The Redesign

…Working Together for Student and Family Success

One-on-One Community Conversations June 2020

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"For the African American community, I feel like we are the drums-If the community were a song, we would be the beat. We bring a lot of resilience to our community."

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Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

ACEs are potentially traumatic events occurring in childhood (before the age of 18) that have negative, lasting effects on health, wellbeing and opportunity. ACEs include things like household violence, abuse and neglect, household substance use and mental health issues, and having a parent or caregiver who has ever been incarcerated. Research shows that ACEs can disrupt healthy brain development, affect social development, compromise immune systems, contribute to adult onset chronic diseases and lead to substance misuse and other unhealthy coping mechanisms[1-3].

Mechanism by which Adverse Childhood Experiences
Influence Health and Well-being Throughout the Lifespan
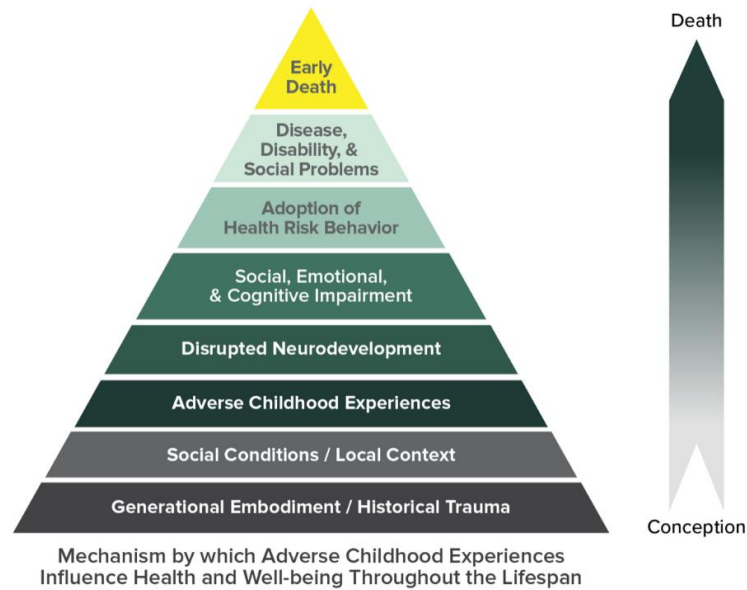
Social determinants of health are the conditions in the places where people live, learn, work and play that affect a wide range of health risks and outcomes. ACEs stem from Adverse Community Environments that include things like poverty, discrimination, community disruption, violence, poor housing quality and affordability, and lack of opportunity, economic mobility and social capital[4].

Building community resilience through community engagement, and collaboration between community organizations and larger systems can help buffer communities and families from negative outcomes associated with ACEs, trauma and toxic stress.

According to 2019 Minnesota Student Survey (MSS) data, half of all Robbinsdale Area Schools' 8th, 9th and 11th graders reported experiencing at least one ACE. The most commonly reported ACE was living with someone who is depressed or has mental health issues (27%), followed by having a parent or caregiver who is or has ever been in jail or in prison (18%). One in ten report living with someone who drinks too much alcohol. Minnesota Student Survey data show that, statewide, students with four or more ACEs are:
- About 3.5 times more likely to report past two-week depressive symptoms
- 7.5 times more likely to report suicidal thoughts
- Over 5 times more likely to report vaping
- About 9 times more likely to report marijuana use
- Over 12 times more likely to report prescription drug misuse

Overview

Robbinsdale Area Redesign, a Family Service Collaborative serving communities within the geographic boundaries served by Robbinsdale Area Schools, is charged with integrating systems, reducing duplication, and improving access to services for children from birth to 18 (or age 21 with disabilities) and their families. As part of Redesign's efforts to engage community members on the topics of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Neuroscience, Epigenetics, ACEs and Resilience (NEAR Science), one-on-one community conversations were held to gather input and recommendations that can help inform a Community Resilience Plan.

A total of 76 conversations were held with individuals living and/or working in the cities of Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, New Hope, Plymouth and Robbinsdale. A standardized interview protocol was used to gather input on community strengths and needs as well as recommendations for building a more resilient community. Robbinsdale Area Redesign plans to use findings from the one-on-one community conversations, along with local data on ACEs, mental health, homelessness, justice involved youth and other data, to inform community resilience action plans. Findings from this report will be shared broadly with interview participants, community leaders, and the community at large. Key themes will drive community action planning.

> **It should be noted that the conversations originated before the stay-at-home order under COVID-19 and continued during the stay-at-home order, as well as the riots after the George Floyd murder.**

Key Findings/Recommendations:

- **Mental Health**: More school-based mental health services, wellness checks for those struggling, reduced mental health stigma, suicide prevention supports (especially for LGBTQ+ youth), culturally responsive mental health services, and awareness of/help navigating existing mental health supports and services.

- **Access to Services**: Increased coordination, and development of one-stop-shop access to services and supports

- **Equity, Inclusion, Racism**: Opportunities for conversations about community – equity, diversity, inclusion and which provide opportunities to share, educate and collaborate as well as to address systemic racism and bias, and opportunities for community members to get to know one another

- **Youth and Teens**: Affordable activities for youth, teens, life skills training for youth

- **Family and Individual Safety**: Increased access and supports for youth and families struggling with domestic violence and abuse

- **Basic Needs Supports**: Increased basic needs support and improved access to supports, such as food access, housing, affordable healthcare, affordable childcare.

