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## How will our generation be remembered?

By Rosanne Foust and Jim Hartnett

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About 50 years ago, San Mateo County looked vastly different. Less of everything, people, jobs, traffic, diversity and technology. Only white men, not women or people of color, were traveling on public transit to industrial and professional service jobs in larger cities. The county has changed through immigration and innovation, through its scrappy attitude and its ever-evolving pursuit of collaboration amongst its 20 cities and towns and unincorporated neighborhoods.



**Rosanne Foust**



**Jim Hartnett**

Today, San Mateo County is at a crossroads, no longer the envy of many but still with incredible passion, promise and dare we say hope. The hope is that the adage does not become a self-fulfilling prophecy, “that sometimes you don’t appreciate something until it is gone.” The announcement that Oracle was moving its corporate headquarters from Redwood City to Texas felt like a gut punch, but it also awakened an even stronger desire to thank, celebrate and appreciate the companies that make San Mateo County what it is and what it can continue to be, which is a more fair, balanced and equitable place for all, not only some.

Collectively, we, including friends, neighbors, elected and appointed leaders, nonprofit, education and labor leaders, need to reflect how to better recognize and appreciate the businesses for who they are and what they contribute and mean to us. The San Mateo County Economic Development Association (SAMCEDA) and the San Mateo County Transit District (SamTrans/Caltrain/San Mateo County Transportation Authority) have always recognized and celebrated the importance of business, large and small, to their mission and vision for economic prosperity. It lives in each organization's DNA.

From its annual Innovator Awards and THRED Talks, SAMCEDA unabashedly celebrates business and the community connection with business. Now adding in its extensive work with San Mateo County leaders on the pandemic and especially via its efforts helping our small businesses, it sees the even greater value of celebrating our large corporate partners who contribute so much to so many.

The public transit sector steadily works hand in hand with the private sector and major nonprofits to improve the quality of life for all on the Peninsula. Stanford University and private sector employers partnered with Caltrain for the creation of a pioneering Business Plan to embrace the future needs of the seventh largest commuter rail service in the country, and major corporate employers continue to support Caltrain through investment in its Go Pass program which benefits all riders. Facebook, Google and other major employers invested well over \$50 million to improve our transportation infrastructure. Earning the trust of the private sector, SamTrans obtained tremendous business support funding the Measure W campaign so that SamTrans can sustain its services to the most needy and public transit dependent in our communities. SAMCEDA members contributed more than \$700,000 to the \$1.2 million 2018 campaign and co-led its passage.

We believe Oracle will remain a valued corporate partner but losing the HQ status should serve as an overdue wake-up call. Stop and look at what our corporate partners have given to San Mateo County: from Oracle's early days in providing housing in Redwood Shores to its employees, the Ralston Interchange, money for infrastructure and the publicly chartered Design Tech High School; Genentech's commitment to science education in South San Francisco via its Futurelab Initiative

and its overwhelming commitment to child care; Facebook and Google's commitment to underserved communities of color with education and housing support; lastly let us not forget our architectural, engineering, building and construction firms — BKF, Granite Rock, DES and WL Butler — to name just a few. Add in our San Mateo County families including Bohannon, Foster, Sobrato and now Chan-Zuckerberg where their imprint is found in so many places of need. Without these corporate leaders, partners and families we would be in a far greater world of hurt. One we cannot even imagine.

So where do we go from here? It is everyone's responsibility to be part of a health and economic recovery unparalleled anywhere else. The pandemic is having a dramatic effect on all of us and we need to beat it by starting with the basics, wearing a mask and avoiding large gatherings. We need to support our economic recovery by shopping local, grabbing take-out, reaching in your pocket for just one more donation to those providing food and shelter and thinking how I can support the depth and breadth of businesses in our communities, whether large or small, tech or nontech, family or corporate owned, old or new.

And just maybe our children and grandchildren will see our generation as tackling the toughest challenges to create a more lasting, just and equitable future for them.

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