On May 22, Superintendent Polly Bove presented to the community during a special Community Hall session at Cupertino City Hall on the impact of development, specifically the Vallco development, on school funding and enrollment.

For those unable to attend this special session, the presentations made by Superintendent Bove and the District’s demographer Tom Williams have been made available to the public on the FUHSD website. The presentation was also filmed, and can be viewed at https://youtu.be/kAL_nICwBW8.

Unfortunately, the Q&A portion of the event following the presentation on the issues of enrollment and school finance in relation to the Vallco project was not recorded. District staff has attempted to recreate these questions and the responses to the best of our ability.

We want to be clear that we do not know if the SB 35 project will be approved either by the City of Cupertino or the State of California. We are aware that this is a very new law and that it has not yet been fully vetted. However, we do believe that a Specific Plan option would probably have significantly more benefits for our community than the SB 35 plan.

Question: When you say that the schools are able to serve the number of students now and that which is projected in the future, have you accounted for needed restroom increase, more sports center area, playground, clubs, number of teachers, etc.? My child can’t get to restrooms during first break in the morning.

Answer: All of our building plans have accounted for student populations that significantly exceed even the most aggressive student-generation rate that the Vallco housing would create. If your child has a concern about not being able to get to the restroom, we suggest he bring that to the attention of the school administration, because we would like to understand the issue more so that we work towards a solution for your child.

Question: Under SB 35, should it pass, I do not believe that the city can place constraints or ask for teacher housing at Vallco. In examining SHP’s plans for BMR housing, most of those units appear to be between 425 and 600 sq. ft. What teachers would want to live in something that small? Is that really the type of housing that we want for our teachers?

Answer: While we cannot speculate on what type of housing individuals would be willing to live in, a compromise/specific plan could provide some community benefits, for teacher specific housing for instance, that would not exist in the SB 35 plan. We do however know that many of our teachers already do live in units of this size, and it’s been shared anecdotally that affordability and commute distances are of far greater concern than size of unit.

Question: Has CUSD stated or shown an interest in a District Office at Vallco.

Answer: Yes, this is an idea that has been suggested and discussed in general terms by CUSD.
Question: What is the definition of an overcrowded school? Has any district school ever been considered overcrowded? How do school districts deal with schools that cannot handle the number of students they have?

Answer: The District understands that there continues to be a sentiment from some members of the community that several of our campuses are overcrowded. Several recent construction projects funded by Measure K, including the new Science and Classroom building that opened at Cupertino High School, this year have added additional capacity to our campuses. When growth is projected, the District must plan far in advance in order to accommodate the rising student population through the construction of new classrooms. Despite perceptions of overcrowding, each of our schools could accommodate substantially more students if the District were to use every available space on campus for classrooms and use every classroom during all 7 periods a day for instruction – strategies which have all been used in the past to accommodate more students than we have at some of our campuses currently. We have never had a school in FUHSD that has been overcrowded. Due to strong community support, we have been able to pass a series of bond measures that have allowed us to create additional building space. And, if one were to look at our schools historically, several decades ago, we had schools approach student populations of 3,000 – and we were still able to deliver a high-quality education at each of our campuses. And while this information was not discussed specifically at the community hall session, in some cases this perception may stem from circumstances where a student did not receive a class that he or she requested. However, the ratio of students to sections is the same across all campuses regardless of school size; so as a school grows the number of staff increases proportionally to keep the student/teacher ratio the same across the District. Students may not get every class they want every year, but all schools have enough classes for students to get all of the classes they want in their four years at the school. Many classes are only offered one to three periods per day, so conflicts between classes do arise. Other students request not to have a first or seventh period, which further limits the classes they may get. Lastly, some classes cater to students in grade 11 and 12, so students in Grade 9 or 10 that sign up for that class will get a lower priority. Several recent construction projects funded by Measure K, including the new Science and Classroom building that opened at Cupertino High School, this year have added additional capacity to our campuses. When growth is projected, the District must plan far in advance in order to accommodate the rising student population. Despite perceptions of overcrowding, each of our schools could accommodate substantially more students if the District were to use every available space on campus for classrooms and use every classroom during all 7 periods a day for instruction – strategies which have all been used in the past to accommodate more students than we have at some of our campuses currently. We have never had a school in FUHSD that has been overcrowded. Due to strong community support, we have been able to pass a series of bond measures that have allowed us to create additional building space. And, if one were to look at our schools historically, several decades ago, we had schools approach student populations of 3,000 – and we were still able to deliver a high-quality education at each of our campuses.

Question: Do private schools have a measurable impact on public school enrollments?
All communities have some students attending private schools, no matter how good the public schools are. The issue, from a forecasting standpoint, is whether the approximate ratio of public vs. private enrollments (1) recently has and/or (2) soon will change meaningfully. Without such a meaningful change, then whatever recent public school enrollment trends are being evaluated in the current approximate public vs. private ratio should be valid for the near future from existing housing. Our demographer has not found any reason for there to have been, or for there to soon be, a notable change in that ratio (or the private high school student totals) in the FUHSD region. No major private high schools have opened or closed, or greatly expanded or contracted, their 9-12 enrollments within your region, and none of those occurrences is expected in the immediate future.

Question: What could be the criteria to get our teachers into the affordable housing at Vallco?

Answer: First year teachers in FUHSD would not qualify for the below market rate housing that is outlined in the SB 35 plan. However, affordable housing that would be specific to teachers or other public service employees could potentially be negotiated in a compromise/specific plan.

Question: What is the footprint of the City of Cupertino in each of the districts? Meaning: what percentage of total acreage from the FUHSD boundary is Cupertino vs. the balance of cities included in these boundaries?

Answer: While we are unable to provide the exact footprint in acreage of the City of Cupertino as a proportion of the District’s total acreage, you can view the attached District Attendance Boundary map to get a better sense of where our boundaries fall in relation to each of the six cities we serve.

Question: Do you have slides that show enrollment numbers from 10 to 15 years ago.

Answer: Please view the attached slide for enrollment numbers for this period.

Question: Have you correlated increases in median rents or median home prices with declining student enrollment?

Answer: Our demographer has not spent time surveying the many hundreds of people who lived here a year or two ago, along with the many hundreds of people who reside here today, to find out if the changes in families with district-enrolled children made different decisions based on housing costs. A project of this magnitude would be very costly for the District to undertake. However, our demographer shared that data supports the statement that soaring housing costs have made it harder for some families to live here, even if we do not have the precise correlation.

Question: Is it possible that (the declining enrollment) is a result of the age group of people moving in - i.e. young techies not ready to start a family. What will happen when they are ready?
Answer: There are certainly people that fall into that category. Moreover, we still have young families moving into our school district. But the data shows that this is happening at a much lower rate than ever before. Every available data point shows steep decline in birth rates and thus enrollment. If indeed there are some couples that are waiting to start a family, this will only mitigate to a small degree the inevitable decline of student enrollment. Enrollment will certainly not be increasing.

Question: If Vallco builds teacher housing, can it be exclusively reserved for OUR teachers? Or any teacher?

Answer: The City is very supportive of providing affordable housing opportunities to teachers and public employees. In 2015, the Council amended the priority system to assign an additional point for public employees serving Cupertino.

BMR program applicants can now receive up to a maximum of 4 points based on the following criteria below:

One Point = Cupertino resident
Two Points = Working in Cupertino
One Point = Public Employee Working in Cupertino
Applicants receiving four points shall be considered the highest priority

Should you have any questions about the presentations or the information provided here, please don’t hesitate to contact Coordinator of Communications Rachel Zlotziver at Rachel_zlotziver@fuhsd.org.