

OPUD Community Engagement Program

Staff Report Content

Context

OPUD has been a member of the Yuba County Integrated Regional Water Management (IRWM) group since 2009. The IRWM program was initiated via bond (Proposition 50) in 2002. The program, which is administered by the Ca Department of Water Resources (DWR), is focused on fostering regional collaboration around issues of water management and providing funding to construct infrastructure projects identified as high priority by local IRWM regions.

DWR, early in the process, designated Disadvantaged Communities (DAC), with a median income under 80% of the statewide average, as communities that would be a strong focus of the planning and project construction. Olivehurst has been designated a DAC since the first mapping efforts by DWR. This designation allows such communities to participate in grant funding for projects without having to provide the 25% construction match. OPUD has received several such grants, totaling over 2 million dollars

OPUD is part of the Yuba IRWM, which has been funded by DWR to prepare a local Integrated Regional Water Management Plan (IRWMP) and associated updates to the Plan since 2009 (2015, 2019). The Yuba Water Agency has provided administrative support for the life of the effort.

OPUD Engagement in IRWM

The first IRWMP was completed in 2009 and provided goal/objectives, management strategies, and an extensive project list – all developed by the participants in the IRWM process. In 2013, as part of the 2015 IRWMP Update process, the OPUD service area was selected for more in-depth outreach to its Latino population, at the request and with the cooperation of senior OPUD staff (with the approval of the Board). This outreach has continued to the present through both the 2015 and 2019 IRWMP update processes. The variety of outreach efforts/components are described below.

Initial IRWM-sponsored Latino Outreach in Olivehurst/OPUD (2013-2015)

For the 2015 IRWMP Update (beginning in 2013), to better understand the water needs of the Latino community in Yuba County, community leaders and community-based organizations (CBOs), such as members of the Alliance for Hispanic Advancement, were contacted via one-on-one, in-depth interviews. Person-on-the-street interviews were also conducted with 17 Latino residents in Olivehurst, Linda, and Marysville, which are the three communities in Yuba County with the largest Latino populations: 36.6 percent, 32.5 percent, and 24.2 percent respectively.

Initial findings pointed towards a general mistrust of the quality of drinking water among the Latino community. Every person interviewed reported purchasing bottled water due to their belief that their tap water was unsafe to drink. CBO members interviewed also stressed the importance of providing water conservation and environmental education to their community.

OPUD Engagement in the DACI Program

In 2017, DWR launched an initiative specially aimed at DAC, known as the Proposition 1 Disadvantaged Community Involvement program (DACI). This program was launched across the larger Funding Area of which the Yuba IRWM is a part. By unanimous consent, it was decided to make Olivehurst a pilot project for the entire region. This program included two primary parts – engagement with the local Latino community via a school-based program focused on the question of “Is my water safe to drink” (due to the local perception that the water was not safe) and community education through event participation and the creation of a social media account entitled Tu Agua to provide information to the larger community.

Based on well-documented research on the positive impacts of education on water conservation and water-literacy, the Olivehurst Education Outreach Program was funded in December 2017 through the (DACI) contract. This comprehensive program was developed in consultation with the Olivehurst Public Utility District (OPUD) staff and management, once authorized by the Yuba IRWM DACI Subcommittee, in mid-2018. The program was aimed at engaging and empowering youth and families in the Olivehurst community through education and outreach on issues related to domestic OPUD-provided water.

The program had three primary components:

1. Targeted 4th grade in-school education effort (where the Water Cycle is first taught)
2. Water conservation/education program for the broad community (with a focus on Spanish-speaking community members)
3. Internal assessment within OPUD of measures that staff could use to improve communication with their customers about their water

The DWR contract supported the extensive activities associated with the collaborative design and launch of these programs (6/18 – 9/19). During this period, the initial program was designed and the planning for the 2019/2020 school year was conducted, with the direct cooperation and engagement of OPUD staff. However, the DWR funding did not include implementation of the full first school year for the 4th grade education component. Consequently, the Yuba Water Agency agreed to fund the first full year (2019/20) of the 4th grade program. Additionally, Covid disrupted the school year 2019/2020 and accommodations to collaborate with teachers to design a Distance/Remote Learning strategy were developed. At this point, the products of this work effort are available for review and will soon be posted on the Yuba Water Agency website, as demand for the education materials has spread across the state.

