Human Together: Denver Human Services Strategic Vision Framework

Community Engagement Strategy Recap & Action Plan

Report Attribution
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Section 1: Executive Summary

Denver Human Services (DHS) conducted the following community engagement strategy to better understand the needs of the community. In order to carry out our vision of a healthy community where everyone is connected, supported, safe, and well, we recognize we must co-create and implement solutions, outside of DHS’s traditional scope of work, with the beneficiaries and stakeholders. We hope this strategy serves as a foundation for collaboration within DHS and with our valued partners to better serve Denverites.

Process

The Community Impact team hosted 13 conversations:

- Four topical conversations with community-based organizations (the topics of those conversations ranged from: growth and development of Denver, food security, financial worries and opportunities, Caring for yourself and your family)
- Four conversations with City Council representatives, and
- Five conversations with neighborhood residents of Montbello, Windsor, Westwood, College View, and Capitol Hill.

These conversations took place virtually on the Zoom platform. The feedback was analyzed using thematic synthesis methodology.

Conversation Themes

The following priority themes are organized by rate of frequency that they arose across all conversations:

1. **Resource Communication and Collaboration:** Participants requested a citywide and cross-sector resource list and wanted to see organizations collaborating to serve the various communities.

2. **Housing Costs:** Rising housing costs are a burden for families, creating displacement and causing multiple families or multi-generation families to live together.

3. **Economic Resiliency:** Low wages, job loss, and high costs of living (specifically, health care and child care costs) are barriers for economic resiliency.

4. **Cultural, Racial, and Linguistic Equity:** Diversity was the greatest asset for communities, yet a lack of translation services and disproportionate job loss and COVID-19 exposure was a top concern.

5. **Digital Divide:** Digital literacy and the cost of internet and technology has become an increased barrier for many residents.

6. **Distrust and Fear of Government:** Public Charge has created fear for people to apply for benefits and other government services.

7. **Transportation:** Lack of transportation was an identified barrier to food resources, child care and access to health services.

8. **Missing or Desired Resources:** Mobile food pantries or home deliveries, affordable child care, mental health resources, job pathways, financial literacy, and youth programming were all missing or desired resources.

9. **DHS-Specific Areas of Improvement:** Better hours, improved communication on eligibility and services, better website navigation, co-enrollment, meeting people where they are, and building trust were all expressed areas of improvement specific to DHS.
Section 2: Our Process, Important Definitions, & Methodology

**The ‘Why’ behind community engagement**
Denver Human Services want to learn what the community needs, and it is integral to the success of our vision of a healthy community where everyone is connected, supported, safe, and well. We have made a brand promise as a department that "Together, we've got this," but have yet to reflect that promise in the way we are implementing our vision. We are embarking on this community engagement strategy because we believe that we should share both the development and implementation of solutions with the beneficiaries.

**Our Definition of Community***
Community is the intended beneficiaries and their families, neighbors, community leaders, and the leaders of organizations — including community based or faith-based groups — who work most closely with individuals in the place they live. To make this definition more specific to our work in implementing Human Together, community engagement encompasses the following four categories for Denver Human Services:

- Engaging broadly with the public and residents of Denver
  - Individuals that are not qualified for services due to earning too much income; however, they might have thoughts or perceptions on what a healthy and connected community looks like or they might be struggling financially but don’t qualify for services
  - Individuals that support the community in various capacities (kinship providers, helping families provide food for their children, etc.)
- Engaging with stakeholders, including community partner organizations, other city departments, elected officials, and private organizations
- Engaging with existing DHS clients
- Engaging with the eligible-but-not-enrolled population

* More information regarding definition of community engagement can be found in the appendix

**Guiding principles for community engagement at Denver Human Services:**
- Cultural humility and inclusion
- Equity
- Rooted in acknowledging our current crises (COVID-19, racial inequity, economic recession)
- Asset based: focus on the strengths of the communities

