

NEIGHBORHOOD SCHOOLS

Willow Glen Middle and Willow Glen High schools share a large campus two blocks from Stone Church



OUR NEIGHBORHOOD'S NEEDS

SUBSECTIONS

- Methodology
- Local schools
- Community non-profits
- Police
- San Jose City Council District 6
- Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors District 4

METHODOLOGY

Our church possesses resources of people, money, and buildings that we can use toward service to our community. We know what our vision, mission and core values are as stated on **Page 3** of this report. But to determine how we could best use them to address our community's needs — which we feel Jesus calls us to do in Matthew 25:37, "When did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink?" — we believe it is critical to start by seeking to understand the needs rather than launching into solutions.

Rather than attempting to survey the 54,000 residents who share our Zip Code, our committee took a shortcut and interviewed people in the community whose jobs and expertise involve constantly meeting with residents, assessing, and addressing their needs. In the first three months of this year, our committee interviewed 14 people representing nine government, school and nonprofit entities. The full list of interviewees is contained in the **Appendix A, Page 43**, and summaries of the interviews are in **Appendix C, Page 66**. When we spoke to them, we didn't begin by asking "Could you use some help with [fill in the blank]?" We had back-and-forth discussion in which we shared — without commitment — information about our resources and they talked about their needs.

Back in our meetings, our committee collaborated on how we might match needs and resources. We wanted to be ambitious, so we didn't accept the insurance and certification requirements that accompany, for example, tutoring or childcare assistance, to be instantly disqualifying. The feasibility of these kinds of ideas should be investigated thoroughly by specific church task forces so that ultimate decisions are made with a full understanding of the facts rather than a perception of impossibility or an assumption of "too much trouble." Solving difficult problems involves hard work, but hard work that produces solutions can be worth the price.

*Seek the welfare of the city
where I have sent you ... and
pray to the LORD on its behalf,
for in its welfare you will find
your welfare.*

Jeremiah 29:7 (NRSVUE)

Our committee was also guided by two interdependent ambitions. One is that being an asset to our community helps those who are closest to us. It is fundamental "do unto others ..." service to God's people and Creation. It's the Golden Rule. The second is that being a community asset reconnects us with our neighbors. Becoming a recognized force for the common good is the most effective way to revitalize, inspire and sustain the Stone Church that we inherited from its founders. It is rediscovering the roots that were planted by the Presbytery of San Jose in 1944.

LOCAL SCHOOLS

The three elementary schools where we interviewed key personnel — Booksin, Galarza and Willow Glen — can be viewed as proxies for what could become a wider engagement with Willow Glen’s schools. They demonstrate that schools have both common and unique needs and can become test cases for how we can interact with middle and high schools to further identify needs and ways we might participate in addressing them. School concerns were also mentioned as priorities for those representing the non-profit, local government and police sectors covered in this community needs section.

Stone Church already has some experience in how close contact with schools can produce meaningful programs. When a Stone Church member’s tutoring experience for Willow Glen High School students revealed to him how many couch-surfed with friends because of lack of housing, he and another member developed an idea to use the house Stone Church owns on Roycott Way to house a low-income family. After further study by a church task force, Roycott House became a house for a refugee family from Afghanistan.

Another example is Stone Church's current involvement with Willow Glen Cares, a non-profit that helps low-income students from Willow Glen Middle and Willow Glen High Schools. Besides financial donations, Stone Church has assisted with special efforts when specific needs arise, like a school supplies drive and a toothbrushes and toothpaste drive.

Of the three schools, **Booksin Elementary** would appear to fit the popular image of a Willow Glen neighborhood school. Principal Felicia Tan told us they have only “a handful” of low-income families. Its parents’ association, the Booksin Elementary School Community Association, works to support them. For example, in the past they provided backpacks filled with summer activities supplies for those families. Stone Church has experience donating items for similar programs. BESCA’s website is <https://www.mybesca.com/> Booksin’s other major needs/issues include:

- After school hours vandalism by older kids who like to hang out and leave trash, eggs and broken bottles. See also the results of our interview with two officers with the San Jose Police Department School Liaison Unit in the Police subsection immediately after this subsection.
- Dog poop on the grass and paved playground has been difficult to solve even after banning dogs, posting signs and talking to neighbors.
- Need more crossing guards at street intersections at the busiest drop-off and pick-up times by parents.