- **Additional Specific Support**s: Supports for seniors, individuals with disabilities and their caregivers, parental supports

Robbinsdale Redesign Community

The Robbinsdale Redesign Family Service Collaborative is defined by the geographic boundaries of the Robbinsdale Area School District boundaries. These boundaries include all or parts of the cities of Brooklyn Center, Brooklyn Park, Crystal, Golden Valley, New Hope, Plymouth and Robbinsdale. These cities vary greatly in terms of geographic size, population size, the percentage of people living in poverty, and racial/ethnic diversity. The Robbinsdale Area Schools demographics vary greatly from the municipal demographics, creating a unique opportunity to bridge conversations around Adverse Childhood Experiences**.**

Municipal Demographics

City	Geographic size[1]	Population size[2]	% Persons in Poverty[3]
Brooklyn Center	8.38 mi^2	30,690	17.2%
Brooklyn Park	26.55 mi^2	80,389	9.3%
Crystal	5.87 mi^2	22,899	7.4%
Golden Valley	10.54 mi^2	21,886	8.0%
New Hope	5.11 mi^2	20,907	10.5%
Plymouth	35.48 mi^2	79,768	4.6%
Robbinsdale	2.99 mi^2	14, 389	10.1%

1. Google
2. United States Census Bureau, Vintage 2019 Population Estimates
3. United States Census Bureau, 2014-2018 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

City	American Indian	Asian	Hispanic	Black	White	H/PI	Bi-/multi-racial
Brooklyn Center	0.3%	17.7%	13.3%	27.3%	44.9%	<0.1%	3.2%
Brooklyn Park	0.4%	17.6%	7.3%	28.4%	47.8%	0.1%	3.8%
Crystal	0.3%	3.3%	6.1%	15.1%	77.1%	<0.1%	2.7%
Golden Valley	0.7%	3.5%	1.9%	6.2%	85.8%	0.1%	3.3%
New Hope	0.6%	3.3%	8.1%	20.7%	68.6%	<0.1%	4.6%
Plymouth	0.7%	9.2%	4.6%	5.5%	80.9%	<0.1%	3.2%
Robbinsdale	0.6%	2.9%	7.0%	11.7%	75.8%	<0.1%	6.0%

United States Census Bureau, 2019 population estimates
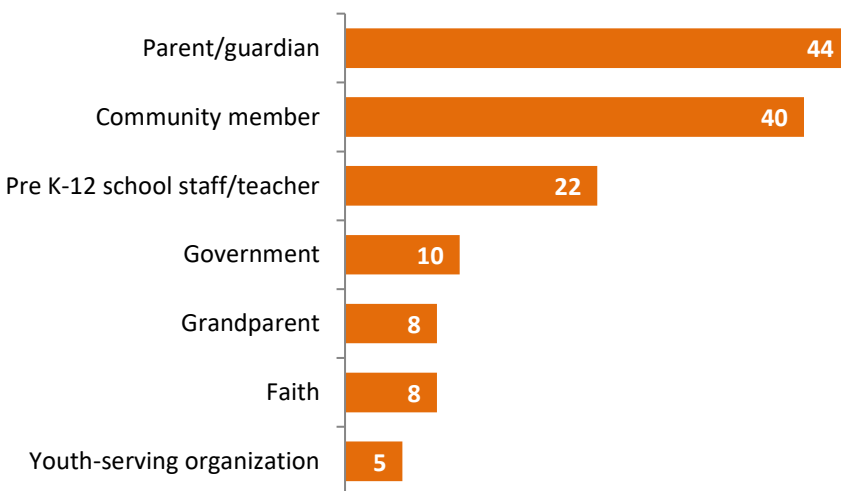
Robbinsdale Area School District Demographics

| Enrollment as of 10/1/2019 (Source: District)			
Total (#)	12,393		
American Indian	0.059%	White	37.69%
Asian	6.24%	HPI	5
Hispanic	15.5%	Bi-/multi-racial	9.59%
Black	30.34%	% Minority	58.20%
Free/reduced lunch enrollment	49.1%	# Languages spoken	>50

One-on-One Community Conversation Participants

When asked about the community they most identify with, participants shared numerous communities they felt a part of. Communities were defined by geographic, race/ethnicity, and affinity group. In addition to a set of check boxes used to identify sector representation, a number of participants also shared their race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, faith, age group, and income level.

Sector Representation

Participants were most likely to identify as a parent (n = 44), community member (n = 40), and PreK-12 school staff member or teacher (n = 22). Ten participants represent government, all but one represented local government. Of the eight grandparents, most also identified as parents. Sectors indicated by fewer than five respondents each included: business, civic/volunteer, daycare provider, healthcare provider, law enforcement, mental health provider, social service provider, student, university/college staff/ faculty, and other (e.g., community advocate, community provider, non-profit.) No respondents identified as a representative from the media. A number of participants selected multiple sectors.

Sector	Count
Parent/guardian	44
Community member	40
Pre K-12 school staff/teacher	22
Government	10
Grandparent	8
Faith	8
Youth-serving organization	5

