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TRANSCRIÇÃO

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- First of all, V3, thanks a lot for being here today. I really appreciate you spending your time with me and being available for the interview. To start, I have to introduce my research and the broader research I'm part of. So, the title of my research is "The Territorial Impact of Participatory Budgeting in Mid-sized Cities." So, I'm focusing on mid-sized cities, it's the case of Vallejo, because my hypothesis is that PBs can be better in mid-sized cities for a lot of reasons, and also because I'm a part of a broader project that studies what... I'm an urban geographer. It's what we call the "social-spatial fragmentation". It's a process that we see happening in cities since the '80s, basically, in which new types of urbanization are changing cities how they were before, they were more like... you have the downtown and the other areas, like more with this commuting daily. And now we have cities that have different types of centers with shopping centers, with business districts, with different types of... - **Industrial hubs, yeah.** - Industrial hubs, gated communities. So, cities are becoming more complex. And because of that, we have the hypothesis that this causes what we call this fragmentation, people that were in the past more like participating or living in the same areas of the city now are more fragmented. So social classes, like the richest and the poorest, now, they have less interactions that they had before. Because of these new types of urbanization. We see that with a lot of evidence in metropolises, like big cities, where the wealthiest live and we also have normally the poorest peripheries, but our research is looking for that also in mid-sized cities. The research is mainly focused on Brazil because I'm a student from the São Paulo State University and the universities that are together are in general Brazilian universities. But do we also like to compare with other realities, other spaces.

V3

- And PB came from Brazil, didn't it?

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, yeah, PB came from Brazil. It started in Porto Alegre in the 1980s. And well, my research specifically, I'm looking at how PB relates to this process. If it has any influence or not, how does that work? And I have four case studies, two in Brazil, Araraquara and Maringá, and also Lodz in Poland, and Vallejo. So, they are all mid-sized cities, different sizes, but they like have these roles as mid-sized in these countries. So, I'm going to compare how they relate. And all of them have different institutional designs, so it's kind of interesting.

V3

- Yeah, fascinating.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I like my research. So, it's basically why I'm doing these interviews also because there's a lot of things that quantitative data can't show. So that's why the interviews are so important for me. And I just need for bureaucracy the authorization for recording.

V3

- Yes, you have the authorization.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Okay, thanks a lot. So, for the introduction, I would like to know a little bit about your career, like outside of PB and inside of PB, and how your experience was with it, and also your personal background. Like, career, where are you from, age, all this kind of stuff.

V3

- So, I am from the Bay Area originally, and I have lived here almost all of my life. And let's see, I have three daughters, ages nine to almost 19, in a week and a half. And I wear a lot of hats, but my career is on the realtor. And so, I started in real estate in 2006, so almost getting on 18 years now. And then also I became a council member for the city of Vallejo in 2000... the election was 2013, I was sworn in in 2014. And then I serve on a variety of boards and organizations as well, and I am 49 years old.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Okay, great. So you are in real estate, working for real estate. That's interesting for me because the first block of questions about PB and the second is ones about urban Vallejo. So, it is interesting to see your opinions and visions on that. So okay, I know that you worked with PB during some time and also as a councilwoman. And I would like to know what was your functions, the main functions with PB, and how your work was related to the structure, the design of the process.

V3

- So participatory budgeting was first proposed by council member, Marti Brown, for Vallejo. And at the time she proposed, I want to say, \$3 million, was the initial amount that was allocated that the council approved to allocate to the project. So then they wanted to create a steering committee made up of community organizations, representatives. And I was chair or vice chair of the Chamber of Commerce at the time. And it was interesting because there were just a variety of opinions about what PB was and should be or shouldn't be. There were some people that felt, like, we have a representative form of government, those representatives that we elected should be the ones making all of these decisions. And at the end of the day, I said to the group, "it doesn't matter what your opinion is of this, it's here and we should be a part of it and make sure that our voice is also part of the process." So they agreed and appointed me as the Chamber's representative to the steering committee. And we had facilitators, like, national PB facilitators that helped us with our first, well, helped us with the whole year, a couple of years actually, were contracted to help us with all of the processes involved with the PB.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Participatory Budgeting Project, right?

V3

- Yes. Yeah. It was really good, it was really helpful. And the thing that was the biggest impact to me at the time was how it brought so many individuals that... like, there were individuals on the steering committee that, you know, the perception of the community was they were not aligned. But we, for example, there were some community groups that didn't like what the Chamber perception-wise stood for and other groups like that. And it brought us together and had us do different exercises where we came to understand that we all wanted the best for our community and were aligned in a lot of ways and have a lot of similar ideas of what that looked like. And that was really helpful for bringing the community together, to focus on how we help our community be better together. And so that was really exciting to me to have that, building that community network from groups and organizations that normally wouldn't have ever had a conversation together. And it changed that dynamic, so that was really good. And then we had the different community outreach meetings where we were seeking input on ideas, you know, projects, submissions, and it was citywide. It was the first time we were ever doing it, so it was, you know, a little haphazard and messy just because we didn't understand how that process all looked and worked. And so, there were a lot of challenges with, like, once the ideas were submitted, the project ideas, we sent them to city staff, and city staff's like, "I'm already overworked. What is all of this? Now we have to figure out how to flesh out all of these ideas." And there were, I don't know, 300 and something ideas submitted, and so it was a bit overwhelming for city staff initially and then, and who were going to be the partner agencies and, you know, whether it could be program services or capital improvement projects, like all of these different questions and trying to understand all of the pieces. And so then I got to... then we, like, categorized the different ideas into different committees. So like anything that was improving safety went to Public Safety Committee, which I was the facilitator for, and there was, like, economic development, there were youth, you know, different categories. I don't remember all of the categories, but they were a variety of them. And then working with, for the Public Safety Committee, it was working with my delegates to flesh out the ideas that had been submitted and come up with ballot propositions. And it was limiting in that what, like, the language for the ballot was very limited, like the number of characters you could have on the ballot. And over the years, there were some that, you know, were just, you know, like, "help the homeless". And it was \$800,000 budget item, and that was, like, the top vote getter that year. But there wasn't a lot of fleshing that out behind, you know, on the ballot. And so once it was approved, it was like, "okay, how are we going to allocate this?" We ended up buying a building that's now the Blue Oak Landing project on Sacramento Street. - **Okay.**

- But we bought the land with that money, and it was a little more than \$800,000. But that's what we used the money for, and then that became the Permanent Supportive Housing Project that it is today.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- What's the name of the project? Just for information.

V3

- Blue Oak Landing.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- In Sacramento Street. I'm going to go there at some point.

