

# STRATEGIC PLAN 2023-2028



## Building Our Home

Our 5 year vision for Mayfair and East San José, co-created with community.



SOMOS Mayfair builds **community power** in East San José through leadership development and by organizing around **resident-led solutions**.

Our **mission** is to support children, organize families, and connect neighbors to uplift the dreams, power, and leadership of community and address systemic inequities. **Our vision is a thriving Mayfair.**



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SOMOS Mayfair's Strategic Plan represents our collective vision and focus areas for the next 5 years as we work to build power in our neighborhood.

The plan is laid out as a set of strategic goals and milestones that were co-created over a 10-month process with staff, community, Board and partner input.

Our strategic plan grounds us in our core organizational competencies, responds to the real needs of our community, and looks forward towards our vision of a more vibrant East San José.

The following five vision statements will serve as our guiding compass as we navigate the next five years of our work:

- 1 Housing is a human right, let's make it real**
- 2 Community governance in action**
- 3 A leaderful home**
- 4 Economic justice and community wellbeing for our people**
- 5 SOMOS as an organization is an alternative system**

# MEETING THE MOMENT

## HISTORY & CONTEXT

With **25 years of deeply rooted experience** in East San José, SOMOS Mayfair is a force to be reckoned with. We are an institution that paves the way for others and invites them into the movement, modeling **community-centered transformation** and building **grassroots power** that generates concrete change. Our strength lies in our relationships: with our community, with one another, and with the many partners in our ecosystem who we co-conspire with across coalitions and actions. We have a strong pulse on what's happening on the ground and what our community needs, because we **are** a part of the community.

Our work began in backyards and garages of Mayfair, circling up with chairs and flip charts as we gathered people to a shared table, listened deeply to the challenges folks faced, and brought our solutions to life. We hosted literacy campaigns, neighborhood clean-ups, women's support groups, soccer tournaments and Zumba classes. Our programs varied, but at the heart of it we always strived to **center community voices** and **assert our power** to create the neighborhood our children and neighbors deserved.

Over two and a half decades later, the landscape has evolved and so have we; however our values and approach remain the same— **tap into community leadership, challenge existing systems, and build the solutions and services we need**. With more experience, staffing and budget we have **organized thousands** of families (for affordable housing, immigration rights, representative leadership and more), **launched three Family Resource Centers**, graduated hundreds of 0–5 age children through

our **early learning** programming, generated over \$4 million dollars in contracts for Promotores and worker-owned co-ops we helped incubate, and more. Through the pandemic we advocated for a redistribution of resources, moving over **\$213,000** directly into families hands, distributing nearly **5,000** diaper boxes and cases of baby formula, and serving over **745,000 meals** with the Alum Rock Union School District.

As we emerge and recover from the pandemic, this moment finds us stretching and experimenting in bold new ways to advance our mission: an intentional shift towards **shared and distributed leadership** brought a Co-Executive Director model, a strong Directors' bench, and greater community representation on our Board of Directors. The completion of **Quetzal Gardens**, the new mixed-use affordable housing project that houses our headquarters, brought us even deeper into the housing world which we now show up in with expertise. Three years spent working hybrid invited us to think through our organizational policies and how we could more deeply invest in the administrative infrastructure of our team.

Together in this strategic plan we attempt to answer questions about the shape we need as an organization to meet the current socio-political moment, the fights we need to prioritize in order to advance a **liberatory future** for our communities, and how to lean into our broader ecosystem of support to both win big and sustain those wins. We use this moment in time to dive deeper into **community-led solutions** that push the boundaries of our dreams and imagination towards a **more just society**.



SOMOS Mayfair is a founding member and serves as the backbone agency for the **¡Sí Se Puede! Collective (SSPC)**: five established neighborhood organizations that have aligned our efforts to meet the needs of our community. Collectively, we advance policies that promote economic, racial and social justice.