At **Willow Glen Elementary**, nearly 40% of the school’s 730 students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. Katie Settle, head of the school’s Tiger Cares program, said it works to make the school experience at Willow Glen Elementary as equitable as possible for about 50 low-income families. The families are identified by teachers and staff and then asked if they want to be part of the program, which is confidential.

Tiger Cares receives money from the school's PTA to cover some of their efforts, and it also holds fundraising events. Funding pays for yearbooks, registration to the Willow Glen 5K and kits for the beginning of the school year including a backpack, water bottle, T-shirt and other school supplies. Other needs/issues include:

- Donations to specific causes like the Holiday Drive at Christmas and a coat drive, which includes San Jose Bible Church, also mentioned on **Page 10**, as one of its main supporters.
- Donations to a new personal hygiene/home essentials closet such as one operated by Willow Glen Cares, a non-profit that supports students at Willow Glen Middle and Willow Glen High. The StoneWorks committee provided some financial support in 2020. Its website is <https://www.willowglenfoundation.org/programs-activities/willow-glen-cares/>
- Help with clean-up after the farmer's market every Saturday.

Ernesto Galarza Elementary is a Title 1 school, meaning more than 40% of its 380 students come from low-income families, and the school receives funding for specific programs to improve academic achievement. Principal Elizabeth Brush said there is no program at the school like Tiger Cares or Willow Glen Cares, but the school could use donations like backpacks and personal hygiene kits.

The primary volunteer need is for Galarza's "Cornerstone" reading program. Volunteers need to be registered with the San Jose Unified School District.

COMMUNITY NON-PROFITS

Members give money, time and material goods to Stone Church, but the church also gives to groups that we believe do good in the world and need our support.

Through the StoneWorks committee, our church has partnered in the past with numerous community non-profits including Village House (rotating homeless shelter), Front Door Communities (feeding the homeless), Life Moves (housing), Silicon Valley Safe Parking (housing), Rebuilding Together Silicon Valley (building housing), Immanuel House (refugee housing), Amigos de Guadalupe (housing/social services), Mental Health Ministries (health), Silicon Valley De-Bug (community organizing), Showing Up For Racial Justice, the Covenant Network of Presbyterians (LGBTQ+ rights), Human Agenda (human needs), Willow Glen Cares (low-income students), Sunday Friends (anti-poverty), and Operation Gratitude (military and first-responder support).

StoneWorks is budgeted to contribute \$50,000 — representing 8.6% of the church’s 2025 operating expenses of \$587,000 — toward supporting charitable work by other organizations.

StoneWorks FY 2025 budget	Amount	% of its budget	% of church budget
Presbyterian general mission	\$18,000	36%	3.1%
Local mission	22,000	44%	3.7%
Global mission	5,000	10%	0.9%
Peace and justice	5,000	10%	0.9%
Total	50,000	100%	8.6%

Source: Stone Church 2025 budget

We conducted two interviews with representatives of **Martha’s Kitchen** in downtown Willow Glen, which is named for the Biblical Martha, sister of Lazarus, who frequently served meals to Jesus and his friends when they passed through her town of Bethany. Ryan Van Den Heuvel, the organization’s marketing director, said they are working to change their public image as “a small soup kitchen.” Between hot meals prepared by the staff and its grocery delivery programs, Martha’s Kitchen provides 200,000 meals per month through 60 partners in Santa Clara, Santa Cruz and San Benito counties.

Patricia Garcia, the kitchen’s operations manager, and Kendra Lanham, community outreach director, noted that because many of their volunteers and clientele are Hispanic, the organization is being affected by fear of ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) raids. They said demand for meals has *decreased* because of this. Current needs/issues include:

- Financial donations to its “Plate It Forward” program, which is a monthly pledge beginning at \$3. The online form is at <https://www.marthas-kitchen.org/plateitforward>

- An ongoing need for food staples. Second Harvest Food Bank, has reduced its donations to Martha's Kitchen to 30% of previous levels and eliminated protein such as meat, eggs, and milk.
- A new building. Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic parish church and school at 311 Willow Street, which houses the kitchen, needs the space. The new building must have public access, a commercial kitchen, and be close to the east Willow Glen community.

