



CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

THE 113TH ARIZONA TOWN HALL



FINAL REPORT



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CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

FINAL REPORT

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The 113th Statewide Arizona Town Hall, which took place online via Zoom conferencing technology from January 24-26, 2022, developed consensus recommendations on the topic of "Creating Vibrant Communities." Before the Statewide Town Hall, a number of precursor Community Town Halls and Future Leaders Town Halls provided valuable insights and ideas to the participants at the 113th Statewide Town Hall and to the communities sponsoring the Community Town Halls and Future Leaders Town Halls.

Vitalyst Health Foundation, in partnership with community experts and the Arizona Town Hall Research Committee, lent its time and talent to create a fact-based background report integral to the understanding of the topic. The Background Report, distributed to all participants in advance of the Town Hall sessions, is an essential element to the success of these consensus-driven discussions. Vitalyst Health Foundation and all those who worked with them on the Background Report created a unique resource for a fuller understanding of the topic.

Our sincere thanks go to the report's authors for sharing their time, wealth and breadth of knowledge, and diverse professional talents.

Our deepest gratitude also goes to Jon Ford, Kelsey Otten, and Amanda Nelson for marshalling authors, creating content, and serving as lead editors of the Background Report.

The "Creating Vibrant Communities" Town Hall sessions could not have occurred without the financial assistance of our generous Professional Partners. These Partners include the sponsors of the Statewide Town Hall (Vitalyst Health Foundation, Arizona Public Service (APS), the Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community (SRPMIC), Salt River Project (SRP), Health Choice Arizona, Affinity Wealth Management, Center for the Future of Arizona, and the Town of Oro Valley), as well as numerous sponsors of the various Community Town Halls and Future Leaders Town Halls around the state.

Contained in this single Final Report is the full text of the consensus recommendations developed by the participants at the 113th Statewide Town Hall. The Final Report also includes the individual Community Town Halls reports, a summary of the Future Leaders Town Halls reports, and the Background Report.

This report will be shared with our public officials, community and business leaders around the state, Arizona Town Hall members, and many others. It is already being used as a resource, discussion guide, and action plan on how to create vibrant Arizona communities.

Sincerely,

Evelyn Casuga
Board Chair, Arizona Town Hall
www.aztownhall.org

**C R E A T I N G
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C O M M U N I T I E S**

Statewide Town Hall

**R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S
R E P O R T**

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Michael J. Langley, Director, Racial Equity Advancement Project, Greater Phoenix Leadership

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Report of the 113th ARIZONA TOWN HALL

"Creating Vibrant Communities"

Online via Zoom

January 24-26, 2022

INTRODUCTION

"People working together in a strong community with a shared goal and a common purpose can make the impossible possible."
- *Iain Duncan Smith, Member of Parliament of the United Kingdom*

"Community is much more than belonging to something; it's about doing something together that makes belonging matter."
- *Brian Solis, Digital analyst, speaker, and author*

Community vibrancy includes many aspects of community well-being and health, and its assessment requires a holistic perspective. Health and longevity present an excellent example. Medical care is only a small part – by most estimates, somewhere between 10 and 20 percent - of what determines a population's health and longevity, which contributes to community vibrancy. The places we live, work, and play have much more impact on health and longevity. In Arizona, a child born in zip code 85256 has a life expectancy of 65.8 years; meanwhile, a child born in the adjacent zip code of 85251 has a dramatically longer life expectancy of 80.89 years. There are many factors that play into why this disparity exists including but not limited to structural racism, built into the systems that impact life expectancy.

We can view community vibrancy through Vitalyst Health Foundation's Elements of a Healthy Community (Vitalyst Wheel) – a framework built by statewide community partners using data and science from national and international sources. Fourteen elements are identified that are present and robust in vibrant communities. When all these elements are intentionally cultivated, coordinated, and aligned, communities thrive and prosper.

Set against this backdrop, participants across the state convened virtually in the 113th Arizona Town Hall to consider ways in which community action and policy change can create a healthier Arizona for all.

Participants found that communities are vibrant for all only when they have fairly offered options for different kinds of development, mobility, and autonomy, such as: (1) supportive spaces for community and development including high quality air and water, (2) a diverse array of affordable, quality foods, (3) livable, supportive, and obtainable housing, (4) educational opportunity, and (5) economic opportunity. Additionally, crucial building blocks to a vibrant community include pivotal social elements like equity, civic engagement, social cohesion, and community safety. It is important to elect officials with the ability to listen, understand, and act upon the true needs of the community. When community infrastructure is planned for sustainability, social connections, and well-being, then all Arizonans will have the opportunity to thrive.

Participants also recognized that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to a vibrant community. Some of the most effective solutions have historically come through the voices of communities experiencing the largest vibrancy gaps.

Participants considered current disparities noted in the background report such as:

- 35.1% of people living in urban areas have low access to healthy food.
- Low-income individuals spend 58% of their income on transportation, on average, with higher percentages spent in rural areas.
- In Arizona, 45% of rented homes are rented at 30% or more of household income.
- Homelessness in Arizona increased almost 10% from 2017 to 2018.
- Only one in four adults in the state meet physical activity guidelines.
- Only 21.9% of Arizonans report conversing with their neighbors; such conversation is used as an indicator to measure social cohesion within communities.
- In Arizona, the poverty rate of American Indians/Alaska Natives is 34%, 19% for Hispanic or Latino individuals, and 19% for Black or African Americans. Meanwhile, the poverty rate for White (not Hispanic or Latino) individuals is 9%.
- The poverty rate in rural Arizona is 26.9%, compared with 13.4% in urban areas of the state.
- 48% of households on Indian reservations do not have access to reliable water sources, clean drinking water, or basic sanitation. This led to COVID-19 affecting Native Americans at a rate 3.5 times higher than their white counterparts.

The COVID-19 pandemic is deeply testing Arizona's economic, housing, food, education, social, and health systems, exposing significant issues and disparities that can be transformed into key opportunities for more vibrant communities. The participants felt that the pandemic identified the potential for cross-sector, community-driven solutions to make our communities better and stronger going forward underscoring root causes that could lead to collaborative initiatives resulting in "an ounce of prevention" over a "pound of cure."

One of the key opportunities for the 113th Arizona Town Hall topic was identifying and championing transformative, collaborative, and cost-effective strategies. With the right stakeholders at the table, effective solutions to challenges are not always about spending more money or government intervention. Participants explored and discussed the elements that create vibrant, resilient, and equitable communities, through data, emergent research and examples, and lived experience, resulting in consensus recommendations to ensure a healthier and more vibrant Arizona for all.

The 113th Arizona Town Hall invited a robust, respectful policy discussion and participants hope their recommendations will inspire and motivate our state's leaders to respond to these challenges. The results of the discussions at the 113th Arizona Town Hall are included in this report. Though not all Town Hall participants agree with each of the conclusions and recommendations, this report reflects the overall consensus reached at the 113th Arizona Town Hall.

CULTIVATING AND COORDINATING COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

While communities may define themselves with descriptive names or have geographical boundaries, collaboration among communities is key to optimizing community health and vibrancy. The collaborative process should begin with identifying areas of need, assessing commonalities, identifying individuals and goal-aligned organizations to optimize the use of resources and create a strategic plan for achieving those goals. Personal safety, access to water, affordable housing, educational opportunities, access to food, medical care and social services, adequate transportation and opportunities for recreation and cultural activities are important for communities to thrive.

In planning for community needs, it is critical for community members, developers, and the business community to coordinate with state and local government, especially city and town councils and their staff. Some believe that smaller cities and towns tend to do a better job with the collaborative process, involving families and youth in the development and implementation of general community plans. It is a challenge for larger municipalities to engage in a meaningful collaborative process, and consequently their plans may be less impactful and sometimes unsustainable.

Access to health care, both treatment and prevention of disease, public safety, housing, and social services constitute “public health” issues. To improve public health in our communities, we must get beyond siloed services that do not take into account input from those needing these services. Community Health Needs Assessments, either facilitated by the Arizona Department of Health Services, county health departments, or non-profits are “bottom up” processes that include survey assessments, focus groups, and epidemiological studies and are useful in evaluating the health needs of urban, rural, and tribal communities.

It is critical to engage with communities at a grass roots level, including engagement with low-income communities, youth, and our aging population. The City of Yuma currently uses a robust community town hall process that has demonstrated effective broad spectrum community engagement, which includes a town hall process specific to Yuma’s youth. Yuma County engages with its residents and border communities on issues such as infrastructure, education, economic development, and tourism, all of which has enhanced the vibrancy of the communities within and surrounding the County. Oro Valley offers a community academy to familiarize its residents with community programs, services, activities, and their local government. In addition, Scottsdale offers free classes to the community on how its government works. Fire, water, police, and government 101 showcasing all the city departments.

In Yavapai County, different groups are working together to raise the tide and lift all boats, united by the Verde River. The Verde Valley Regional Economic Organization (VVREO) is a regional organization serving business and economic development leaders. VVREO looks at issues such as planning, development, and economic growth, and provides access to resources for regional business creation, attraction, and expansion. In addition, local communities and governments are partnering to address critical infrastructure needs such as lack of attainable and affordable housing and addressing the challenges brought about by short term rentals. For example, the cities of Cottonwood and Sedona combined resources to hire a full-time housing manager.

The Urban Land Institute (ULI) serves as a resource for those engaged in community planning and development. The ULI has developed innovative strategies to address housing, parks and recreation, streets and transportation and other land use needs.

It is critical to invest in our youth, from a very early age. First Things First is an example of an effective state agency that supports early childhood education through various initiatives. All In Education, which receives both public and private funding, and constitutes a public/private partnership, does a good job educating parents about how to advocate for their children through the Parent Educator Academy. We need to see youth as a valuable resource, providing them with life options and mentorships, and creating educational and workforce opportunities through paid internships.

Arizonans can do a better job of holding elected officials and government agencies accountable for what they say they are going to do and what they actually do. Arizona’s elected officials should reflect their constituent communities while ultimately working in the best interest of the State. Gaps remain between state and local efforts to determine who is in need, what services and resources are needed, who is at the greatest risk and how we can serve all members of our communities. We cannot forget that when we talk about community health, healthcare is only about 20%. The social determinants of health, as depicted on the Vitalyst Wheel, account for the rest. For example, lack of access to childcare has devastating, lifelong consequences on families, as is illustrated during this almost two-year COVID-19 pandemic. Lack of affordable transportation can also create pockets of hunger and poverty.

Additional efforts, whether by local communities and government or the state, must start with a comprehensive needs assessment that includes extensive outreach to groups who are often left out of the deliberative process.

Cultivating and nurturing arts and cultural opportunities can help foster unity and understanding among groups and individuals.

IMPEDIMENTS PREVENTING COMMUNITIES FROM THRIVING

There are a number of impediments to coordination and cross-sector collaboration that prevent communities from thriving. Governmental entities are constrained by policy and budget considerations, legal issues, and political considerations about the consequences of their decisions. Smaller organizations and communities may have a lack of resources and capacity as well as facing scalability challenges. Sometimes elected bodies and organizations are disproportionately influenced by the “loudest voice in the room,” and well-organized groups that may not represent the majority of residents.

Another impediment is the many silos that exist in our communities. This leads to duplication of effort and other problems. One solution for non-profits may be for grantors to strongly encourage organizations to collaborate in both design and implementation of initiatives before receiving grants.

Vibrant communities are safe communities. Underlying conditions that already exist in communities can contribute and magnify unsafe conditions, including crime and interpersonal violence.

Communities could be more vibrant if residents better understood the local and state governance framework including state funding mechanisms. Voters are expected to understand and vote on complex issues, such as school funding and taxes, but few have been educated about these issues. A return to more robust civics education in our schools would certainly help. Arizona’s Medicaid, the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS), the Arizona chapter of National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI Arizona) and the Arizona Peer and Family Coalition have developed a civic leadership initiative to address issues specific to healthcare.

We need to recognize the importance of elections and who is elected. We should consider changes to election processes such as open primaries, ranked choice voting or other voting models which could result in more diverse representation and better governance outcomes. We also need to limit the impact of money on our elections and increase the transparency of campaign contributions. Our elected leaders should continue to make data-driven decisions with cross sector collaboration to solve challenges including lack of healthcare workers, other labor shortages, burnout, trauma informed care, social services, the digital divide, access to trained employees and volunteers, use of social media, and lack of access to high quality childcare.

In some jurisdictions, such as Scottsdale, geographic differences have resulted in some constituents feeling left out. Sometimes, local planning processes have not adequately reflected cultural competency, diversity, and equity.

COVID-19 has resulted in those who were already at risk being at even greater risk now. While the Internet has helped overcome some of the disparities, it has also exposed the digital divide and made participation even more difficult for those without online connectivity. Lower cost Internet and more widespread broadband access are needed. Students need access to no-cost or affordable devices. The pandemic has compelled us to think in new and creative ways. As we make changes in our communities and processes arising from the pandemic, we must ask how we maintain the momentum.

Rural areas often lack infrastructure, such as water and sewage, which can constrain growth. Further, there is a perception that the state allocates more per capita funds and resources to urban areas over rural communities impeding community vibrancy. While there has been a huge growth in Maricopa County’s population, there needs to be more equity on how resources are distributed around the state.

As a society, we tend to focus more on what is wrong with our communities rather than solutions. Social media has made bullying easier and has adversely impacted public discourse. People have become afraid to speak publicly. Arizona Town Hall serves as an example of respectful dialogue and civic engagement.

Some of the challenges we face are national and extremely difficult to solve, such as the distribution of income, but we can focus on how such problems affect us and make appropriate decisions.

Access to care in rural communities is an impediment especially including access to specialists. Geography creates challenges because our rural communities are spread out. Rural communities need economic development to create livable wage jobs that promote families and sustain communities.

The very word community assumes cooperation, but fears can arise from people being different from each other, underlining the need to do more listening. There are counties in the state that do not want to work with other counties or communicate with each other. There are situations where there are limited resources and areas will end up fighting over pieces of the pie. An example of sharing resources is the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area sharing resources for providing educational activities for students.

Coordination requires and only moves at the speed of trust, transparency, empathy, and legitimacy.

SYSTEMS IMPACTING COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

This is not to say we should minimize or downplay the compelling manifestation of inequities that have existed historically and continue to exist today. Inequities exist in the justice system, in environmental conditions and hazards, and as a result of systemic racism, poverty, and gentrification. Inequities also exist with access to resources, such as clean air and water, nutritious foods, healthcare, transportation, municipal services, and education. Inequities are reflected by the fact that individuals living in the same metro area, but in different zip codes, with vast differences in property value, have significantly different life expectancies.

Advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion is not only the morally and ethically right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do, from an economic growth and business development standpoint. A vibrant community is not based solely on monetary wealth. Individuals want and need more than financial security, especially the younger generations that value intellectual curiosity, energy, and creativity over money. And our senior populations need an enhanced social safety net.

A lack of financial resources negatively impacts marginalized communities, which has been on heightened display with the COVID-19 pandemic and provides a visualization of Arizona's blind and weak spots regarding vibrancy and communities. Some maintain that certain economic conditions and credit practices such as payday lending and tax breaks for the wealthy, have perpetuated cycles of community poverty. This can deter businesses and organizations from investing in these areas. Our leaders in both the public and private sectors must acknowledge this and encourage immediate change by promoting direct investment in low income and socio-economically disadvantaged communities to stimulate economies and close equity gaps.

Further, we must address disparities in how education is funded in Arizona. Public education funding in Arizona is ranked among the lowest in the nation and the funding structure in place is not conducive to ensuring vibrant communities. Rural, tribal, and low-income areas do not have the same monetary resources to spend on education. More affluent communities have significantly broader educational choices and more access to better funded schools. An example of an education resource for rural communities is the Rural Activation and Innovation Network (RAIN). Grants from the National Science Foundation have also allowed STEM programs to flourish in some of our rural communities' public schools.

GOVERNMENTAL ACTIONS TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

Collaboration is the new currency. When communities and organizations work together to create vibrant communities, we maximize our ability to attract funding and solve problems.