Together we are building the conditions for rooted families to stay and thrive in Mayfair. As context:

- Mayfair is home to around **14,165 residents**
- The median income of Mayfair is **\$65,070** (compared to **\$139,358** Silicon Valley)
- **61%** are renters, and **50%** are rent-burdened (paying more than one third of their household income on rent)
- **80%** speak a language other than English (**60%** being Spanish speakers)
- **29%** of Mayfair adults are non-citizens

## Current Assets Within the SSPC



Amigos operates Safe Parking, a motel program and a tiny home community.



GFS operates two state funded preschools and supports a network of licensed child care providers.



Mexican Heritage Plaza is a legacy cultural institution with a Pavillion, theater, classrooms, and reception area.



SOMOS has 3 Family Resource Centers and organizes 600+ residents across our local schools, neighborhood, and city.



Veggielution is a 6-acre farm with open green spaces, a Pavillion area, kitchen, and farmstand.

## Projects in the Pipeline

A museum + community organizing hub at the recently purchased Cesar Chavez historical home.



Expanded space for childcare providers to serve families.



A cultural district that brings more businesses, arts, housing, and vibrancy to the Alum Rock Corridor.



Developing a housing co-op and bringing homes into community control.



A commercial kitchen to support local food entrepreneurs and their small businesses.



# A VISION FOR BUILDING OUR HOME

The Mayfair neighborhood is a tapestry of **resilience and resistance**: this has always been a welcoming place for families from all parts of the world to weave their histories and cultures into a vibrant illustration of what is possible when we **collectively fight for our dreams of a brighter and more just future**. The inception and evolution of SOMOS Mayfair is inseparable from this spirit of Mayfair— our mission is to support the families who want to lay down roots and create a better life for themselves, their children, and their community.

It is these families of East San José that we center: the **undocumented immigrants, Latinx/Chicanx people, women, seniors, youth, BIPOC neighbors and the working poor folks** who have long generated Silicon Valley's wealth without benefiting from it. Our voices, ideas and lived experiences have long been silenced or disregarded. SOMOS' role is to recognize, uplift and support our **many forms of leadership**

Our **In Our Hands** campaign, spanning the last decade, brought our Promotor model, our commitment to popular education, and a wealth of community-driven projects that blossomed in our neighborhood. With this **2023–2028 Strategic Plan**, we expand this work with a sharper analysis of the larger racial and economic systems at play and a deep leadership base trained and ready to fight back. Now that we've learned to harness our power, we are positioned to **Build Our Home** as a place where we will organize, heal, laugh, learn and build together for generations to come.

**(CONTINUED →)**

*"THE INCEPTION AND EVOLUTION OF SOMOS MAYFAIR IS INSEPARABLE FROM THE SPIRIT OF MAYFAIR— OUR MISSION IS TO SUPPORT THE FAMILIES WHO WANT A BETTER LIFE FOR THEMSELVES, THEIR CHILDREN, AND THEIR COMMUNITY."*

We are dreaming of a neighborhood where families, schools, businesses, and institutions are actively working to **generate opportunity and power** for residents. A **rooted community** where we **own homes, land, commercial spaces** and create neighborhood-wide transformative projects, like **housing and business cooperatives**. A place where we **organize** to take care of ourselves, to shift power and produce the conditions for **wellness, joy and self-determination**. A place where infants, children and young people **lead and thrive** in a loving community and flourishing schools.

This Strategic Plan is an invitation and a call to action. The seeds of this vision have been planted and are already beginning to sprout— we are excited to welcome in all leaders and partners ready to ensure our movement continues to grow and thrive.

In community,

*Victor Duarte Vasquez*

**VICTOR VASQUEZ**  
CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

*Saúl Ramos*

**SAÚL RAMOS**  
CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

## Rooted in Mayfair Building Our Home

With special thanks to Vecinos Activos, Jóvenes Activos, and Mayfair residents who contributed their dreams and aspirations for this neighborhood concept map.

