

# PACT 2006 Mayoral Forum

## Critical Issue: Immigration

San Jose cannot be deemed a truly "immigrant-friendly city" until law enforcement practices already followed are codified in a city ordinance. Currently, the SJPD's Duty Manual states that the police shall "not detain, arrest or, in any manner, take enforcement action or place an 'immigration hold' on any person not suspected of crime solely on the basis that they may be deportable aliens."

In San Jose, it is not a regular practice for police to question people who they have stopped about their immigration status and to deliver them to federal immigration authorities if they lack immigration papers. However, there is increasing fear in the San Jose community that this could change, due to pressure on cities to have local law enforcement act as agents of the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services Department.

Such a change in policy would have significant damaging effects on both individual residents and the status of San Jose as the nation's "safest big city." If police officers began acting as immigration officers, this conduct could lead to racial profiling and harassment of U.S. citizens and foreign visa holders who appear "foreign" to police officers. ***If undocumented immigrants have reason to fear that their talking to police will lead to their arrest and deportation, they will be much less likely to cooperate with law enforcement in reporting crimes or giving evidence, which would harm San Jose's public safety climate as a whole.***

Police departments around the country have embraced community policing, which focuses on building trusting relationships between beat officers and the residents of a community. Crime rates have dropped substantially in the past 10 years, particularly in immigrant and minority communities. According to a recent report by the US Justice Department, non-fatal violent crime dropped 44 percent between 1993 and 2000 for the general population, but fell an impressive 56 percent for the Latino population. Violent crime against Asians also dropped between 1993 and 1998, although less dramatically, as Asians already experienced lower crime victimization rates than other ethnic groups. Many police officials attribute these successes in part to new community policing programs.

When people fear the police, community policing becomes extremely difficult. When undocumented immigrants who are otherwise law-abiding members of the community avoid law enforcement at all costs, all of our communities become less safe.

We want a safe and secure city for all residents. In order to move this effort forward, at the PACT Mayoral Forum on May 21, PACT's grassroots volunteer leaders will ask the candidates the following question:

*If elected Mayor, will you continue the current, long-time City practice that City employees will not be used as agents of the federal immigration service, and make that practice into City policy, like other big cities have done, including San Francisco, Seattle, and Houston.*

*If elected Mayor, will you make San Jose a model city in terms of the positive relationship between law enforcement and the community.*