SJAccess

COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SUMMARY

January 2021

UNDERSTANDING THE IMPACT OF THE DIGITAL DIVIDE IN SAN JOSÉ

In December 2020, SJPL staff collected feedback from community members via two aligned efforts:

1. Community Conversations with SJPL members who borrowed SJ Access hotspots during Fall 2020
2. Focus Groups with stakeholders connected to schools, including those from Local Education Agencies participating in the Wi Fi Hotspots for San Jose Students project

SJ**Access**

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS HOSTED BY SJPL

- A forum for patrons to provide feedback to SJPL staff regarding their experience regarding the Digital Divide
- An opportunity for SJPL staff to better understand the needs and desires of their patrons, in order to better align future programming
- Valuable feedback for the EOC Digital Inclusion team to improve SJ Access as well as community data to present to the CMO/City Council

Invitations were extended equitably among 800+ residents from every District in the City who have borrowed an SJ Access hotspot. During the first two weeks of December 2020, SJPL hosted a total of seven hour-long virtual Community Conversations, including separate sessions for Spanish-only and Vietnamese-only speakers.

SJ Access

COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS HOSTED BY SJPL

| Demographics Summary	
Total Attendees	80
Total # of events	5 English, 1 Spanish, 1 Vietnamese
Race/Ethnicity	80% Communities of Color (Asian, Latinx, Black)* 8% Caucasian 12% Prefer not to answer
Gender	74% women 22% men No other gender self-identifications reported
Connectivity Needs	At least 50% of attendees did not have a current internet subscription

*Upon learning that many non-English speakers did not use email, SJPL individually called patrons to extend invitations, dramatically increasing attendance (50%+) for Spanish-speaking and Vietnamese-speaking groups.

SJAccess

QUOTES FROM **COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS**

"HAVING A HOTSPOT IS LIKE BRINGING THE LIBRARY INTO OUR HOMES."