Con un agradecimiento especial a Vecinos Activos, Jóvenes Activos y los residentes de Mayfair que contribuyeron con sus sueños y aspiraciones para este mapa conceptual de vecindario.



- 1 Quetzal Gardens Affordable Housing  
Quetzal Gardens Vivienda Asequible
- 2 Culture and Arts District  
Distrito de la Cultura y las Artes
- 3 Market  
Pulga
- 4 Library  
Biblioteca
- 5 Mayfair Museum  
Museo de Mayfair
- 6 Job Training  
Formación Vocacional
- 7 Community Health Center  
Centro de Salud Comunitario
- 8 Chicana Activist Mural  
Mural Activista Chicana
- 9 Community-owned Land  
Terreno de Propiedad Comunitaria
- 10 Limited Equity Housing Cooperative  
Cooperativa de Vivienda con Capital Limitado
- 11 Child Care Cooperative  
Cooperativa de Cuidado Infantil
- 12 Small Business Cooperative  
Cooperativa de Trabajadores

\* Placement is flexible. This is a proposal to spark possibilities and plan together.  
La colocación es flexible. Esta es una propuesta para despertar posibilidades y planificar juntos.

# OUR VALUES

We believe that **all people are valuable** and can contribute to building a movement for justice and that we all have **power to change the world** around us.

We believe it is our responsibility to **take action** and support one another, our collective heritage, and the common good.

We struggle to **reclaim the power** that is denied to our community and all other oppressed communities.

Mayfair is a **permanent community** and our home: we commit to making Mayfair the most supportive neighborhood possible for working poor people, families and children.

We **do not accept** the chronic crises caused by the inequitable distribution of power and resources.

We believe that **urgent action**, even in the face of conflict and risk is **necessary**





# THEORY OF CHANGE

By activating the leadership of the neighborhood, we take collective action to make meaningful changes in the lives of children and families and build sustainable communities.

## HOW DO WE BUILD POWER?

### Challenge Existing Systems

We organize our community to demand community solutions.

### Learn & Develop Our Leadership

Our staff and community co-lead this work from a place of deep understanding and with a popular education framework.

### Sustain Alternative Systems

From design to execution we build solutions that respond to the real needs of community and sustainable change.

# STRATEGIC PLANNING PROCESS

The intention of this strategic planning process was to draft a 5 year vision that would guide us through the next iteration of SOMOS Mayfair. Given our new size, shape and the evolving landscape of our neighborhood we wanted to hold space for critical conversations around gaps, needs and opportunities to strengthen our goals, values and internal practices. Over the course of 9 months (October 2022 – July 2023), and with the help of our incredible consultants, together we dreamed up a blueprint that will chart our way forward.

## ACTIVITIES INCLUDED

- Grounding review of Theory of Change
- Assessment of previous Strategic Plan
- Landscape interviews
- Leadership retreat
- Collective meetings
- Staff feedback sessions
- Weekly visioning meetings for Directors

## KEY ROLES

- **SOMOS Directors:** held organizational vision, aligned teams, developed goals and milestones
- **Strategic Plan Work Group:** reviewed goals, shaped language, incorporated the Collective's ideas
- **Staff & Collective:** provided feedback on milestones and activities
- **Consultants:** facilitated spaces and synthesized all data

## WHAT WE HEARD FROM PARTNERS...

Through landscape interviews with partners and funders, we heard that our partners and funders believe in the power of SOMOS and want to see us continuing to assert our leadership in the region. Our organizational strengths include:

Commitment to build up, empower and serve the community

Centering community needs

Commitment to multilingualism

Ingenuity and commitment to learning & unlearning

Deep sense of community for members and staff: lifelong and intergenerational commitment

Convener

Multigenerational approach

Resourceful and strong at building alternative systems

Root cause analysis and Popular Education

Collaboration + collective wisdom (fostering interdependent work)



# STRATEGIC PLAN

## GOALS & MILESTONES

The following goals and milestones tell the story of how we plan to have an impact in our community that is lasting and has a real impact on people's material and emotional conditions.