V3

- Yeah. Yeah. So that one was, and, you know, at the end of the day, I think that is a success, but there was controversy over, like, the nonprofit that had really lobbied to put that on the ballot and lobbied the community to vote for it had a different concept of what that money was going to be used for at the end of the day. And so, there was controversy and conflict over that, but I think the community as a whole is pretty happy with this end product. It just took some years to get there.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I imagine. I'm curious about that, because I had a meeting with Marti Brown, but it wasn't an interview, because when we talked and she was like, "Maybe it's more interesting for you to do interviews with people that are living in Vallejo", because she's not living here anymore. And she was part of the process in the beginning, so we had a meeting and she introduced me to a lot of people. But I'm very curious about how the process of PB starting here, started. Like, okay, Marti came with the idea, but how was that approved? I'm saying that because in Brazil, normally, what happens is that the mayor has a lot of power in the structure of the executive power. So normally, PB came to the cities from the mayor itself or from people who worked with the mayor and were part of the same political party that was working with PB in other cities. Normally, it's not necessary that, but it's the main process of adopting PB. But I know that here was different. So how was that?

V3

- Yeah, so Marti brought the idea to the city manager and pushed and lobbied with a couple of council members, because we have the Brown Act, so she couldn't talk to the whole council before it got put on the agenda because that has to be a public conversation. And so, she was successful in getting it "agendized" to the agenda. And then there was a lot of conversations publicly with the council, and I think it was a four-three vote to support. And so that's how it got approved. So, it was not a unanimous vote, even at the council level, there was a split. But over the years, I think there has been pretty unanimous support on the council for PB. It's just competing priorities, so it's at risk every time because you have limited funds and trying to prioritize where those funds go. And like, for example, streets and roads are frequently on that ballot. The community frequently puts that forward. And it's not enough to really affect the... to really improve the streets overall, the condition of the streets overall, because it's so expensive to repair streets and roads. And so a lot of people in the community are like "the city should

be doing that already. Why are we having this on the ballot?" And so there's just a lot of conflicting feelings in the community about it.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I saw... I was collecting data on the projects before being here in Vallejo. And I saw that, for example, one of the years, there was, I think, US\$ 400,000 for potholes and street repair. And the Public Works Department got this project and wanted to put it together with another project that was like \$2 million for street repair. But it appears basically every year, the need for street repair, right?

V3

- Yes, our streets and roads are failing. And it's like, just to maintain the failing condition we have will cost us \$23 million a year. And we don't have that, let alone, I mean, you know, \$2 million doesn't...

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, \$23 million per year just to maintain how it is. That's interesting to see the difference between the investments. It's very expensive, right?

V3

- Yeah, because once they reach... like, if they're all in good condition, it's much cheaper to maintain that good condition. But as they start degrading, it's not just like sealing the surface. You have to grind down to the base and then make sure the drainage is all proper, and then lay it and roll it. It's just expensive.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I can see that. And what about... you told a little about the challenges, but I don't know if you can, like, detail more what you felt about challenges and difficulties.

V3

- Yeah, so in the beginning, some of the challenges, for example, was there was the mobile... what was it called, the SNP, I think, that was the Span Neuter project. And so it was like a mobile van that would go to, like, feral cat communities and capture the cats and spay and neuter them there and release them that day so that people weren't having to capture them themselves and bring them in and try to reduce. And it would save us money in the long run to do that. But the challenge was the van was privately owned, and so it was like the concern about a gift of public funds to a private individual is not legal. And so there were some issues there. And then we changed it to making sure that there was a sponsor that... like, it had to be the school district or GVRD is the partner, Greater Vallejo Recreation District, or the city is the partner. Some public agency that the city already has vetted and knows is legally allowed to be a recipient of those funds and hopefully even supplement those funds. And then we also... I think because of the streets and roads, we changed it to... or no, it wasn't because of the streets and roads, it was... I can't remember why we changed the categories and the ratios. So, it was like 20% of the funds could be

allocated to program and services and then 80% to capital improvement projects. So that change happened over the years.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, I would like to ask you about institutional design changes in PB. What changes happened and why they happened? And if you see the council or the committee discussing new changes for the future.

V3

- Yeah, I haven't heard them discussing new changes for the future recently. I do know that the... I think it's open right now, right, for project submissions. We did over the years [a few changes]. And for me, I really wanted to see the youth get more engaged and involved, and so, you know, because if they are able to be a part of building the world that they're going to live in, I just think that would be so much more beneficial for the health of our community overall. And just like one year we... so, we made it like 16 and over at first. And so we had one year where one high school was bussed to the other high school and we had pizza and we had them all break up into groups and just brainstorm ideas. And then, you know, put those on through the process of vetting out for future ideas. And we have since changed the voting age. I think, I mean, you can be any age and participate. I think it's 14 now to vote. And you don't have to be like... it's just the age, is the only criteria and you are a resident here.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- One thing that is very important about participatory budgeting is the budget itself. So, I was looking at the data and I saw that the investment decreased over time. As you said, it started with three million and I think there was like two and a half million, but I think then last cycles have been, like, one million dollars. One million something, one million. Of course, when you look at the project implementation, it goes a little bit higher because normally the implementation is more costly than you think. - **Right. Or some projects don't end up fully getting used and so that money will get reallocated.** - Yeah, they reallocate the funds. So, but in general, the investment decreased. What's your opinion on that? Why did it happen?

V3

- Yeah, I think like I was saying before about competing priorities, just trying to figure out how to best meet the needs that we have to meet, that we're required to do and also make sure that the amount of money that we're allocating is enough, that it is enticing to people, that it has an impact, that if they put something forward and it comes through the ballot and is approved and council approves and it's implemented, that it actually has an impact. It's meaningful. And so for me, that threshold was a million. Going below that was not going to be enough. Just anything below a million I didn't feel was really going to have enough of an impact for people to feel like it was an authentic process.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- And do you feel that, or do you think that maybe there is any debate on the council or the steering committee to get that higher again, like to increase the value again?

V3

- I think there's always a push and pull. I think the other piece of it is the number of votes that some years, you know, like we had I think 4,000 votes the first year and it was declining over the years. And so that's another piece that they look at and have to consider. If people aren't engaging in voting, why aren't they? And is there something that we can do to improve that turnout? Is there, you know, like one year the team actually went and canvassed at apartment complexes and different areas that normally don't turn out for the regular voting elections, to try to engage a different population that maybe isn't normally engaged in the elections or voting in general to show them "hey, we really do care about your opinion and your thoughts on how to improve the community. Please, you know, engage in this process. We want you to directly be a part of budgeting where the budget and the money goes and get spent in your community." And I think that was the highest turnout we had because we canvassed and we also had the first ability to access the ballot from your phone, like electronically. Like they sent out text messages and all of that. And so that first time, I think that was not the first cycle. I think that was year three maybe.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- I don't remember exactly.