Final Year of the DACI Grant

The initial years of the DACI project focused on education in local schools and outreach to the larger community. The final year of the grant is focusing on opportunities within the organization to expand and enhance community engagement and relations. This effort includes several components:

1. Direct collaboration with the OPUD Board (of which this initial presentation is a result),
2. Conducting an extensive Communications Audit (which is currently underway) with a goal of producing materials in Spanish to expand the reach and understanding of OPUD in the local community,
3. Continue community engagement strategies,
4. Document key lessons and strategies for use in other communities.

Equitable Engagement

Serving a changing community

Olivehurst by the Numbers

A Demographic Review

2020 Census

▶ White	40%
▶ Hispanic	40%
▶ Asian	7%
▶ Black	3%
▶ Native American	1%
▶ Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%

Source: data.us.gov

34%

Increase in Hispanic population in Olivehurst between the 2010 and 2020 censuses.

Percentage of Olivehurst residents who speak Spanish at home.

31%

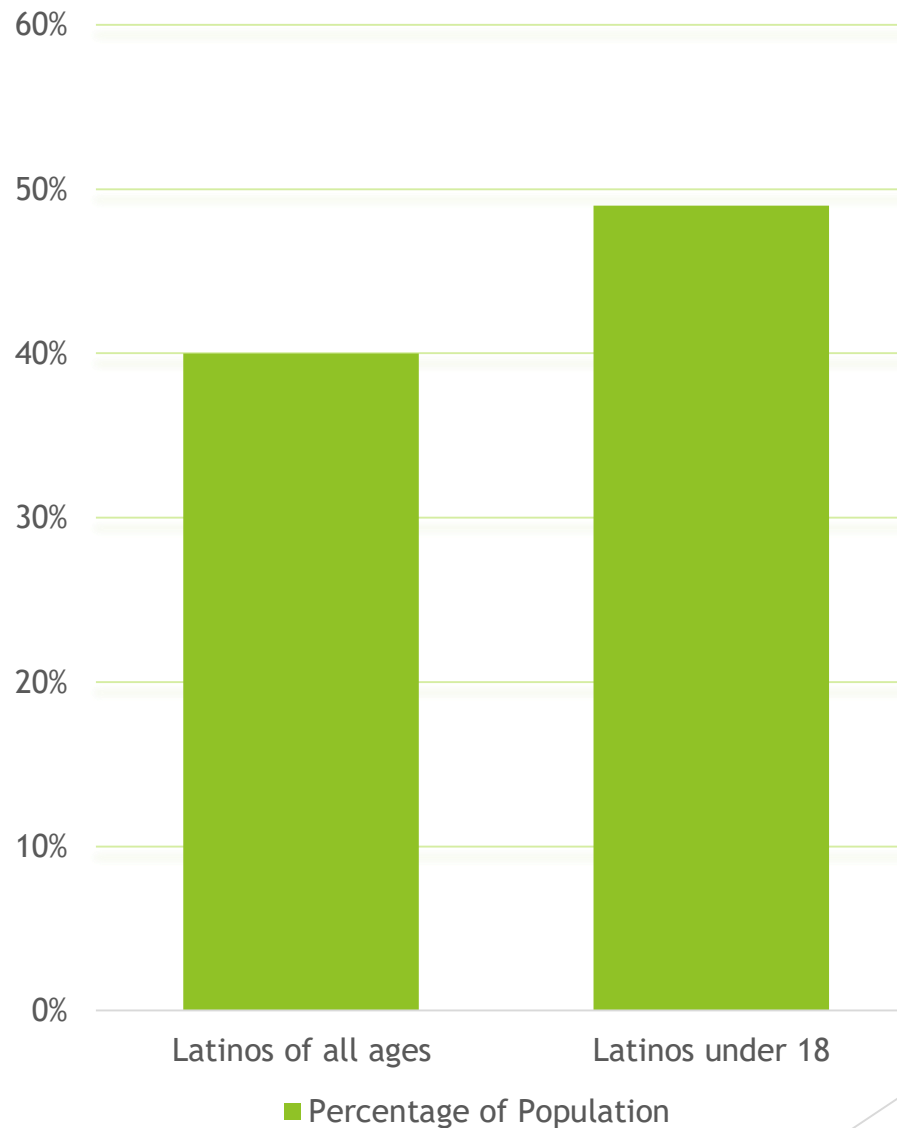
36%

Percentage of Spanish-speakers in Olivehurst who are language isolated.