In terms of geographic representation, the cities of New Hope (n = 23) and Crystal (n = 22) were more frequently mentioned than other cities, followed by identification with the broader Robbinsdale Area School District (n = 16). Brooklyn Center (n = 2) was the least cited city by participants. In addition to these cities, five people identified with Hennepin County or the metro area, and one person identified with Minneapolis. Several participants identified with more than one geographic area. Several Plymouth residents differentiated between East and West Plymouth.
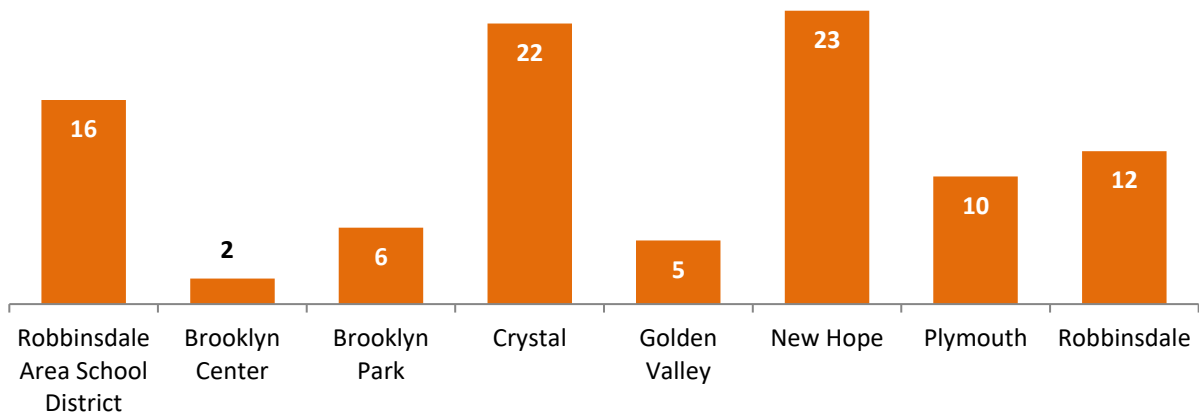
One-on-one community conversation participants also identified with family, friend, housing, neighborhood, parent, and work communities. Each of these communities were mentioned by fewer than five people.

While not all participants identified their gender, 26 identified themselves as female and 16 as male. Among those who identified their race/ethnicity: 48 identified as White/Caucasian, 11 as African American, five as Hispanic/Latino, four as African (e.g., East African, Ethiopian, Liberian), and one as Native American. Some individuals identified with multiple races/ethnicities (e.g., White Hispanic, African American and African). When asked to identify the community they identify with, several of the African American, African and Hispanic/Latino respondents identify with their respective communities. Three participants identified as members of the LGBTQ+ community. A small number of participants also identified their religious affiliation (e.g., Muslim, Jewish, Christian), their age range (e.g., teen, young adult senior), and/or their income bracket (e.g., low income, middle class, upper class).

Familiarity with ACEs

Roughly half of all participants were familiar with Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). Forty-five percent of participants said they had not heard of ACEs.
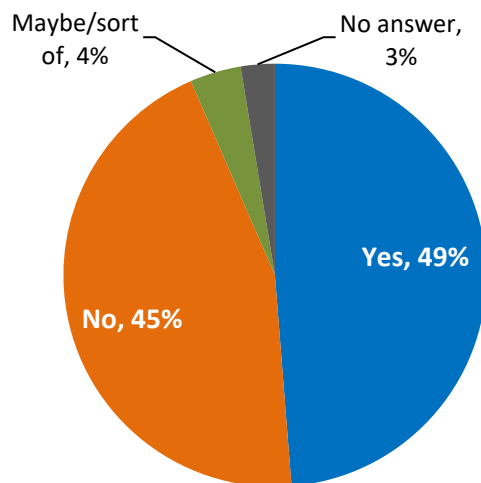
Community Voice

Participants were asked if they felt like they had a voice in the community. Most **respondents (n = 41) said they do feel that they have a voice.** Among these, ten identified as community leaders (e.g., school board, city council, mayor) or were connected to community leaders. Seven felt that their voices would be heard if they were proactive and wanted their voice heard. Four people felt their voices were heard when they exercised their right to vote. Several felt that their voice would be heard because they are white, or from certain families or backgrounds. Two acknowledged that they don't always agree with what is decided but they do make their voices heard. One respondent shared:

"I think I do more (have a voice) because I am diplomatic as a person and not in your face.   If you are a hard advocate for LGBTQ+ and in your face, they are not always listened to, especially from the far right. I am more of a middle left so people are more likely to listen to me."

However, some participants (n = 21) felt that their voice is not heard. Several people felt that even when given the opportunity to provide input, the decisions have already been made. Three respondents expressed frustration over trying to advocate to get their children's needs met. One of these three shared:

"How many times do you have to reach out to a teacher, counselor, etc. and when you reach out to everybody you possibly thought you could and the answer is nothing … you've just failed your kid."

Some respondents didn't feel heard because they live in a smaller subset of a larger city or are "just a kid." Respondents from African American and immigrant communities shared:
- *"Our voices do not get heard. When I vocalize something about school, no one hears me or listens. They only want me involved when they call me. I have a master's degree. They only see me as a parent. We are marginalized. We are in the district, but how can we trust you when you only seek our involvement when there is a problem."*
- *"Voice requires numbers. And if there are not enough people, and I can't necessarily say black – needs to be white folks involved too for change to occur – so, it depends on how many people I have along with me on what I am asking to change; but I would say no."*

Ten people felt that their voices are heard sometimes or somewhat. Several felt that it's challenging to navigate the right channels and to find the right ear. Another noted:

"I will say that I am a person who will always raise my voice; depending on the situation, I don't really know it is heard--at which point you don't really have a voice."

Community Strengths and Values

What Community Does Well

When asked what the community does well, the top two themes that emerged were **programming** and **safety**. Eighteen people also talked about community programs - recreational, educational, and supportive. Recreational programming areas communities cited as doing well include summer programs, community center activities, pools, Park and Rec, and arenas. Some respondents did note that they had to travel to a community center in another city either because their city didn't have one, or their city didn't have affordable activities for low-income families and youth with disabilities. Educational programs noted by respondents included Community Education, Early Childhood Family Education, libraries (including little free libraries), fire safety classes, and educational opportunities for all ages. Participants were appreciative of supportive programs and efforts including Redesign programming for at-risk youth, Boys and Girls Club, the Step It Up Program, Seven Dreams, the HUG diaper program, housing supports for people living with disabilities, and food shelves. Related to programming, one respondent described an active arts community in the area, including artwork and music.

