



Success in Numbers

How “Build Up for San Mateo County’s Children” is addressing our child care and preschool shortage

San Mateo County is experiencing a tremendous shortage of approximately 19,000 child care, preschool and after school spaces. Our community’s collaborative spirit and shared passion for helping every child receive the quality care they deserve is what’s going to close the gap.

The Challenge

Available child care is a quality of life and workforce issue for both residents and employers. Ultimately, the shortage of available spaces is forcing working parents in the community to choose between less-than-ideal arrangements or turning down employment opportunities.

Gaps between child care supply and demand persist because of numerous barriers, including the high cost of real estate and construction, lack of availability of qualified staff, and the planning, zoning and permitting process. Recently, the county turned down \$1 million in state support for subsidized child care due to lack of facilities to house programs. Before programs can be built or expanded upon, these barriers need to be addressed.

Childcare availability doesn’t just impact families. It’s a critical piece of community infrastructure with massive economic implications. It interrelates with housing and transit; child care sited near housing, jobs and transit reduces the number of cars on the road at any given time.



A 2017 report showed that sixteen of San Mateo County’s twenty-seven zip codes are now considered “child care deserts.” Currently, families may drive an extra 45 minutes or more to get to quality care. San Carlos city officials, recognizing this issue, recently opted to exempt child care centers from paying traffic impact fees.

The Brion Economics study estimated a need for \$420 million in capital funding to fill the gap of child care and preschool spaces.

The Solution

An Early Learning Facilities Needs Assessment report conducted by Brion Economics found that the shortage of early childhood facilities is a multisector issue requiring diverse perspectives and multiple types of stakeholders, such as school districts, faith-based organizations, corporations, nonprofits, cities and real estate developers.

The reality is that our entire community must rally together to create sustainable systems for children and the local economy to thrive. Fortunately, leaders in the community put their heads together and set this in motion with the creation of “Build Up for San Mateo County’s Children” in 2018.

Build Up seeks to alleviate the child care shortage through a four-part approach, informed by the recommendations of the Silicon Valley Community Foundation’s cross-sector Task Force: reuse of existing available space, inclusion of child care in new developments, partnerships with large employers and generating new capital funds. **Through this model, Build Up’s ambitious goal is to increase the child care supply by 3,000 spaces in 2020.**



“These generous donations take us one step closer to ensuring that parents in San Mateo County can find affordable, high quality child care for their babies and toddlers,” said Michelle Sioson-Hyman, deputy director at Silicon Valley Community Foundation’s Center for Early Learning. Corporate and private donors have collectively contributed \$300,000 in capital funding to Build Up thus far in an effort to spur child care and preschool facilities development in San Mateo County. These funds will help bring approximately 100 new child care spaces to the region. Example grant recipients in the community include:

- Puente, a nonprofit serving the South Coast, received a capital grant to bring the first licensed infant child care program to this underserved area.
- Institute for Human and Social Development (IHSD), San Mateo County’s Head Start provider, received a capital grant to serve infants and toddlers in East Palo Alto, and a planning grant to determine the feasibility of adding an infant program in Half Moon Bay. In East Palo Alto, IHSD is leveraging a new Early Head Start grant to provide the program at no cost to low-income parents.
- The Redwood City School District received a planning grant to conduct a feasibility study for using vacant district classroom space for infant/toddler child care for staff.

Build Up’s leadership is provided by First 5 San Mateo County, the Child Care Coordinating Council (4Cs) of San Mateo County, the County of San Mateo, the San Mateo County Office of Education and the Center for Early Learning at Silicon Valley Community Foundation.



Moving the Needle

Gilead Sciences, Inc. became Build Up’s first corporate donor with a \$50,000 grant for its Child Care and Preschool Capital Fund. “Gilead hopes our funding will be a catalyst for other local businesses to partner with Build Up and grow an early childhood facilities fund to increase access to quality care,” said Joydeep Ganguly, Senior Vice President of Corporate Operations. As a leading employer in the county, with its own child care facility, Gilead is well-positioned to understand the challenges working families face and model employer best practices in contributing solutions to this shortage.

Build Up is seeking additional philanthropic contributions at any level from individual and corporate donors to grow the Child Care and Preschool Capital Fund. For more information visit BuildUpSMC.com