Source: data.us.gov

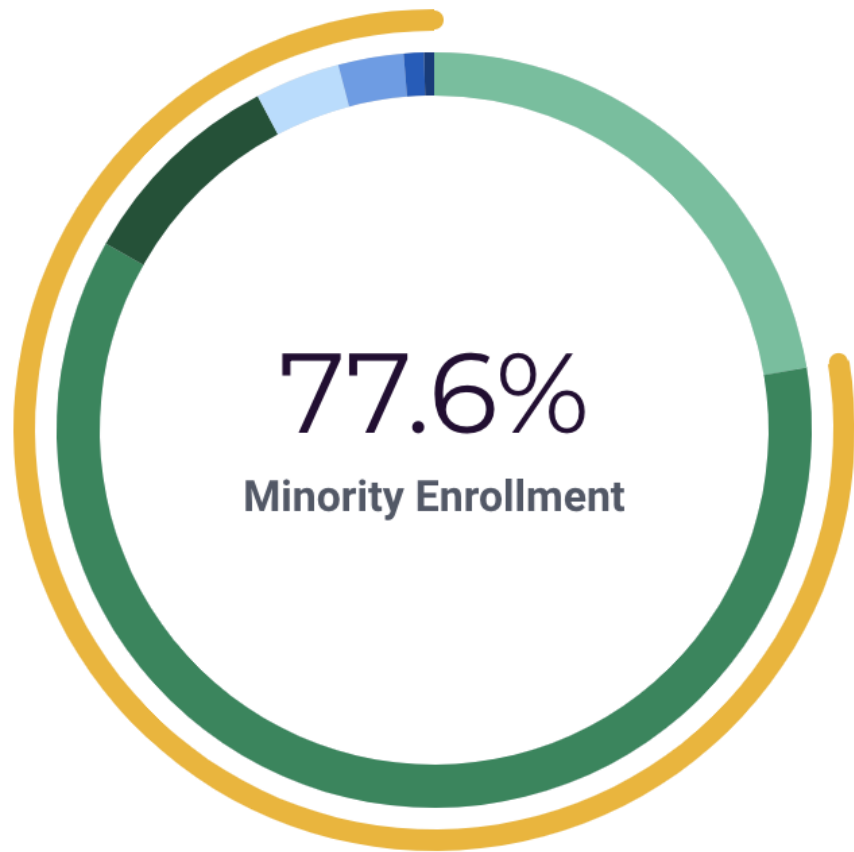
Looking Ahead

Latinos make up 40% of Olivehurst's population, yet account for 49% of residents under 18 years of age.



Source: data.us.gov

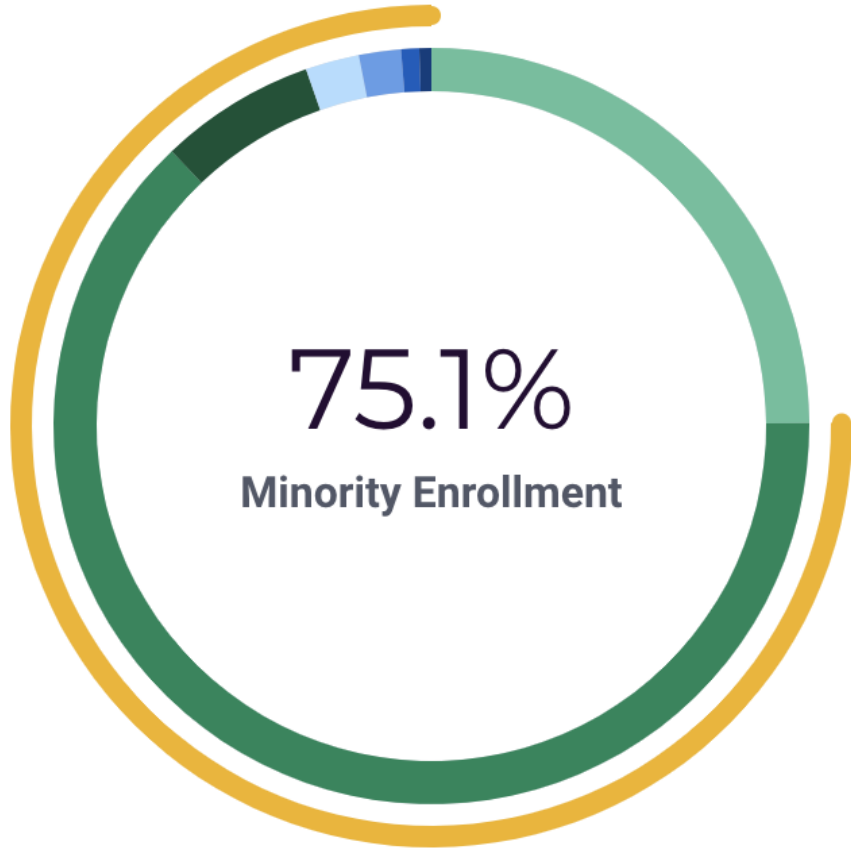
The trend is even more evident when we look at elementary school enrollment