Eighteen people spoke about safety. Among these, 13 expressed appreciation for local law enforcement. Police were described as responsive, accessible, committed, competent, and respectful. Similarly, six people expressed appreciation for local fire departments. A few people commented about police and fire departments responding to physical and mental health crises, as well as connecting with local youth. A number of people spoke to feeling safe in general in their neighborhoods and communities.

The next most common theme was **neighbors supporting neighbors**. Thirteen participants described ways in which neighbors watch out for each other, such as watching each other's homes, plowing driveways, checking each other's mail, and conducting mental health checks.

> *"There is an elderly woman who lives across the hall – she has all her prescriptions mailed to her. We make sure she gets it by her door."* And, *"When a storm happens, everyone makes sure everyone is okay."*

Twelve people felt their communities have great **parks and green spaces**. Respondents appreciate the parks, trails, biking and walking paths, golf courses, greenways and other outdoor gathering spaces. Ten participants described community supports related to **health, healthcare and wellness**, in clinics, schools, worksites and throughout the community. Specific examples shared include dental clinics for low-income families, women's clinics, a well-at-work clinic, and increased community conversations around mental health.

Ten people also spoke to **information and resource sharing**. Among these, seven people expressed appreciation for their communities' communication and transparency. Participants receive information through city meetings, social media, communication from schools, and quarterly newsletters to residents. One person in particular appreciated meetings held outside City Hall, like parks - a more informal setting for information sharing where community members can feel more comfortable and get to know one another. On the topic of resource sharing, people described city efforts to connect people with resources especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. One person described resource sharing among low-income families:

"Low income families need to bond together—in as far as transportation and social connections, which are vital for survival. So they provide connections and resources, spread those resources out in a bartering way, to help one another; referring to the different resources available."

The next most common themes were the **strong school district**, **faith communities**, and **city maintenance and infrastructure**. Respondents felt area schools do a good job of supporting youth and family health, well-being and safety. Schools were described as having strong leadership, being innovative and welcoming, and working to address inequities. One person shared a success story about a school program that supports at-risk youth.

"I think we probably work with the most at-risk students in our program; so those that may not have a hope of going to college. We tend to let them see that that is a possibility for them and so we also bring in our students who are in college to help them see who has been successful before them. So we use mentors from our program as well. I think that is one of the shining moments of our program is to use students who have gone before them who look like them."

When describing the strengths of the faith community, several people cited efforts to help families with food supports, clothing, shelter, and supports for people in treatment and recovery. One respondent described ways their church partners with other community organizations:

"I think probably the biggest thing we do is we talk about not wanting to exist for ourselves but the good of the community. So that, for a lot of churches, is a shift in thinking. So we look outside of ourselves to people who are already doing the work of keeping the community healthy and resilient and we ask what we have to enhance the work or opportunity, to play off of each other and make our work stronger. So we have a number of community partners and PRISM, and we partner with Northport Elementary School and we give them, each student, a lunch for a weekend that they take home with them. So it is identifying organizations and then we are asking what the need is and addressing the need."

On the topic of city maintenance and infrastructure, respondents appreciated the cleanliness of their communities and described neighbors helping to pick up litter. People also noted "strong, healthy infrastructure" to include buildings, roads, and utilities. Related to this, the next most common theme was **local government**. Respondents spoke to strong community leaders, responsiveness to community members' questions and requests, and collaboration between city agencies and municipalities.

Participants who identified as members of African American, immigrant, or LGBTQ+ communities spoke to specific supports within those communities - advocating for one another, checking in on one another, having each other's backs, and building community resilience. One respondent shared:

"For the African American community, I feel like we are the drums–If the community were a song, we would be the beat. We bring a lot of resilience to our community. There is a lot of hope, a sense of familiarity. For the health and safety and well-being...let's level that to advance both communities towards more equality and equity in the state of Minnesota."

Six participants described ways in which their communities are **engaging, collaborating and connecting**. Examples shared include volunteerism, collaboration across multiple community organizations, connecting through social media and social events, and community celebrations and gatherings. In addition to these themes, other community strengths mentioned include: support for youth, support for seniors, businesses like grocery stores, housing, and diversity.

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Important Community Values

A number of people struggled with the question asking about their community's values - it was easier for some people to share their own values rather than to perceive the values of others. However, almost all respondents shared multiple values.

Common themes included:
- **Safety**
- **Family and friends, caring for others, and relationships, and looking out for neighbors**
- **Inclusivity, equity, diversity, and sense of belonging**
- **Respect, human decency, compassion, and grace**
- **Education**
- **Honesty, transparency, authenticity, and trustworthiness**

"So I think one thing we value is trying to figure out meaning in the world, and making a difference in the lives of others and figure out where we are called to show up and enter into the story of someone else. Huge emphasis on community, that anything we do on our own is going to be made richer when we join in community, and probably more impactful too."

While youth was noted as a value, one respondent felt that a failed referendum for the school district didn't reflect this value. *"We say we care about kids, but it doesn't always show up in the actions."* Other values noted by at least five participants were infrastructure like transportation, green spaces, and grocery stores, as well as overall health and wellbeing.

What Makes People Feel Connected

Participants were asked what makes them feel connected to their community. While several respondents noted that COVID-19 has led to feelings of isolation and longing for connection, one person stressed that the pandemic may have led to physical distancing but that people are still finding ways to connect socially.