V3

- Yeah, but that was I think the highest turnout. But I think it's been declining since then. And then there was one year where the entity that had the software for the voting, something failed there and all of the votes were lost and had to be redone. And one of the ballot proposers wasn't aware that the vote had to be redone, so she hadn't pushed it out to all of her people. And her project ended up missing the mark, and she felt like perhaps her votes had not been counted properly. And so I think we ended up trying to fund that. I know we tried to fund it. I don't remember if we actually did or not.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- And do you see like spillover effects from PB? For example, projects that were not funded originally but after that appear in the council or appear into the city management? Or maybe projects that were first funded by PB but then became more like a policy?

V3

- Yes. For example, there was... I want to say Native Plant Garden. Yeah, it was like a Native Plant Garden with walking paths and whatnot through it proposed in the ballot. And it was actually funded, but it became part of a larger project that hopefully will come through. Because it's another entity partner that would be putting \$10 million towards it, and it was like \$488,000 that was on the ballot and approved.

So clearly it's a much bigger project on the waterfront that would become more than just that little Native Plant Garden. It would be a whole outdoor fitness area, children's park, like a whole thing that currently it's just a... - **A whole public space.** - Yeah, it's like currently just looks abandoned and dead grass.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- And where is that?

V3

- That's on the southern waterfront. So if you're at the ferry terminal and then there's the blue building next to the ferry terminal, that vacant land south of that.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- So, it's kind of close to the ferry terminal. Sorry, I just have to write it down. You told me about the participation. So what do you feel about the quality and how many people are participating over time?

V3

- Yeah, for me to be on the steering committee and to be a facilitator of one of the subcommittees, that was just a ton of volunteer hours on my own part. And that was a challenge. I could do it for that year, but to continue to do it every year would have been a lot, for sure. And so, I think that's part of the challenge is just seeking volunteers regularly. And it really has to be volunteers, right? I mean, because as soon as you have paid positions and you're taking away from that amount of money that could go to the actual projects, right? So, it's just a constant balance of how you get more people engaged, get new people engaged, keep people that have been working on it inspired. Sometimes you have people that got involved with the process because they had a specific project they wanted to see move forward. And if their project doesn't end up on the ballot or isn't successful in getting the votes, then they are disappointed and go away. Or worse, they start saying that they were targeted or not, and saying that the process is not... it's tainted somehow. So, you have all of that. So, when it works, I think it's great. I think it's hard, and it's just something that you just have to constantly keep working on engaging the community and do the best you can to keep people inspired about it and excited about it.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, it's one of the main challenges.

V3

- Yeah. Like, the last one was super exciting to see.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Before the pandemic?

V3

- No, no, no. This year, the skate park, like the kids were super excited and engaged and were successful in getting it on the ballot. We're successful in having it win in the top tier of the vote getters. And so it was really exciting to see that success story for them and to have them realize that they're important. They matter. They make a difference. They're actually going to physically see something that they had a part in change and improve for the better.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- One thing that's important here in Vallejo, the city is very diverse. So, it's one of the most diverse cities in America, considering that you have like one quarter of the population is white, one quarter is black, one quarter is Asian, one quarter is Latino. - Yes. - And do you see that this integration between social and racial classes happening in PB? Or do you think that it is like any group, social group that benefits more from PB?

V3

- I mean, yeah, I think we're pretty well integrated. And we're, you know, we used to, well, like at the beginning, and I don't remember who's on the steering committee now, so I can't speak to what it looks like today in terms of the steering committee. But we were intentional about reaching out to the different ethnic groups, like the, we have four chambers of commerce, right? There's the Vallejo Chamber and then there's the three regional chambers that represent, like the Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, the Solano County Black Chamber and the Phillipino Chamber of Commerce. So all three of the ethnic chambers represent the whole county, but have, you know, ties directly here in Vallejo. So we wanted to make sure they were included, the African American Alliance, you know, like just trying to make sure that we're including everybody in the steering committee process. And I will say that, you know, it seems to be that it's pretty well integrated ethnically, racially.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- And what about like the regional differences in Vallejo? There's this concept in the origin of PB that is the inversion of priorities. That in theory PB should benefit poorer neighborhoods. Do you see this happening here?

V3

- Yeah, I mean, well, the skate park is not in like one of our lower income neighborhoods, so that one, for example, would not. And I just can't remember like other projects off the top of my head, but I would like to see more, whether it's through PB or through some other neighborhood revitalization programs, a more targeted investment in some of our poorer neighborhoods, certainly with programs and services, but also, you know, streets and roads and just general infrastructure improvements.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Because the design is citywide, right? And normally we see that the institutional design of a participatory process like PB shapes the territorial outcomes. Do you see that happening here? Like if it wasn't citywide, it was... okay, okay, citywide, but with rules for where we put the investment, it would be different?

V3

- Yeah, yeah, for sure. I mean, yeah.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Do you think that would improve the process or not?

V3

- It could. I don't know. I mean, until you...

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, it's a broad question.

V3

- Yeah, it could. I mean, it's certainly like... I got to go to Charlotte for the National League of Cities one time and they have this neighborhood matching grant program that was really interesting to me. Because the neighborhoods that could qualify for the matching grant were a certain... like the median home price was a certain percentage below the citywide median. So that they were making sure they were investing in the neighborhoods that needed it the most. And so I would love to see more of a focus on that kind of a thing. I just can't remember. I'd have to look at the list of projects to really be able to say where, I mean, I would know where they are as soon as I see them, but I just don't remember off the top of my head right now.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- No, of course. And also, it's like nine cycles, so it's a lot of projects. - **A lot of projects, yeah.** - You already told me about the... We know that the projects that are most common relate to street repair and road repair. But do you see any types of projects receiving more investment?

V3

- Yeah, I think youth-related programs and services and projects for sure are, whether it's like after school programs or art programs for the kids, different things like that, I think we're seeing more interest in.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Okay. And I have a very specific question about Vallejo itself. It's part of this Bay Area, so it's like a broader metropolitan area, so they have like a lot of relations. There is daily commuting, people who go to San Francisco every day. I got the ferry to get here, so I saw there was like...

V3

- I'm on their board of directors. How was your ride? How was the ferry?

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Very good, actually. I like it very much.

V3

- Best way across the bay [laughs].

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- I agree! Probably because like doing all route with bus or car is probably much longer. - **Longer, yeah.**

- The ferry is very good. Yeah, it's very good. And also the landscape, amazing. - **It's beautiful, yeah.** - The views are beautiful, especially... I got here like with the ferry from 3:40 [P.M.], so the sun was down, and so, like, golden hour, you know? It was good for photos.