**Background for community engagement strategy**
In 2020, Denver Human Services decided to take an intentional approach to learning the needs of the community. In order to understand what we needed to learn from the community, the strategic planning team facilitated four strategic retreats with DHS employees and stakeholders to discuss a data-driven approach to understanding how to engage the community in our work and what we need to learn from them. After the retreats, we identified the following categories of questions to receive input and involve the community, which are rooted in our Human Together goals:

- Food security
- Caring for yourself, children, and family
- Learning how the development and growth of Denver has impacted the lives of Denverites, and
- Financial worries and opportunities
Additionally, we identified five neighborhoods based on the highest numbers of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) eligible-but-not-enrolled (EBNE) individuals, as demonstrated in the data, as a starting point to begin our place-based strategy efforts, those neighborhoods included the following:

- Montbello: approximately 2,400 EBNE
- Westwood: approximately 2,000 EBNE
- Windsor: approximately 1,900 EBNE
- Capitol Hill: approximately 1,800 EBNE
- College View: approximately 1,500 EBNE

We had two overarching goals for engaging with the community. The first was understanding why individuals and families in these neighborhoods that are eligible are not accessing DHS services. And the second goal was to understand how the issues discussed at the strategic retreats impact community members and their lives; this includes asking the community to help us define the problem and define the solution to the following topic areas: food security; caring for yourself, children, and family; learning how the development and growth of Denver has impacted the lives of Denverites; and financial worries and opportunities.

**Methodology for Collection and Analysis of Feedback**

**Recruitment and participation**

The Community Impact team recruited participants for these sessions through a variety of methods including social media, marketing emails to our community partners, and relying on our community partners to share the word with the community. For the neighborhood conversations, residents were able to fill out a survey for the chance to win a $25 gift card. Additionally, residents were given the opportunity to receive a $15 internet reimbursement for their time.

**Collection of feedback**

The Community Impact team held conversations with City Council member representatives of each of the five neighborhoods. This information helped form background knowledge before engaging with the residents of these neighborhoods. Next, DHS hosted four topical conversations (food security; caring for yourself, children, and family; how the development and growth of Denver impacted your life; and financial worries). These were held via Zoom for community based organizations and other interested stakeholders (285 participants across all sessions). Finally, conversations with the five neighborhoods were held via Zoom and Facebook Live; Spanish interpretation was provided. Approximately 80 individuals participated across all five of the neighborhood community conversations. It is difficult to give an exact number because some members did not stay for the full 90-minute conversation. Both the neighborhood conversations and the stakeholder conversations were recorded and transcribed.

**Analysis of feedback**

The feedback was analyzed using thematic synthesis. The transcription of the conversations and the feedback that came through the chat were initially coded for each of the conversations using descriptive four- to five-word codes. Then after identifying patterns across the sessions, codes were themed. Neighborhood themes were prioritized based on the frequency of which the theme appeared within the conversation. Overall themes were prioritized based on the frequency of which the theme appeared across all conversations, both stakeholders and neighborhood sessions.
Section 3: High level themes across community engagement strategy

The Community Impact team hosted 13 conversations: four topical conversations with community based organizations, four conversations with city council members, and five with neighborhood residents of Montbello, Windsor, Westwood, College View, and Capitol Hill (our conversation in Windsor was not included in the overall synthesis of information because of a low turnout of participants; more details in section 4).

We recognize that many of the priority themes are interconnected and are rooted in systemic and historic inequalities that will require collaborative and continual iterative work to address.

Community Assets
With resounding agreement, our community members said that diversity and communal support was the greatest asset they had within their communities. They spoke of diverse cuisine, arts and culture, and the diversity amongst the residents themselves. The diversity is what drew them to live in their communities and made them proud to stay.