The most common theme was **participating in/attending community events.** Twenty-five people said they feel connected when they attend community gatherings and celebrations, volunteer at events or serve on boards and committees. Among these, one person stressed the importance of attending groups hosted by other cultural communities to demonstrate inclusivity and solidarity. Another recommended working to make community celebrations more welcoming by diversifying the food vendors, the musicians, and the activities (e.g. African American drumming in addition to 1980s pop music, basketball and soccer in addition to baseball). While one participant feels connected serving on committees with other community leaders, they noted the importance of finding multiple connections in order to really build lasting relationships.

The next most common theme was **communication and conversations**. Sixteen participants feel connected because they receive communication from local leaders and officials or informative networks, or communication from community members through traditional and social media. Among

these, one greatly appreciated the opportunity to participate in the one-on-one community conversations.

Eleven people spoke to walking around their neighborhood, **talking to neighbors and watching out for neighbors** as a way to feel connected. Eleven participants feel connected when they spend time with **family, friends and colleagues** - among these, one specified time with friends and family who speak their language/are from their culture and three people commented about building friendship after being in the community for decades. Nine participants commented about **faith-based connections**, and nine people noted connecting with people through **community amenities** like parks, lakes and streams, trails, pools, libraries, the YMCA, local businesses, and farmer's markets. Eight people feel more connected by **sharing a meal or drink** with others; examples included BBQs, cooking for neighbors, meals with community leaders, food vendors at community events, and baking cookies for new neighbors.

Seven people described connections built through **receiving or providing services**. Recipients of services listed HUG, PPL, and case managers. Service providers noted serving youth and seniors, and helping to provide basic needs. One person shared: *"So I feel like being able to work with the most vulnerable people helps me stay connected to the community. Because if our most vulnerable is not okay, the community is not okay."* Six respondents feel connected when interacting with other **parents** who have kids of the same age. Six people said they feel connected through **school district** connections and programs. Of these, one shared:

"What has helped is spaces that are brave spaces, spaces that are intentional and the practice of circle has increased my connections instrumentally and I find myself in community in ways I never would have dreamed...youth can come to circles and say—It is black history month but no one is talking about it, except a poster in the hallway. Great conversations have helped me feel connected."

Conversely, seven participants said that they **do not feel connected** to community. A couple of people cited turnover; one noted: *"Nobody nurtures relationships. There is a general feeling of people keeping to themselves. It may be because people don't bother to get to know people who aren't going to stay in the area."* Two people who do not have children found it challenging to connect with other adults who are not parents--especially for young adults. Even among parents there can be barriers. One person who does feel connected to community described a book club formed by mothers of kids attending the same school; they noted that mothers with kids attending other schools sometimes join but they "don't last long."

Who Helps

In addition to asking what helps them feel connected, participants were asked who helps them in times of need. After listing the people who help, one respondent shared:

> *"Sometimes you just need someone else to hold your story, what you are going through. It is not about having them fix you or your situation but hold your story."*

The most common theme was turning to **partners, family and friends** for help and support. Fifty-five people noted that partners/spouses, family members, and close friends listen to them, encourage them, provide advice, and help with things like childcare and transportation. Among these, three noted that family and friends will "call them" on things or "set them straight" if they are being out of line. Another three participants shared that it's easier to voice concerns and needs to friends and family within their

own cultural group. Of these three, one turns to family for help dealing with racial issues - learning from family members' past experiences and how they deal with situations. Another shared:

"So, the way it normally works in our community, we should be able to turn to our neighbors. I find it hard being I am a transplant... I find it hard to be able to be trusting of asking, outside of my immediate friends or immediate network, to ask for help. And it is because that I know either if it is about the way that I live culturally, or who I am, I don't want a negative perception tied to my lifestyle or who I am... I don't want to be put in their box and stereotyped, as they have (in the past). I turn to friends, those in my immediate circle."

The next most common sources of help (n = 14) was **community members with experience and connections**, including city staff and community leaders. Eleven people said they turn to **neighbors** for help, and ten said they turn to their **faith community**. Nine participants turn to **colleagues and their work community** for help. Nine people spoke to seeking help from **service providers** and support networks such as Redesign, ECFE, social workers, 411, support networks for women, and youth services.

Six participants discussed **school administration, teachers, and district staff**, though not all were described as helpful. One youth felt that hall monitors and equity specialists were more helpful than teachers. One parent expressed frustration:

"There are a number of people that I have turned to who haven't helped, for instance, school leadership. I feel like the district leadership pays a lot of lip service to wanting to be partners with parents, but they only reach out when they want your support--such as when they have a levy on the ballot or when your kids are causing trouble. When parents have concerns about the schools or the teachers, they are less engaged. There is no accountability and they don't want partnership. They just want to tell you that your perception is not valid. There is no real conversation, just damage control."

Seven respondents described themselves as privileged or blessed, sharing that they did not need much in the way of help. This may be indicative of how "need" is defined or contextualized.

Community Needs

Community Challenges

When asked about the most significant challenge facing the community, the most common theme shared was **diversity, inclusion and discrimination**. Respondents commented about lack of inclusivity, growing inequities, competing priorities and needs, fear of differences, and lack of compassion. There were key variations in how this theme was framed. Twenty-six people spoke to growing diversity in the communities. One person noted that diversity in broader communities doesn't reflect diversity in the schools. Some addressed east vs. west differences and disparities in Plymouth, and north vs. south disparities in Brooklyn Park. Thirteen people cited significant challenges with racism, sexism, and homophobia. For example, one respondent reflected on area schools' lack of LGBTQ+ mentors, the community not being reflected in existing curricula, lack of safe, gender neutral bathrooms and locker rooms, and teachers not intervening when students say something homophobic.