Olivehurst Elementary

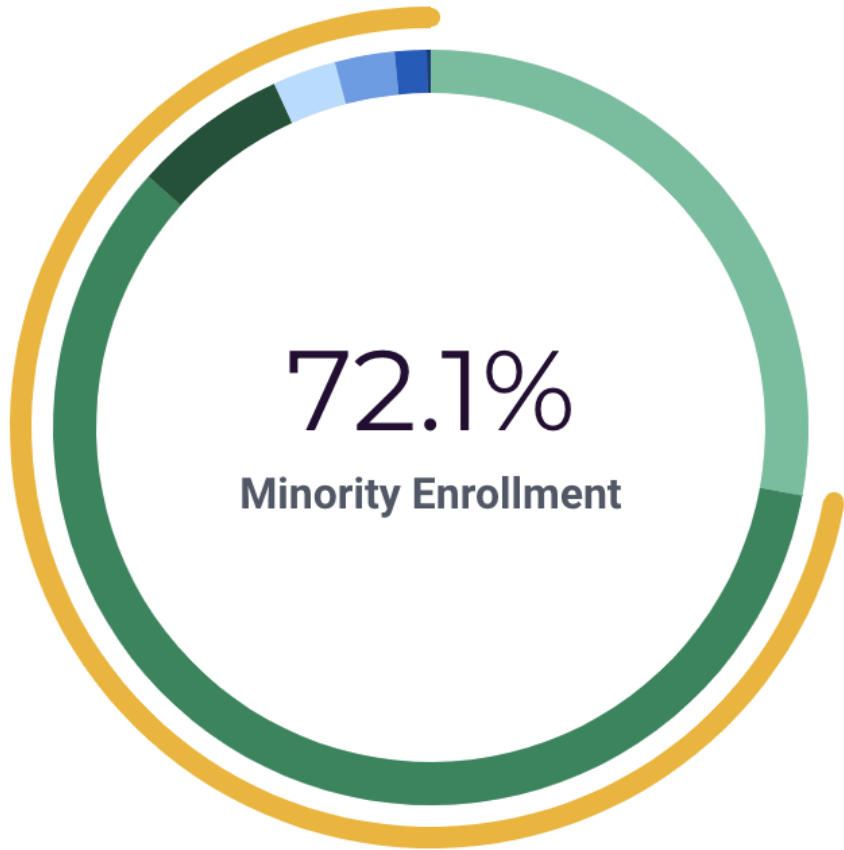
- 77.6% Minority Enrollment
- 22.4% White
- 60.9% Hispanic/Latino
- 9.0% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander
- 3.7% Black or African American
- 2.8% American Indian or Alaska Native
- 0.9% Two or more races
- 0.4% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