Elected officials should rise above political polarization to represent all constituents and improve and maintain the vibrancy of Arizona communities by implementing nonpartisan and bipartisan public private partnerships under a community development framework that celebrates civility, humility, equity, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility in the spirit of collaboration reflected by past Arizona Senators John McCain and Dennis DeConcini.

Among the many examples of effective collaboration, the Maricopa Association of Governments (MAG) launched a regional council on homelessness. This process began in 2018 and involves non-profits, businesses, faith-based organizations, and local governments. In Portland, Oregon, an innovative zoning system was established due to collaboration among various entities that addressed several land use issues, and in the process institutionalized regional intergovernmental collaboration on a long-term basis.

We recognize that collaboration takes time and resources. Like many rivulets of water that flow into a stream and eventually create a river, we build a community one person at a time working together consistently. Cochise County is creating an action group to bring together a leadership multidisciplinary group including hospitals, schools, universities, and other community leaders. It addresses all areas of the social determinants of health. Public officials, non-profits and others are participating. Best practices learned include the need to set clear and measurable objectives.

To collaborate effectively, it is important to break down silos. Siloed programs tend to protect their funding sources and overlap their delivery of services. The Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) has been working with many organizations around the state on breaking down silos in the community health and public health arenas to identify overlaps in funding and services. Likewise, the Arizona Department of Housing has been working together with the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) on housing solutions.

Fire, police, libraries, and other public entities often interact with those experiencing homelessness. Local governments should launch interdisciplinary groups of those entities to address how to care for those experiencing homelessness, rather than each entity acting on its own.

Communication is critical for collaboration. In diverse communities it can be difficult to reach all residents. Newsletters can be an effective way to reach residents, but to be impactful they need to do more than just report on what is being done. They should solicit input from residents about needs and programs. Another strategy is to encourage residents to form interest groups that represent their unique region or perspective and to work with staff. Arizona State University (ASU) has been performing town hall style events to collect data on behalf of local communities and develop actionable items. Yuma County has a regional communication system that includes federal, tribes, and state agencies.

Government needs to take time to go beyond pro forma hearings to really listen to the community before taking action. Government must be transparent and open to receive comments from the public and the public needs to participate and talk back in constructive ways.

Government agencies provide training for their employees, and they could leverage those programs to help their staffs expand their awareness about how government works. This could include developing a better understanding of underserved communities as well as the impact of the social determinants of health to enhance connections with and service to those communities. An example of such training is the Bridges Out of Poverty program instituted by the RE:center in Navajo County, which is a national training program available to individuals, institutions, and the community.

We strongly encourage local, county, state, tribal, and federal leaders to hold Arizona Town Hall-style meetings, inviting participation from all voters and political parties and everyone they represent. Diverse public engagement in public meetings could also be greatly advanced by government or philanthropy funding childcare, meals, and transportation to facilitate and encourage participation.

Government should do more to communicate and provide economic development opportunities to small businesses. Government needs to understand small business needs, help them with technology and social media issues, and provide training that meets their needs.

Much of government is carried out by trained, experienced professionals. All governmental organizations should improve the public awareness about what they do. This can be achieved in many ways including social media and websites. These communications should include information about diversity, equity, and inclusion. For example, in the City of Yuma, the Yuma Crossing National Heritage Area obtained federal funding from several different sources and has communicated information about that to stakeholders and the public. This has contributed to the expansion of Yuma's tourism industry.

To educate all Arizonans, we need to look expansively and consider how we communicate information. Although information can be provided in face-to-face conversations at coffee shops and public meetings, in order to reach younger people it must be digitally accessible and provided via social media platforms they use.

Regulations need to be revised when they do not promote community vitality. For example, US Housing and Urban Development (HUD) rules currently limit benefits to members of the same family. Government should expand those benefits beyond family relationships to include neighbors and friends. This would give people an expanded sense of family and make better use of funds.

Government and communities should partner to address all of the elements of community vibrancy through optimized funding achieved through cross-sector collaboration. This includes public transportation, schools, libraries, childcare, early education, education, teachers, low-income housing tax credits, housing stock, State Housing Trust Fund, jobs, leadership training, eldercare, water, climate change, social safety nets, social determinants of health, healthcare, and mental health care. Mobile restrooms and improved access to emergency services should be available to those who are experiencing homelessness.

Loss of funding is a common issue for programs, especially for nonprofits, underscoring the importance of sustainable funding. For example, a dementia alliance in Arizona developed with funding from Vitalyst Health Foundation has produced some amazing results but is now running out of funding. It is unclear whether it can continue. Sustained funding is vital to all of these initiatives.

NON-GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION ACTIONS TO ENCOURAGE COMMUNITY VIBRANCY

Educational institutions, businesses, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, and other community stakeholders must utilize coordination and cross-sector collaboration to improve and maintain community vibrancy. One way of doing so is to hold Arizona Town Hall-style events that increase community awareness and provide networking and leadership opportunities. Encouraging dialogue between public and private sectors can breakdown organizational silos.

Information needs to be shared more freely. Agencies and institutions could share information identified in the Vitalyst Wheel or its equivalent among stakeholders, creating an information hub in which community accomplishments could be shared, and new partnerships formed.

Leadership academies, similar to ones held by the Show Low Chamber of Commerce, should be encouraged to provide opportunities for stakeholders to learn about their community as a whole, share information, and promote education and awareness in the community.

Nonprofits must be encouraged to become "coopeteers" – finding new ways to collaborate with other nonprofits and overcoming the challenge of often competing for the same funding as well as duplicating some services. The Yuma Area Nonprofit Institute is a good example of an association encouraging collaboration, not competition, and providing networking opportunities. Public and private sector collaboration is also critical.

Another example of this cross-collaboration is the Community Action Human Resources Agency, otherwise known as "CG Helps," a public private partnership between the City of Casa Grande and community nonprofits throughout Pinal County. CG Helps has been identified as the lead agency in the operation of a Homeless Resource Center. The Center is a place where homeless or those on the brink of experiencing homelessness will be able to speak with representatives and obtain services. The Resource Center is a part of one of the initial goals identified in the strategic plan of the Casa Grande Mayor's Task Force on Homelessness. The CG Helps website also provides residents with volunteer opportunities based upon geographic location.

The Gather and Grow program at The Farm at South Mountain also demonstrates successful cross-collaboration involving small business and schools. The vision for this program is to be a model of sustainability for the South Mountain and Phoenix community through farming, gardening, composting and aquaponics. Gather and Grow provides out-of-classroom education for hundreds of students and teachers both in public and private schools by partnering with Phoenix's sustainability and urban agricultural leaders to offer hands-on garden experience for students, fostering an appreciation of sustainability.

Grand Canyon University has partnered with Habitat for Humanity to engage student and employee volunteers and homeowners in performing home repairs primarily funded by state tax credits as part of a neighborhood revitalization initiative for residents living in the 85017-zip code in the City of Phoenix. This initiative has empowered residents and increased the curb appeal of the homes in the area, which has resulted in property values rising dramatically.

The Spaces of Opportunity Gardens (Spaces) is a collaboration between the Desert Botanical Gardens, the Orchard Community Learning Center, the Roosevelt School District, and others to enable South Phoenix families to have affordable access to healthy food. Spaces is transforming a food desert to a food oasis through the coordination of a 10-acre incubator farm, family gardens, and an on-site farmers market.

Individuals need to get involved on a personal level with existing community collaborations as well as volunteer to mentor youth and assist in connecting youth to pathways that lead to enhanced opportunities for education, work-force training and development, and employment. Arizona@Work is an example of an organization that provides these individualized opportunities.

FACTORS THAT PROTECT AGAINST ACES

The following actions should be prioritized to utilize coordination and cross-sector collaboration to improve and maintain the vibrancy of Arizona communities:

- With substantial funding currently available from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), and other sources there is a time sensitive need to find ways to interweave funds across silos. Cities and towns can be the best place for funds to be applied since constituents are more directly affected by government at a local level. Unincorporated and tribal communities need to be included in this as well. A cross-section of communities and organizations should approach the governor with a plan on how these funds should be expended and insist on transparency in how the funds are actually utilized. This should include processes and opportunities for meaningful consultation with community members on how to use these funds.
- Education is viewed by most Arizonans as a top priority, and we need increased civil dialogue between legislators, governmental agencies, and citizens to find and implement solutions that will improve and maintain the vibrancy of Arizona communities. Current funding for public education is not sufficient and a new way to fund this system needs to be found. Educational opportunity is a basic element of the Vitalyst Wheel upon which everything else is built. Programs such as First Things First and Junior Achievement, which involve partnerships between government, non-profits, and the private sector, target these areas. The COVID-19 pandemic cast a glaring light on the gaps between government, home, school, and community. Schools, particularly grade K-8 schools, and public libraries are community hubs where students and their families receive information, food distribution, social services, and social connection. Schools are community and life centers where health and safety issues are first identified.
- Affordable, high-speed Internet, as defined by ARPA regulations, must be expanded across the state, particularly in low income, rural, and tribal communities. Rural areas need this infrastructure expansion to improve communication, make education and healthcare more accessible and promote the overall vibrancy of their communities. We should also leverage institutions that already have infrastructure available, such as schools, public libraries, and faith-based organizations, to provide information and connections for people who need them. Arizona Telecommunications and Information Council (ATIC) through its Arizona Broadband Stakeholder Network (AZBSN, <https://www.arizonatele.org/about-stakeholder-network.html>) in partnership with Greater Arizona Educational Leadership (GAZEL, <https://gazelaz.weebly.com>) continues its efforts with the AZBSN COVID-19 Digital Access Task Force where government, industry, and stakeholders are regularly meeting to share information and developing specific initiatives to address unmet broadband connectivity needs in education and the workforce as part of the disaster response. Industry, such as utilities, can also be a resource in expanding broadband across the state. For example, Arizona Public Service (APS) is currently expanding its broadband infrastructure to serve its business needs but is overbuilding the system to bring more dark fiber capacity in rural Arizona.
- Community Health Needs Assessments (CHNAs) should be prioritized and acted on. They are comprehensive appraisals that can be used to reduce barriers and streamline services, help with formation of partnerships, encourage culture change, and produce cross-organizational plans to improve social determinants of health.

- A central clearinghouse should be created to share information across the state. For example, employment is a priority for general well-being in communities. Chambers of commerce, representing business and services industries, could step forward with accurate information to share with the community. Clearinghouses could be modeled as a cross-sector collaborative that includes government and business and provides a space for Arizonans to give input.
- Vibrant communities require more than money. Participation from constituents should be a priority with their input on what needs to happen to create and maintain community vibrancy. We should continue to hold local and statewide town halls on the social determinants of health that are supportive of civil engagement, inclusive, diverse, equitable and accessible to everyone in the community, including business, nonprofits, and government. In addition to traditional communication channels, we should use social media, with corporate and philanthropic funding, to increase participation in community collaboratives. Getting people involved and participating is important. Participation will introduce new ideas and develop new sources of funding.
- We need to promote cross-sector collaboration by identifying issues where an intersectional problem exists. Then, we should align resources in a manner that will allow us to provide a one-stop shop solution for those affected by the intersectional problem. Homelessness is a good example of an intersectional problem. For example, Project Connect, a convening of nonprofit organizations serving homeless individuals and families, brought together by the Human Services Campus and funded by the Valley of the Sun United Way, has been very successful in connecting the homeless with the resources they need in one place.
- Effectively engaging community leaders into our political discourse should reduce, and possibly eliminate, the many myriad partisan distractions and divisions.

We should not rely solely on government to implement and fund all of these initiatives. Private and business funders should be encouraged to support innovative and effective collaborative efforts and to leverage existing resources with greater impact.

WHAT ONE ACTION WILL YOU TAKE BECAUSE OF YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS TOWN HALL?

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the 113th statewide Arizona Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared and have been categorized based on impact.

Identify and Engage Cross Sector Connections and Collaborations for Systems Change and Healthy Communities

- I will continue to make connections and collaborate with communities impacted by transition away from coal economies - specifically I will support what the communities see as their future.
- I will continue to build my network of collaborative partners, build my knowledge and work toward solutions that build community vibrancy, health, and sustainability.
- I will continue to participate and serve with nonprofits that provide significant results in building community resiliency, in terms of demonstrative health, education and economic development benefits, and well as nurturing and providing access to arts and culture.
- I will work to recognize unconscious silos around me, and those of which I may be part, to build consensus and intentional collaboration.
- I will continue to look at community issues as something that must be achieved through collaboratives, as the more groups are involved to solve an issue, the more expertise and capital can be leveraged.
- I will continue to engage in collaborative actions and model that behavior for others, with specific focus on the Historic Yuma Experience.
- I will continue to insist that diversity, equity, and inclusion is a central part of any solution to achieving a vibrant community.
- I will look for opportunities to collaborate with other individuals and organizations to further our community, local, state, and federal resources for the betterment of the entire community.
- I will continue to be engaged in my community and ask the question, "Is what we are doing now still serving us?" and seek to find collaborative partnerships.
- I will continue to work with the Maricopa Association of Governments to encourage cross- community collaboration on issues of homelessness.
- I will compile a community connections reference document with individual contact information to promote collaboration.
- I will work to coalesce the business community to amplify the impact of JPMorgan's commitment to equity in Arizona (<\$30B).
- I will promote civil discourse and cultivate coordination and cross-sector collaboration in all my work.
- I will ask the Arizona Partnership for Healthy Communities to share this report with its members.
- I will continue my work on SDOH and EDIA.
- I will continue to seek out opportunities to collaborate with community groups and individuals in order to create a more vibrant community.
- I will work to broaden commonly held definitions of housing and healthcare communities by incorporating more social impact communities of interest.

Identify and Engage Cross Sector Connections and Collaborations for Systems Change and Healthy Communities

- I will reach out to other Town Hall participants to identify potential community members interested in working with the nine NAMI Arizona Affiliate boards, steering committees, and no-fee signature programming.
- I will leverage my position at Arizona Town Hall to invite the voices of interdisciplinary organizations to encourage rigorous discourse and create robust solutions.
- I will add this Arizona Town Hall experience to my city planning toolbox to create vibrant communities.
- I will reach out to my fellow Arizona Town Hall participants to plan events and use a large conference space.
- I will post and blog about the 113th Arizona Town Hall on creating vibrant communities, as well as speak to elected officials.
- I will share the work Arizona Town Hall brings to nonprofits and business improvement districts.
- I will continue volunteering with Arizona Town Hall to promote civil discourse and community dialogue on important issues.
- I will propose bringing community town halls to West Valley elected and civic leaders.
- I will take steps to bring a community town hall to Flagstaff.
- I will share the resources provided through this Arizona Town Hall with my staff and community through coalitions I am currently working with.
- I will support and participate in local town hall meetings as well as invite local stakeholders that have not previously participated.
- I will ask in my local Tucson neighborhood and my statewide rural network if there is interest in helping to roll out the next Arizona Town Hall Report.
- I will communicate with elected officials at local, state, and national levels to provide highlights of the experience and key findings from the final report (113th Arizona Town Hall on Creating Vibrant Communities) and periodically share actions that are happening in my community and region.
- I will take steps to bring a community town hall to Flagstaff through the FH Foundation and/or the Arizona Community Foundation in late spring when the FHGC season starts up again.
- I will encourage our local town hall committee to present the results of our local report to ALL city council members and county supervisors and encourage elected officials to participate in local and state town halls.
- I will continue to collaborate with regional leaders to ensure expansion of AZTH Future Leaders Town Halls for high school students in the Verde Valley and Flagstaff.

Gain Insights Through Civil Discourse with Individuals with Different Life Experiences and Perspectives

- I will work harder to promote cross sector discourse among the groups of which I am a member, and specifically work with the Vail Chamber of Commerce.
- I will explore the "one-small-step" StoryCorps podcasts.
- I will listen more respectfully to people who hold differing political viewpoints to build bridges and encourage bi-partisan efforts.
- I will work to promote civil discourse through community town hall meetings, the Scottsdale Human Relations Commission and the Scottsdale City Council and Public Relations Department.

- I will talk with someone who has very different perspectives than me at least once a month.
- I will look for and volunteer with organizations in Arizona that have the ability to effectively reach across political/social perspective divides.
- I will host an online panel discussion on civic belonging and health to continue these important conversations.
- I will be curious about others lived experience and views.

