Thriving Neighbors is at the beginning of what will be a long-term partnership with the residents of Greater Washington. If you are interested in learning more about Thriving Neighbors or would like to get involved, please contact us.

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Silicon Valley is internationally known for its start-up companies, venture capitalists, and vibrant entrepreneurial spirit. Successful high-tech companies like Facebook, Google, and Apple have created hundreds of tech millionaires, but that’s only part of the story. In the shadow of Silicon Valley, communities such as San Jose’s Greater Washington area haven’t benefited from the tech boom. Access to adequate education and health care, support for business development and entrepreneurship, and other issues of poverty keep communities like Greater Washington from fully participating in the prosperity of Silicon Valley.

More than one in five Greater Washington residents live below the federal poverty line, despite community residents living in one of the most expensive and prosperous places in the United States. The neighborhood is also a landing place for recent immigrants, many of whom are struggling due to these significant social barriers.

Santa Clara University’s Thriving Neighbors Initiative responds to these challenges by working to build strong ties between the University and Greater Washington area with the goal of expanding educational choice and improving pathways to prosperity.

Extraordinary Assets and Real Challenges

Thriving Neighbors is facilitated by SCU’s Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education. The program focuses on the five predominantly Latino neighborhoods that make up Greater Washington—Alma, Gardner, Goodyear, Tamien, and Washington—all located south of downtown San Jose and east of Guadalupe Parkway.

Collectively, these communities have both extraordinary assets and real challenges. Greater Washington is home to a vibrant population, strong community organizations, and seasoned community leaders. Conversely, it is also one of the most socioeconomically challenged regions of Santa Clara County.

Community Dialogue

Thriving Neighbors understands the complexity of interrelated social and economic issues that neighborhoods like Greater Washington face. At the same time, the initiative also recognizes that a sense of community pride and a desire to improve social and economic conditions in these neighborhoods can be a powerful catalyst for change.

The philosophy behind Thriving Neighbors is that the most successful community programs are those that grow organically. As such, a new, inclusive community dialogue is vital to the success of this initiative. This collective conversation will guide how Thriving Neighbors utilizes the resources of Santa Clara University.
Working in collaboration with Greater Washington residents, businesses, community leaders and organizations, Thriving Neighbors will build local capacity for entrepreneurship, expanded educational choice, healthy living, and more.

Thriving Neighbors will bring SCU schools, departments, and community programs together with community residents, leaders, businesses, schools, and non-profit and government entities to create mutually owned, interconnected, and multidisciplinary solutions.

In the first phase of Thriving Neighbors’ development, it will host programs aimed at reducing barriers to higher education and improving neighborhood prosperity.

As Thriving Neighbors expands its programming, it will encompass added offerings, including the following:

**Hub of Engagement**
Serving as a hub of engagement for SCU and Greater Washington students and neighborhood families, Thriving Neighbors looks forward to having a brick-and-mortar presence in the community. Over time, the Thriving Neighbors Center will become a gathering place for sharing community knowledge and discovering pathways to innovative social change. It will be a place where residents and community leaders join University faculty, staff, and students to probe challenges from multiple perspectives and sectors, while forming collective solutions.
Expanding Educational Choice

Designed to make college a reality for all, the first phase of Thriving Neighbors includes the launch of a fourth- and fifth-grade academic enrichment program. This program integrates science, technology, literacy, and California Common Core Standards into an 8-week, project-based, afterschool program. The first group includes 45 high-performing students. The Thriving Neighbors Academic Enrichment Program invites these top-performing students to continue on their quest for knowledge through hands-on learning activities that expand the walls of the classroom.

Prosperous Businesses

The promise of Silicon Valley grows from its entrepreneurial spirit and creativity. To promote and support community entrepreneurship, the Leavey School of Business will consult with local businesses and implement workshops to build entrepreneurial skills.

A Healthy Neighborhood

The health of local families and community members is inseparable from the health of their neighborhood. To support the general well-being of residents, SCU will explore collaborations in healthy living in the areas of food security, physical activity, and mental health. SCU will work to improve access to healthy living resources through innovative partnerships and programs.

Opportunities for Justice Education and SCU Student Involvement

Students at Santa Clara University learn more than just facts and figures. The Jesuit tradition emphasizes educating the whole person, and Thriving Neighbors will create opportunities for students to learn how they can be catalysts for positive change and social justice. Already, schools and departments are beginning to imagine new ways to learn and grow with our community.