V3

- [laughs] Yes!

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- So, of course, the San Francisco metropolitan area has an influence in the dynamics here. And do you think that Vallejo can be considered like a peripheric city? Like a city that's in the periphery of the Bay Area?

V3

- Yeah, I mean our whole county is. Like, of the nine Bay Area counties, we are the most forgotten, I think, for sure. And you know, we're like, you have to cross a bridge. I mean, it's very long to go around to get to San Francisco or to Contra Costa or San Jose, like. And so there's, you know, bridge tolls no matter which way you go, right? And you know, just most of the opportunities, the jobs are more central Bay Area.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- And do you see... because normally when you have like cities that are part of a metropolitan area, they have, okay, this position of Vallejo is peripheric, but you can see inside the city, there is a periphery inside the city or difference of income that are very clear or not?

V3

- Yes. North Vallejo, Central Vallejo, South Vallejo are all, tend to be lower income areas. East, whether it's Northeast, Southeast, all East Vallejo seems to be... not seems to be, census tract data shows is higher income areas.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Interesting. And PB has any relation to that, like it disappears in those debates or in the steering committee on the council, like this position as a periphery or we should have more investment in these or these or that.

V3

- I don't know if the conversation happens at the steering committee level. I wasn't the liaison to that committee. Once it comes to the council, it's after all of the projects have been fleshed out, after they've already been put on the ballot and after they've already been voted on. So, when it comes to us, it's coming to us for approval and implementation. And so, it's very possible those conversations are happening as the project ideas are being submitted and as they are looking at what goes on the ballot. I would hope those conversations are happening.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Okay. You told me a little about the conflicts that happen. Do you think that the NGOs, like the nonprofits, they have a strong role in the process? And if there are conflicts that happen from PB with council, with city staff, do you see that happening?

V3

- The city staff, we did have a lot of issues in the beginning just because it was so new and they were like, nobody knew what it was going to look like. And so staff had no, they were not prepared for this huge volume of work all of a sudden that was just shoved at them, like figure out what projects are feasible and how to make them happen. Like, "what? Like this was not in my job description yesterday. And all of a sudden I've got a stack of project ideas that I have to figure out, like what the heck?" And so that was definitely a challenge in the beginning and was a little messy the first few years. But I think, and you know, there's as they were tightening the process to make it flow easier through staff, there was some pushback from the community that we were making it too restrictive for that purpose. So that some ideas that were being submitted weren't going to make it to the ballot because it just was going to be too difficult and challenging to ever make that project a reality.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- And the nonprofits?

V3

- So the nonprofits, so there's a bigger challenge with the nonprofits in our community and that's just capacity. We as we're... I just was at a foundation summit last week that was talking about how the philanthropic dollars that we receive is so substantially less compared to like San Francisco. Like I think we get \$258 per person per year versus \$11,000 per person per year in San Francisco from philanthropic giving.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Wow, it is a lot.

V3

- It is a lot. And so we have a lot of nonprofits and they have a variety of, you know, levels of ability and capacity. Some of them are just a very small board and one individual that is doing all of the work. And to have that one person that's already doing a ton of work for the purpose of that nonprofit to then spend a ton of time also on PB that there's no guarantee there's going to be any return, is a challenge. So I don't know that we have had a lot of engagement and participation from nonprofits, but they can submit ideas. They can always submit ideas and they can always lobby people to support those ideas and be involved that way.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- And here in Vallejo, PB has any connection to other urban planning plans or instruments?

V3

- Not that I'm aware of.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- So, there's like, PB has no discussion with like... I don't know if Vallejo has an urban planning institute or...

V3

- Yea, Urban land institute, ULI. Vallejo does not. There is like the urban land institute that's statewide, right? That we can tap into. I think through the League of California Cities, that was more my exposure to that, but not Vallejo specific. And I don't know that we really have had conversations. Where I've seen PB becoming more popular is with the regional transportation agencies. So I actually got interviewed and I was also part of a conference for... I was on the board for CALCOG, which is the California Council of Governments, which is like a regional government, mostly transportation agencies. And they were super interested in PB and how that could be used to really engage the regional community to have conversations about what transportation projects do you want to see and how would they look and how would we do that. So that was exciting for me to hear that they were looking at that.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- That's interesting. I don't know if you're going to have more inputs or conversations on that. There was an experience in Australia, in Melbourne, if I'm not wrong, that the transportation agency did a PB for the projects that they wanted to do, like with public transit, with roads. And it was like \$4 billion. - **Wow, that's awesome.** - Yeah, \$4 billion. Australian dollars, so it's kind of less than... But still, that's a lot of money.

V3

- Is which transportation requires.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Exactly. It was an interesting experience. And it's good to see that, like the discussion at least happening here. And the last question about PB. Do you think that Vallejo PB looks for justice, like social justice or territorial justice?

V3

- I mean, we... social justice... Again, I'm not like involved with the steering committee so much right now, so I'm not sure what conversations, and I haven't been involved in the last...

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- But what comes to the council for, what is your vision...

V3

- And I can't remember the projects, so I have to look at the projects again early. I think that engaging the youth is super important, and that just to hear what's important to them, what they're not seeing in their communities that they need. I think, again, engaging populations in neighborhoods and communities, complex, apartment complexes and all of that, that normally aren't engaged in the election process at all is super important. And supporting what comes from those conversations to make sure that we are seeing that kind of connectivity with everyone, right? That's super important. But without seeing the list of projects that have come forward, I can't remember.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, but like the idea of PB, do you think that relates to...

V3

- Yeah, definitely, yes. I mean, that was the whole point of it, was to engage more of the community that perhaps is disenfranchised with local government and not engaged with or apathetic to their community as it pertains to the whole community around them, not just their family, their life.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Okay, interesting. Well, I don't know if you want to have some water, go to the restroom. I'm going to start the second... Oh, are you good? - **Yeah, I'm good.** - Okay, I'm going to start the second part of the interview that's more focused on urban aspects of Vallejo. So, considering that we are studying in our broader project, the transformations that are happening in cities, and we were talking in the beginning, could you evaluate generally the urban changes that happened here in Vallejo in the last ten years, and how they relate to the whole Bay Area?

V3

- And how, like what changed in the last ten years?

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, in the city.