The **Willow Glen Community and Senior Center** is a San Jose Parks and Recreation facility at 2175 Lincoln Avenue. It serves lunches for seniors on weekdays and requests a donation of \$3, although it does not turn away anyone who can't donate. It hosts classes taught by volunteer and paid city instructors, and it also has a program for preschool children with Spanish classes and a summer camp. There are also leisure classes for many ages such as soccer, ballet, dance, gymnastics, children's theater, Zumba and computers.

Director Tiffany Trinh told us the center has noticed an increase in economic needs among their participants and that the preschool program has declined with the growth of public transitional kindergarten classes. She said the center's biggest needs are volunteer instructors and scholarship donations.

The **Willow Glen Neighborhood Association** works to improve Willow Glen's quality of life in the priority areas of safety, beautification and developing community spirit. Maren Sederquist, its president, told us that using Stone Church's facilities for meeting space, and possible tutoring are possible uses the association could explore. She identified homelessness as Willow Glen's major problem but noted the church's lack of parking space for mobile showers.

She listed several upcoming community events the church might participate in or have a presence at:

- Willow Glen Night Out, August 5 in Bramhall Park. The event includes police and firefighters, live music, food trucks, a petting zoo and jump house.
- Consider tutoring programs, especially in math, for Willow Glen Cares. That organization has been meeting with math teachers and county representatives to discuss an alternative/additional curriculum that is not tied to the UC admission requirements, which are not relevant to students who are behind in math or are not college bound.

POLICE

Police are among the public employees including firefighters and rescue workers grouped under the umbrella term as “first responders.” What they respond to are emergencies both natural and human caused. Often the work is conducted at the intersection of the best and worst traits of humanity. As a consequence, they are attuned to community situations and conditions that our committee was studying.

We had a half-hour interview with Sergeant Brad Thayer and Officer Nad Yasin of the San Jose Police Department’s school liaison unit. They said Willow Glen is part of a larger area that stretches from Bascom Avenue and Campbell east to Monterey Highway, which is considered a training district because of its low level of violent crime. “It was a great district to let newer officers learn how to do the job, interact with all kinds of individuals in the city,” said Thayer, who was a supervisor here before moving to his current job.

Property crimes — particularly vehicle and home break-ins — predominate in Willow Glen, they said, and the most important public assistance police are timely reports of suspicious activity or crime. The church could be valuable in their work by providing a place for neighborhood meetings where the public can get to know and trust officers and where events like crime prevention discussions can be held.

Other current needs/issues, all of which they related to crime prevention, include:

- Supporting local schools and their needs.
- Supporting affordable housing.
- Creating or maintaining connections with organizations like the Willow Glen Neighborhood Association and Willow Glen Business Association.
- Hosting “Coffee With Police” events for the neighborhood.