> *"Well, just inequity in the housing and education system and just being a person of color is always going to be a challenge--to be treated the same, be respected, don't be taken as a number. Understanding that people come from other communities of color (not all people of color are African American), communities of color can live in different ways and understanding our differences and—being perceived as different--perceptions of communities of color as a whole (in one race). And that is a challenge. It is a challenge to always be stereotyped. Understand that we have the same needs and the same things that the rest of the community needs but, like, it is just being treated differently.*
>
> *I know the school is doing a good job now, because they are recognizing, you know, inequities. And I think that is getting better; but it is a new challenge even in the way stuff is being done is different between communities of color (Hmong versus African American). So just being culturally aware, I would say."*

Some participants reflected on growing acknowledgement of inequities. One participant said *"I think there are people starting to ask questions, real questions, about equity in society; and they are starting to see more of their actual neighbors who are, you know, coming under the weight of some of the systemic stuff."* Other respondents expressed frustration with attempts at engagement, while expecting members of other cultural groups to attend their meetings and functions.

Related to diversity and inclusion, five participants addressed language barriers. One person was dismayed that youth who speak other languages are sometimes automatically placed in ELL courses whether or not it's needed. Another spoke about youth having to serve as translators for family members, helping with paperwork and attending appointments with family members.

The next most common theme was **housing** (n = 13), though housing concerns differed among respondents. While most of these respondents expressed concern about lack of affordable housing, three people expressed concern about housing values going to low or rental properties not being kept

up. Other concerns included high taxes, and an over-abundance of senior housing (with worry that seniors do not contribute as much to the economy).

Eleven participants noted **poverty and income disparities** as a significant community concern. One specific example was lack of free activities for youth from low-income families. *"It is really exciting for kids because we take them on trips...they can have all they can eat at a lunch on the campus, so that is exciting, as that doesn't happen to cost them anything. Sometimes the field trips at school cost money and they have to stay back, and they sometimes feel singled out. And in our programs, they are not turned away--it is free."*

Related to this topic, concerns were expressed about good paying jobs, access to affordable childcare, and food insecurity. Respondents specified a lack of access to existing food:

"There is a lot of food around, it is just how do you get to the people...because some residents -- they cannot get to NEAR (Food Shelf) or PRISM (Food Shelf) or the churches--or they do not feel comfortable getting there. So, there is food available but there is so much waste – you know, for businesses that have to throw food away, we could better utilize getting this to the community."

Ten people addressed **access to quality education**, including special education, tutoring services, resources and support, and communication from the schools. Similar to discussions around diversity and housing, concerns differed among respondents. While a majority of the ten respondents wished for more resources for students and families, a few expressed concerns about families leaving the community for "better schools" or resources going to a small number of higher need youth at the detriment to most students. Divisions between families sending their kids to public magnet schools vs. non-magnet public schools were also noted.

COVID-19 challenges were noted by eight respondents, including issues of isolation, distancing learning, family stress, and capacity to serve community members while practicing physical distancing. Specific examples of the latter are families not being able to attend church, and seniors not having access to a wellness program that also provide an opportunity for socialization. Related to these challenges, seven people talked about isolation, not feeling connected to community, and not feeling welcome as a newcomer to the community.

Access to **health care, mental health services, and health insurance** were noted by seven people. Related to this, participants spoke to health promotion, education and awareness raising. **Political division and polarization** were noted by five people. Numerous other concerns were raised by one-to-three people, ranging from crime to transportation to adequate green space to neighborhood cleanliness to places for youth to hang out. Lack of awareness of resources were noted by a few people, including lack of awareness that parent educators are licensed to provide support to parents of young children, teens and emerging adults - across all stages of development.

Missing Supports

When asked about missing supports in the community, the most common theme was **accessing mental health services** (n = 22). Examples included more school-based mental health services, wellness checks for those struggling, reduced stigma, suicide prevention supports (especially for LGBTQ+ youth), culturally responsive mental health services, and awareness of/help navigating existing mental health supports and services. Regarding the latter, one respondent shared:

"Just helping people understand the value to teens and adults of counseling, of the different roles of different therapists' licenses and the accessibility payment structures, all that stuff. How they can access it and utilize it. I think it always feels to people who haven't had experience with it like a mystery and a stigma, as opposed to a healthcare benefit and asset. So just continuing to help people know that that is something that can enhance their lives, like a gym membership for physical health."

Continuing with that theme, 20 participants commented on the **lack of awareness of existing resources**. Recommendations were made for increased coordination, and development of one-stop-shop access to services and supports. *"Services are disconnected and there is not just one place to go to. For A, I have to go to one person; for B I have to go to another person; for C I have to go to yet another person. It is a lot of work to help families because nothing is coordinated. So many different places – where do you start!"* Respondents recommended: city websites with links to basic services that are easy for families to navigate and understand, packaged resources to share with those new to the community (including culturally-specific resources), and resources that neighbors can share with neighbors who are struggling (e.g., job loss). *"I worry about some of my neighbors needing support and I don't know where to tell them to go."* One person noted that barriers to connecting families to resources include high mobility, resulting in changes of address and disconnected phone numbers, especially during COVID-19.