Conversation Themes
The overall themes that have been identified as priorities are themes that arose across all conversations with high frequency:

1. Resource Communication and Collaboration
2. Housing
3. Economic Resiliency
4. Cultural, Racial, and Linguistic Equity
5. Distrust and Fear of Government
6. Digital Divide
7. Transportation
8. Missing or Desired Resources
9. DHS-Specific Areas of Improvement

Resource Communication and Collaboration

“I believe it's definitely important for us to build community partnerships. And for Denver Human Services to invest and build these community partnerships to reach more of the community. And an investment, whether it be providing funding, whether it be providing a streamlined process and supporting some communication, or whatever communication device is being used, that's essential, because a broader reach is going to be able to reach more individuals. And ultimately, that's what we all want.” — Community partner

All groups expressed a desired to see more information about what resources were available citywide and across sectors and wanted to see organizations collaborating to serve the various communities in a more holistic way.

Participants identified the following concerns around resource communication and collaboration:

- Too many platforms for information
- Stigma of receiving resources
Participants identified the following solutions around resource communication and collaboration:

- A central list of resources
  - An accessible list that encompasses all resources across Denver and across partners

- Resource collaboration
  - Participants expressed the need to have multiple services in one location; for example, providing services in libraries and recreation centers.

- Funding for community based organizations
  - As an extension of collaboration, participants expressed the need to fund community based organizations who are doing grassroots work within the community and already have the trust and rapport of the community.
  - Additionally, community partners suggested DHS serve as a neutral funding convener.

- More community engagement and community centered communication
  - More town halls
  - Social media
  - NextDoor app
  - Registered Neighborhood Organizations (RNs)

Housing Costs

“My grandparents owned homes, my parents own a home, but there’s no way that I could afford to buy a house of my own. Even to rent, the rents are going up a lot and you know, I’m thankful for the affordable housing that’s going in soon, but even that’s not enough. It’s just skyrocketed and become really unattainable.” — Neighborhood Resident

Participants identified the following as concerns of the current housing costs:

- High costs of housing
  - Housing costs are rising but incomes are not.

- Gentrification and displacement
  - Families who have lived in neighborhoods for generations can no longer compete with the rising costs of housing.

- Multiple generations in homes
  - Multiple generations are moving into tight living spaces, often times sharing rooms and beds, creating more risk exposure to COVID-19.

Participants identified the following as solutions to the current housing costs:

- Rent control
- More rental assistance
- More low-cost housing
Economic Resiliency

“[We are] not being able to do the things that we had dreamed about doing when we were growing up. I was in college to be a social worker. And I had to step out of that for a really long time, because I couldn’t afford to take care of my kids at the same time.”
— Neighborhood Resident

Participants identified the following as concerns of economic resiliency:

- Low wages
- Loss of jobs
- Cost of health care

Participants identified the following as solutions to economic resiliency:

- Support for small business
- Increase minimum wage

Cultural, Racial, and Linguistic Equity

“I think one of the biggest barriers is just language. We’ve got a very diverse neighborhood. And so Spanish and English are kind of the tip of the iceberg for us in terms of languages that are spoken at home. I think there are lots of barriers for folks to seek services. And I think a lot of those are kind of baked into the way that services have been provided historically and how folks have received or, you know, benefited or not benefited from services historically.”
— Neighborhood Resident

“Language justice is racial justice” — Community partner

With resounding agreement, our community members said that diversity and communal support was the greatest asset that they had within their communities. Yet, some of the greatest needs were to bolster cultural, racial, and linguistic equity.

Participants identified the following as concerns about cultural, racial, and linguistic equity:

- Lack of interpretation for services and translated marketing materials
- Racial inequity
  - Participants expressed that people of color disproportionately loss jobs because of COVID-19 and had higher risk exposure (due to front line jobs and multi-generational homes).
  - Additionally, racial inequity was expressed by the historic disinvestment of specific communities.

Participants identified the following as solutions to cultural, racial, and linguistic equity:

- More interpretation for services and translated marketing materials
- More supports for immigrants and refugees
- Culturally relevant foods at food banks and other food resources
Distrust and Fear of Government

“The overall policy of the last administration put so much pressure on people and developed a fear within them. [...] I think with the new administration we’re gonna see a whole sea change in that policy and that attitude, which should allow SNAP to, especially in Colorado, increase the number of sign-ups that they have. But I can tell you that in previous mobile food markets, people are absolutely fearful to register because of potential situations that might arise out of that.” — Community partner

Participants identified the following as concerns of the distrust and fear of government:

- Need for documentation to receive benefits or resources
  - Because of the Public Charge rule, participants expressed that people were fearful to sign up for benefits, even if their children qualified and it was desperately needed.