We humbly invite you to join us as we make our **Building Our Home** vision a reality. *¡Unete!*

### Goal 1: Housing is a human right, let's make it real

People of Mayfair and the Eastside have access to affordable and dignified housing. Our communities and neighborhoods are thriving because people can stay in their homes, collectively control the places they live, and continue to nurture their roots and traditions.

#### MILESTONES

1. We've launched alternative community-controlled housing projects in East San José, by responsibly stewarding the land and taking properties off the speculative market, to care for living systems and our health
2. There is a robust and thriving preservation ecosystem in East San José including strong partnerships
3. We've passed policies that fight displacement
4. Tenants are organized
5. We've shifted culture and public narrative through popular education to establish community-owned properties as a proven solution
6. Community and partner education, including environmental justice and land stewardship
7. Within our Collective, we've shifted our understanding and see housing as a basic human right





## Goal 2: Community governance in action

SOMOS is governed by our Collective and we have strong decision-making practices. We have personal and community autonomy on the issues that affect us to get solutions that our community needs to protect current and future generations.

### MILESTONES

1. We have clarity on who is a part of the SOMOS Collective, and what it means to belong and tied to our governance
2. We have clear decision-making structures and processes in SOMOS and we utilize them for decision-making
3. We continue exploring different electoral governance strategies and our organizational infrastructure needs
4. Our Collective is represented in external decision-making spaces on our issues
5. We have strong political education spaces and partnerships that center community to take part in governance



## Goal 3: A leaderful home

We strengthen our Collective's *compañerismo* and we deepen and sustain many forms of leadership, rooted in our commitment to justice for our communities.

### MILESTONES

1. We prioritize and practice our leadership model across the organization with consistency and rigor
2. Build deep networks of relationships with our base in East San José
3. We have a robust youth leadership base that is active in integrated into our model
4. We have a thriving community learning institute (UPM). Our Collective (including, staff, community, and our Board) can teach and learn what we want together and are engaged in ongoing learning
5. We have the tools, training, information, and practices to thrive in our different leadership roles
6. People feel a sense of belonging and that SOMOS is their political home

## Goal 4: Economic justice and community wellbeing for our people

We exercise our human rights by strengthening hubs as sites of community-led collective wellness, redistribution of resources, and advocacy for dignified and sustainable work.

### MILESTONES

1. Our Family Resource Centers are sites for the community-driven reclamation and redistribution of resources, where communities have access to the resources they need
2. We have a unifying vision for our FRC's that embodies our unique approach
3. We have a vision of economic justice as SOMOS and we foster and steward a collaborative of economic justice partners in alignment with that vision
4. We've shifted the local landscape through worker-led advocacy to expand access to just, dignified, healthy, sustainable work and resources for excluded workers in East San José
5. We've shifted culture and public narrative through popular education to advance our economic justice points of unity
6. East San José is a cooperative hub with an ecosystem that supports and sustains different kinds of cooperatives.

## Goal 5: SOMOS as an organization is an alternative system

We strengthen our internal practices and policies to honor our SOMOS cultural identity and worldview to continue disrupting white supremacy and challenging systems of oppression. We use our strength as a convener to challenge systems and nurture a local regenerative ecosystem.

### MILESTONES

1. We have a shared culture at SOMOS and reclaim old and cultivate new SOMOS traditions to celebrate and honor our values
2. There is alignment between our administrative teams and our programmatic teams
3. SOMOS' structures, practices and culture supports and sustains our SOMOS model and facilitates our collective wellbeing and impact
4. We center our most vulnerable folks in our policies and practices and continue uprooting white supremacy
5. Our Collective members are centered and we've removed barriers to access to work and leadership opportunities through or within SOMOS
6. We use our power and influence as a convener to steward a vision that is community centered and promotes the common good. We are a leader in collaboratives that are committed to a thriving Mayfair
7. We implement a community-centric resource development strategy that influences funding institutions and individuals to create deeper alignment with our vision



# IMAGINING OUR FUTURE

A POEM CO-CREATED BY OUR COLLECTIVE

May 24th, 2023

**Because of our commitment to our mission, values, approach and the goals for the next five years SOMOS will feel like, will look like, will be....**

El corazón de San José donde líderes tienen orgullo y son la voz de gobernanza

Comunidad empoderada!

