

## Mapping Out-of-School Time Resources for East Palo Alto and Belle Haven Youth

### Background

In 2009, community leaders who work with youth in the City of East Palo Alto (EPA) and the Belle Haven neighborhood in the City of Menlo Park approached the John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities (JGC) at Stanford University with a need to better understand out-of-school time opportunities for youth.<sup>1</sup> This community has a high number of youth faced with multiple risk factors as well as a deep tradition of community service, resulting in a dense network of youth-serving organizations in a community that covers a total of approximately three square miles. This group of leaders wondered why, in a community with so many programs and youth-serving agencies, many youth were disconnected from those services. The JGC has collaborated with this group to gather and analyze data to answer the following questions:

1. What programs are available to youth in the East Palo Alto and Belle Haven communities, and where are there gaps or duplication in available services?
2. How do available programs overlap with the schedules and interests of youth?
3. What factors inhibit or facilitate accessing the services available to local youth?

To answer these questions, we conducted interviews with service providers to learn about available programming. This program information is available in an online searchable tool at <http://jgcnet.stanford.edu>. In addition, we trained youth to survey their peers about out-of-school time practices, programmatic preferences, and barriers to participation. Finally, we compiled publicly available transit and crime data to examine these potential barriers to accessing programs for youth.

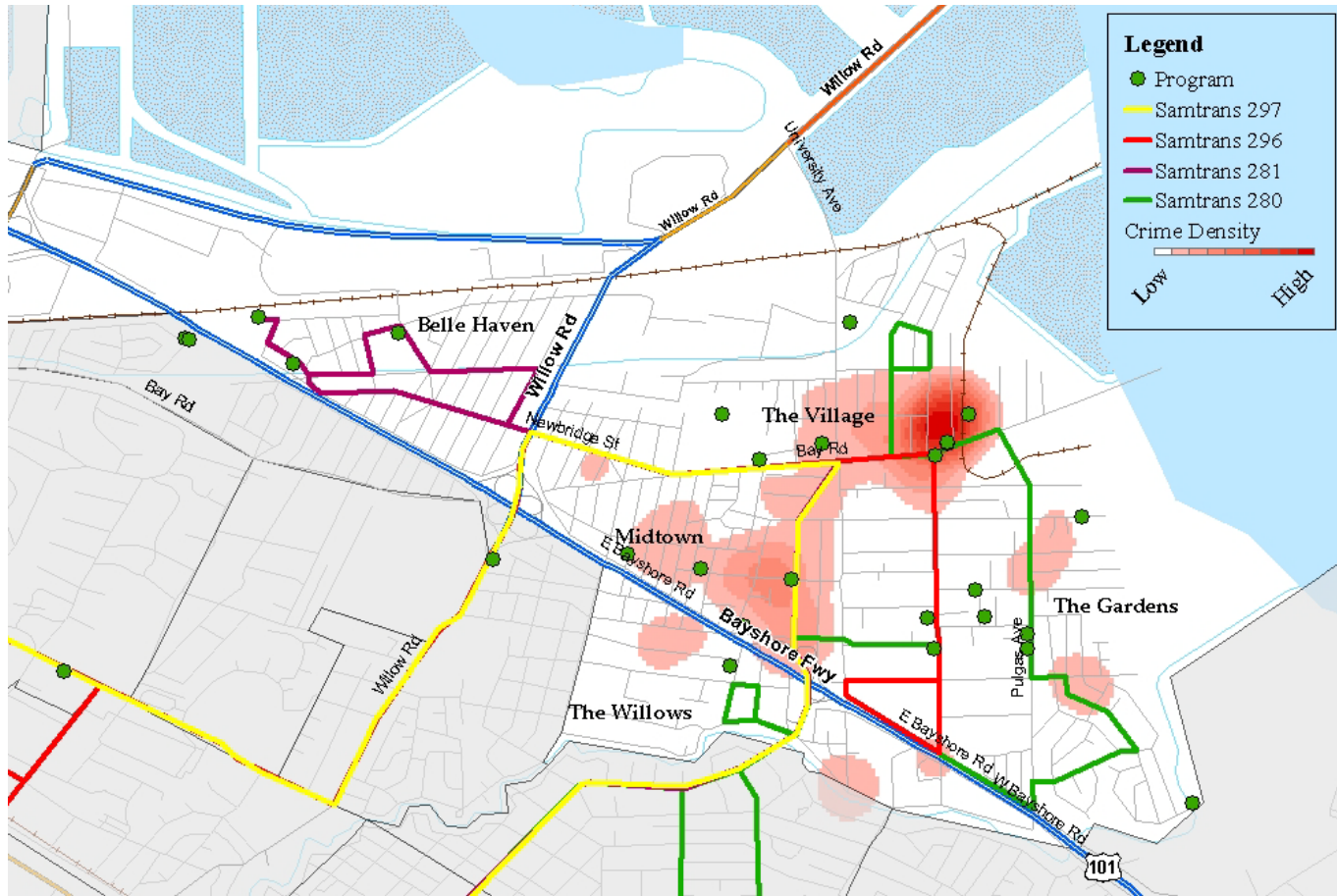
### Findings

Looking across these data sources, we found that:

- There were substantial out-of-school time opportunities – research uncovered 93 agencies administering over 150 programs or services to the approximately 6,250 youth aged 10 to 18 in EPA and Belle Haven.
- Service gaps remained despite the large number of programs and services; specific gaps included arts and music programming and programs operating at night.
- Family responsibilities, such as taking care of younger siblings, emerged as the largest barrier to accessing programs.
- Some areas had few programs, and youth living in these areas could be isolated from programs by lack of transportation or proximity to high-crime areas (Exhibit 1).
- Lack of information about programs was another important barrier; many youth reported not knowing about available programs, and the places where they learned about programs were limited to social networks and school.

<sup>1</sup>Community partners included: Andres Connell (Nuestra Casa), Leif Erickson (Youth Community Service), Julio Garcia (One EPA), Goro Mitchell (Community Development Institute), Gail Ortega, and Heather Starnes (For Youth by Youth).

### Exhibit 1: Program Locations, Crime Hotspots, and Transit Lines in East Palo Alto and Belle Haven



### Implications and Next Steps

This report is a first step in exploring the relationships between program availability, youth preferences, and logistical factors, but the findings do point to several potential ways to improve program access for youth:

1. *Address barriers to participation:* Although barriers to participation often involve factors outside programs' direct control, there are strategies that providers can use to overcome those barriers. For example, co-locating different programs for multiple ages in one location may facilitate participation for older youth by allowing them to bring younger siblings under their care. Also, providers can use new avenues to publicize programs, such as social networking sites, to reach a broader audience.
2. *Partner across agencies to fill gaps:* In a time of limited resources, service providers may consider collaborating as a way of filling gaps instead of adding new programs themselves. For example, programs might refer youth to other providers that can fill areas of need. Also, existing programs might coordinate when and where they offer services to fill scheduling or geographic gaps in programming.

In addition to the implications for the immediate community, the process and methods behind this report provide an example that other communities struggling with similar issues could employ. Gathering data on service providers across a community, although difficult and time intensive, can be a valuable resource for a community in thinking strategically about filling service gaps and collaborating to collectively make the best use of available resources to improve outcomes for youth.