Participants identified the following as solutions to distrust and fear of government:

- Increased hope with new federal administration
  - Participants expressed hope that the new administration would change some of the policies of public charge rule, but that the trust would still be slow to build.
- Use trusted community based organizations (CBOs)
  - In order for community members to begin to trust government, participants suggested leaning on trusted CBOs to deliver information and resources.
- Provide programs and benefits without identification documents

Digital Divide

“We are looking at the elder technology gap ... and that technology gap for telehealth for mental health, and different counterparts because with COVID we’re going to shift a lot into digital. The elders in our group realize they have to make that jump ... but there is that gap of getting technology in different parts.” — Community partner

Participants identified the following as concerns of the digital divide:

- Cost of internet and computer hardware
  - Financial burden for internet has increased with the demand for children going to school and family members working from home.
  - Many free resources can only provide one hot spot per household and the hot spot does not have enough bandwidth to support the whole family.
- Digital Literacy
  - Even when residents can access the internet many are not digitally literate enough to navigate things like making appointments, applying for benefits, etc.
  - Specifically, there is a need for digital literacy support for the aging population.

Participants identified the following as solutions to the digital divide:

- Free/affordable internet
- Digital literacy resources
Transportation

“We have to travel miles and we have to have proper transportation in order for us to get food.” — Community partner

Participants identified the following as concerns to transportation:

- Lack of transportation to food resources
- Lack of transportation to health care
- Lack of transportation to child care

Participants identified the following as solutions to transportation:

- Mobile pantries
- Increased home delivery services for food resources

Missing or Desired Resources

“I think [what's missing] is opportunities for young people to explore ... hunting, skiing, snowboarding, and also more opportunities to explore arts, ... a place where kids can play with graphic design and T-shirt designs and everything. And a studio, like to make movies or TV shows; just things that help them be innovative.”

— Community resident

Other relevant quotes are demonstrated throughout the neighborhood pages.

The following resources were most frequently identified as missing or desired resources for the community.

- Mental health services
  - Many residents expressed that the mental health services that were available were too far away or were not offered in a variety of languages.
  - Lack of mental health providers that accepted Medicaid or had room to see new patients
- Affordable and quality child care
  - Lack of affordable of child care is forcing residents to rely on family, friends, and neighbors which is causing concern for kindergarten readiness.
- Food resources
  - Food security was topic of discussion across all conversations. However, the issue that residents used to frame the topic of food resources was the need for more mobile or home deliveries and more culturally relevant food.
- Youth programming
  - This included recreation centers, music and arts, and mentorship programs.
- Financial literacy
  - Financial literacy classes were something that both stakeholders and community residents themselves identified as a way to become more financially secure.
- Job pathways
  - Specifically, resources that help lead to career development for long-term success
DHS-Specific Areas of Improvement

“We love the concept of collaboration and presenting ourselves to large private funding sources as one voice, but the inevitable human nature is that when we retreat back to our shops, we go after those funding sources, fairly myopically. So to the extent Denver Human Services can represent a fairly neutral voice to convene sessions like this with funders present, to actually look into the fish bowl and see the collaborative opportunities, there might be a greater proclivity for them to invite us in as groups.” — Community partner

“We work in the community, we provide resources, but sometimes the misinformation is really bad. [...] We need to find another way to help these people who need the help because it so difficult for them to get into this system.”— Community partner

While many of the topics of conversation were universal, there were several areas of improvement that participants suggested specifically for Denver Human Services:

- **Eligibility communication**
  - Many expressed miscommunications about eligibility requirements for DHS programs
  - The need for better messaging to overcome stigma
  - Offered in more languages

- **Better hours**
  - Hours outside of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., or hours on the weekends for working residents to be able to access services