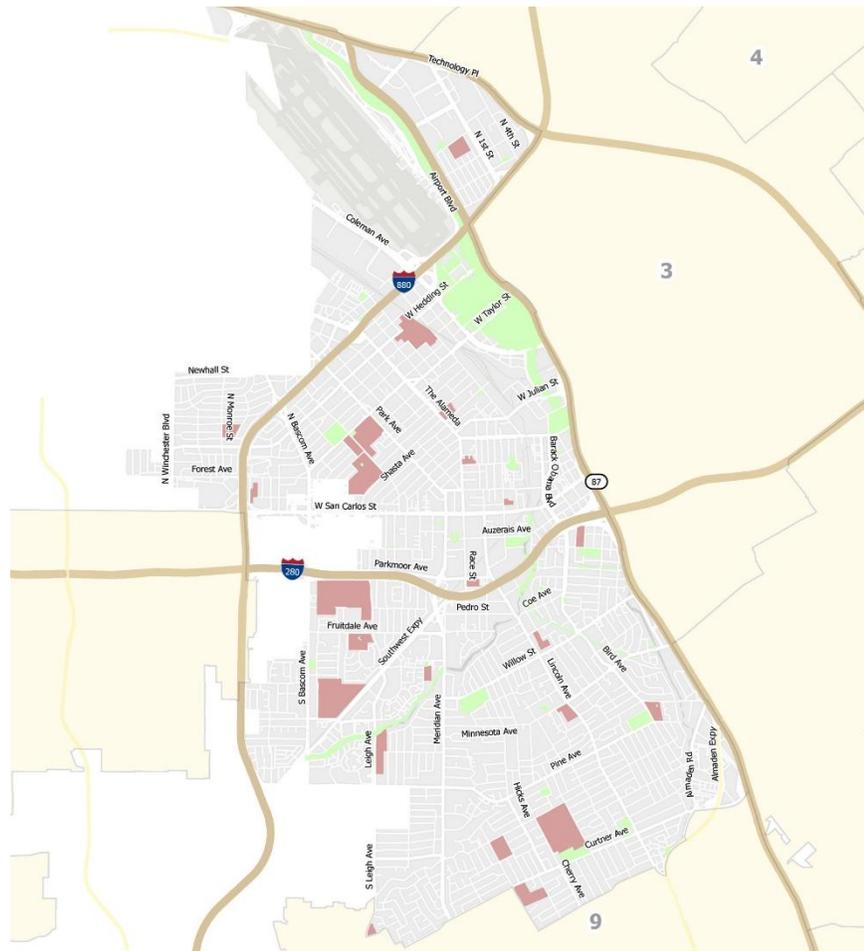
SAN JOSE CITY COUNCIL DISTRICT 6

This City Council seat is currently held by Michael Mulcahy, a lifelong Willow Glen resident. The district is larger than Willow Glen, however, stretching northward to include all of Mineta San Jose International Airport. The 95125 Zip Code, which is synonymous with Willow Glen in this report, stretches beyond the district's southern border to include a small part of District 9, represented by Pam Foley, San Jose's vice mayor, who lives in South Willow Glen. Our committee met with three members of Mulcahy's staff: Karina Castro and Joseph Mauro, legislative & policy aides, and Amber White, executive assistant.

Because a quarter of Willow Glen's residents are Hispanic and some are concentrated in the Gardner neighborhood just north of downtown Willow Glen, we were told that there are several needs there reflecting ethnic isolation from the larger neighborhood. The boundary is, quite literally, defined by railroad tracks.

English language proficiency is a particular concern at Gardner Elementary School, where 88% percent of students are Hispanic. Castro said there is a need there for bilingual volunteers to help with language issues among students and adults. Sharing a complex with the school is the Gardner Community Center, operated like the Willow Glen Community Center as part of the city's parks and recreation department, which needs volunteer help for its art and computer classes and where the senior nutrition program is having food quality and quantity issues.

Other needs/issues discussed were:



The highlighted area is City Council District 6
City of San Jose

- Community meetings using the church's building space and outdoor patio. White offered the councilmember's district newsletter as a place for Stone Church to publicize its own events.
- Possible use of Stone Church's artists in working with the Willow Glen Neighborhood Association's project to beautify the road entryways to downtown Willow Glen.
- Participating in Willow Glen community clean-ups.



