

Common Knowledge

Common Knowledge Group facilitates new ways of listening together and learning together. Why is this our focus? Time and again, we see how effective inclusion catalyzes new innovation for a community's common challenges and shared goals.

It's Spreading: New Ways to Move Forward on Housing

We just completed another successful cycle of inclusive community outreach and dialogue with San Mateo County's [Home for All](#) collaborative and three great teams from the cities of Brisbane, Pacifica and San Mateo.



Now a total of seven cities have implemented [a comprehensive engagement program](#) that starts by listening to a broad cross-section of the community and responding with accessible baseline information about housing challenges. This sets the stage for facilitated community conversations that provide residents from

all backgrounds with the chance to talk together and develop shared understanding about what is happening with housing and options for moving forward. Even in communities with recent political events that have created a sense of division, this process has demonstrated that people are ready and willing to grapple with the complicated issues around housing when invited into a constructive learning experience.

After the dialogues are done, these cities are developing expanded two-way information channels, using what they have learned about [the community's information needs and interests about housing](#). Visit the [Brisbane Baylands Project](#), [Pacifica Connects](#), and [Housing in San Mateo](#) to see how they are keeping the conversation going.

We're comparing this experience with housing dialogues in Northern California with colleagues in other parts of the state and country. [Let us know](#) if you want to talk.

Recovering Together

The extent of devastation from last fall's Camp Fire in Paradise is well understood. What many people may not realize is the essential role that libraries play during and after a disaster. During a period of disruption and trauma, libraries provide a welcoming space, internet connection, information about resources and much more. Beyond those immediate needs, how does a community continue to recover and rebuild six months later? A year later? Three years later?

We are delighted to once again be partnering with the [Northnet Library System](#), now on "Recovering Together", a collection of insights and resources drawn from the experiences from all 41 library systems in this Northern California network that stretches from Marin County to the Oregon border. This is a region well familiar with wildfires plus earthquakes, floods, mudslides and significant changes to the natural and social landscape. The project is just getting underway and [we welcome your experiences](#) about helping communities recover.

Making Sense of Civic Life

Let's all thank the California State Library for supporting an update to the suite of Key to Community non-partisan civic engagement tools. This was one of Common Knowledge's original projects that spun off the still popular Easy Voter Guide. Using the same spirit of [community-driven design that created tools to double voter turnout](#), we are conducting research with people who may have limited formal education but keen interest in their communities. We're using this input to update materials and conduct "train the trainer" sessions for workshops at libraries across the state before California's March 2020 Primary election. As before, what gets designed for newer voters may also be appealing to busy better educated voters.

Here we are at Second Start, at the Oakland Public library, assessing information needs about levels of government and how that relates to the issues people care about most (not just the issues chosen for them by campaigns). We welcome past partners and new partners as we work to increase the supply of quality nonpartisan information co-designed and co-delivered by diverse community members.



Photo credit: Jamie Turbak, Director of Oakland Public Library (thanks Jamie!)

Redwood City Uses "Library Takeover" to Reach New People

Redwood City Public Library Director Derek Wolfgram and the entire RCPL leadership team is committed to inclusion. One of the ways they are putting this principle into action is by launching [Library Takeover](#). Residents can propose their own ideas for programming, especially if they help reach parts of the community less likely to use the library. Successful applicants get small grants, marketing resources and planning support from the library. The due date to apply is July 19.



Common Knowledge was invited to help make the project as accessible as possible to a wide range of audiences, including designing an orientation session that was both fun and informative. The RCPL team conducted effective outreach, made new relationships and delighted the attendees: *"I loved how welcoming the event felt from the very start to the very end. It was truly amazing to hear all the resources offered at the library."* [Click here](#) to read more about how this very creative library is working with new community connections.

Expanding Our Team

Visit the Common Knowledge [team page](#) and you'll see that Stevie Greenwell is now helping us with community event design and facilitation, bringing a rich array of talents in music and participant experience. Welcome Stevie! Congratulations also to Mony Flores-Bauer for being tapped to serve on the nominating committee of the U.S. League of Women Voters.

We are growing and we are hiring! Please help us spread the word about the current opening for an [Executive Assistant](#). In our next newsletter, look for the job posting for a Communications Associate.

What We're Reading

The National Civic League just released the 4th edition of their "Civic Index" which is in fact a qualitative way of looking at how investing in community connections (which they call "civic capital") helps build capacity for sustainable social change. The report shares many practices and case examples that affirm what we too have found makes a difference in fostering and nurturing healthier, high performing community ecosystems.

"...civic capital can be found in all sorts of communities, not just the most affluent, educated or advantaged. While myriad other factors contribute to community progress, civic capital is the core factor identified by the National Civic League as the primary explanation for long-term community success." Click [here](#) to access the PDF.

From your friends at the Common Knowledge Group:
Susan Stuart Clark, William Cooley, Mony Flores-Bauer, Stevie Greenwell,
Harriet Mayeri and Victor Reyes.



Common Knowledge | 415-454-6500 | info@ckgroup.org | www.ckgroup.org

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