- **Resource communication**
  - Better communication (linguistically diverse, easy to understand, and on commonly used platforms) surrounding services and programs that DHS offers
  - Communication about what other services are provided citywide (see first theme)

- **Website navigation**
  - Easier-to-use website navigate to find resources and apply for benefits

- **Meeting people where they are**
  - Examples included outreach and enrollment services at recreation centers and libraries

- **Co-enrollment**
  - Creating a streamlined process to enroll for multiple benefits

- **Building trust**
  - Using and funding trusted CBOs who are already working in the community and have built rapport
  - Serve as a neutral funding convener for CBOs
  - Follow through with initiatives and feedback that we hear from the community
Section 4: Place-Based Strategy: Neighborhood Themes

We had a small representation of each neighborhood that participated in these sessions. While these are the themes and topics that were of most importance to our audience, we are also aware that it is not necessarily an accurate representation of the neighborhood in its entirety.

Westwood Neighborhood

“I have loved being in southwest Denver because I just feel like we have one of the most diverse communities in Colorado, I just think we have some of the most amazing people.” – Community Member, Westwood

About the neighborhood

Data sources are listed in the appendix

- Number of SNAP eligible but not enrolled: 1,972
- Percent of people not within 10-minute walk to a grocery store: 86.8%
- Adults age 25 and older with less than a high school diploma: 39.0%
- Households without internet access: 18.3%
- People in poverty: 26.5%
- Percentage who speak a language other than English in the home: 62.3%
- Cost-burdened housing (over 30% of income is spent on housing): 48.2%

Assets of the Westwood neighborhood to leverage

- Diversity and representation of the neighborhood
- There are strong community based organizations already integrated into the neighborhood of Westwood
- In Westwood, many use social media and it is integral to the support and connections in this neighborhood
Themes that we heard from the Westwood neighborhood, themed in order of frequency:

Top three themes

- Housing
  - Cost of housing
  - Poor relationships with landlords
- Transportation
  - Lack of transportation in the neighborhood
  - Transportation is a barrier to maintaining access to other services, particularly food resources
- Food Resources
  - Lack of food resources available in this neighborhood
  - Many families are facing food insecurity

Other relevant themes:

- Distrust of government
  - A lack of trust in the community with the government, in particular those that are undocumented or have family members that are undocumented
- Digital divide and beyond
  - Lack of internet access
  - The neighborhood expressed the desire for free or affordable internet access
  - Lack of knowledge on how to operate computers and how to use the internet
- Cost of health care
  - It is difficult to afford insurance, medication, and dental care
- Financial barriers
  - Low income and needed financial literacy
- Communication about resources
  - Communication about eligibility and collaboration of resources
  - Many languages are spoken in Westwood and translation services are necessary
  - Many do not think that they are eligible, and DHS needs to be more upfront with what eligibility looks like
- More opportunities for community connectedness
  - Meeting people where they are by creating more community engagement opportunities with Denver Human Services, for example: pop-up events in the community
  - Increase opportunities for youth in the neighborhood — recreation, art, music, etc.

“"I hear about the families who don’t have transportation, it’s been a big thing for a lot of them not able to go and pick up food.” — Community member, Westwood

“My relationships have become strained due to money issues, and stuff like that, and not being able to really, do the things that we had dreamed about doing when we were growing up. And, you know, I was in college to be a social worker. And I had to step out of that for a really long time, because I couldn’t afford to take care of my kids at the same time.” — Community member, Westwood
Capitol Hill Neighborhood

“I reside in Capitol Hill with my husband and one thing that stands out to me [about this neighborhood] is that during 2020 at about 8 p.m. each night there was cheering and howling and support for frontline workers from all over the neighborhood. And I just thought that was really special and really telling regarding just the coming together of a neighborhood and community to support those that were supporting us. I thought that was so cool.” — Community member of Capitol Hill

About the neighborhood*

Data sources are listed in the appendix

- Number of SNAP eligible but not enrolled: 1,825
- Percent of people not within 10-minute walk to a grocery store: 0%
- Adults age 25 and older with less than a high school diploma: 1.8%
- Households without internet access: 7.2%
- People in poverty: 12.0%
- Percentage who speak a language other than English in the home: 9.8%
- Cost-burdened housing (over 30% of income is spent on housing): 39.0%