V3

- I think, like, a lot of changes that we're seeing here, we're seeing all over the Bay Area, but perhaps a little more critically here than we are in other parts of the Bay Area, and I think crime has increased. We're seeing more unhoused population, and so many... It's really interesting to have those dynamics, and at the same time, so many employers are talking about not being able to hire employees, and so that's a really interesting dynamic. Yeah, I think that... I don't know what part PB has played in that. I think that COVID had a big impact on a lot of things, people's mental health, people's general outlook on life. The economy has changed in many ways, and yeah, I mean I think those kinds of things are happening.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Okay, and one of the many changes that we see in the whole world, especially in the Americas, like North America, South America, Latin America in general, are related to the diversification of housing, how people live. So, gated communities for high income people, gated communities for middle class, more buildings like verticalization, more buildings appearing in city centers or in business districts, and this kind of stuff. How do you see this happening in Vallejo?

V3

- As a realtor, it's super frustrating because it seems like the United States is not great about building a mix of income product types in a single neighborhood. You either have like Hinbrook, which is all super high end, and then you have 201 Main, also gated, but subsidized housing project. The data shows that having a mix of income types in the same neighborhood is the most, you have the best outcomes from those neighborhoods for all of the individuals involved, right? And so trying to figure out how to do more of that is a constant puzzle that I think about. Vallejo currently has 1500 housing units in the pipeline. We've had that many housing units in the pipeline for years, and trying to understand each project and

why they're not going vertical yet is frustrating, and it's different for each one. We currently, our planning department, we're supposed to have seven employees. We currently have two, so that's definitely one part of the problem. I get contacted regularly from different individuals that are like, "Hey, I've been working on these permits for 18 months. I really would like to be able to build the project." And whatever the project might be, it could be, it's a variety of different, like it's not just one type of permit, right? It's not one type of project. It's all across the board, everybody is just really struggling to get things moved forward. We have the opportunity for transit-oriented development, for example, like right here across the street. That used to be the post office. We demolished that, and we put out an RFP...

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- What is an RFP?

V3

- A Request for Proposal. For that project, and it was part of the surplus lands that we have processed that we have to follow with the state's guidelines. That means that there's bonuses given to proposals that have an affordable housing component to it, whether it's 100% median income housing or a percentage of low income and a mix, which I personally think that would be great. Either one would get bonuses.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Here in the waterfront?

V3

- Right across the street here, so on Georgia and Santa Clara [streets]. It's got a cyclone fence around it right now, and it's surface parking. We had a proposal previously that was looking at doing mixed-use development. It was like retail on the ground floor and then apartments above. We didn't get them into a DDA, a development agreement, before the end of last year, which was what needed to happen if they were not going to be part of surplus lands. Since we didn't have a DDA, we had to end the negotiations with them and put it back out for an RFP, which they could submit if they wanted to. I haven't heard if we got any submissions, so I don't know where that's at today. I would say, like, Vallejo in comparison to the rest of the Bay Area, our housing prices are lower, our income levels are lower, so our cost of construction and just the ability to build on our land, like a lot of our waterfront is bay mud and silt, so it's very soft and subject to liquefaction, subject to sea level rise, and so the cost of construction is just as expensive as it would be in other parts of the Bay Area, but those profit margins aren't going to be as enticing as they would be in other parts of the Bay Area. So for us to attract quality developers that can actually make the project happen, it's a challenge.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Okay, I can see that. What I was going to comment is that you told me that there's this idea in this land close by to do probably housing that is with subsidy, right? – **Affordable!** - Affordable, yeah.

V3

- So, whether that is for like 10% of the units, for example, could be low-income housing, so that would mean they would pay something, not 100% subsidized, and then the rest of the units, the other 90% of the units could be total market rate standard.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- But this is also interesting, because normally when we see housing projects for low-income people in Brazil, where most of our research is focused, normally they are very far away from city center because where the land value is much cheaper, so they can build these units. But here it's kind of in the city center, close to the ferry, so in theory the land should be like higher value.

V3

- Right. So that was intentional from the state. So, I should back up. So, California, the housing shortage in California is equal to the housing shortage in all other 49 states combined. That's the reason we have the highest unhoused population of any state. We have 22% of the unhoused population for the country in California. And so, part of that is we have good weather, part of it is we don't have any housing. So those two combined kind of create that situation. The state has been very intentional about focusing on, so the surplus lands that went into effect in January of this year says that any land that a municipal government is not using for public benefit must offer it up for an RFP and must give bonuses to any affordable housing proposals. So, if somebody comes in and says "I want to build an office tower" and someone else comes in and says "I want to build subsidized housing", subsidized housing is going to get the better, is going to get higher points awarded to them for the analysis of which ones to choose at the end of the day.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- It's amazing information. It's good to know that, like to compare with the processes. That's good.

V3

- Yeah. And the challenge with that is that there's no... So there needs to be that mix, right? Because if it's all subsidized, like downtown currently has five subsidized housing projects. We have 201 main, we have the Marina Towers, we have the senior housing, we have two senior housing facilities, and I forget the fifth one at the moment, but there's five that are subsidized. So the discretionary income available to spend at our downtown shops is not what it would be, for example, up in Hiddenbrooke where there's a lot of higher incomes and more discretionary dollars. But no shopping center up there. So they're going and shopping and spending their retail dollars elsewhere and we're not getting that sales tax revenue to our city. So going back to what I said earlier about having a mix of incomes, we really need to make

sure that we are focusing on attracting that mix because if all we have is the subsidized housing projects, it's not going to be a healthy economy.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- These projects, are they gated?

V3

- Two of them are.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- And three are not. Okay. That's interesting.

V3

- Two of them are and they have separate buildings throughout the gated areas. Actually three of them might be. I just can't remember the third one at the moment. The two of them for sure are the other two just have one building. And so, okay, right. So there's no gate, but there's one of them.... There's a lobby and a security guard there in the entry. So, it's not just open access.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Okay. And who promotes mostly the urban sprawling here? Real estate or the public power?

V3

- Promotes urban sprawl? What do you mean? Like tries to create more of it? - **Yeah.** - I would say Vallejo doesn't have the ability to have more urban sprawl because we have where the city is already defined. So, there's a lot of infill opportunity. There isn't really a lot of available land to build further away anymore.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Oh yeah. So, the city is controlling...

V3

- Oh, the planning? - **Yeah.** - The zoning.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- The zoning is kind of restrict.

V3

- Well, we have the zoning map, the zoning code, and that is all determined by the city.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- But it doesn't change much?

V3

- We update the general plan every 10 years, 20 years. - **10 years?** - Yeah, it should be. We hadn't done it for a very long time. We did it five years ago and it's the general plan 2040.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- I'm just going to give you a background about that. And normally in Brazil what happens, we have the same zoning. The process is basically the same, 10 years to do like... passing the zoning laws and do the master plans as we call. But what happens a lot is that because the zoning plan, it's a law, like a municipal law. So, the council, the local council has the power to change this law because they're the local council. So, what happens is...