Fifteen respondents addressed missing **housing supports**, such as affordable housing, housing large enough for families, and supports for homeless teens. One person pointed out that some immigrant communities cannot carry a loan or mortgage as it's against their religious beliefs, making it challenging to purchase a car, let alone a home. One person recommended developing affordable tiny house communities. Several noted the need for rental supports. Examples include:

- *"Support services don't kick in until it's too far away to help people avoid emergency assistance; different ways to intervene with dignity and earlier help like with one month's rent as opposed to foreclosing on a home."*
- *"Many families have to pay a huge background check fee for each rental property they apply for, even if they end up being denied. A consortium could help make those checks available for 60 days and shared across rental programs. The fees add up and can be a significant hardship for families."*

The next most common theme was lack of **activities and programming** for youth, adults, and families (n = 8). Recommendations included pools, movies and plays, readings, programming in parks, community centers, and activities for older youth to do with younger youth, like pickup basketball games. Five respondents described lack of **support for seniors living alone, people with disabilities, and their caregivers**. Four people noted lack of supports for youth and families struggling with domestic violence and abuse; another four cited food access. Other missing supports mentioned by at least two people

included affordable healthcare, support for parents, affordable childcare, opportunities for community members to get to know one another, life skills training for youth, and opportunities to address systemic racism and bias.

Recommendations

What Can Be Done Now to Support You and Your Family

Some people struggled to identify supports that would help themselves or their families, and/or answered the question by identifying what could be done for others in the community. These respondents felt that they didn't have needs. Others' recommendations largely aligned with community challenges and missing supports identified in the previous section of this report. Among those who shared ideas, no themes were endorsed by ten or more people.

Nine respondents recommended more **opportunities for community members to get together** (e.g., activities, neighborhood and block events, BBQs, City Hall in the Park). Eight people suggested **improved infrastructure and amenities** like parks, playgrounds, sidewalks, trails, gardens, streets (e.g., lighting, safety, streets conducive to skateboarding).

While four people wished for a timely reopening of businesses, three people endorsed stay-at-home measures and wished others were taking COVID-19 more seriously. Four people spoke to the importance of community members providing grace, withholding judgment and listening. Four people recommended more safety and security at area businesses and housing complexes.

> *"I think it might be helpful for everyone, myself included, to stop making assumptions about others that you don't know. It's better to seek understanding, to listen deeply to gain understanding. I am talking about everyone in the community – not just those with institutional power."*

Three people each suggested: more authentic opportunities for community engagement, increased community support for the school district, increased food security, more enrichment opportunities and job opportunities for older youth and young adults, and increased sharing of information and opportunities in the community.

"I think with what is going on right now, is having a list of things around the community we can take advantage of. I don't know – a list somewhere of independent people that are doing stuff that you could call. Maybe a yoga instructor or maybe it is -- I am trying to think – a person just doing cooking out of their house – a list of people so we can support our community better."

Ideas endorsed by at least two participants include: more affordable housing opportunities, increased mental health education/awareness, increased advocacy for disabled persons, and checking in on friends and neighbors.

"We could go around and put a note in my neighbor's mailboxes to say that I hope that they are okay. It doesn't have to be done by someone else, it could be me. However, it's my experience is that it's not something that people here do. I definitely think something like that would be a benefit for our community."

What Would Have the Greatest Community Impact

Recommendations for action steps that would have the greatest community impact echoed sentiments shared about supports that would help respondents' families. The most common theme was better access to **health and mental health services** (n = 15), including social and emotional well-being and wraparound services (e.g., mental and physical health care, housing, transportation, food supports, homework help). One respondent suggested online mental health resources for youth:

"Being that it [education] is virtual now...there are some webinars where kids can call in for mental health and there are some for younger kids and some specifically for kids of color that I am going to look into and share with them. I know that Cooper has a site for meditation and calming and different things for kids who are struggling. And I also think it would be good to – maybe if kids need to talk to somebody and--there is such a stigma with the African American community with the therapy piece and there are roadblocks with paperwork. Someone that kids can talk to that is more culturally relevant, that would be helpful. Fallout from all of this (COVID-19). Concerned with the pressures at home. Concerned with everybody at home together. Pressures of family, pressures of parents, stress and how that is all going to possibly explode all under one roof. I would like to see some resources put in place and outlets for kids that can have an immediate help for them."

Eleven participants recommended **more investment in schools and education, more supports for distance learning, and more equitable support across schools** in the district. One person specifically stressed the need for teachers and school staff who represent and look like the students they serve. Another respondent shared:

"I believe that the education system is the foundation of the community; because when you want to know how the community is doing, you ask, "How are the children?" And in my community, as far as the children, we are not doing very well--in the terms of graduation. I don't think it is a reflection of our children as uneducable, even though others may see them as that. I think it is a problem of having opportunities afforded to our kids and – it is about having those opportunities afforded to our children and so when there is a breakdown in that (we can rally around that breakdown). It is my belief that the education is the foundation – nothing else is going to thrive for our community because – housing, health – all those disparities stem from education disparities and all that rolls down to one thing – literacy. Literacy is the difference between life and death in our community and literacy is the foundation. Once that is strong, I think that there is a lot more that we will be able to be do."

More opportunities to **get to know neighbors and make connections** was suggested by seven respondents. Seven people also recommended better **information sharing/communication** about opportunities and resources. *"Have a central location for community of resources which address and support the social emotional wellbeing of ALL."*

Four people addressed the need for **more welcoming schools and communities**, seeing themselves represented, and greater acceptance and understanding (e.g., for LGBTQ+ community, people of color, and immigrants). Four participants also spoke to **addressing systemic and institutionalized discrimination** faced by people of color, immigrants, and the LGBTQ+ community (e.g., improving law enforcement, schools, corrections, healthcare systems). Improved supports noted by at least two respondents include: parent education and peer supports, better/safer walking paths and green spaces, more free and low-cost activities for youth, housing security, food security, life skills training, support for local businesses, and more positive interactions between police and youth.