Assets of the Capitol Hill Neighborhood to leverage

- Strong trust of community based organizations
- Registered Neighborhood Organizations
- Active and engaged community members

Themes that we heard from the Capitol Hill Neighborhood, themed in order of frequency:

Top three themes:

- Lack of communication about resources
- Cost of living: in particular, housing and rising rent prices
- Lack of mental health services: in particular, lack of available therapists and on-call supports

Other relevant themes:

- Jobs and wages
  - Unemployment income thresholds
  - More job opportunities are needed
  - During COVID: this community experienced a high loss of jobs due to many working in the arts and service sector or the gig economy
- Transportation
  - Difficult to walk around in this neighborhood; it feels unsafe
  - There are grocery stores in walking distance, but they don’t have all groceries in stock and on the shelves. Sometimes this results in needing to go to multiple grocery stores or driving to the suburbs for groceries
- Need for more youth programs

“I had to call the crisis center for a friend and I was worried about their mental health state and the people on the other line on the crisis hotline in Denver were like ‘call the police.’ And I was like, there's 0% chance I'm going to call the police, zero. I will put myself in danger before I do that because I've had friends killed by the police on mental health crisis calls and I've had friends in prisons. Can we send someone over there, the response not being ‘call the police’?” — Community member of Capitol Hill
*Capitol Hill was in the top five neighborhoods for eligible but not enrolled but does not appear to be as disproportionately impacted in other indicators. We hypothesize that this may be because of the high number of freelance, self-employed, and residents working in the gig economy. The action plan recommends more exploration of this nuance.

Montbello Neighborhood

“I love the connections and the people that live here. I think I’ve learned so much from mentors and teachers and the culture here that I don’t think I’ve had anywhere else.” — Community member of Montbello

About the neighborhood

Data sources are listed in the appendix

- Number of SNAP eligible but not enrolled: **2,417**
- Percent of people not within 10-minute walk to a grocery store: **85.0%**
- Adults age 25 and older with less than a high school diploma: **34.6%**
- Households without internet access: **18.1%**
- People in poverty: **13.6%**
- Percentage who speak a language other than English in the home: **59.7%**
- Cost-burdened housing (over 30% of income is spent on housing): **39.0%**

Assets of the Montbello neighborhood to leverage

→ Many languages are spoken in Montbello and the need for translation and culturally relevant approaches is necessary, especially in Spanish.
→ There are strong community based organizations and churches already integrated into the neighborhood of Montbello, such as Struggle of Love Foundation and the Boys and Girls Club
→ Very resilient neighborhood that cares for one another

Themes that we heard from the Montbello Neighborhood

Top three themes:

- Cost of housing
  - This neighborhood is experiencing a lot of homelessness
  - Issues working with landlords
  - Home accessibility costs are impacting this neighborhood
- Mental health
- Digital divide and internet access

Other relevant themes:

- Food Resources
  - Limited grocery stores and low-quality food

“Growth has caused the increase in housing costs, but not in the payments of our jobs.” — Community member of Montbello
Transportation barrier and the need to access food banks
- RTD recently cut some service lines that there is a significantly impact Montbello, including a Park and Ride

- Fear of government and community trauma
- Health care
  - Hospitals are at capacity and dental services are difficult to obtain in this neighborhood
- Stigma of receiving services
- A strong need for Native American services
- Low wages and loss of jobs
  - Need for job pathways
  - Financial literacy
  - Criminal records are a barrier for obtaining a job
- Youth programming
  - Sports
  - Music and arts
  - Mentorship opportunities
  - Scholarships and job pathways for youth
- Miscommunication about eligibility

College View Neighborhood

“One of the things I think is really cool about College View is that it's not just the neighborhood. There's lots of businesses and public resources embedded within the neighborhood. There's a Buddhist temple, there's a tattoo parlor across in the industrial areas. The intersection right here with a Sheraton and subsidies, just make it a really unique place to live that feels really connected to other parts of the city.” — Community member of College View