Promote and Support Civic Engagement

- I will take more personal responsibility in making my community more vibrant and healthier for those who live, work, and recreate there.
- I will bring back leadership academies in rural communities.
- I will be a good constituent and attend public meetings.
- I will expand my support and involvement with Voter Choice AZ and other groups working for open primaries and ranked choice voting.
- I will continue my efforts at expanding the engagement of Native American communities on water policy and providing scholarships, internships, and mentoring opportunities for Native American college students to build water management capacity.
- I will continue supporting the philanthropic sector in its journey to fund policy and advocacy, and to widen its lens to the constellation of factors that drive vibrant communities.
- I will work to provide civic engagement opportunities to our patients and the communities we serve to help magnify their voice and express their needs to our elected officials.

CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Future Leaders Town Halls

KEY POINTS

FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALLS ON "CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES"



KEY POINTS FROM FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALLS ON "CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES"

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

STRENGTHS

- Educational opportunities.
- Good community design with indoor and outdoor spaces.
- Environmental Quality/Parks and Recreation.
- Youth themselves.
- Social/cultural cohesion, especially in small communities.
- Economic opportunity.
- Safety for the general population.
- Access to care from places that accept those without insurance.
- Programs like the Boys and Girls Club and sports programs, and other places to go.
- Transportation because we have access to free bus/light rail passes.

OPPORTUNITIES

- Leverage local strengths via community events in local neighborhoods and engage local businesses.
- Expand interaction among people in different neighborhoods and communities to increase diversity. Knowing your neighbor matters.
- Increase accessible green spaces, community gardens, pedestrian walkways, and hiking/biking trails.
- Enhance transportation options and access to public transportation.
- Improve/expand communication about the resources available to increase awareness and utilization.
- Utilize social workers in the area to help residents be resilient during these difficult times.
- Improve community safety.
- Increase educational opportunities, including extracurricular programs, to improve economic opportunities.
- Ensure that adults reach out directly to young people to hear their voices. When more young people get involved, the world can become a better, more peaceful place. We are here to change the world.
- Improve the resources and safety measures for the LGBTQ community by increasing general awareness about needs and education.
- Increase the availability of more affordable housing and quality homeless shelters.
- Address food insecurity through community gardens and library seed banks that offer free seeds.
- Continue to reduce the stigma that existed before the pandemic associated with using a food bank.
- Create more accessible youth centers that offer assistance to youth thinking about moving out. Give them a place to learn about college and transitional life skills.
- Increase public safety and law enforcement resources to reduce response times.
- Clean up the parks and remove gang activity, such as selling drugs in the parks in Maryvale.

- Ensure that we have a well-lit community with good streetlights that are properly spaced to prevent dark areas.
- Reduce speed limits to reduce the number of accidents, especially those involving collisions with pedestrians and bicyclists.

LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC

- COVID-19 has affected every part of the Elements of a Healthy Community wheel. Work styles and lifestyles have changed. Social issues below the surface have been exposed, such as the fragile nature of mental health, unequal access to quality education, disparities in healthcare and mental healthcare, and unequal access to services and resources.
- COVID-19 has made it clear that socioeconomic status is related to race. Racism affects social cohesion, raises tensions, and causes distrust in politics. These issues must be discussed, and local governments need to work together to provide equitable outcomes.
- Shortages of supplies and healthy foods as well as reduction in community activities and educational opportunities have negatively impacted the quality of everyday life.
- Mask and vaccine mandates have divided the community, isolated some groups, and disrupted the unity we had before.
- Approach each public issue proactively with comprehensive solutions.
- Use the design of communities to break down barriers.
- Enhance online infrastructure to facilitate online neighborhood associations.
- Use novel approaches, such as what Meals on Wheels has done, to identify neighbors who can help those near them.
- Mistrust within the community has created fear and changed our way of life.
- There have been rare cases of male teens who got the COVID-19 vaccine and subsequently developing inflammation of the heart muscle or lining. This has created a fear of the vaccination when the incidence of heart issues is a much more common complication of COVID-19 itself.
- Black and brown individuals don't receive the same level of attention as white individuals when they go missing.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has illustrated how close as well as separate people can be. In neighborhoods where racism has been discussed, people are more open and support one another. However, people are reluctant to voice their opinions at the risk of offending others. These tensions are reducing trust between neighbors.
- Isolation due to lockdown, quarantine, school closures, business closures, parks, and libraries had a negative effect on everyone.
- Unfortunately, the pandemic brought out selfishness as seen by people stocking up on supplies and taking advantage of economic status.
- Students were scared to speak up when they felt sick because they would have to quarantine and stay at home.
- Positive impacts of the pandemic included getting closer to family during lockdown and recognizing it's better to help each other instead of fighting over things.

WHAT ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS NEED TO KNOW

- Creating vibrant communities requires a focus with intentionality on the planning process to benefit the health and wellbeing of the entire community. Address equity in our communities so that where you live doesn't determine how long you live or how laws are enforced. Conduct outreach sessions and listen empathetically and deeply to understand the different perspectives of your constituents.
- Make access to reliable broadband service, high quality healthcare, education, and transportation available to all.
- Affordable housing that is accessible to jobs, transportation hubs, medical services, and stores is critical.
- Focus on the populations most affected by climate change to ensure environmental quality.
- Strengthen employment opportunities and vaccination availability/access.
- Mobilize youth to increase the vibrancy and resiliency of a community by reaching out to them. Recognize them as an important part of the community who can make a difference. Increase the number of adult mentors and expand city programs that work with youth groups. Create safe spaces for adults and youth to talk one-on-one. Give feedback and acknowledge that young people have been heard.
- Raise awareness of the short- and long-term effects of harmful substances and behaviors.
- Spend a day with children from different communities and cultures to get to know people who are different from you. A child's point of view is basic and can teach us all something we didn't know before.
- Utilize vacant public lands to enhance public and commercial recreational opportunities.
- Mental health is extremely important, and we need more free resources available. School counselors need to be better trained to assist students with mental health issues, and more school counselors are needed.
- Be more open minded, be aware of and respect people's differences, and see the perspectives of others.
- Diversity is much more than hiring a "diverse" team. Ask employers to implement a culture of understanding and accepting differences.
- Understand and research the communities you serve. Focus on making neighborhoods safe by creating a neighborhood watch, implementing cameras in the community, evaluating the police force to ensure officers are properly trained about diversity, and addressing gang activities.
- Keep the policy for free transportation implemented during COVID so that it isn't a barrier for people.
- We need more healthy and affordable food options.
- Reinstate in-state tuition for undocumented students.

FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALLS

Mesa Community College

Paradise Valley Community College

Yavapai College – Prescott Campus

In collaboration with AzCASE

In collaboration with Opportunities For Youth

In collaboration with South Mountain W.O.R.K.S.

In collaboration with Tucson Young Professionals, Greater Tucson Leadership, Pima County, University of Arizona, and Arizona State University-Tucson

- Devote greater attention to human and child trafficking.
- Hold organizations accountable to the people they serve.
- Add more lanes for the buses. Create safer sidewalks to reduce pedestrian accidents by adding rails or barricades for pedestrians and even for bicyclists.
- Conduct awareness campaigns about the unique issues and solutions in each community.
- Provide designated safe places for specific populations (ex: a women's only gym).

COMMUNITY SPECIFIC IDEAS

- **AzCASE:** One of our biggest issues is finding people who care. Get young people more motivated. Improving your community is a basic human need to be regarded as more than an extra credit activity.
- **Maryvale:** Despite increased police presence, the neighborhood is not any safer, and people are afraid to go out at night. There are areas like Surprise and Scottsdale that have very good funding and better communities, but they are not affordable.
- **Mesa Community College:** Teach youth how to take care of themselves before they become adults. Teach them how to take personal fiscal responsibility in high school. Ensuring students can catch up after the pandemic and are well prepared for their future careers is important in all school districts.
- **Paradise Valley:** Resources for families are even more important with the stressors brought on by the pandemic. Quality after-school programs at affordable prices are essential to provide a safe place for children while their parents are working. Support for teachers is essential to provide quality education for our youth.
- **South Phoenix:** Improve our health and wellness by ensuring that healthier food alternatives are available in our community. Ensure that we have equitable transportation, air quality, parks, and trees.
- **Tucson:** Implement "justice reinvestment" and spend our local resources and taxes less on police and other aspects of the criminal justice system, including incarceration, and more on social programs to meet needs. Better utilize neighborhood watch programs to help enhance public safety with less formal policing. Increase transparency with regards to public allocation of funds so that the public better understands these allocations and can see that justice reinvestment is achieved.

TAKING ACTION

- Enhance social cohesion by providing equitable access to all critical resources and services, especially quality housing with opportunities for neighborhood and local social engagement, transportation, health care, mental healthcare, education, and public safety.
- Increase/enhance access to counselors and mental health services.
- Protect the environment and educate ourselves and others about how to do that. Seeing the skies of Phoenix had an eye-opening impact during the pandemic because of less traffic.
- Facilitate dialogue on racism and important issues, such as mental health, the environment, and health.
- Ensure healthy food options are accessible to everyone. Focus on prevention through healthy foods and lifestyle instead of the current focus on acute care.
- Lower drug misuse in our communities through programs and discussion in schools, minimizing advertisements for smoking and alcohol, and zoning that reduces the number of liquor stores.

- Provide high quality education for all, including vocational training, job apprenticeships, and trade school programs.
- Encourage communities to be proactive in deciding and communicating their needs and desires. Parents play a leading role in molding future citizens and leaders who are civically engaged. Leadership must be representative of their communities to produce flourishing neighborhoods.
- Take some of the burden upon ourselves to reach out to our legislators and share our opinions. Above all, VOTE. Every election at every level counts.
- Recognize that we are the community and educate ourselves on how we can best help and support our community. Be open to the needs of our neighbors, not just our own. Be a voice for our community, support local businesses through patronage and encourage other community members to do so as well.
- Balance being outspoken constituents, responsible citizens, and considerate neighbors to help our community.
- The responsibility for taking these actions begins with us. While adults can help us and we can seek their assistance, we are the future adults. We are the ones experiencing these challenges, and we have the understanding and passion to begin the change needed. We can also be role models for other youth by exemplifying the change. Don't underestimate ourselves and each other.
- Rebuild trust by listening to both sides of a situation, and though we don't always agree, we need to respect each other.

I WILL...

- Campaign to reduce the number of liquor stores.
- Not go to parties and become involved with drugs. Inform my friends and peers of the dangers of drugs and alcohol.
- Work with my coalition to put up anti-smoking signage in Peoria parks.
- Produce a resource hub website for the prevention of distracted driving among Arizona youth.
- As an adult, listen and mentor more with youth.
- Send letters and emails to senators.
- Ask elected leaders to fund more prevention, mental health, and community-based initiatives.
- Vote in local to federal elections. Encourage others to vote as well as this is the easiest way for our voice to be heard.
- Volunteer more in my community.
- Educate youth about issues that are going on and help them to find their voices and to be empowered.
- Create discussion in my own school and present at least one workshop by the end of the year.
- Convene conversations at the college bringing together state and local elected officials who have opposite perspectives to help combat the growing political and social polarization and show students that we can engage in difficult conversations with civility and understanding.
- Find ways to ensure civic engagement is embedded into the student experience.
- Advocate for patients with low health system literacy.

- Be steadfast in my determination to ensure continued self-education and education of others on social topics and their role in equity, equality, and inclusion.
- Finish the Student Public Policy Forum this semester then work on getting my social worker certificate next semester.
- Think of the Elements of a Healthy Community model when I participate in conversations in Tucson Young Professionals.
- Advocate for community design projects that lead to better social and health outcomes.
- Advocate for access to counselors as a very important resource to students.
- Utilize methods of participation used by Arizona Town Hall in future public engagement activities.
- Network with Arizona Town Hall. The reason why it feels so overwhelming is because the issues are so big. With the support from Arizona Town Hall, we can feel a little bit less helpless.
- Share my voice on the topic of having better counselors and people who better understand the mental health issues of younger generations.
- Speak to my principal about having better counselors and having better listeners for youth.
- Take action by talking to someone/speaking up when I see something happening that I know is wrong.
- Wake up every day with a commitment to improve, spread positivity, treat everyone equally, see and understand people better, and stand up for the people afraid to use their voice.
- Help people in need. Show others they aren't always alone and that someone cares. Give out food, blankets, etc. to the homeless.
- Plant trees to add green, pick up the trash I see on the floor, and reach out to people around that I see need help.
- Keep my environment clean.
- Lead others to understand what makes a safe community and work with them to make it better.
- Encourage youth to be something great no matter their situation.

**SPECIAL THANKS TO
"CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES"
FUTURE LEADERS TOWN HALL
SUPPORTERS & PARTNERS**

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**C R E A T I N G
V I B R A N T
C O M M U N I T I E S**

Community Town Halls

FINAL REPORTS

Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

July 30, 2020 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

July 30, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Vibrant, healthy communities are the product of various elements that work together synergistically to promote individual and community health. There is significant economic opportunity in the Maricopa County region, as compared with other parts of the state. Development in the West Valley has been rapid, strong, and largely focused on economic development. As development continues it will be important to discuss the healthy communities wheel to be sure all the elements of community health are considered.

Economic prosperity is not as robust and universal as it might be. There are many pathways to education and workforce training, but there are also some challenges. For example, some children lack computer technology and broadband access that is needed to utilize educational resources. Simply being employed, if one must work two or three jobs to live, is not economic prosperity. For a community to be economically healthy working people should be able to earn a living wage.

Among the strengths of West Valley communities are the existence of programs such as food banks, meal delivery programs, and utility assistance. West-side communities are diverse, safe, and calm places where people can sit and talk with each other with relatively high degree of social cohesion. There is abundant, quality health care. There are many retirement communities with lots of ways to engage—fitness centers, rec centers, golf.

There are wonderful resources available in the West Valley, but there is room for improvement.

While there are many ways for people to connect, there are pockets of loneliness and isolation, and COVID-19 has made that worse. We need to find ways to connect with people who are not part of organized communities. There are a variety of health care resources available, but some people have difficulty accessing them or even finding them. There is a need for care coordination. Educational programs and services are not universally available and accessible, and more focus is needed on the issue of equity. West-side communities should become more engaged in joint planning and coordination to optimize their investments in the elements that support healthy communities.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

COVID-19, and the significant disparity in death rates, have highlighted the disparate conditions prevalent in our society that affect health and wellbeing. Those who are most vulnerable have been impacted the hardest. The elements of health depicted on the wheel represent underlying conditions that contribute to chronic disease, and vulnerability to COVID-19.

The most vulnerable are highest at risk of not having, or losing, food, shelter, clothing, and health care. They are least likely to be employed securely, most likely to become unemployed in a downturn, and least likely to

be reemployed. They are most likely to suffer from chronic disease, and least likely to be educated about chronic conditions or to receive preventative care for those conditions. This is reflected in disparate death rates from COVID-19—8 per 100,000 in Maricopa County, 15 per 100,000 in Navajo Nation, 20 per 100,000 in Yuma County.

At the societal level, COVID-19 has damaged the social fabric. There is less social cohesion, and a greater sense of isolation. Although access to care is enhanced in some ways, such as through greater availability of telehealth, in others it has been diminished. It is projected that 30-50% of the nonprofits that provide services to the most vulnerable will go out of business in the next 6 months.

Sun Health, and other health care providers, are also directly affected by these conditions. Sun Health has a global work force that is affected by the conditions that create these disparities and the need to treat people coming from regions where health care is not generally available. The U.S. spends two-and-a-half times what other developed nations spend, but we have outcomes at bottom of pack. We need to look at where the money is going, spend more on social determinants of health and education, and spend less on administration and treatment. We need to prioritize educational programs that help people understand and deal with chronic underlying conditions.