"THANK YOU FOR ORGANIZING THIS CONVERSATION SO THAT VIETNAMESE PEOPLE CAN MEET AND HELP EACH OTHER DURING THIS DIFFICULT TIME."
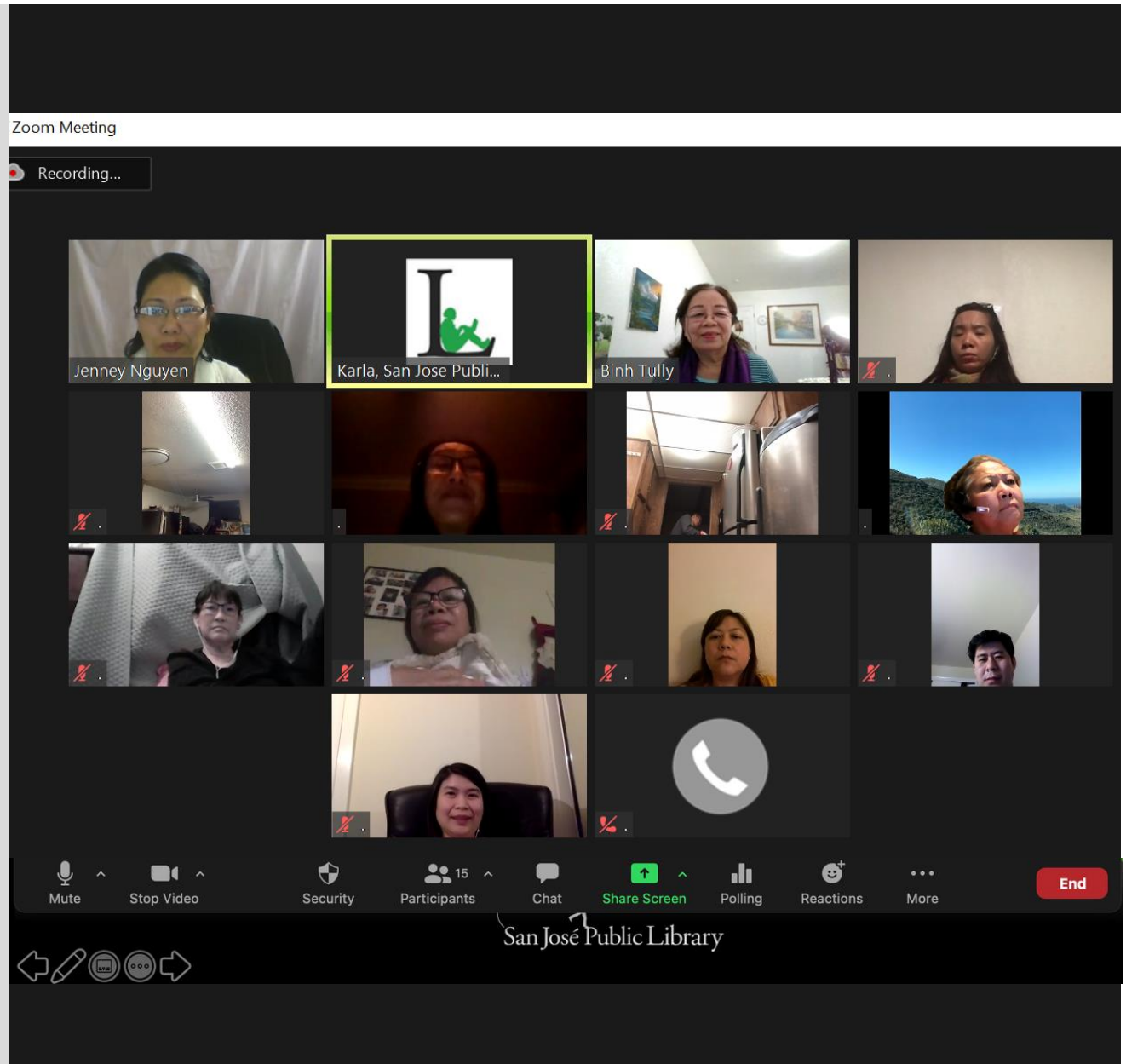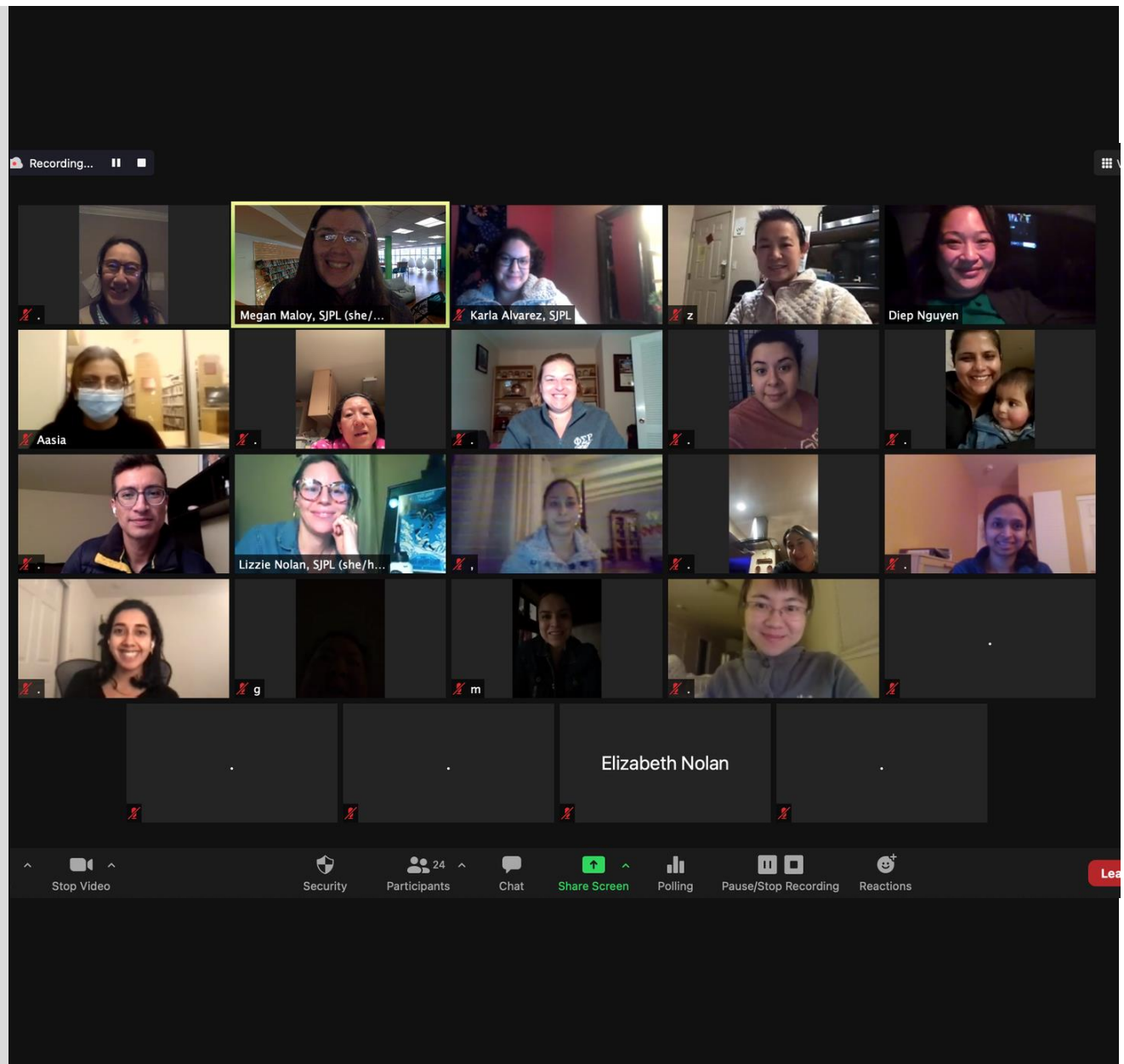
"IT'S A QUALITY OF LIFE ISSUE."