What Others Should Know

Participants were asked about one thing they know that they wish others knew and paid attention to. A number of people struggled to answer this question, some skipping it altogether. While the most common topic was **schools and education** (n = 11), the responses varied greatly. Among these, four people wished others understood the extent to which school board, superintendent, and teachers strive to make the best decisions to support youth. Three wished there were more appreciation and support for education. A couple of respondents felt that schools made decisions for some student groups to the detriment of other students--while one felt privileged students sometimes benefit from more resources, another felt that youth with behavioral issues received more resources. Lastly, one person wished more community members would see the good in students:

" I wish that the people in the community saw the great things that are happening in both Cooper and Robbinsdale Middle School...I have worked with teens my whole life and so my perspective has always been they are giving kids, who want the best, and want to be successful.   And I have never made – never made a call to one of my former students where they have not wanted to come back and talk to other students about their success. I have had the only Somali dentist in the state come back and speak, doctors, nurses...I see a lot of negative stuff (out there) and I wish they would focus on the students and the great things that are happening."

Ten participants noted that the **community is caring**, and that people would benefit from connecting more. Ten people wished others were **more aware of resources** in the community, such as the HUG program, food shelves, YMCA programs, and healthcare options for the uninsured.

> **Six people addressed the issues of <u>Adverse Childhood Experiences</u> and mental health needs, especially during the pandemic.**
> - *" Mental health of the parents. It is so easy for a parent to dismiss what is going on within themselves because you are so focused on your child or children, so you put yourself on the backburner. Being aware and knowing when to talk to someone – professionals, friends, family."*
> - *"Several of the children on my caseload have been abused either verbally or physically. Would love child abuse to be talked about and make it something that my kids could report and be believed, especially now during the pandemic. There is economic strain which increases mental health needs. The trauma on individuals is real."*

Five respondents spoke to the idea that **diversity brings strength**. Another five spoke to the importance of **environmental stewardship**. Three people wish that others were more aware of **implicit bias**, more aware of what they say and how they frame things. Topics mentioned by at least two people were awareness of how decisions are made in local government, need to engage and support seniors, need to address homelessness, and that city council and board members are not representative of the communities served.

"I wish there was..."

Finally, one-on-one conversation participants were to complete the sentence: "I wish there was a place in our community where…" The most common themes were **spaces to gather and connect**, and **resource hubs**.

- Places where people could gather and get to know one another like parks/dog parks, community centers, cafes, or a thriving downtown area (n = 19).
- Safe places for kids to go, whether it's to hang out, access things like mentors and homework help, or a place to spend the night (n = 14).
- A place where people could go and be themselves, be safe, be valued and not be judged--where people can have powerful and meaningful conversations regardless of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation (n = 13).
- A one-stop-shop for resources (n = 9).
- A safe place or shelter for all ages (n = 4).
- A place where parents can gather and network (n = 2).
- A place where young adults can gather besides bars (n = 2).

On the topic of spaces for people to gather, one respondents shared: *"I really wish we could figure out a good space where it is not always a competition for space...we do have a lot of seniors' classes and that battles with teens and other programming. We could fill this place all day long, every day, with different opportunities for seniors. And then the other end is teens; and to be totally honest, it is a lot of the school-aged kids too. I wanted to—sadly--cut down the trees in the back and make a program building. That would put such a huge building on site, for kids—almost for camp right on site."*

> *"Sometimes you just need someone else to hold your story, what you are going through. It is not about having them fix you or your situation but hold your story."*

References

1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Adverse Childhood Experiences. Updated April 3, 2020. https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html
2. ACEs Too High. https://acestoohigh.com/
3. ACEs Connection. https://www.acesconnection.com/
4. The George Washington University, Milken Institute School of Public Health. Sumner M. Redstone Global Center for Prevention and Wellness: Resilient Communities. https://publichealth.gwu.edu/departments/redstone-center/resilient-communities

Resources

- Robbinsdale Area Redesign: https://www.rdale.org/(763) 504-4981
- FamilyWise: https://familywiseservices.org/
- Substance Use in Minnesota, reports and data, including MSS data on ACEs, mental health, and substance use, by county and demographic group: https://www.SUMN.org
- Minnesota Department of Human Services, Adult ACE report: https://www.health.state.mn.us/docs/communities/ace/acereport.pdf
- Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Student Survey data: https://education.mn.gov/MDE/DSE/MDE085585
- Minnesota Kids Count, data on the wellbeing of children in Minnesota: https://datacenter.kidscount.org/data#MN
- MN Compass, data on various Minnesota topics, such as health, housing, and equity: https://www.mncompass.org/

Appendix

Interview Questions

1. I am going to be asking you questions about "your community." What *community* do you most identify with?

2. In your opinion, what does your community do well to support the health, safety, and wellbeing of people who live here?

3. What values do you think are most important to your community?

4. What are the most significant challenges that your community faces?

5. What's something you know that you wish other people in your community knew and paid attention to?

6. What's one thing that could be done right now by the community that would make a difference for you or your family?

7. What is one thing that could be done that would have the greatest impact on improving wellbeing in your community?

8. What helps you feel connected to your community*? (If you don't feel connected, what might help?)*

9. When you need help, who do you turn to and how do they help?

10. What types of support services for individuals and families are missing in your community?

11. Could you please finish this sentence with your ideas?   "I wish there was a place in our community where…"

12. Do you feel like you have a voice when decisions are made in the community?

13. What have we missed that you would like to share?

14. Have you ever heard about Adverse Childhood Experiences or ACEs?   ❐Yes   ❐No

15. Who are some other people who you think we should interview*?*