TAKING ACTION

1. Make sure that members and residents are informed about health care programs and what Sun Health is doing to contribute to community health.
2. Based on the West Valley community needs assessments performed earlier this year – collaborate with community leaders and organizations on three key topics: chronic disease, access to care (1-800-I need help) and Alzheimer's.
3. Create a directory of like-minded organizations to facilitate communication and collaboration.
4. Create/enhance the pipeline of post-secondary educational opportunities to assure that there is a trained and educated workforce. Organizations like Sun Health can partner with educational institutions to provide opportunities for internships and mentoring.
5. Provide scholarships for students who otherwise could not afford to attend college to become trained as health care workers.
6. Refine the general ideas developed during this discussion into two or three specific proposals that can be presented to prospective partners for consideration and action.
7. Look ahead to evaluate and plan for a possible senior affordable housing crisis.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



AzAEYC Virtual Community Town Hall

August 27, 2020 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

AzAEYC Virtual Community Town Hall

August 27, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Several elements must come together to make a community healthy and vibrant. Robust educational and economic opportunities are especially important because they serve as “conduits” for other important elements.

With respect to educational opportunity, our community benefits from a shared understanding that our children deserve to grow up in healthy, vibrant communities. In that regard, multiple stakeholders are focused on the well-being of our children. Early childhood educators are deeply committed despite the many challenges facing their profession. We have a strong infrastructure in place, and know what we need to do to support young children, including to help them deal with trauma. More work needs to be done, however, to improve coordination among stakeholders, make our policies more cohesive, and optimize our financial and other resources to have greater impact.

Our community is strengthened by our commitment to each other, resiliency, and cultural cohesion. We also have good resources in the areas of transportation and parks and recreation, but there are inequities in those systems, and in other areas, that must be addressed to make our community healthier and more vibrant.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Poverty, systemic racism, and other pervasive disparities must be addressed to make the critical elements of healthy, vibrant communities accessible to everyone. The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on these disparities, and the fact that they are the root cause of many of the other problems facing our communities. COVID-19 has also created additional trauma for our vulnerable populations, including our children, who are being deprived of critical developmental experiences.

To the extent that the pandemic has brought stark clarity to these systemic issues, we need to use that clarity as a turning point to improve the overall health of our communities. For example, we have become much more aware of our interdependence regardless of socio-economic status. Educators and childcare providers are now widely acknowledged to be “essential workers.” Finally, we better understand the interrelationships between the various elements of healthy, vibrant communities.

TAKING ACTION

Several important actions need to be taken to make our community healthier and more vibrant.

- As individuals, we need to:
 - recognize our own privilege, and how our circumstances may be different from the challenges faced by others;
 - make a commitment to listen to and understand each other;
 - educate ourselves about – and speak out on – systemic racism, social justice, economic inequality, and other issues affecting the health of our communities; and
 - be informed voters.
- As a community, we need to:
 - consider the educational needs of our children at all levels, and how we can provide appropriate opportunities to meet those needs even during the COVID-19 pandemic;
 - enhance our data collection and analytic systems, which will equip us to improve educational opportunities and other elements of healthy communities;
 - focus on our interdependence and the resulting imperative to support each other;
 - make voting as accessible as possible; and
 - provide a “safe space” for community members to speak out on issues affecting the health of our communities.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the AzAEEYC Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Stand beside and speak out against racial and social injustice and stand back when necessary to amplify and elevate the voices of underrepresented community members.
- Work to make sure that once the Pandemic is over that we don't 'cover up' the things revealed during this period...and return to 'normal', forgetting about the great inequities we see.
- Commit to ensuring the voice of those impacted most by decision making is amplified and a key component of the process.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



Arizona Association for the
Education of Young Children

**American Planning Association
Community Town Hall**
September 11, 2020 – Online via Zoom

Creating Vibrant Communities

American Planning Association Community Town Hall

September 11, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COVID-19 IMPACT ON PERSONAL GROOMING

The COVID 19 pandemic has resulted in new grooming habits for those who work from home. Often those who work from home dress professionally only from the waist up with Shoes and socks optional. Others have not experienced any change—especially if they are in work environments that still require them to go into the office.

The new informality has impacted the way people engage with each other. Some people are more comfortable expressing their opinion virtually while others speak less and engage less.

Virtual meetings allow for more participation by people who would otherwise not have attended meetings. Although their participation tends to be passive listening.

So they may be more informed although we are nor always hearing their thoughts and input on public matters. When they do weigh in, the online format can cause some people to be harsher than they would be in person.

While technology has some benefits with increased passive participation, it can create barriers, especially for older residents of our communities. It can also be more challenging to get input through body language and other nonverbal means.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic and rising daily temperatures on Arizona have highlighted the need to address several areas for long range planning

Rural areas always have a shortage of healthcare providers. The pandemic has highlighted this disparity to access of care. It has also raised concerns about economic aspects that relate to tourism and winter visitors.

Rising temperatures mean that we need to address water needs and how to plan for public spaces. This may include for example, what plants to use for public landscapes and how to water them.

Given rising temperatures, planners should continue to encourage homeowners to use drought tolerant plants, trim trees, and take actions that reduce wildfires. To reduce the possibility of fires, we should look at volunteer groups who can assist residents in clearing their property support such volunteer groups as much as possible. We also should consider planning for wildfires, should they occur. Such planning includes how to effectively manage evacuations.

Rural areas of Arizona do not seem to have as many discussions or concerns about racial justice. These discussions appear to be more focused in the urban areas of Arizona.

Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

September 30, 2020 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

September 30, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Arizona as a state has an extraordinarily rich history and heritage that unites all of us. That includes rural and urban areas as well as reservations. We could leverage that rich heritage by using it in design of the built environment to create greater vibrancy within our communities.

Some of Arizona's other strengths include its population of young people, who are stepping up to take responsibility for their future and are taking action to improve conditions in the state. However, there is concern about a thread of ageism that has emerged in the wake of COVID-19, and we should also value the many contributions by and wisdom of seniors.

Arizona's education system could be a strength but is not universally excellent. Some parts of education system are excellent, others are not. There are some bright spots (there are some excellent charter schools, public schools, and universities) but the K-12 system is not universally excellent. It needs to be excellent throughout so that the benefits can be leveraged for everyone.

Where excellent education is available it is a powerful tool for community vibrancy. For example, Yuma is a border community with high poverty, under-employment, and an agricultural economy. But students who want post-secondary education to have great opportunities. There is a low dropout rate and high success rate, with all three state universities offering programs. This is part of a system that could be leveraged to improve the community.

Access to care is an important issue for Arizonans, but care is not equally accessible for all. In the southwest valley access to health care is exceptional. Sun Health knows what the community needs because it has been involved in providing health care from all sides. There are some challenges because some people do not have access to, or are not comfortable with, new technologies through which care is being provided. Mental health care is far less accessible than other forms of health care, and is relatively unavailable to certain populations, such as people in prisons.

Arizona communities strongly value and support public safety, public works and infrastructure, parks and recreation, the arts, and the natural beauty of the surrounding environment. It is important that Arizonans get involved in efforts to protect the environment, including parks, trails, and recreational amenities, which promote health and social cohesion.

Throughout Arizona affordability of housing is becoming a real issue. The lack of affordable housing has contributed to the problem of homelessness and poverty. Increasingly, landlords are refusing to rent to low-income persons. When the eviction moratorium ends this problem will likely get worse. We need to do more to provide for the construction of affordable housing and to assure that people who are experiencing poverty and homelessness get the help they need to find suitable housing.

There is a big difference between rural Arizona and urban Arizona for all the attributes on the wheel. In these times broadband infrastructure is critical for access to all the things that people need, including education and health care. We may need to find a way to fund satellite dishes for people living in rural areas to give them access to these amenities.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Our society will be reshaped by the COVID-19 pandemic, both for good and for ill.

COVID-19 has acted like a huge magnifying glass bringing attention to and exacerbating inequities already existing in our communities. Tribal and lower-income communities and communities of color were harder hit than other communities. The disproportionate impact reflects the relative lack of investment over the years in the things that contribute to community health.

COVID-19 has created incredible stress on the innermost ring of the wheel. It demonstrates that everything is linked; we can't separate the facets of community health into separate topics. Shocks like the global pandemic will likely come more frequently, and we need to look to the experts and prepare to respond.

COVID-19 had huge impacts on the mental health of the community. There were insufficient mental health resources to begin with. Add to that the incredible stress of COVID-19-caused stress and uncertainty, people struggling with lack of access to health care, trying to work from home, struggling to help their children with homework, worrying about their jobs and their health. The result has been an increase in mental health issues and trauma, depression, suicide, and abuse. Schools are important sources of referrals for help for homelessness and abuse, but DCS referrals are down 90%. There is concern about domestic violence and child abuse that is occurring in the home while people are isolating. Among the homeless families at UMOM there have been ten deaths attributed to COVID-19-related trauma, including two youths aging out of foster care.

The isolation and loneliness associated with COVID-19 have also taken a toll, particularly on the elderly population. Many older individuals are tech-challenged, less able to connect with others via technologies such as Zoom, and thus may not have the ability to maintain social connections. This has caused widespread suffering for that population.

Other impacts of the pandemic have included a lack of access to quality and affordable food. Information should have been made more widely available in Spanish. There is a sense that the connection between people has eroded, and the bonds that tether our civil society have frayed. There is growing uncertainty about the reliability of information we receive from government, the media, and one another.

During the pandemic racial disparities have become more apparent. Seventy-five percent of homeless families are people of color. The scarcity of ventilators and other medical supplies and equipment on the reservation during the pandemic highlighted the pre-existing gap in access to health care resources. Once again rural areas were hurt worse because they have fewer financial resources.

COVID-19 has highlighted where there are gaps and weaknesses, but it has also allowed us to find ways to find new ways of doing things. The shift to online technologies for meetings and events has had some benefits, promoting easier connection for people who otherwise might lack access. COVID-19 has caused some organizations to revisit their missions and resulted in companies reinventing their service models and delivery methods and finding new ways of doing things. People are spending more time outdoors, for recreation and exercise. Some groups have created new rituals to connect people and lift their spirits, and some people have

found new ways to volunteer to help their neighbors. COVID-19 has created an opportunity for us to do the work of examining systemic racism and offers the hope that we will spend the time and energy required to make the changes that are needed to address that problem.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

Establish broadband access across Arizona. The digital divide cuts across many issues. It impacts schools, economic development, and even things like food access. Yet there are parts of Arizona where there is NO internet access.

Expand resources for development of affordable housing. At the local level, identify, address, and mitigate barriers to affordable housing. Streamlining the process would expedite development considerably. The state should add more resources to the pot for development of affordable housing. One way to do this would be to restore the Housing Trust Fund, which was swept by the Legislature in 2008. At the federal level encourage the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to bring more resources than the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) to development of affordable housing.

Restore funding to the Arizona State Parks Heritage Fund (\$10 million per year). This would provide a source of revenues for communities that want to invest in their heritage through restoration of historic buildings.

Realign funding for education and training at the state level so that everyone in Arizona has the tools they need for economic opportunity and self-sufficiency.

Fully fund our education system, including counselors. Schools are vital societal hubs as well as centers of learning.

Address the issue of childhood poverty through the lens of the wheel. Every meeting room at every level of government should have a poster of the wheel and come to understand the concepts involved in getting out of silos and addressing problems holistically.

Take what we have learned from the COVID-19 crisis and use the information to prepare for future challenges. Engage the public in conversations about the issue of community health to apply these lessons and make decisions in context.

TAKING ACTION

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Go to boards that I am part of and raise these issues (and the wheel) to be discussed.
- Encourage the State Land Department to be more active in working with communities on annexation of land, specifically in Oro Valley.
- Work to bring Arizona Town Hall to the community of Oro Valley.

- Be very loud with Arizona legislators about the need for internet accessibility.
- Continue working with leadership at ADOH to find ways we can leverage Historic Tax Credits with LITC to adaptively reuse significant heritage assets in our communities to address the affordable housing crisis.
- Align state funding to metrics that require school districts that require higher level off graduates that are job or college ready. Continue to work to create those pathways within the curriculum.
- Add the topics discussed today on every non-profit board I serve on, and to encourage my fellow board members to review and update their bylaws, policies, and procedures to effect needed change.
- Print out an 8-1/2 by 11 copy of the wheel and send it out to mayor, council members, and school board members with a letter educating them about the issues.
- Commit to raising awareness on these issues.
- Use my school platforms and programs to have healthy dialogue and debate.
- Commit to promoting this wheel with my community and school programs as well.
- As a volunteer, I will work with partners in Pima, Cochise, and Santa Cruz Counties to hold Community Town Hall meetings on Creating Vibrant Communities.
- Continue to advocate for additional resources and strategies to increase affordable housing.
- Reach out periodically to older people who are isolated and help them get up to speed on Zoom.
- Engage with fellow board members on the foundation I am part of in Flagstaff to use the Healthy Communities wheel to direct our funds to the greatest needs.
- Become more aware of the needs in my community which might be addressed by working with Arizona Town Hall.
- Focus more on the gaps limiting our town's success, particularly those that have become more acute do to COVID-19!
- Periodically reach out to isolated seniors and try to assist them in accessing technology and knowledge for zoom video communications so they can connect with family, friends, religious services, healthcare, etc.
- Print out the wheel and send it, with a cover letter, to my state legislators, my city council person, and perhaps school board members.
- Share what I learned during the Sun Health Town Hall with others in my community.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

October 14, 2020 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

October 14, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Different regions within Arizona have different community strengths that contribute to community health. For example, Green Valley, a senior community in rural Pima County, doesn't have all the bells and whistles that are present in larger communities, but it does have a caring population that looks out for one another. They can build on these strengths by reaching out to community leaders, so they are reaching out to their constituents to assure that they are caring for themselves and one another.

Flagstaff has a free drop-in youth center that offers recreation for youth as well as scholarships. Surprise in the west valley is a very safe community that is diverse in age and ethnic background with a great deal of open space and parks and plenty of health care systems. The Veterans Heritage Project works with the school systems. Rural northern Arizona is the tourism center for Arizona and people live there by choice. Geographic centers in this region are quite diverse. The region has major universities and education centers, and adequate health care.

In Yuma, due to distance from other urban centers, they grow their own programs, tapping into the resources of the state's universities and the benefits of the border economy. There is a need for more youth and senior recreation programs. Yuma benefits from an influx of winter visitors, and the ability to access health care resources on both sides of the border.

COVID-19 has had an impact on community strengths. Volunteerism, a traditional strength in many communities, has been reduced because of COVID-19. Although efforts are being made to work around these challenges, the overall level of volunteer service, particularly by older Arizonans, has been reduced. COVID-19 has also impacted sexual and domestic violence shelter programs, due to distancing requirements, isolation, and lack of reporting. Some businesses and employers are taking advantage of desperate employees who may fear loss of job more than the trauma of abuse.

Some felt there was generally broad and equal access to health care throughout their communities. Others felt that there is not equal access to health care, particularly in rural areas, where there are fewer health care providers and specialists, and for low-income populations and the homeless. While there may be plenty of health care providers and facilities, if you do not have the resources to access and pay for these services, they are not accessible, and it cannot be said that access is equitable. In rural communities there are additional challenges such as lack of transportation and unavailability of access to digital resources, such as broadband internet.

Communities could reduce health care costs and improve access to health care if they find ways to keep our populations healthy instead of waiting until people become ill from the many social conditions that affect health and then treating illness once it occurs. Spending money in advance on efforts to address background environmental conditions may avoid the need to pay for expensive in-hospital care. More collaboration, bringing government, nonprofits, and volunteers together to address conditions that are harmful to health, could produce big dividends. A greater focus on nutrition and exercise has emerged in response to COVID-19, and this could produce longer term benefits for community health.

Broadband internet services keep people connected to one another and to vital community telehealth services, particularly in rural areas, and help keep people healthier and reduce the demand on more expensive inpatient services. Investment in greater access to broadband throughout Arizona would offer many other benefits, including connecting students and families to their schools, and making it possible for employees to work from home.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has both created new problems and exposed the weaknesses in systems, and magnified problems that already existed.

Systemic racism has become a focus during the pandemic, but it was a pre-existing condition that has needed to be addressed for many years. The pandemic has further eroded the trust minority communities have in systems that should be there to help them, such as law enforcement. The virus has affected different segments of the community differently. This should have raised sensitivity to the differences in conditions affecting these communities, including circumstances such as racism, poverty, lack of access to broadband, and safe housing and health care services. It has also called attention to the fact that white people are in the position to make decisions and all too often people of color are not. We need to work harder to include people of color in decision-making and discussions at all levels. Unfortunately, there are still many people who are unaware of these discrepancies and the need to address the problems of systemic racism.