Cooperative Power!

Con una sola voz y una comunidad escuchando

Somos una comunidad fuerte, positiva y decisiva de que si se puede.

Donde líderes se sientan apoyados

Una organización y comunidad llena de líderes que han creado sus hogares alrededor de la comunidad, donde van a tener sus propios negocios familiares y habrá parques en donde las familias puedan disfrutar.

A diverse place with youth, children and adults,

An organization that the community can rely on

Poderosa en el vecindario – una fuerza generadora de líderes, nunca de promesas incumplidas.

Será la casa de la comunidad – una incubadora de cooperativos de vivienda y trabajo

El ejemplo para otras comunidades. Harán que otros pierdan el miedo de abogar por lo que la comunidad necesita. ¡Un Fruitful Mayfair!

Seremos dueños de nuestras casas y tendremos más coops de negocio y vivienda.

En la calle veo a familias caminando juntas, el aire limpio, una abundancia de árboles y flores y sonrisas

Seguridad para mis hijas y para mi familia – una vivienda digna

Comunidades más unidas y personas más empoderadas

Una comunidad con familias felices con viviendas justas – un hogar seguro.

Si se puede! With my hopes of a better future we strive for those who follow – Seguiremos plantando nuevas semillas para proteger nuestros hogares

We will be known for making things happen! – Empoderada con una comunidad llena de sabiduría

Families and individuals no longer worried about displacement and finding a good job

Todos estamos empoderados y unidos para una mejor vida para la comunidad y nuestras familias.

Nos sentiremos realizados de formar una comunidad de unión donde se siente paz

Pertenencia! ¡Poder cooperativo! Comunidad estable!

¡Una comunidad unida!

¡Celebración! Por la liberación de nuestra comunidad.

Se siente el poder.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank all those who participated in this Strategic Planning process. We practiced shared and distributed leadership, making space for deep trust, hard conversations, and collective dreaming. We're proud that this document represents voices from every level of our Collective, and we're excited to journey together from **In Our Hands** to **Building Our Home**.

Special thanks to the **S.H. Cowell Foundation & Valley Medical Center Foundation** for their support in this process and their investment in SOMOS Mayfair's future.

## STAFF

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## STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

Si Se Puede Collective

Alum Rock Union School District

FIRST 5 California

Sobrato Family Foundation

## STRATEGIC PLAN FUNDERS

S.H. Cowell Foundation

Valley Medical Center Foundation

## BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Julie Ramirez **Chair**, *SCC Office of Gender-Based Violence Prevention*

Kwok Lau **Vice Chair**, *Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund*

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John Sanchez *Silicon Valley Social Venture Fund*

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# BUILDING OUR HOME

## Our strategic vision forward


Our vision is a **thriving Mayfair** where our current residents can call Mayfair their **permanent home**. A place where everyone believes they belong and has a greater sense of **community ownership**. A place where everyone is actively taking action to **organize** the Mayfair neighborhood. A place where people have a neighborhood ecosystem that meets their **immediate and generational needs**, supporting and sustaining their wellbeing, encouraging their hopes and fulfilling their dreams. A place where neighborhood development preserves and centers our most valuable asset: **La Gente de Mayfair**. We envision a neighborhood home no longer defined nor constrained by the racist and scarcity laced narrative of “*Sal Si Puedes*” but a neighborhood that cultivates **collective empowerment, care, pride and responsibility** to each other and the Mayfair neighborhood. The vision of **Building Our Home** will exercise our human right to housing and our desire to stay rooted and empowered in the beautiful and historic Mayfair neighborhood.



**Donate to our  
movement!**

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