"NOW I'M AN ON-THE-GO MOM AND I'M NO LONGER STRESSED OUT TO BE AWAY FROM THE HOUSE WHEN SCHOOL IS IN SESSION."

"I THINK THAT SJPL REALLY STEPPED UP WITH THE HOTSPOT PROGRAM, & EVEN ALLOWING PATRONS TO CONTINUE TO CHECKOUT MATERIALS DURING COVID."

"I AM SO THANKFUL TO SJPL FOR ALL THEY DO FOR KIDS."

FINDINGS FROM **COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS**

- One hotspot reaches/benefits approximately three times as many individuals per borrower (household members, neighbors)

- Availability of internet service is insufficient for those who live in:
  - a) San Jose foothills
  - b) high-density buildings
  - c) low-income areas

- Community members face an array of connectivity deterrents:
  - a) Prices for high-speed data plans are more than what most can afford
  - b) Fee structure and binding contract processes builds a fear and creates a hesitancy to engage in any connectivity solution, as well as inhibiting personal development opportunities which have now moved virtually
  - c) Residents report difficulty navigating complex internet service network availability

- Affordable internet service plans are not viable for current internet needs which includes distance learning, working from home and video-based/livestreamed programs.

SJ.Access

- Overall positive experiences with SJ Access hotspot speed and signal strength. However, District 7 and District 8, especially the area surrounding Tully Branch Library, reported higher than average connection issues.

- The mobility of the hotspot devices contributed to patrons' wellness and quality of life, providing connectivity for their jobs, multiple households and outdoor activities.

- Patrons with disabilities, especially learning disabilities, have expressed that the hotspots' high-speed streaming feature allow for more consistent self-paced video and visual learning opportunities.

- The hotspots provide a critical connectivity stopgap for patrons with existing internet service subscriptions given the inconsistency of service and oversaturation of the networks.

SJ Access

- Patrons seek additional support for digital literacy and learning opportunities, especially around school learning management software, online banking and other common applications.

- Older adults express the need for simultaneous support with connectivity, computer access and digital literacy.

- Patrons are overwhelmingly appreciative and trusting of this service, of SJPL staff support and high-quality customer service.

- SJPL's diverse outreach methods successfully reached patrons. Outlets reported included: news segments, SJPL email newsletters, banners at Library and in community, flyers at Express Pickup, word-of-mouth, radio, CBOs, faith-based organizations and schools.

SJ.Access

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Renew AT&T contract for Library general circulation hotspots

- Expand SJ Access website to include resources on internet service provider coverage
  - Develop a GIS map of service providers by zip codes
  - How to determine broadband speed for household needs

- Add more computing devices to Library catalog and make tech device availability visible online

- Expand Digital Literacy classes in multiple languages, include review of common software applications (distance learning, banking, telehealth)

- Share this presentation with Digital Equity Coalition, Digital Inclusion Fund advisory board and grantees, Schools-City Collaborative

SJ Access

- Hotspots have an important role to play in supplementing basic (insufficient) internet services, but we should continue to invest in high-quality and affordable broadband options for City residents.
- In order to ensure equitable experiences and distribution of resources, we should continue to leverage partnerships with LEAs and CBOs and explore ways to improve communication pathways.
- Successfully engaging with underserved community members (particularly under-/unconnected residents who do not speak English) requires substantial time and commitment from staff; we should continue to invest in staff development and training opportunities.
- Offering technical support and opportunities to develop digital literacy skills has been vital to the success of SJ Access programs; we should continue to invest in these areas to ensure meaningful long-term impact.
- SJ Access resources have not only enabled families to connect to the internet and distance learning—they also enabled them to feel more connected to the community and cared for, as well as access other vital resources during the pandemic. We should continue to invest in these resources in a post-pandemic world.

SJ Access