COVID-19 has also undermined the bonds that connect us and protect us. There is concern that children and other vulnerable individuals are suffering because of the isolation caused by COVID-19. Adverse Childhood Experiences, domestic violence, abuse, and neglect are occurring in secret, not reported because victims are removed from view and mandatory reporters, and there is potential for life-long harm. Frustration and fear that parents feel are transferred to children. They know something is wrong. Inability to have normal social interaction is not good for their health. Children are in danger of losing their sense of safety and stability. What are we doing to help build resilience while children are not connected to the teachers and other helpers with whom they normally have regular interactions?

The disconnection from schools has even more serious consequences for communities of color. These communities may be more dependent on schools for educational resources and access to social services, and for engagement with the larger community. They may have fewer resources at home and may be disproportionately affected by the disconnection.

There is concern that COVID-19 is having a profound impact on community health. Viewed from the perspective of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, COVID-19 is affecting the most basic human needs for safety and security. People are afraid of dying from COVID-19, so they avoid seeking needed medical care, and are dying at home instead. People are affected by fear and need to find a way to get back to providing safe access to food, lodging, water, and meeting other basic needs across the diverse spectrum of population. COVID-19 has also caused economic injury to the business community and at home. In rural northern Arizona average wages can't compete with unemployment payments, making it difficult to get people to come back to work.

One way to address systemic racism in the context of the pandemic is to take it into account in setting our priorities for action when addressing issues affecting community health.

Stronger as One mental health and wellness.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

Participants would tell Arizona's elected leaders:

1. End the digital divide by developing a plan and providing the funding to invest wisely in state-of-the-art internet infrastructure for the whole state, including the reservations and small rural communities. Internet is like a utility, and these communities have the same needs as big cities. This will help with education, employment, social connectivity, virtual care for health care, and calls for help by victims of abuse and neglect. Austerity should not be the overarching criterion for this plan. Communities should be engaged in a collaborative effort to develop the plan to consider the unique needs and characteristics of each region. This initiative should be carried out at the state level, led by the Governor's office, and funded by the Legislature. Perhaps we could build on Proposition 123 funding for this purpose. To increase the likelihood that the Governor and the Legislature will act, individuals and communities must demonstrate their support for the plan.
2. Be inclusive. You represent the whole community, not just the people who voted for you or contributed to your campaign. You are role models for the entire community. You should make everyone in the community feel needed and cared for.
3. Finish the I-17 corridor, which includes broadband internet. This would extend the I-19 to the I-10 segment from the international border in southern Arizona to Maricopa County, and the I-17 corridor north from Maricopa County to Nevada.
4. Foster collaboration and inclusivity through meaningful incentive programs.
5. Healthy communities are comprised of more than just one thing. They need arts, culture, health care, and transportation. They are affected by changing conditions and shifting priorities. Needs and priorities vary from town to town, and region to region. Listen to individual communities when determining community needs.

TAKING ACTION

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- To get things done we must collaborate, plan, and recruit a champion to advocate effectively to governmental leaders.
- Instead of waiting to respond to crises, we should invest in preventative measures to address social problems in each community before they become a crisis.
- Northern Arizona Council of Governments (NACOG) is writing a recovery and resilience plan addressing all the issues addressed today and will apply for federal funds to leverage as much private sector investment as possible.
- Better Together, a grassroots organization in Green Valley that meets periodically, will continue to work to raise funds to provide internet access for school children.

- Continue to use my voice and privilege to advocate for investment and attention into prevention programs to decrease future crises.
- Continue to speak up about things that are relevant, whether in my personal life or in my family.
- I've been working on this issue for a few months already. I've had conversations with the Chambers of Commerce, Greater Phoenix Leadership, the Alliance of Arizona Nonprofits, Arizona Grantmakers Forum, Arizona Public Health Association, League of Cities, Arizona Association of Counties, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Arizona Commerce Authority, Valley Leadership, and more.
- Commit to voting thoughtfully in each and every election.
- Continue to participate in future Town Halls and share information with others. I will also bring youth to the table as often as possible.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

October 22, 2020 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall

October 22, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Arizona communities vary in their individual strengths and their focus on those strengths as starting points for discussion about community health.

In Southern Arizona social and cultural cohesion is the starting point and foundation for building cooperation and collaboration across sectors to improve the community and community health. Additional strengths of Southern Arizona are environmental quality and the proximity to national parks.

In the Northwest Valley of the Phoenix Metro Area one thing that shines is the regional focus on access to parks and recreation. Municipalities have invested in the infrastructure that allows people to participate in affordable sports and exercise, including both large and small community parks, sports facilities, and trails.

In Camp Verde quality of life is front and center. There is a growing collaboration with the Yavapai-Apache Nation which has brought out the best qualities of the different segments of the community, including respect for elders. Transportation systems are another strength in this region, including planned trails that provide access to recreational facilities. This system supports robust employment and a thriving tourism industry.

In the West Valley, there is access to health care facilities and excellent education. West-MEC is a great strength in this region.

During the pandemic the lack of access to digital resources, including computers and internet, has been identified as a gap to be addressed for some segments of the community. It is important to find ways for students and others to connect outside the classroom, for social and emotional health. Schools have been forced to address this need so that students can continue their education while isolated. Another aspect of this issue is the relative unavailability of internet connectivity in rural areas at a time when the pandemic has increased demand. In Prescott Valley where many people are moving into the community, people are reluctant to meet in person due to the pandemic. This creates a need for virtual meetings such as this town hall.

One thing Arizona communities have in common is their interest in leveraging scarce resources and building on their strengths to optimize community health. Several examples illustrate the opportunities for such efficiencies.

By treating mental health problems rather than criminalizing them, we can save substantial sums and improve outcomes.

One police department has developed a successful trauma care program where police communicate information about children who have suffered trauma to schools and child safety agencies.

Schools and libraries are community hubs that already serve as resources and might be leveraged to do even more. The Phoenix public libraries sponsor myriad programs that benefit the public and promote literacy. Most people trust and respect libraries, find them safe and comfortable places to go. Schools are places where

families are used to coming and might be leveraged to provide access to different types of information and services families need. We could build on these resources as sources of community strength and connection. However, we should not expect teachers, schools, and libraries to take on new and additional responsibilities without providing additional funding.

In leveraging scarce resources data sharing across communities will be essential.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

COVID-19 has shined a light on existing economic disparities affecting Arizona's communities. Primary among these are the lack of access to health care and affordable housing for some segments of the community. Health care is a complex issue. Many people lack meaningful access to quality care. Even those who have insurance may have difficulty finding a provider who will accept it. There is also a shortage of affordable housing that has put many families and seniors in a desperate situation.

Lack of access to childcare is another issue that has been aggravated by shutdown of K-12 schools. Many people cannot afford or do not have access to childcare that would allow them to continue working during the pandemic or are not comfortable with the quality or conditions of the care that is available to them.

COVID-19 has also highlighted the ongoing problems of K-12 education funding. For example, some teachers laid off during the pandemic discovered that they made more on unemployment than when teaching. The lack of access to broadband internet and computer technology for some students has underscored the impact of poverty and lack of resources on educational opportunity for some communities.

People of color are disproportionately affected by all these issues. The history of red lining and segregation has kept communities of color in "less desirable areas," with fewer resources and investment to make them better. There has been widespread denial of systemic racism. COVID-19 has brought greater public attention to and acknowledgement of the disparities affecting communities of color and the impacts of racism on these communities as well as the need for reform.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

When things get tough, communities cut back. In the COVID-19 era cutting back is not the answer. Instead, we need to provide more services, particularly to communities of color and lower income communities. Problems tend to grow and have ripple effects.

We need to do something for special populations, including people with disabilities, seniors, and youth.

Collaborate. Figure out how to collaborate across parties, levels of government and different sectors of stakeholders.

Engage more of the community in this discussion about how many elements of healthy communities interact.

Put partisanship aside, find common ground, listen to all people and groups. You represent ALL people in your community, even those who didn't vote for you.

As architects of communities designed to produce disparities, take responsibility for the outcomes, instead of blaming the residents of communities that have been deprived of the resources they need to thrive. You can change the outcomes by reversing course and providing more resources to historically underfunded communities.

Stop cutting taxes. Our state budget is about the size of Wyoming's. Their population is just under 600,000, ours is 7 million. Hundreds of millions of dollars are missing from our communities every year because of the tax cuts. We need to fund basic services such as public education.

Get out into the community. Visit people where they live, and see how they live, before you make decisions about their lives.

Have some integrity. Be honest. Build trust. Don't make promises you don't intend to keep. Stand up for what you believe is right.

Reach out beyond the people who voted for you, to educate the entire community, engage them in the public process, support and connect them with one another. Respond to constituent needs and requests, particularly from vulnerable groups.

Continually work toward more civil discourse. Communication may be blocked when people fear aggressive response from others.

TAKING ACTION

We all cannot do everything but we ALL can do something! We can make a difference together.

Encourage people to find ways to stay active during these times.

Be compassionate and kind share what you can.

Vote. Run for office. Get involved in civic organizations and civil discussions of public issues. Encourage organizations in which you are involved to become more diverse and representative. Promote civic engagement in the community.

This Domestic Violence Prevention month remember to check in on your friends, especially seniors, who are still relatively isolated. In Yavapai County they are reaching out to seniors and teens with care packages.

Combat violence and hatred by taking actions that give the world hope. Even simple actions such as picking up trash, or speaking up about something that is wrong, make a difference.

Foster positive peace, by encouraging people to foster one another. Take a meal to an isolated senior, or a homeless person.

Multigenerational efforts such as the cyber-Seniors program and youth teaching seniors, and community building physically and access technologically, are beneficial in preventing walls being built. Tutoring offers face-to-face connection for some students that is a powerful boost for their personal and educational success.

Community engagement is a first step, but engagement alone is not enough. Community empowerment must follow, and it is much harder because it involves the person or group in authority giving up power.

Education and communication are key to activating change. We need to find ways to engage those who are disengaged. Inclusion is a privilege that has great value. Some strategies to consider include changing the timing and location of meetings so that more of the people affected by the decisions being made can participate.

We also need to motivate those who are comfortable and feel no need for change to become more open to empowering others for the good of the larger community. People show up and take actions when something personally affects them. Reframing the message, perhaps by providing information about how improving conditions for others will positively affect them personally, is one strategy that may motivate them.

Become aware of our own implicit biases and create awareness of these issues in others. Encourage dialogue about these issues within family and community groups.

Governmental organizations can implement better communication processes. Some communities have policy workers set up informal events such as "Speak with a Planner" or local official to have community events where they just update in informal settings such as bars, once the COVID-19 threat is diminished.

Organizations should be open to conducting self-assessments, to identify their own implicit biases and to improve their efforts to become more inclusive.

We should resist the "us vs. them" paradigm and build community through listening and learning. Our objective should be to listen and learn, not to tolerate but to understand, to accept and value one another's differences.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Sun Health Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Continue to tutor neighborhood K-12 children who need a personal connection to reach their educational goals.
- Continue to reach out in listening, mentoring and educating with respect to friends and neighbors!
- Bring listening and learning to the West Valley. Grow multiculturally rich programming in the West Valley. Run for office. Seek ways to promote positive peace.
- Reach out to the City of Phoenix vs. Neighborhood Board in dealing with the issues regarding the problems we are experiencing with our current HOA board.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



SEAGO Virtual Community Town Hall

November 20, 2020 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

SEAGO Virtual Community Town Hall

November 20, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In the four counties in Southeast Arizona, there are a number of strong community elements present that keep our area resilient despite the tough year we are experiencing with the current pandemic and national concerns. In general, there is sufficient access to quality affordable food in the area. In the community of Bisbee, there are steps to provide outreach support services from local volunteers and organizations to help their neighbors and decrease food waste. Willcox has groups that have come together and prioritized accessible food pantries for providing food to those in need. There is significant social and cultural cohesion in the region with collaboration between different segments of the population. There is economic opportunity with large employers, although driving some distance to work is necessary. Cochise College helps with providing an educated workforce in the region with different vocational and academic options for residents.

Access to care, however, is a challenge. There are healthcare facilities, but often higher access to care requires traveling to another location, which causes stress with patients and their families. One community has focused on advocacy for seniors and the disabled population to provide better access to care and has done so through C.A.R.E.S. Act funding and working with the hospitals and city governments. Community health improvement plans in one area discovered a capacity issue with people able to solve issues at the community level. This finding helped create the Cochise Leadership Capacity, a nine-week course, which has led to bring community members together to become leaders and to create solutions to problematic issues. City government, such as the Willcox government, has prioritized economic development and increasing opportunities for jobs, the arts, and opportunities for youth.

Housing, however, has become more of an area of concern due to gentrification and stratification in some communities. Residents with fixed incomes have no elasticity in their purchasing power and have reached a crisis mode for their basic needs. In Bisbee, there is underutilized property, which is an issue, and is being addressed in various ways.

There are cross-border activities with Mexico, which have engaged communities, and have benefited both sides of the border. Engaging the region's population with neighboring Sonora has helped engage our communities. Economic development has been an area of focus throughout the years. The pandemic has had a negative effect on all communities in this area. Through government funding, a number of businesses have been helped. Communities that have historically depended on tourism had to virtually shut down during the pandemic, but with assistance are slowly coming back.

Overall, Southeast Arizona is located in a beautiful environment, which provides rivers, mountains, the desert, and great weather that residents appreciate.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The pandemic has had significant impact the communities in Southeastern Arizona. Communities have had to decrease services and, in some cases, close services such as parks, public restrooms, and events.

There is concern that students are falling behind in education and may lose a year or more in schooling and their overall development. In particular in rural areas, there is a lack of regular, stable access to the internet and educational services so necessary for learning during the pandemic. In some circumstances, schools have not developed a well-designed educational experience and have lost enrollment to other entities. The adaptation to distance schooling has had a mental health impact on youngsters due to the lack of a social life outside of home and the instability of education access.

This level of stress has also reached families and our aged population. Older adults may not have experience interacting with technology and don't know how to access services, which causes stress and social isolation. Bringing younger students and the older population together is a possible solution to help bridge the technology gap.

However, people are scared to go outside. The pandemic has created an overall mental health situation, which has stressed the entire population.

TAKING ACTION

This area has a board that has helped develop a roadmap with action items that include many elements of the vibrant communities wheel. In Bisbee, the library has served the community in several ways as a disseminator of information from various services that assist the community with mental health, stress, education information, and more. It important that residents know that in this difficult time, it is okay to reach out for help. Our governments and other organizations can assist people with classes and information on health cooking, mental health, and other areas to build self-resiliency.

The Council on Aging helps with resources for older adults. The more information that can be shared, the better this council can help the elderly. Bringing younger students and the elderly together is an action that can help with resiliency for both of these groups.

We should look back on the pandemic experience to better prepare ourselves to address future challenges. Some areas hit significantly by the pandemic included healthcare, transportation, and education.

People need to feel more connected. The pandemic has isolated residents even though they appreciate their independence. Economic opportunities can be made more visible and enable businesses to connect as well. The SEAGO Economic Advisory Council creates a platform and a space for developers to connect and share information about resources and training. Open dialogue and supporting each other is essential. We all can help. The entire community needs to identify and bridge the gaps that exist.

Communities and organizations have searched for and found funding for projects that help our communities and also put people to work. Some examples include housing and sidewalk improvements.

