement Project Connect vision for regional transportation.**
- **Focus development in Activity Centers and Corridors.**
- **Combine the Capital Area Metropolitan Planning Organization (CAMPO) and the Capital Area Planning Council of Governments (CAPCOG).**
- **Create affordable housing in high opportunity areas.**

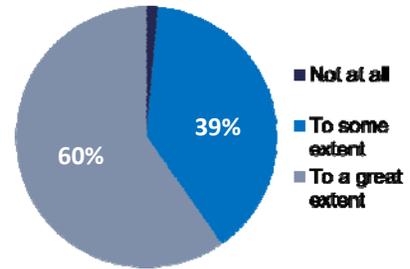
Luncheon and Together We CAN!

CAN Executive Director Vanessa Sarria and Leadership Austin Interim CEO Christopher Kennedy shared a new on-line civic action tool that has been collaboratively developed by CAN and Leadership Austin. “Together We CAN!” offers helpful tips of action people can take where they live, learn, work and serve to improve our community. People are encouraged to also share their ideas for taking action by taking pictures of themselves holding signs stating how they take action. Participants were encouraged to make signs at their tables and email pictures of themselves and their signs to CAN staff.

The Income Divide and Its Impact on Our Economic Future

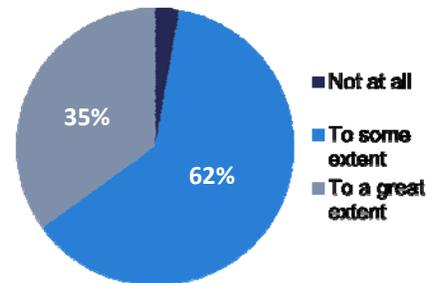
Jon Hockenyos, President and Founder, TXP, Inc., presented a keynote address on the impact of income inequality on the local economy. Hockenyos noted that the Austin, Round Rock, San Marcos Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA) is among the strongest in the nation economically. Hockenyos said 95% of the economic gains made since the Great Recession ended have accrued to the richest 1% of U.S. households. He also noted that more and more government spending is being pushed to the local level where public safety consumes the largest portion of spending than any other category. The result, he noted, is that there is little public funding left for investments that can help reduce income inequality, such as education, job training, research, and infrastructure upgrades.

99% reported that the session increased their awareness of community issues such as the suburbanization of poverty .



Total responses = 144

97% reported that the session increased their awareness of strategies/policies that can help balance growth and affordability.



Total responses = 143

Some recommendations Hockenyos made for reducing income inequality included:

- Reform the tax system so that it is more progressive and less regressive.
- Increase the federal minimum wage.
- Adopt economic development policies that reward job creation for targeted populations.
- Incentivize existing companies for job creation and expansion.
- Assist entrepreneurs with capital and business development expertise and needs.
- Expand workforce development for jobs in the medical fields to meet the needs of the new medical school.
- Encourage policy makers and the public alike to view transportation options as helping to offset some of the impacts of disparity. Local funding will be needed, so education and marketing are required to build support.

Panel discussion: What strategies and policies can help us develop our human capital and job opportunities to build a sustainable future? A panel discussion was moderated by Alan Miller, past CAN Chair and Executive Director of Workforce Solutions Capital Area.

Panelists:

- Kevin Brackmeyer, Superintendent, Manor ISD
- Hannah Gourgey, Vice President of Strategic Alignment, E3 Alliance
- Hopeton Hay, Director, Historically Underutilized Business Program, University of Texas System
- Mike Midgley, Vice President, Instruction, Austin Community College

Panelists discussed the need to provide education, training and skills development to allow more people who live in the Austin area to participate in middle-skilled jobs with career potential. The committee also discussed some of the barriers people face that prevent them from participating in job training.

Participant Survey & Evaluation

Following the panel discussion and questions from the audience, participants were asked whether the session had increased their awareness of community issues and their awareness of policies and strategies that can help develop our local human capital.

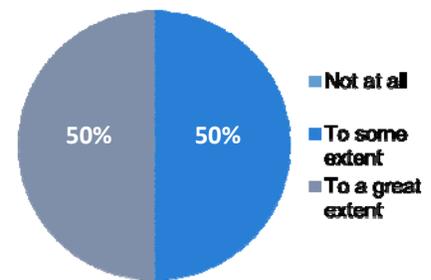
Participants were asked to rank order the top 5 policies or strategies they believe are most important. Policies identified as “most important” by more than half of respondents were:

- **Consider investments in early education as economic development.** (This strategy was listed as the “most important” strategy by more participants than any other and was also ranked as the #1 most important strategy by more people than any other.)
- **Develop meaningful industry involvement in career pathways.**
- **Develop a region-wide strategy aligning education, workforce development and economic development.**
- **Combine adult education with occupational training to create new, short-term training programs to meet the needs of employers and job-seekers.**

Adjournment

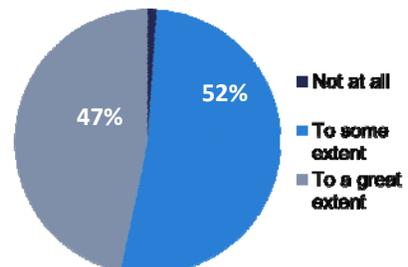
Ashton Cumberbatch thanked speakers, panelists and participants and adjourned the meeting.

100% reported that the session increased their awareness of community issues.



Total responses = 92

99% reported that the session increased their awareness of strategies/policies that can help develop human capital and job opportunities.



Total responses = 92