V3

- Little carve outs.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Exactly. There are lobbies from real estate companies in general that like, "Look, we want to sprawl, we want to create this new housing units or this new urban subdivisions so the land value goes up." They have the land, they built like... they bought it as rural land and then council changes the law and this becomes urban land and then the value goes much up. This is illegal, but they do that on the backstage, you know? So, do you see that happening here? Like lobbying.

V3

- Yeah, I would say that... trying to think of different times we've been lobbied. Not very often. There are... I think what we're seeing, the most that I'm seeing right now is that there are some areas that are zoned single family density and people are... it's like, so for example like just the permits, like not even the connection fees, just the permits with the building department to build a single family three bedroom, two bath, 1600 square foot house is \$50,000. And then you have the utility connections, the connection fee plus the infrastructure, all of these sub-infrastructure, sub-ground infrastructure fees and costs before you even get into the construction of the house. So at the end of the day, you're looking at a custom built single family home that is certainly not going to be an affordable housing product type. And so we are seeing a push on some of those parcels to change the zoning and make it denser. But I don't know that those are like on the edges where it would be considered sprawl, right? I think you see... I think you see sometimes where they will bring it... I don't know if it was like a zoning code, I'm just trying to think of projects like the bigger projects. Like for example, Mare Island, so they're doing a specific plan process now to have a specific plan that governs the whole island. And the developer already owns the central 600 acres plus the 150 acres on the north end of the island and they own a

field golf course there. And they're going through the public process of creating this specific plan. So that at the end of the day will change the zoning that lays over all of that island. But they're doing it through a public process. It's not like going straight to council and saying, "Can you just change this?" It's a public process. We're also going to be initiating a new waterfront specific plan process and a downtown specific plan process which will take a couple of years and it involves the community and lots of outreach and really doing everything we can to engage and have a conversation with the whole community on what do you want to see here.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Interesting. And Mare Island is part of Vallejo too? – **Uhum.** - Oh, okay. Just to be sure. So, there's a few participatory processes that's going to... like urban participatory processes.

V3

- Well, these aren't PB.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Yeah, yeah. I know. But the others processes, they're participatory too, right?

V3

- Yes, they are participatory. Yes, absolutely.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- But they don't relate to PB at all?

V3

- Right, no.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Okay, just to be sure. And you said about this empty urban lands that are in the zoning area and it appears any demands from the public about that? Like the municipality should invest in it. If it appears on PB...

V3

- I wouldn't say that it appears on PB, but like our golf course, the city-owned public golf course, Blue Rock Springs, we entered... we offered it up for RFP for development because we were paying about a million dollars a year to subsidize the golf course. And it has a very old clubhouse and two 18-hole golf courses and it just was not the fees people were paying to use the golf course weren't covering the cost to maintain the golf course. The community did say that they wanted to see some, still have a community golf course there, but they were open to seeing ways to make it so that it wasn't a burden to the city

budget. And so we have entered into an agreement with the developer and it will be, I want to say less than 500, but more than 450 housing units with a golf perimeter. And on the other side of Columbus Parkway, a new clubhouse and more golfing on that side. And so that was changing from just a golf course, right? But we did engage the community again.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Interesting. Good. And one thing that I'm seeing a lot in conversations or in the interviews is concerns about public safety. So how do you feel about that here in Vallejo?

V3

- Yeah. Yeah, I mean, it's definitely a concern. And you know, in Vallejo, we've had some past incidents and actions of our officers that have been harmful to the relationship with the community.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- You mean the police officers?

V3

- Yeah. And so we currently just have 36 officers on patrol for the whole, you know, 24/7. And so to put that in perspective, like Richmond, similar size city, similar crime, similar demographics, they have 200 officers on patrol. So that's a... And I think that we... our economic opportunities for individuals are not as available as they should be. And so all of that combined just doesn't create good, you know, situations for general safety. And we're seeing it, you know, across the state for sure, you know, an increase in retail theft, an increase in personal property crimes, you know, just a lot of things. Even my own family has experienced, my oldest daughter was a pizza delivery person, and she had somebody pull a gun on her just for a pizza. - **Here?** - Yeah, in Vallejo, for a pizza and the \$80 she had in her pocket. And you know, it's just like wild, right? Like so crazy. And even this morning, like, you know, just there's like no matter how many officers we have, right, we can't have an officer on every single corner stopping every single person from running every single stop sign, right? Like there's just not that capacity. There's a social contract that we have to... that we have that has to be agreed to. Like everyone has to agree to participate in that social contract. Otherwise you're not going to be, you know, nobody's going to be safe. And so when you have a lack of law enforcement and a lack of economic opportunity, I think those two cause that social contract to fall apart. And so, you know, I think that it's important to... for our community, like we're not able to... like, you know, San Francisco is now the highest paid officers in the country. Alameda is offering \$70,000 hiring bonuses to any new officer, and we can't compete with that. We can do better than what we're doing now, but we can't compete with that. And so how do we recruit good people to our department? I think we have to be more intentional about reaching out to our youth and saying, look, here's a career opportunity. It's a great career opportunity. You will have good income. You will have good benefits. You'll be able to help keep your community safe and serve the people in your neighborhood and in your community to all, you know, do better. And so we used to have a robust,

like, police explorer program in the middle schools, and I think that it has, you know, kind of fallen to the wayside with our staffing issues. But I think that is one of the top things we need to bring back is just really... and, you know, city-wide, like, we have 193 vacancies in the city organization as a whole, and how do we recruit our residents and get them eligible and qualified to be able to apply for those jobs and get those jobs and do well in those jobs? I think that's, you know, at the end of the day, really focusing on our youth and focusing on developing our own workforce to be able to, you know, seek those opportunities is how our community as a whole will thrive.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- The police department, so it's from the city, right? – **Yes.** - It's interesting because in Brazil, we have three types of cities, the polices.... Policies. Sorry for that. - **That's okay.** - And one of them is statewide. So, if one city has less police than others, they just move. This police has other types of problems, but this, at least the planning of where to put the officers...

V3

- Yes. So, we do have... we have federal, like, US Marshals. We have California Highway Patrol. They primarily focus on the highways. And then we have the Solano County Sheriff, so that's the county. And they primarily focus on the unincorporated areas of the county. And then we have our own police department. So, we have been asking for support from all levels of law enforcement because of our current situation. However, we're in labor negotiations with the police union and have been for over a year. So all of the other organizations, the laws say that they can't step in and support when there's labor disputes. And so, you know, I don't know what the current issues are with the labor contracts. That's all closed, confidential closed sessions. But hopefully that gets worked out soon so that we can get some support from outside agencies. And we do get, I should say, like, critical incidents, priority one, you know, active shootings or, you know, crimes like that that require immediate assistance. We do have mutual aid from neighboring agencies. So, like American Canyon, Venetia, Fairfield can send officers to support CHP. I mean, the sheriffs regularly send a helicopter to help support.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- When the situations like that happen. Okay. I was asking that also because I was looking at the data from PB and I went to the police department yesterday to talk to someone. I got there like 4:50 P.M, so there wasn't nobody to talk to me. And they are this... after public works, they are the second institution to receive more money from PB. - **Yeah.** - In different types of projects, like projects from to get training for officers, projects of like infrastructure. I remember it was like a simulator.