We are learning from crises created by the pandemic and can move forward. SEAGO's strategic planning efforts can help Southeast Arizona going into the future and find and be the helpers for all of our communities.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the SEAGO Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Assist with the reopening of a community development center.
- Build in individual self-reliance and resiliency using government resources/funding.
- Become a Cochise Leadership Academy mentor/cohort, continue working with nonprofits, and help build ground up community resiliency.
- Keep applying for monetary support for nonprofits I am associated with.
- Lead by example. Instead of working for "A" community, work with ALL communities.
- Make myself more available through phone calls, going on site, working with the mayor and council and other departments and community members.
- Advocate for the senior population and do my best not to get dragged down by negativity (political or otherwise).
- Continue the work I already do and double-down on the efforts.
- Continue to help in what ways I can like picking up groceries for seniors and others.
- Strategize where funding is best applied to help low-income families (like for sports, devices, internet, etc.).
- Volunteer more in community and be more visible.
- We have an excellent aging council with 17 members who are active in their communities and bring back information that has been shared with them. I will give those members additional information to take back to their communities and connect youth with seniors.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSORS



**South Eastern Arizona
Governments Organization**



ARIZONA COMMUNITY
FOUNDATION
OF THE GILA VALLEY

Prescott Virtual Community Town Hall

December 16, 2020 – Online via Zoom





Creating Vibrant Communities

Prescott Virtual Community Town Hall

December 16, 2020 – Report of Recommendations

The program was opened by the Prescott Commission on Well-Being with welcoming remarks by Peg Travers, Vice Commissioner, and topic introduction by John Murphy, Chairman. The goal of the Commission is to make Prescott America's premier city of well-being. As reflected by the Commission's logo, depicted above left, the key to well-being is balance. Prescott is already considered to be in the top ten communities for well-being. Nonetheless, participants repeatedly voiced concern about heightened political divisiveness and the need to create a safe welcoming place for people of diverse cultures, races, and beliefs. The question now is what can be done to increase well-being for all. One ultimate objective of this quest for well-being is the creation of a sense of community.

Dr. Hojat Askari of Thumb Butte Medical Center explained that to create a sense of community, every year he donates over 1,000 meals to needy people in the community. This is just one of the ways in which Dr. Askari has contributed to the community and his participation in building the community is greatly appreciated. Dr. Askari noted the importance of prevention as part of community well-being and spoke about the impacts of the current pandemic and community-based efforts to address the pandemic.

Courtney Osterfelt, director of the Launch Pad Teen Center, introduced two youth leaders Reilley Phelan and Emma Wymore who spoke about their recent event "Better Together." Concerned about the impacts of racism and privilege and political and cultural differences, they sought to engage youth in conversations about social justice issues, to encourage youth to become more inclusive, and to give them tools to be more effective in communicating across differences.

STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE PRESCOTT COMMUNITY

Prescott is a vibrant community with many fun, cultural events to engage residents and visitors. There are opportunities for volunteer service and social engagement, strong community support for schools, and generous and caring community outreach efforts to help those in need. Prescott has a strong community of volunteers who want to make a difference. There is an incredible generosity of spirit, with people who are willing to step up and get involved in a hands-on way. That helps to build a stronger community, bringing unique talents together to build stronger relationships and foundation. Prescott's greatest treasure is the people who live here.

Another strength of Prescott is that it is a safe, low-crime community. People feel safe and are more welcoming as a result.

Another of Prescott's great strengths is its geography and climate. There are over 100 miles of trails for hiking and numerous parks for recreation, and they are well used.

One of Prescott's strengths is the ability of its residents to inspire one another. There is talent, intelligence, care, and passion residing in the local community. Prescott has its own local versions of Brene Brown and Tony Robbins, and some of the world's best musicians live in this community. The youth who are working to engage the community in discussion about contentious issues, and their courage in addressing issues affecting people of color in a largely white community, are also a source of inspiration.

Prescott has cross-sector partnerships, and these partnerships create successful relationships with people, and lead to a healthy community. The whole-person approach to wellness is the wave of the future but that requires having the hard conversation about why some people are entitled to health care and others are not. Change is hard, but it is achievable if we make the effort to connect with one another across boundaries to address issues that might seem intractable but can change if there is will and effort.

There is a perception, nevertheless, that Prescott government and social networks are somewhat closed, in other words, an insider's network. While there are supportive relationships and other elements of a healthy community within different sub-communities, those sub-communities are sometimes disconnected. For the health of the larger community, Prescott needs to identify common goals between and among its separate groups and establish processes for engaging all members of the community in an open and transparent way.

Events like the protest on the square this summer provide the opportunity for learning and growth. While the white residents of Prescott may not perceive racism as a particular problem in Prescott, the young people participating in the protest were responding to what they perceived as the pain of people of color living in the community, and many of them experienced violent assaults and threats because of their peaceful protest. There is a need to improve communication and understanding, tolerance and acceptance of people with different cultures, languages, beliefs, religions, and goals. Prescott is working hard to create unity within the community, but it can and should do better.

Financial security provides the foundation for the other components of well-being. Unfortunately, some people face challenges in this area, but those who are less well-off are marginalized and often isolated. This is another area that warrants attention. Prescott should invest in programs that address the needs of the less fortunate such as affordable housing, public transit, access to care, and drug abuse prevention, particularly programs that target fentanyl.

Prescott should engage more youth and capitalize on the energy and enthusiasm of its youth. One way to do this would be to bring together caring adult members of the community to engage in discussions and other activities with teens. For example, there are plans to bring back a community garden, which could engage

community members across the age spectrum. The median age of Prescott is 58 and 92% are white. Most downtown events are geared to this age group and tourism revenue. More diverse, youth-oriented events in the downtown area rather than on the fringes of town—Dia de los Muertos, pow wows, Scottish highlander festival, Pride Day events, and other youth-oriented events would help create a more inclusive community.

While engaging youth the talents of the older population should not be overlooked. Prescott could take better advantage of the wisdom and experience of its seniors to serve as volunteers, mentors, and engaged residents in service of community efforts. Many older people are able and eager to serve others and this population is a great untapped resource that could be leveraged for good. Pairing this population with teens could create an amazingly effective volunteer force. The schools could be an excellent place for this activity to occur. An added benefit of this pairing would be to create ongoing relationships between younger and older people, increasing the likelihood that young people will find reasons to remain in the community after they graduate from high school.

Excellent schools are another great resource of the Prescott community. They should be a focus of connection for the community and should continue to be supported financially and with volunteer service activities.

We need to have serious conversations about these issues and come up with an action plan to make changes happen.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

A key factor in resilience is a strong, united, compassionate community. Some groups in Prescott stepped up to promote public health and safety in the wake of COVID-19 in significant ways. For example, Prescott Indivisible and Democratic Women of the Prescott Area (DWPA) spearheaded two mask programs—delivering over 10,000 masks made by community members to the Navajo Nations and Masks for Safe Schools. The quad city area has been engaged in preparing a community health assessment for some time. It is available at <https://www.yavapai.us/Portals/39/Quad-Cities-CHIP.pdf>. COVID-19 has made clear how interconnected health issues are, and how much comorbidities affect health. Many agencies are already doing work on community health issues and should reach out and connect with one another. Those with resources should reach out to these agencies to provide funding and other resources.

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has occurred in a poisonous and divisive political environment. This has magnified the impacts to individual and community health. Political divisions, illustrated, for example, by political signs, separate neighbors, foster tribalism, and lead to resentments. These divisions have also undermined the will of political leaders to enforce public health measures, such as the wearing of masks and social distancing requirements. Indeed, some individuals wearing masks in restaurants and stores have reported being bullied and fear retaliation. People report not feeling safe because these basic public health measures are not being observed. One group that sought to promote support for loving your neighbor by publishing a letter to that effect in the local newspaper was told that its members should fear for their lives if the letter was published with attribution.

Those who run care institutions were busy before the crisis hit. They have become busier throughout the crisis, in some cases as a coping mechanism. Despite their hard work and expertise their advice has been ignored or rejected. Many are approaching physical and mental burnout. The Recreation Services Department has also

struggled with keeping volunteers engaged while not sacrificing their health since the majority are in a high-risk age category.

In this environment people who are self-isolating to avoid contagion, and caregivers of vulnerable people in special care settings, suffer mental and emotional health impacts. They feel isolated and without community. They feel sad, unsafe, and unsupported. These circumstances have enabled them to understand a little of what people of color must feel living in Prescott.

One take-away is that people should reach out to their neighbors with grace to heal these divisions and repair relationships.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

You must listen, and leadership must reflect everybody. Set your personal beliefs aside, and lead for the benefit of the community. (City Council, Board of Supervisors.)

Be involved. Join in. Be present when local leaders are crafting plans for the community. (City Council, Board of Supervisors.)

Have some courage and lead, even if it's not popular. Do the moral thing, the right thing. (All levels.)

Certain things that are best for the community must be mandated, even though constituents don't like mandates. (All levels.)

Make a place for young people that is equitable. Be inclusive, not ageist. (All levels.)

Lead with values. Define community good, out loud, repeatedly. Lead by example. (City Council, Board of Supervisors.)

Include in the strategic plan a statement against racism and in support of increasing diversity, inclusion, and equity. (City Council.)

Work together. (Local.)

Lead by example. (All levels.)

Collaborate with the private sector to find ways to change people's habits. (All levels.)

Take measures to help people improve physical well-being, such as strengthening their immune systems. (Local.)

Listen to Arizona Town Hall and its reports. Participants at Arizona Town Hall are your constituents. When they are unhappy ballot measures are the result. Work across the aisle for the good of all. (State).

TAKING ACTION

The most important actions to make the Prescott community more vibrant:

- Understand that the world is getting more diverse. Prescott can't stop this and needs to deal with it.
- Showcase the beauty of Prescott by, for example, creating a socially distanced hydration hike.
- Preserve open spaces.
- Keep water in our lakes for the birds. We have several Important Bird Areas (IBA) here in Prescott. We need to continue to care for our lakes.
- Create better transportation options.
- Create more trails for people with disabilities
- Put in parking meters that take credit cards but would allow two hours of free parking. This would eliminate some of the traffic, congestion, and pedestrian/bike/auto accidents that occur.
- Set up lines of communication between different organizations including the city and law enforcement.
- Create more outdoor spaces for the community to use to socialize.
- Have community meetings moderated by professionals.
- Make our community a walkable city like Europe.
- Communication is critical.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Prescott Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Promote movement and the importance of hydration.
- Continue to encourage wearing of masks and will always wear my mask when out in public.
- Commit to always working to call out and eradicate racism and bigotry.
- Meet with neighbors again in our back yards when it is safe and focus on all the things, we are together on.
- Host a quarterly neighborhood potluck.
- Do all I can to help mentor young people, academically and professionally, to make them the best leaders they can be. The planet needs them right now!
- Strike up a socially distanced conversation with whomever you see. Say hi.
- Continue our work with the Launch Pad Teen Center and Teen Advisory Committee. We look forward to organizing more events like "Better Together" for youth and adults to advocate for inclusivity and bettering communication skills.

- Keep an eye on our next-door neighbor and help if and when we can.
- Get Tara Jackson to speak about the Arizona Town Hall on our podcast!
- Through the Launch Pad Teen Center, commit to organizing more community education and connection programs.
- Continue to conduct a meditation class weekly.
- Continue to work with the Prescott Commission on Well-Being to improve well-being.
- Listen to the community and try to help.
- COMMUNICATE!

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSORS



AzAEYC Virtual Community Town Hall

March 6, 2021 – Online via Zoom

Creating Vibrant Communities

AzAEYC Virtual Community Town Hall

March 6, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Early childhood education (ECE) creates the foundation for a vibrant community. It all starts with the home, which must be a safe, healthy, and nurturing environment. In the absence of such homes, the community suffers. From infancy and throughout childhood, parents must build trust with their children. A healthy start and a safe environment are essential for children to be able to grow and learn. ECE programs help children to develop trust and a sense of safety by supporting parents in several ways. These programs provide resources and connections for parents that enable them to grow as individuals, parents, and contributors to their community.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are an obstacle to a vibrant and resilient community. ECE is an early intervention that can reduce the negative impact of ACEs, providing a strong foundation for our children's future that allows them to overcome obstacles and contribute to a more vibrant community. The entire ECE community can empower and uplift children to envision themselves as more than their situation, thereby giving future generations the ability to break the cycles of poverty and trauma.

All the people we care for are becoming part of our community. By developing people, we are developing our community. Early educators have the most important role in brain building, helping children develop the skills that are the building blocks of life. These skills include the foundation of ethics, principles, awareness, tolerance, and acceptance. Quality programs and interaction with other peers help children figure things out on their own, become more open minded, and develop social skills and friendships. Critical thinking, interpersonal and communications skills, self-regulation, and overall brain development are all associated with education, childcare, and pre-school. As adults, we want the neighbor with whom we can have a conversation about a barking dog and a clerk who engages in eye contact and says, "Hello, how's your day?" We want kindness and respect, acceptance, inclusion, understanding, and empathy. These are all elements of a vibrant community.

Early childhood educators have information and resources to strengthen family connections, events, and communities. Parents often do not know where to go for help. Parent engagement is important in the education process, and parent education is an important component of the system. Parents can, and must, teach their children important skills at home such as reading, art, and creative play. Parents also need to be informed about opportunities that may help their children's development, such as Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) and developmentally appropriate activities. Working together, parents and educators can create a community of learners.

The early childhood community brings people together. Parents meet other parents and collaborate in the interest of promoting their child's development. They develop friendships and become advocates for the wellbeing of both their children and their community. Early education that focuses on appreciating diversity is one of the best tools to increase vibrancy and resiliency. It is critically important to instill an open and inclusive

mindset, to allow children to make messes, and to help them learn creative skills.

In thinking about ECE, it is important to look beyond Head Start programs, and to include other providers. Head Start only serves about 25% of children. We need to find ways to share the great qualities that Head Start brings to early childhood education with the rest of the industry. Programs such as First Things First that seek to improve the quality of early childhood education across the board are a good start.

We are not creating products. We are creating people and people make up our community. By providing greater support to ECE, we can increase the vibrancy of our communities.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

ECE is important to our communities because it strengthens families and improves parenting. It helps children develop skills, teaches them how to adapt, become more curious, increase their awareness of the world, and become involved. However, ECE was not appropriately funded before the pandemic, and we cannot allow a return to inadequate funding. It is important that legislators understand the economic and societal impacts of in-person ECE programs. Virtual learning is not effective for young children, so we must get them back in programs that provide in-person learning. To do that, we need well-funded programs.

We need to increase advocacy in the legislature on behalf of young children and those who care for and educate them. Personal stories from constituents provide a powerful message to motivate legislators. We should connect with our own legislators, inviting them to virtual visits or introducing them to families we serve, have our families write letters, send artwork, and otherwise let legislators know we are in their community.

When communicating with legislators, we should tie investment in early education programs to opportunities to improve the health of our communities through outcomes they value, such as decreased crime, less drug use, better high school graduation rates, and increased college attendance. We need to demonstrate that investing in these programs produces a greater return. Elected officials want to see that revenues are well spent and we can demonstrate that through our stories.

The early childhood workforce has continued to be hit hard by the pandemic. The pandemic has shown us the importance of having quality childcare available, and the necessity to fund these programs at an appropriate level now and moving forward. Legislators need to understand that doing so will produce community and economic development benefits. ECE professionals have a huge impact on the economy, both because of their influence on children and their own importance to the economy. They make it possible for parents to go to work and contribute to the economy as consumers and supporters of businesses that employ people in our communities and buy locally. ECE programs need funding to get the state up and running again.

Early childhood education is a career and a profession. We are developing minds and community members. Early education is the foundation for building a strong and vibrant community now and for the future.

We need the investment that matches the importance of the profession. We can't create a group of professionals for this important work if we don't pay them a livable wage. Early childhood educators should not have to take a vow of poverty to serve children.

We need to provide early education teachers access to hybrid programs including online and in-class programs, internships, and continuing education opportunities. Early education degrees should be valued comparably to K-12 degrees in status, pay, and growth opportunities. ECE educators should be treated as

equals to other educators, not as glorified babysitters. It is important to recognize ECE educators financially, educationally, and socially and to reduce class sizes to enable more effective learning and to ensure a fair workload for ECE educators.

Funding for early childhood education programs should include support for children with developmental, physical, and learning disabilities.

We also need to ensure that early education honors cultural traditions. The tribal community especially has been negatively impacted by the history of sending children to federal boarding schools. These communities have been resilient despite this historic trauma. Nonetheless, we need to address this and other traumas within marginalized communities to ensure their vibrancy. We should make the necessary systemic changes that honor and incorporate “what was lost.”