About the neighborhood
Data sources are listed in the appendix

- Number of eligible but not enrolled: 1,527
- Percent of people not within 10-minute walk to a grocery store: 64.4%
- Adults age 25 and older with less than a high school diploma: 37.5%
- Households without internet access: 11.7%
- People in poverty: 28.5%
- Percentage who speak a language other than English in the home: 57.3%
- Cost-burdened housing (over 30% of income is spent on housing): 35.1%

Assets of the College View neighborhood to leverage

→ Many languages are spoken in College View and the need for translation and culturally relevant approaches is necessary, especially in Spanish
→ There are strong community based organizations and churches already integrated into the neighborhood of College View
→ Very resilient neighborhood that cares for one another
Themes that we heard from the College View neighborhood

Top three themes:

- Housing
  - Cost of housing
  - High cost of living
  - Difficult to pay bills
  - Gentrification
- Transportation
  - There are grocery stores, but they are not in walking distance for everyone
- Resource inequity

Other relevant themes:

- Mental health services are needed that are reliable and affordable
- Digital divide
- Resource communication
- Loss of jobs and low wages that are not growing
- Better coordination between neighboring cities
- Food resources
- Youth programming

“Why are we replacing lead pipes in west Wash Park where a family can probably access filters and have those paid to be installed and not doing things like that first in a community like College View where folks are likely to be less educated about that and have less access to actually modify their drinking water situation for whatever reason?” — Community member of College View re: resource inequity in College View

“I think this may be a College View thing and as an educator: we have some huge gaps for mental health resources. Many families want to know why they can’t access that at school. But we are not funded for that, everything from low level anxiety to serious trauma, especially where families are not able to drive their kids every day.” — Community member of College View

Windsor Neighborhood

About the neighborhood

Data sources are listed in the appendix

- Number of eligible but not enrolled: 2,417
- Percent of people not within 10-minute walk to a grocery store: 85.0%
- Adults age 25 and older with less than a high school diploma: 37.5%
- Households without internet access: 11.7%
- People in poverty: 28.5%
- Percentage who speak a language other than English in the home: 57.3%
- Cost-burdened housing (over 30% of income is spent on housing): 35.1%

Unfortunately, no one attended the virtual community conversation that we held in Windsor. We had one participant that was watching the live stream via Facebook; the individual commented on the need for more trees in the neighborhood. Although it was disappointing to have no turnout, this was a great learning opportunity for Denver Human Services to understand how to better revise our community engagement strategy for future efforts. We know this community has a large number of aging individuals, immigrants
and refugees, and there are a few gated communities that are difficult to reach. After speaking with Councilwoman Amanda Sawyer about our poor turnout, she shared with us that she does have a large immigrant and refugee population who do not want to be known or engaged with out of fear, cultural differences, and privacy. We also learned about a few resources and community partners to engage with in the future.

Acknowledgement of Missing Voices

We had a small representation of each neighborhood that participated in these sessions. While these are the themes and topics that were of most importance to our audience, we are also aware that it is not necessarily an accurate representation of the neighborhood in its entirety. The Community Impact team will continue to learn best practices for community engagement and ensure that speaking with Denverites becomes a normal part of our business practice.

Denver Human Services’ Commitment to Equity, Diversity, & Inclusion

Over the past three years Denver Human Services has worked to further define what it means to “Be Human.” While our work has been rooted in providing services that support basic human needs — what we call essential services — we acknowledge that the whole person cannot thrive without addressing those structural and systemic barriers that prevent everyone from experiencing equity, inclusion, and respect for diversity. In fulfilling our mission of partnering with the community to protect those in harm’s way and help all people in need, we understand that the intersections of race and poverty have impacted the disproportionate representation of Black, Indigenous, and People of Color involvement and experience with our agency, the criminal justice system, homelessness, poverty, and poor health outcomes. We believe in and are guided by working to improve: Equity and Access; Safety and Wellness; Connectivity; Economic Resilience; and Supporting our Workforce. As we do this important work, we are committing to including a strategic focus on equity, diversity, and inclusion for all people.