V3

- Yes, the simulator, yes! The simulator is amazing, by the way. Because they use all real scenarios that have happened. And it's like a theater. You go in and it's full, you have it all around you.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Cool. But do you think that is happening because lack of funds? So police officers have a little lobby with PB, so “we need more funding.” So they get these projects, do you think that that’s happening?

V3

- I think that there's two things going on. I think that sometimes because the officers can submit ideas directly. Also to the when the project submission period is open, anybody can go online and submit a project. Anybody anywhere. And there's no restrictions. There's no anything. So then it goes through the process of feasibility and review and categorizing different ideas together that are similar and that kind of thing. So I think that there could be some ideas that are submitted by officers directly. I think that there is also things that, like for example, the first year there was one item that was lights camera action from the Public Safety Policy Committee that I facilitated... Public Safety Committee. And it was “lights, camera, action” was the name of the valid item. And the group had come up with “we want more lights on the waterfront so that people feel safe, they can see, we want cameras so that people that break the law can be captured, we have this evidence.” And so that came organically, but was a public safety item.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Interesting. Yeah, I'm saying that because one of the cities... I did my masters in Portugal, one of the cities I studied there was a mid-sized city called Cascais that's in the Lisbon metropolitan area. So, it's kind of close to Vallejo, it's part of the metropolitan area, mid-sized city, but it's in general high income. So, there's this difference. The fire department got funds from PB every year because they had a very good relation to the community in general. So, they promoted their projects and got funded every time. And I would like to know if that happened also with the police department here.

V3

- Yeah, I don't know that... I didn't personally see any lobbying happening, but I think that people are more likely to vote for things that they feel are going to improve the safety of the community.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- And we know that normally these gated communities and security cameras and private security companies are related more to this feeling of unsafeness. And do you think that this provokes emptiness of the public space here? Like less people in the streets, less people using public space in Vallejo? Do you think that is not happening? Or is there a relation?

V3

- I would say there is a relation in the intentional effort to have more events in public spaces to bring people down to improve public safety. I'm president of Vallejo Main Street right now. And so we did these events every Thursday night in August where we had live music, we had vendors, we had food

trucks, and we closed down two of the streets in downtown and had just thousands of people coming and hanging out. And we did that because we wanted to show the community that, and thankfully there were no incidents of any crime, no reports of people's cars getting broken into, nobody talking about having their purses snatched or anything like that. It was just a really great community event. And we intentionally did that because we wanted to attract people to our downtown and show them, "hey, this is a safe place to be. Come enjoy your community together and just have a good time." And so we did that intentionally for that. The Mad Hatter Parade also is in downtown for Christmas. It's very unique to Vallejo, it's like a steampunk kind of feel. - **Interesting, that's cool.** - And so, they have all kinds of floats that are like Burning Man. So yeah, that kind of style. - **Okay, that's very cool.** - Yeah. And so that'll be December 2nd.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- I would like to be here!

V3

- Yes. And so it's a big, big deal. And we really work hard. All of the organizations like Main Street is going to be promoting it even though we're not a part of it, just to try to get more people down and get people to see that it's not this... There's a perception of how dangerous, and there's some reality to that, right? And how dangerous things can be in our community. But when you can show people, look, there's these great events happening and it's safe to go to those events, then people start to think, well, maybe they meet a shop owner and they make a relationship, a connection. They're like, "Oh, I should come back and buy something here and check it out and try to get..." So, I think there's a lot of organizations really trying to intentionally work on that, to attract people to our public spaces and get them to engage with each other and just enjoy the community and enjoy our public spaces. Even as I say that, we have some issues with the unhoused encampments and how they're... I wouldn't want to bring my nine-year-old to some areas of the waterfront right now, just because it's very blighted and I don't know what's going on in some of those encampments and I wouldn't want to bring her through that. And we're prohibited from... until we have available suitable housing for the individuals to go to, we can't move them off of public land without somewhere available for them to go. And so, it becomes this issue until it becomes a health and safety issue. It's infested with rats and garbage and then we can clean it, but you have to go through a 17-day noticing period to make sure that what you're removing is actually garbage and not somebody's personal property. And if they move their stuff, then you have to re-notice it and go for 17 days again. And so it's just a very long process.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- And the urban housing here in Vallejo, do you think that... or the urban structure of the city, do you think that the redlining had any influence here? - **Yeah.** - And you can still see it?

V3

- There is definitely some areas that were... like B.W. Williams and Loafus Place, that neighborhood was the first in the state that was built by a black developer for the black community. And then Highway 37 was built and it went right next to that neighborhood and split that neighborhood and another neighborhood, the Country Club Crest. And when that happened, both of those neighborhoods have suffered. And then College Park neighborhood just west of that, I just found out last night they used to have a community college there. That's why it was called College Park. But then the community college went away and I even read a letter at the Naval and Historical Museum. They had a letter from... I don't know if it was the NAACP or some African American organization back in the 1960s. And he wrote a letter to the community about College Park and how they needed... they had already sold enough homes to African American families. They needed more Caucasian families to move in because otherwise there wasn't going to be the resources. There wouldn't be as many resources or availability of resources to the community. I was just like, "Oh my gosh, that is heartbreaking to hear that." And so, yeah, I mean, there's definitely one of Congressman [John] Garamendi's representatives, Mel Orpilla. He is a Filipino American that his family was... He was born and raised here. His family's from here. His dad and mom immigrated from the Philippines, I believe. And he was talking about the neighbor that he lived in was red-lined and was all people of color. And it wasn't even just the mortgages, but also the insurance was more expensive if they could get insurance at all. That was just so wild to me. But yeah, you do see some neighborhoods that are still not as invested in, whether it's the streets and roads, the trees, just the landscaping in general is not what it is in other areas of the community.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- That's interesting to hear too. Well, just two questions more. First, broad question. What's your opinion about the expansion of gated communities in general, but not necessarily here in Vallejo, in general?