TAKING ACTION

Several important actions need to be taken to make communities healthier and more vibrant:

- Become trained in trauma-informed care, which is essential to healing our society.
- Give children the tools they need to grow.
- Continue to partner with families and fellow educators to have their voices heard.
- Be prepared to advocate when the opportunity arises.
- Make sure that our families and everyone we encounter knows the importance of this field.
- Begin with educating parents so they understand that behavioral, intellectual, and social skills/growth begins with early education before kindergarten.
- Spread information about ECE within the community. Use your voice to educate and influence your community; it takes just one person.
- Parents voices are powerful and meaningful; share your story, it creates change.
- Support each other—whenever needs help and however you can help (mentor, ambassador, etc.).
- Start parental ambassador programs.
- Reach out to your First Things First community outreach coordinator to help you with the language to communicate passionately.
- Think globally to expand the message of the importance of ECE outside its community.
- Use your voice and get to know your neighbors better; we all have something to share.
- Make parents feel that they belong and give them strength through the information on what their community offers and what they can offer their community.
- Have self-care workshops for parents and practice individual self-care.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the March 6, 2021 AzAEYC Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Share my early childhood story.
- Be ready to talk about the needs for funding for ECE educators, centers, communities.
- Continue to get involved in the community, share my story, and practice self-care.
- Be a voice to the underserved communities.
- Be prepared to share why Early Childhood MATTERS!
- Advocate for increased funding for quality programs and pursue continued education and work in family education and social work, with a special focus on trauma informed approach to education.
- Research our legislators and have discussions about the impact of early childhood!
- Continue to have open conversations about supporting education as early as birth. Advocating for children and families in at-risk communities.
- Fight for a healthy wage for early childhood professionals.
- Shine light on the fact that things are pretty bad in early childhood since the pandemic- but that we were in a childcare crisis even before the pandemic.
- Support and encourage parents to find their voice in sharing their stories.
- Continue to try and connect with my Legislative District 11 elected officials to have a conversation about the importance of early care and education as an educational and economic driver to a vibrant community.
- Continue to teach intentionally in my classroom, be a reflective practitioner, and continue to proactively seek out opportunities to advocate for children, families, and educators.
- Continue to develop in my role as a Community Engagement Specialist and learn from our Child Care Resource and Referral Partners and events like these so that I can have a solid foundation of knowledge in this field and can work as a true advocate for children and families.
- Continue to advocate by inspiring and involving fellow educators and their families to have our voices heard and effect much needed change especially as our world changes around us!
- Spread awareness of the importance of a child's first five years.
- Encourage teachers and parents to also feel empowered to grow and learn so that children can have the best opportunity to learn, grow, and aspire!!!
- Join more opportunities like this one today, become more involved, and make more connections with others in our community!
- Become more familiar with my legislators and when appropriate share stories about low compensation and quality in our programs and the importance of building strong communities.

- Message my local and federal representatives regularly on ECE successes and needs.
- Continue to support our early education providers by sharing stories, actively reaching out to our representatives, and attending trainings to stay up to date on shared goals.
- Use the Vitalyst "Elements of a Healthy Community" to organize community conversations to illustrate the importance of early childhood education in contributing to healthy connected communities.
- Continue to get families involved and informed about how we as early childhood educators are just as important as teachers in schools.
- Parents are a child's first teacher! I want to continue to educate parents, which empowers them to create a safe, nurturing, and loving environment for their children. This is what sets those children up in life!
- Continue to help new educators be informed and enhance teaching skills and share ideas from this video as a center for monthly trainings.
- Within the behavioral health research and policy community, I will continue to say if you are only focusing on adult patients/clients, you will never solve complex social issues. A focus of behavioral health must be children and families.
- Continue to concentrate on developing a Parental Ambassador Program to be a voice that can be called upon.
- Get to know my immediate neighbors better and share my passions with them.
- Continue to dedicate my work and efforts towards advocating and elevating the voices of children and their families!
- Stay committed and continue the fascinating work that is being done!!!!

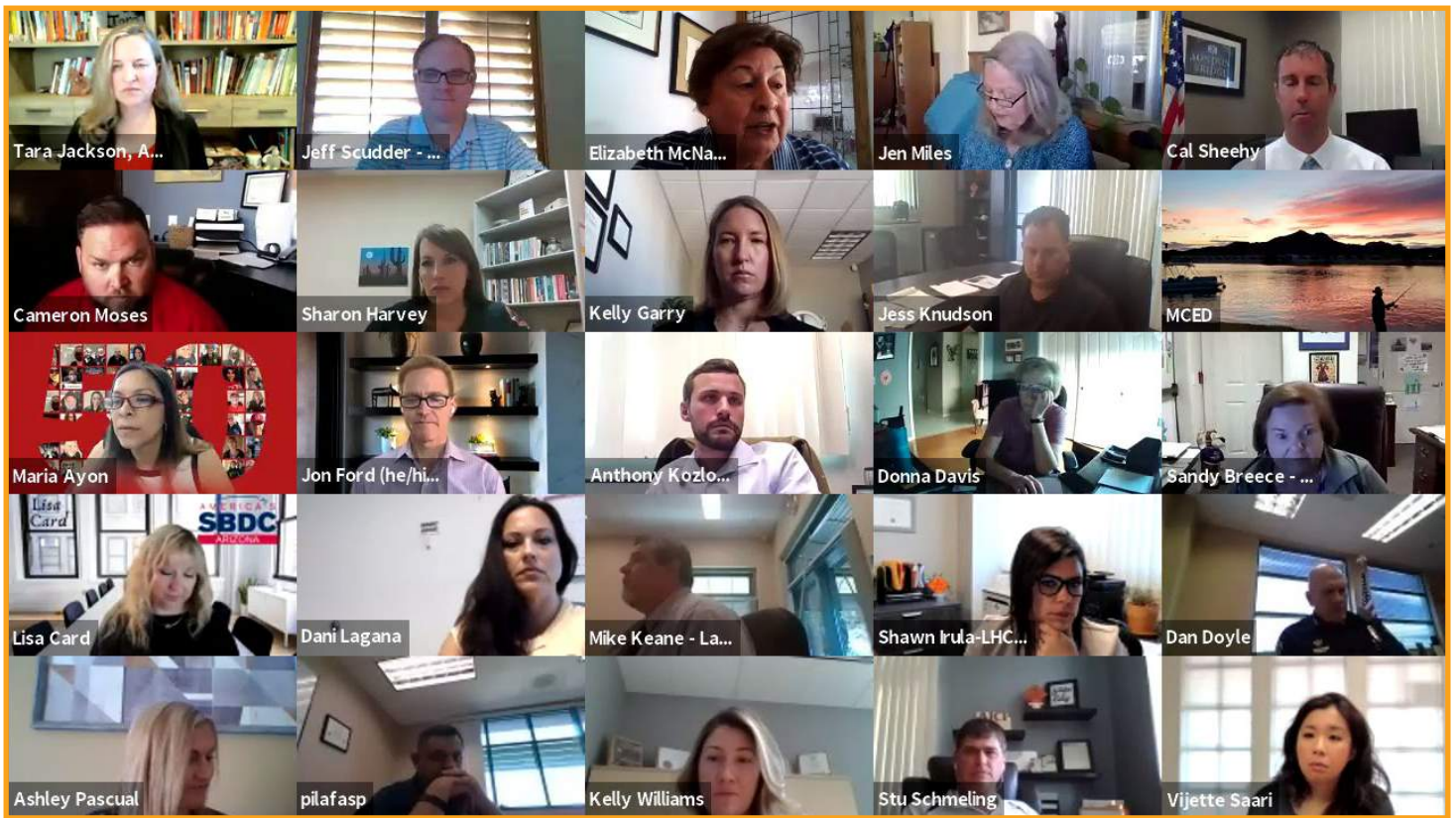
SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



Arizona Association for the
Education of Young Children

Mohave County Virtual Community Town Hall

April 15, 2021 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Mohave County Virtual Community Town Hall

April 15, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Many elements are required to make a community healthy and vibrant. In our communities, we enjoy:

- Excellent parks and recreational opportunities
- Strong local school districts and educational partnerships with our community colleges and state universities
- Robust economic development programs supported by our excellent chambers of commerce and strong partnerships amongst our cities
- A healthcare system that benefits from strong partnerships with our healthcare providers
- Active community support for local non-profit organizations and events
- A shared commitment to volunteerism and working together in a cohesive, collaborative fashion
- A deep sense of pride in our communities and a commitment to friendliness

We can build on these strengths to improve other elements of our communities and overall community health, by:

- Analyzing food insecurity in our communities and developing strategies to improve access to healthy food
- Increasing the supply of affordable housing, including long-term rental units
- Diversifying our economies to reduce our dependence on tourism and improve economic opportunities for our citizens
- Improving access to reliable and affordable high-speed internet
- Working with healthcare partners to expand access to childhood immunizations and “well visits” and improve the ratio of healthcare providers to patients, especially in the area of mental health
- Leveraging our local educational systems and partnerships, including early education programs and our technical schools, to improve our talent pipeline and workforce development

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed, and in some cases created several challenges that affect the health of our communities. The pandemic itself was politicized in a way that exposed divisions amongst our citizens. That, in turn, has challenged our healthcare system both in the context of treating illness and in supporting the vaccination program.

COVID-19 also highlighted the disparities that exist within our communities in the areas of access to transportation and other types of infrastructure, broadband internet access, educational opportunity, food security, access to healthcare, rates of substance abuse, and economic opportunity. These disparities are even more acute within our minority populations, a significant problem that has become more transparent and widely understood in recent months.

In the education system, teachers have been stretched thin at all levels, but there have also been silver linings. Our educators have adapted and identified new ways to deliver instruction, new models for reaching marginalized populations, and opportunities to partner with other organizations to support these efforts.

Significant education and encouragement from our leaders is needed to overcome challenges so we can heal the divisions within our communities and make it healthier and more vibrant.

TAKING ACTION

To make our communities healthier and more vibrant:

- Our cities and supporting organizations should:
 - continue to analyze the positions required to support efforts. Compensation levels need to be addressed to attract and retain top talent to fill those positions.
 - pursue available funding through the federal rescue plan and other sources and deploy that funding strategically to support these efforts.
 - engage in and promote long-term strategic planning to ensure that our parks, roads, water and sewer systems, and the equipment needed to support public safety and other core city services meet the needs of our businesses and residents.
- Our education systems should:
 - continue efforts to build the K-12 pipeline for educational attainment goals, including through the free after-school tutoring program.
 - continue to promote the educational opportunities available in Mohave County, from early education to post-secondary programs.
- Our citizens should:
 - take pride in our communities and commit themselves to building a healthier, more vibrant community, including by taking the time to engage in conversations with each other to create better shared understanding.
 - support small businesses and local food sources, including attending farmers markets.
 - attend broadband training sessions.
 - use our individual spheres of influence to promote these efforts.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Mohave County Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

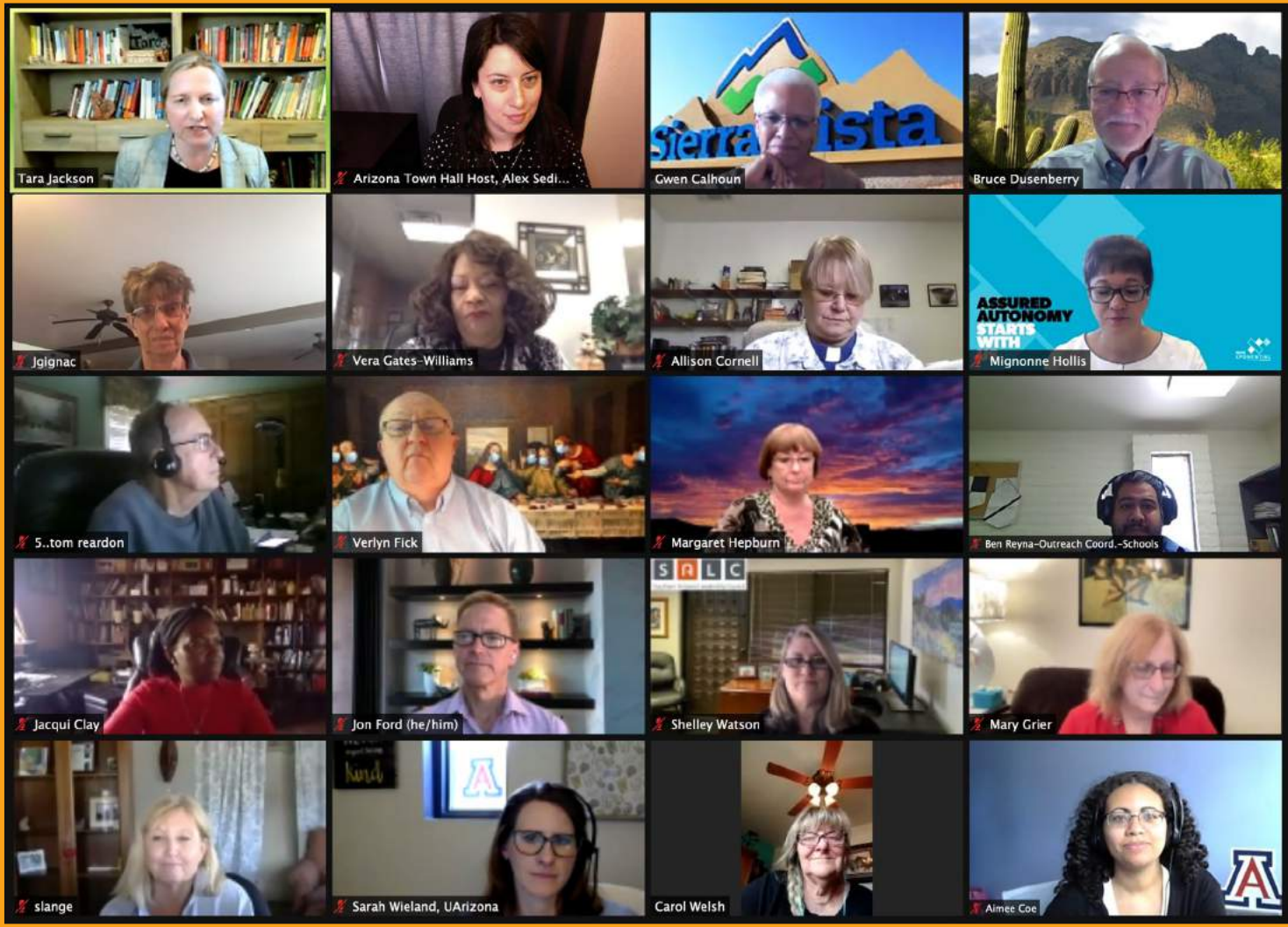
- Participate in community clean up and attend/participate in city council meetings. Also, I recently started the Short Creek Running Club and a local farmers market.
- Engage and facilitate conversations with citizens in our community to move forward to address the issues and to implement a vibrant community.
- Attend the farmers market to support the community and contribute my time once a week.
- Continue to inquire and share partnership opportunities to help community members continue their life journey.
- Put the heat on ADOT to protect our roads, including Highway 40 off-ramps and Highway 95.
- Continue to be a strong part of the educational community and a pioneer to Lake Havasu City (tomorrow is my 55th anniversary of joining this great community).
- Strive to help make our county and our city the best it can be.
- Continue working on broadband access, affordable housing, and workforce development both for the county and regionally!!!!

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSORS



Sierra Vista Virtual Community Town Hall

April 29, 2021 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Sierra Vista Virtual Community Town Hall

April 29, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Social cohesion is a real strength of the Sierra Vista community. The first thing you see when driving into Sierra Vista is the array of signs featuring the many service clubs active in the community. These groups are emblematic of the spirit of compassion and caring that characterizes Sierra Vista. The Legacy Foundation of Southeast Arizona is another example of this culture of compassion and has generously funded grants that support many community needs. When we have common goals, communicate, and work together, even things that at first appear impossible can be accomplished. This is especially true when people come together in times of emergency or crisis, such as after a fire or flood.

Although Sierra Vista is strong in these areas, it could do even better by reaching out to more people in the community. However cohesive the community may consider itself to be, there are segments that do not feel included, including people of color, people in rural areas, LGBTQ+, and people who are not native English speakers. The community could be even better if efforts were made to reach out to include those who may feel left out and assure that everyone's voice is heard.