Source: usnews.com



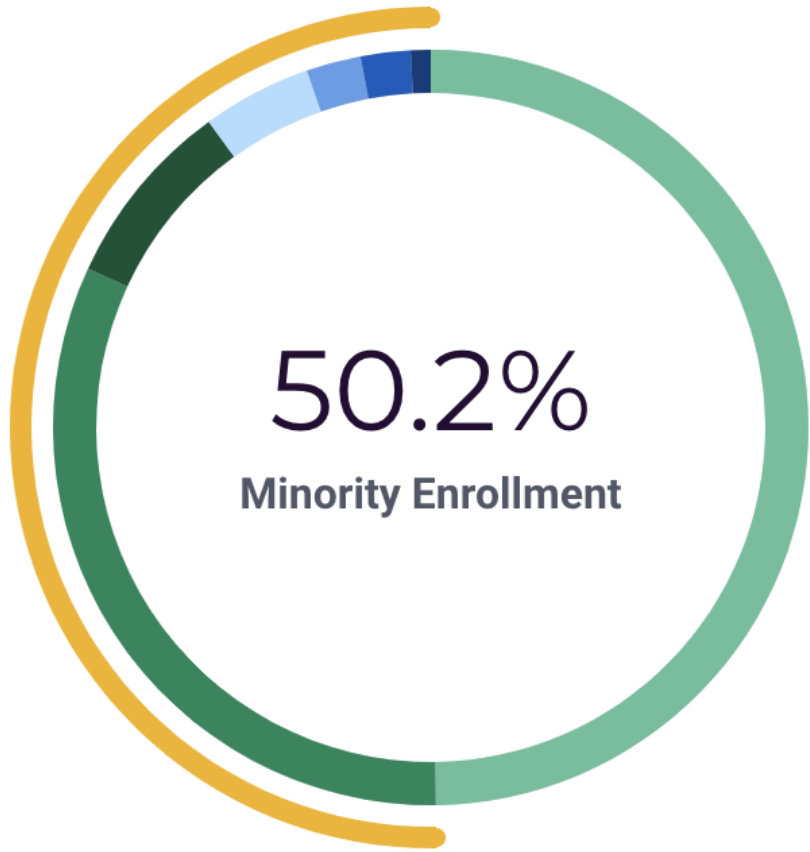
Johnson Park Elementary

- 75.1% Minority Enrollment
- 24.9% White
- 63.1% Hispanic/Latino
- 6.7% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander
- 2.3% Black or African American
- 1.8% Two or more races
- 0.8% American Indian or Alaska Native
- 0.5% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander



Ella Elementary

- 72.1% Minority Enrollment
- 27.9% White
- 58.7% Hispanic/Latino
- 6.6% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander
- 2.7% Two or more races
- 2.6% American Indian or Alaska Native
- 1.4% Black or African American
- 0.2% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander



Arboga Elementary

● 50.2% Minority Enrollment

● 49.8% White

● 32.1% Hispanic/Latino

● 8.1% Asian or Asian/Pacific Islander

● 4.7% Two or more races

● 2.3% Black or African American

● 2.1% American Indian or Alaska Native


● 0.9% Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander

These demographic trends will continue.

Based on the percentage of students in Olivehurst schools who are Latino, it is safe to say that in a short time, and for the foreseeable future, the majority of graduates from Olivehurst schools will be Latino.

It's reasonable to assume that the majority of that population will want to live and work in Olivehurst.

They are OPUD's future customers.



Ensuring the organization rises to meet these changes is an important and effective business strategy.

Implementing institutional change, while critical, is also challenging.

Instituting organizational change associated with issues of equity and engagement can be particularly challenging.

How is OPUD positioned to meet the needs of a changing demographic?

Organization's Strengths

- ▶ High level of name awareness among Latino community
- ▶ Leadership's overall willingness to adapt
- ▶ Upcoming changes to board election procedures could ensure stronger representation of diverse communities.
- ▶ Upcoming wastewater consolidation process will potentially bring substantial new revenues and job opportunities to the organization.

Organization's Areas of Growth

- ▶ Community's perception of OPUD's water quality.
- ▶ Diversity of its staff—specially customer-facing positions.
- ▶ Lack of inclusive communication strategies and tools.
- ▶ Lack of mechanism or strategy to engage and hear from language-isolated customers.

Existing Impressions

- ▶ This is not a pressing issue (things are working well)
- ▶ Cultural diversity equals economic diversity
- ▶ Having a translator equals representation and inclusiveness
- ▶ Hiring for language is discriminatory
- ▶ If you include one language you must include them all
- ▶ Employing the same recruiting tactics over and over again will yield different results
- ▶ Customers have no interest in the way the water system/organization is managed


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What are the impacts of
maintaining the status quo?

- ▶ Continued misconception of OPUD's water quality
- ▶ Lack of community involvement and engagement in organizational governance and management
- ▶ Decision-making with incomplete information
- ▶ Not fully serving a significant percentage of the community
- ▶ Inadequate long range planning that fails to take into account changing needs of a large and evolving demographic

What are the impacts of
changing the status quo?

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- ▶ Individual and institutional resistance to change
 - ▶ Top-down change in organizational culture
 - ▶ Better, more inclusive decision making
 - ▶ Improved perception of the organization and the value of its services in the community

What are the next steps?

- ▶ Workshop to discuss issues in more detail
- ▶ Policies and procedures developed by board to address identified issues and priorities.

What specific issues presented today would you like to see discussed in more detail during the upcoming workshop?

What outcomes would you like to see as a result of the workshop?

Questions?

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