V3

- Yeah. I don't know. I mean, it's like... I mean, I don't really have an opinion. I think that it's more a symptom of something, right? And it's not always the same thing because, like I said, we have the subsidized housing projects that are gated. And it's funny because the feeling you get looking at those complexes that have the fence around them, it feels more like industrial, I guess. And I'm just trying to think why. Because there's some gated communities up in Northeast Vallejo, that are gated.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Like high income? Or middle or high income?

V3

- High income, high income, but not like luxury. And they're gated. Well, I'm not even like... So one of them is more moderate income and gated. So I don't know. I think it's... And they were built to be affordable by design, not affordable subsidized, right? They were smaller, attached. So, the income category that would be attracted to those products is not going to be the same as it would be if they were

detached with a yard and a fence around the property, right? These are attached with shared driveways or things like that and shared walls and that kind of thing. But still gated. So I guess it's...

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- We also see that in Brazil too.

V3

- Yeah. So, I guess it's a symptom of the feeling of... The perception of safety, right? They feel safer in that community. So they're willing to pay the extra monthly fees for the maintenance of the gate and the landscaping and all of that in addition to the house price. And so I guess for me it's more dealing with the underlying cause. How do you make it so that people don't want to live behind gates? They want to be a part of their community and not separated from the neighborhood next door, right? Whatever it is that's causing them to feel that way, how do you address that?

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Okay. And last question. What's your vision or future for Vallejo as a local and as a councilwoman? And also being a member of PB during some time.

V3

- Yes. I mean, for me it's a safe, vibrant, thriving community where all of us are celebrating our diversity together. Like really, not just inclusive, but excited about our differences and celebrating them and then trying to understand what makes us all different. And like I said about really going in and supporting our youth, our public schools are K [kindergarten] through 12, but how do we make sure that the kids are ready to learn when they get to kindergarten if they're not getting support in education they need? We need to step in and help with that. Helping parents, I mean kids don't come with manuals, that's for sure. Helping parents understand how to be the best parents they can and how to have that good work life balance. Like really working with our regional partners because the city government can't be the solution to all of the things. So really making sure that we are supporting our nonprofits, our other public partners, local, state, federal, like everybody going together to make sure that we're all getting the same opportunities, getting the same support, getting the same education. Not same education, like not cookie cutter same, but like able to reach the same, the best potential of the individual. What does it take to help each individual become their best potential? And doing what we can to make sure that that support is there. Like there's one project I'm super excited about that is a partnership with Solano County Office of Education, Solano County. First Five, Head Start and the city and the school district. So First Five bought an elementary school that was shut down during COVID in South Vallejo and a neighborhood that is lower income. And so it will become the, they're talking about changing the name, but Vallejo Early Learning Center. So, it's 300 children will be able to go here for zero to five [years old] really robust early education. So, there will be childcare providers training for the childcare providers to make sure that they're providing the best childcare in early education, you know, environment, enriching

environment for them. And there will be a Montessori component, a family resource component, social emotional wellness components built in and woven into the whole thing. And really just making sure that those kids, because less than half of children in Solano County go to preschool, less than one in four has access to licensed childcare. And so I don't know how we expect our kids to be successful when they get to kindergarten, if they aren't even getting access to those early education supports to begin with. So much of the brain development happens in the first 18 months. And so many people don't understand how much, how important that age is to support. There's so much data that shows that not even abuse, but just neglecting, not giving them full engagement and an environment that is engaging their brains really can damage and change the trajectory of their lives long term. So, I'm super excited about that. That just closed, and it should be opening next year.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- That's interesting. This is off the structure of the interview, but you told me that you were part of the ferry commission. The board commission for the ferry. So this is interesting for us also because part of our study, I'm not that part, but for the project, we rely on mobility, on transit. And when the ferry started, I would like to know that. And if you see any differences, because I know like San Francisco, it's a world of its own, so with very good public transit and a lot of types of transportation. - **Yeah, multimodal.** - Multimodal, yeah. But I know that in the United States, this is exception. New York is like that, maybe Boston, or DC, San Francisco, that's it. In general, it's like much more focused on car. And I could see that here in Vallejo today, it's very different from San Francisco. People use a lot of cars everywhere, and do you see differences in the commuting after the ferry? Like more people are using the ferry, less people are using cars? How do you see that here?

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- So, the ferry system, so the agency is actually called the Water Emergency Transportation Authority. And how that came about was after the Loma Prieta earthquake in 1989. That night was basically the initiation of or the creation of the Emergency Transportation Authority. And it was created by the ferry captains that were doing the dinner cruises, just stepped in and started, because there was no ability to come from San Francisco. The Loma Prieta Bridge was collapsed. And so, they were transporting people from San Francisco over to Oakland. And so, I mean, going back, so that was the public portion. There was ferry systems for a very long time. Like they used to have ferries that transported trains from Venetia to Martinez like every day, 10 times a day. It was a very big, robust system. But since 1989, there's, you know, it has evolved. And so it was considered for a while kind of an elite mode of transportation. It was more expensive. And, you know, it was just not considered like the average commuter's method of transport. During COVID, we intentionally changed our system so that we reduced the fare to make it more in line with other modes of transportation. So, it's much cheaper now. We increased the availability of the service to make it more flexible for people that were working from home sometimes or had changed schedules. And so all of that was really good. We as an agency, like we have a 99%, what's it called, approval rating, like 99% satisfied. 99% of our riders are satisfied and

exceptionally satisfied with the service. We have reached 86% pre-pandemic during the week ridership, which pre-pandemic we had 1.1 million riders from Vallejo to San Francisco every year. The ferry system is the whole San Francisco Bay ferry system, excluding Golden Gate Ferry, which is Larkspur, San Francisco, Larkspur, and I forget their other pieces. And on the weekends, 101% ridership from pre-COVID numbers. So, it's working. And we are really focused on equity and trying to increase ridership from people that otherwise normally would not have ever considered riding the ferry. So, we are being very intentional about reaching out. We are doing a lot of social media, like engaging influencers and in the younger crowd. So, like our riders now, we have 30% new riders since COVID that are younger demographic than we've had in the past. So, it's exciting.

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Good. So, V3, we finished it. I would like to thank you in my name, in the name of Sao Paulo State University, Boise State University, that are both universities that are working together. I would like to reinforce the scientific character of all the information. So, this is going to be available just for my research and I'm going to translate it to Portuguese. So, the other researchers that are part of the broader project also can read it because we have also this, I'm funded by the state, so everything must be very transparent, but just for scientific purposes. And if you have any questions, if you would like to see the work in the future, you can always like mail me, text me. And I just need again for bureaucracy, if everything's okay with the interview and with the recording.

V3

- Yes!

Interviewer (Rodrigo)

- Okay.

V3

- Thank you!

Fim da transcrição