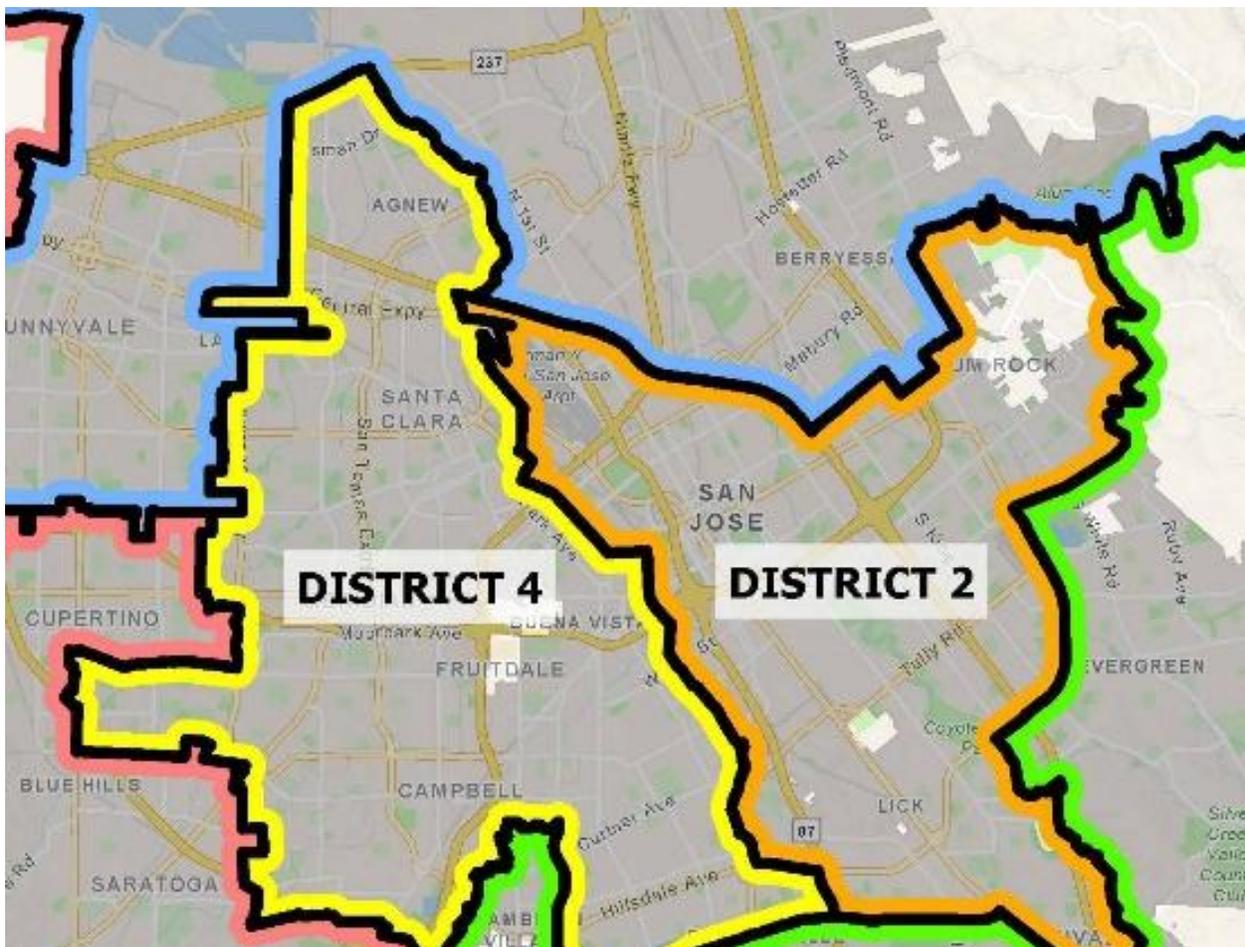
RUNNING AROUND
*... the neighborhood with our
Willow Glen 5K team*

SANTA CLARA COUNTY BOARD OF SUPERVISORS DISTRICT 4

This Board of Supervisors seat is currently held by Susan Ellenberg, a native of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, who met her San Jose-born husband in law school and moved here in 1991. About 400,000 people live in the district, one of the two that share San Jose among the five total districts in the county. It also includes most of the cities of Santa Clara and Campbell. Our committee met with two members of Ellenberg's staff: David Fernandez, deputy chief of staff, and Victor Santiago, community relations aide.

The focus on the meeting was aligned with what we heard at the city level, which was that the church's availability as a place for community forums and events would be beneficial for the district and church. Volunteers typically are needed at schools and non-profit organizations.

Santiago advised that Stone Church provide a list of partners it works with and an inventory of resources to the district office so that it could pair us with potential new partners. He said the district's most urgent needs are more affordable housing.



The yellow outline marks the boundary of Santa Clara County Board of Supervisors District 4
County of Santa Clara