Section 5: Action Plan

Denver Human Services has created an internal action plan consisting of 19 recommended action items. This action plan is not intended to be the end goal but rather to be the follow-up on our promise to act on the feedback we heard from the community and for this to be the first step in an intentional and iterative plan for community engagement. While many of the action items consist of improving our service delivery model, we have a few community facing projects that Denver Human Services will be initiating as a first step in co-creating the solution.

We are excited to announce as our first step to consistently include the voice of the community into our work, we are launching the Human Together Grants Program. The Human Together Grants Program is designed to utilize expertise and knowledge, current events, evidence-based best practices, and evaluations from grantees to identify funding priorities to fund organizations efficiently, transparently and equitably. In the spring of 2021, DHS will launch a $360,000 Human Together grant funding initiative to strategically make investments in the Denver community, while also empowering communities to develop innovative strategies to address pressing needs. All funds will be used to support community organizations and residents of Denver. Stay tuned for more information on how to apply.

If you are interested in participating on a project team to help us accomplish this work, or just have thoughts and recommendations for us as we move forward with this work, please let us know:
• Project opportunity #1: Youth Programs
  a. We will be putting together a project team consisting of community partners and youth to identify opportunities to create, bolster, and support youth programs in the community.
• Project opportunity #2: Mental Health
  a. We will be putting together a project team consisting of community partners and those with lived experience to strengthen and support existing mental health programs in the community.
• Project opportunity #3: Reaching College Students in Need of Supportive Services
  a. We have heard from our stakeholders that DHS needs a strategy to reach college students that are eligible but not enrolled in services as they are often a group that is overlooked. We will be putting together a project team consisting of community partners and college students to create an outreach strategy and ensure we are connecting college students to supportive services.
• Project opportunity #4: Food Access Projects
  a. Denver Human Services already convenes a food access workgroup consisting of community partners that are experts in this space. We invite anyone in Denver interested in defining our food access strategy to join. We will continue to work with the food access workgroup to be responsive to the two areas of need that we heard from our community around food needs:
    i. Expand mobile food delivery and accessibility issues with food pantries
    ii. Expand options for culturally relevant food services

We encourage you to use this report in your own work in any way that it might be helpful. For questions, discussion, and partnership opportunities, please contact:

• Annalise Yahne, Strategic Advisor – Strategic Planning & Special Projects,
  Annalise.Yahne@denvergov.org

• Katie Ziegler, Strategic Administrator – Strategic Planning & Special Projects,
  Katie.Ziegler@denvergov.org

Appendix A: Data Sources

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Eligible but Not Enrolled (U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates 2014-2018 and DHS Administrative Data 2020)

Percent of people not within 10-minute walk to grocery store (Denver Public Health and Environment, Division of Community and Behavioral Health, 2020)

Adults age 25 and older with less than a high school diploma (U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates, 2015-2019)

Households without internet access (U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates, 2015-2019 Table B28002)

People in poverty (U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates 2015-2019)

Speak a language other than English in the home (U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 5-year estimates 2015-2019 Table S1601)

Cost-burdened housing (U.S. Census Bureau 5-year estimates 2015-2019)
# Appendix B: Community Engagement Spectrum

Source: Michele Shimomura, Public Health Manager, DDPHE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
<th>Partnership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>Consult</td>
<td>Involve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Engagement Goals</td>
<td>Provide the community with relevant information</td>
<td>Gather input from the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message to Community</td>
<td>&quot;We will keep you informed&quot;</td>
<td>&quot;We care what you think&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcome</td>
<td>To establish communication and outreach channels, while sharing information and providing services</td>
<td>To develop connections and learn about the needs, interests and perspectives of residents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fact Sheets</td>
<td>Open Houses</td>
<td>Presentations</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix C: SNAP EBNE Map
Source: Lisa Piscopo, Fiscal Administrator, Denver Human Services