One lesson learned from COVID-19 is that it is possible to include more people in regular meetings via online platforms. Leaders are making exceedingly difficult decisions on new issues in a context that requires community input. Ideally, meetings should be inclusive and engage the public in these decisions in a constructive way.

For a rural community, the health care system in Sierra Vista is of an extremely high standard, although improvements are needed in the area of mental health care. Sierra Vista also has an especially strong parks and recreation department, with excellent programming.

The local newspaper is under threat at a time when it is desperately needed to promote civil discourse and maintain social cohesion among citizens. The region also could benefit from a volunteer lawyer or legal aid programs. Without access to legal advocates, low-income individuals are more likely to be victims of predatory practices and less likely to access needed services.

The local economy is an area that needs to be strengthened. Small, rural communities face challenges in developing good jobs, particularly jobs that are suitable for two worker families. Economic opportunities are not evenly and equitably distributed throughout the county and there is too much poverty. This lack of economic opportunity creates stress and impairs health and wellbeing. Many communities in the county could benefit from linkages to the programs and opportunities that are available in Sierra Vista.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

While Sierra Vista has been affected by COVID-19, the particulars are not universally or well understood, and there are pockets of inequitable and disparate impact. People in rural areas, communities of color, the

LGBTQ+ community, people without adequate internet access or access to information especially pertaining to COVID-19, and people who could not access the vaccine all suffered disproportionately. Many students, particularly those in poverty, have fallen off the map and suffered significant setbacks in their education as well as mental health impacts.

Although the county health department and other agencies have collected information about health and social determinants of health, that information is not generally known or available within the community. It also takes time to collect and process the data. It might be helpful and cathartic to invite people who have been impacted by COVID-19 and/or racism to come together and talk about how they have been affected.

People love living in Sierra Vista and it is a community that doesn't think it has a racism problem. Nevertheless, there are populations that feel marginalized and their voices need to be heard.

Videos of killings of Black men and women has raised the level of discussion of racism nationwide. This might be a good time to establish a new and improved diversity, equity, and inclusion commission. It would also be useful to investigate the impact of COVID-19 on county jail inmates, to look at police conduct, and to consider the need for reforms in the light of the Black Lives Matter movement. The recently formed Cochise County Public Accountability Community Engagement Transparency Liaison Committee (PACTLC) has just initiated a police accountability effort.

TAKING ACTION

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Sierra Vista Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- The Legacy Foundation of Southeast Arizona will consider a grant cycle to support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) training in the community.
- Take this information out to the 11 Healthy Community Groups throughout the county. If you are interested in joining one of these groups, visit <http://www.healthycochise.org/> or contact Evelyn Whitmer at emarkee@arizona.edu.
- Obtain more and better data about the key issues.
- Attend city council, school board, board of supervisor, and other public meetings and share the information we obtain there widely with groups we are involved with.
- Cochise County will collaborate and help put out an Educational Concerns Survey, provide venue for feedback at the Superintendents Roundtable, Career and Technical Education Workgroups, County and Cochise College Student Advisory Council. If you are interested, please contact Jacqui Clay via email at jclay@cochise.az.gov.
- Carry the idea back to the Sierra Vista City Council establish a commission in the community on social awareness and embracing diversity.

Pima County Virtual Community Town Hall

May 13, 2021 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Pima County Virtual Community Town Hall

May 13, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In Pima County, we have a strong focus on relationships, collaboration, connecting, and communicating with each other. We can build on this strength by ensuring that we are being mindful of blind spots to diverse and marginalized communities (such as communities of color, LGBTQ+, etc.) and by continuing to actively collaborate in areas where different organizations are working on the same issue to reduce duplication of services. We may want to explore teams of organizations and people who are working on similar topics, perhaps using the Town Hall method, at local or grassroots community levels to have a greater direct impact on neighborhoods.

Pima County also has some strong educational resources such as charter, private, and public schools, community and tribal colleges, and access to Arizona State University, Northern Arizona University, and the University of Arizona. There are a significant educational resources and programs such as the Joint Technical Education District (JTED), Promise of Preschool, STEAM, and JobPath to name a few. We can use these to expand opportunities for future workforce needs by utilizing and expanding existing relationships between private and public organizations to build and support the talent pool for our future workforce needs. We should strive for better integration with the court system to deal with mental health issues. Pima County has rich public lands that surround and inhabit our communities. These assets provide opportunities for activity and improved health.

One of the strengths of our community is our ability to meet the needs of those with food insecurities. We can capitalize on this strength by making these gatherings a resource opportunity to meet other needs such as financial planning, job services, housing, and other services that may help those in need. We should develop, in conjunction with AARP, a housing plan for older adults, particularly the availability of more affordable housing. We should build on the successes of collaboration such as the Elder Alliance and the City of Tucson working to develop elder friendly community by looking across the elements of a healthy community and minimizing duplication of services.

Pima County adopted a plan based on the elements of a healthy community, which has helped to break down the silos within and between government, agencies and other organizations. The Tucson/Pima County Community Investment Partnership, created as a result of the pandemic, provides a single portal for information on housing assistance disbursement to reduce evictions.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The pandemic has exacerbated challenges with mental illness and housing. We can address these challenges better if we can come together more and collaborate to support those neighborhoods most in need. We need to increase/improve staffing at our agencies because we are also facing burnout of staff. The pandemic taught us that housing people in hotels helps people by giving them a sense of dignity by having a personal space. The need for more people working in social services became obvious in the pandemic and it's not limited to that, especially as other businesses raise wages. Despite constant fundraising, it is still difficult to compete for staff.

The pandemic brought to the surface what people have seen or experienced for a long time. Specifically, it brought to light issues of racial injustice, social inequities, ageism, the isolation experienced by many older people, and issues surrounding dying. We need to better plan for death and address social isolation. The digital divide became more obvious as a result of the pandemic, impacting the ability to access services, participate in telehealth visits, and other opportunities. We acknowledge that the digital divide also applies to teachers, not just students, because there is both an access and an affordability issue.

With respect to racism, COVID-19 and other events raised awareness of the continuing presence of racism and created opportunities for more people to go outside of their comfort zone to help people who might look different from them. It was an opportunity (for those who took it) to see how they could be a part of the solution. We also need to use this opportunity to address institutional racism.

The pandemic further highlighted the need for high-quality childcare and the need for broadband internet availability to all communities. It also highlighted inequities in our healthcare system, especially frontline workers who had to continue to go to work to pay the bills and did not always have the educational resources to know how to respond to the risks of COVID-19.

The delivery system for healthcare, which separates public health from individual providers, exacerbated the problems with COVID-19. We need a better system to support direct healthcare workers. While Pima County is blessed with good leadership in the public health arena, the pandemic clearly demonstrated that we need to invest a lot more in our public health infrastructure to avoid future problems like those we experienced because of COVID-19.

The pandemic also exacerbated issues with access to housing. Those who were housing challenged prior to the pandemic were even more so. Stable housing is critical for healthy communities.

TAKING ACTION

Nonprofits are critical to the vibrancy of our community, and they can provide the expertise, collaboration and leadership needed to make our communities healthier and more vibrant. The work of nonprofits should be done in balance with local and state governments and others. It is important for us to look at solutions that allow for effective collaboration between all of these groups. It is also important for us to ensure that nonprofits have the resources needed to do their work.

We need to address climate resiliency—addressing the warming of the earth and how to ensure we have enough water and can take care of those who are most vulnerable to climate change. Related to this is the need for clean, available water to our communities. The lack of clean water impacts community education and health. These are community-wide issues that require community collaborations with nonprofits, businesses, governments, and individuals.

Addressing the difference in housing costs and wages and exploring how to turn Tucson into a living wage community is also necessary. Half the wages in Pima County are low wage jobs.

Virtual or digital town halls have allowed us to engage more diverse people and to come up with solutions that allow for better discussions and solutions. We should continue to utilize digital town halls as part of our efforts to engage a broader and more diverse community. We also need to be sensitive to community members who may not be able to be a part of these discussions. There are opportunities with faith-based and other organizations for partnerships in this area.

Collecting data that allows us to see the impact on marginalized communities is essential as we move forward.

The pandemic highlighted significant work that needs to be done in all these areas.

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Pima County Virtual Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Look for ways to have the faith communities I work with continue to expand their involvement in the issues we have discussed today (housing, outreach to vulnerable communities, etc.).
- Continue my professional contributions to and advocacy for public education.
- Continue to serve on community boards addressing homelessness.
- Be kind.
- Continue collaborating for constructive disruption with members of our community supporting STEAM education in particular.
- Advocate immediate action that can be taken on a “camper’s camp” in Pima County. A low-impact spot where people can live outside but get services. A place where outreach workers can FIND their clients when housing does become available.
- Continue to work both in a professional and personal sense to ensure an equitable community.
- Continue to work with the Y helping young women get good employment.
- Push for the adoption of the Legatum Index of Prosperity as a unifying measurement system to show progress over the 32 variables which underlie prosperity.
- Continue to organize at a grassroots level in our barrio and use our nonprofit to reach out to possible partnership to bring in resources to our multi-generational families.

- Continue our mission to prevent homelessness, working with our community partners.
- Continue to strategically connect the dots throughout the community and professionally disrupt the status quo.
- Look at everything I am engaged in (social service agency, faith community, etc.) to think about them not in an isolated way but as aspects of a vibrant community.
- Starting my own "network" of community change agents and look for opportunities for this "network" to effect change.
- Continue to work on a strategic plan for broadband infrastructure in Pima County.
- Share the factors needed for a vibrant community with Juvenile Court and encourage taking these factors into account when dealing with juveniles and their families who enter the Juvenile Justice System.
- Work to identify new leaders in each of our PCI faith communities and help them get trained to organize their communities to use their voices to advocate for their needs.
- Commit towards the effort of increasing affordable housing, both rental and homeownership, collaborating with community leaders, developers and state and federal agencies

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSOR



Greater Tucson Leadership & Alumni Virtual Community Town Hall

May 26, 2021 – Online via Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Greater Tucson Leadership & Alumni Virtual Community Town Hall

May 26, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Tucson is a community that has several strong elements that foster vibrant community. Social and cultural cohesion, which includes Tucson's strong attitude toward helping one another, is a widely agreed upon element of our community as its strength. A community that has cultural cohesion can leverage this strength for a lot of things, in an effort to increase the strength of areas where we might be deficient. It can be used to create opportunity across the board and to create strengths where we might have weakness.

An additional strength of the community are the outdoor recreational opportunities. Parks and recreation assets assist in creating additional connection among the community, which naturally enhances cultural and social cohesion among groups that may traditionally be disconnected. The outdoor elements can also be leveraged to increase economic opportunity for many groups, specifically within tourism. Having a strong tourism industry within the community could be an asset that we can leverage in order to create more economic opportunity for those who may not have access to it.

Outdoor recreation and connectivity opportunities, including assets like The Loop, Tumamoc Hill, and Reid Park, can be used to connect groups to other services. This highlights elements of community design, which tackles the overall organization and design of a community including access to physical transportation to important services like job centers, affordable food, healthcare opportunities, etc. Transportation assets, as well as parks and recreation assets related to transportation, can be used to connect disconnected groups, assist in place making, and increase access to various elements of quality of life for our community.

Lastly, a significant strength that exists within our community is the network of nonprofits and the services they offer. If we can leverage this strength, including innovative practices like outbound healthcare services coupled with existing assets related to transportation and outdoor recreation, we can better facilitate community design. This will increase opportunities for all groups within our community, invariably increasing social and cultural cohesion, building and supporting a vibrant community.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The COVID-19 pandemic laid bare many inequities across our community. One issue that was explicitly demonstrated to us is the concept of access to technology and digital equity. Lack of technology, including access to internet as well as equipment, severely limited some groups' access to essential services. In a world that is consistently becoming more and more digital, additional investment in this specific area is going to be key in the fight to minimize inequity. This lack of access has further implications, including lack of access to both general and specialized healthcare services, including access to COVID-19 testing and vaccines. This divide will only increase without investment in technology in disadvantaged communities.

Access to food became a significant issue during the pandemic, especially for those already at a disadvantage. Those who rely on public transportation faced a greater challenge in having access to food in general, let alone affordable food. At the intersection of access to school, food, and technology, we see the fact that schools, which are already underfunded, become the sole access point to food for disadvantaged communities.

Further related to access, we saw an increase in the disconnect to essential services including childcare, mental health services, and others. Lack of access to these essential services can further widen the gap and significantly impacts additional opportunities for economic growth and health, especially to already disadvantaged groups. General mental health has been identified as a key component of physical health, and the pandemic exacerbated an already difficult focus of healthcare that has not been given adequate attention.

Public safety on the national level has added to discord and ire involving minority groups. The concept of public safety is already a sensitive subject. The pandemic shined a spotlight on challenges around public safety and abuse of power.

The combination of preexisting racial inequities and the pandemic, exponentially increased challenges in the areas of the digital divide, access to healthcare (both mental and physical), childcare, access to food (especially affordable food), education, safety, justice, transportation, and more.

TAKING ACTION

Nonprofits are critical to the vibrancy of our community, and they can provide the expertise and leadership needed to make our communities healthier and more vibrant. The work of nonprofits should be done in balance with local and state governments and others. It is important for us to look at solutions that allow for effective collaboration between all of these groups. It is also important for us to ensure that nonprofits have the resources needed to do their work.

We need to address climate resiliency—addressing the warming of the earth, how to ensure we have enough water, and how to take care of those who are most vulnerable to climate change. Related to this is the need for clean, available water to our communities. The lack of clean water impacts community education and health. These are community-wide issues that require collaborations with nonprofits, businesses, governments, and individuals.

Addressing the difference in housing costs and wages and exploring how to turn Tucson into a living wage community is also necessary. Half the wages in Pima County are low wage jobs.

Virtual or digital town halls have allowed us to engage more diverse people and to come up with solutions that allow for better discussions and solutions. We should continue to utilize digital town halls as part of our efforts to engage a broader and more diverse community. We also need to be sensitive to community members who may not be able to be a part of these discussions. There are opportunities with faith-based and other organizations for partnerships in this area. Collecting data that allows us to see the impact on marginalized communities is essential as we move forward. The pandemic highlighted significant work that needs to be done in all these areas.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSORS



American Planning Association Community Town Hall

August 24, 2021 – Online via Zoom

Creating Vibrant Communities

American Planning Association Community Town Hall

August 24, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

In some areas that have experienced rapid growth, facilities and infrastructure may be new and well financed, but social cohesion and transportation are lacking. Leapfrog development, large service areas, and being a terminal commuter community all contribute to the transportation challenges.

Small rural communities face challenges with developing and maintaining a vibrant downtown area where people can gather. Malls are in decline and good alternatives need to be developed. In some communities, people have high expectations for government services that are inconsistent with the political and economic culture.

Many communities, particularly smaller and rural communities, face challenges with transportation, affordable housing, economic development, and job opportunities.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Surprisingly, building permit activity remained steady throughout the pandemic. However, permits were generally issued for housing at the high middle and upper end of the affordability spectrum, not the affordable end.

One big impact of the pandemic was to focus communities on outdoor space. Spaces are being converted and improved to make them more suitable for outdoor use by creating shade, trails, and authorization for outdoor activities in public spaces, such as educational institutions. Some campus communities have been redefining their role in the community to create more public access and more outdoor public space. Some of these efforts will address the heat island effect in large cities.

Federal monies made available to mitigate the impact of the pandemic have helped some communities to make improvements to facilities and programs with significant community input and benefit.

The pandemic also created a massive exodus of people from the cities to rural areas which, in many cases, were not prepared to receive them. These people were largely white and well-to-do; many people of color were left behind in cities. People who are less well-off did not have access to broadband and could not work from home or from remote areas and were more likely to be adversely affected by the pandemic.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

The passage of SB 1350, which prohibits cities from regulating short term rentals, has reduced the number of units available for longer term lease in some communities, exacerbating the affordable housing shortage. This creates a host of associated problems for communities and residents.

Schools should be allowed to use education monies to pay for all students to receive free lunch.

Leaders should work collaboratively across their jurisdictional lines, particularly in areas such as Yavapai County where there are many small jurisdictions affected by common challenges.

Elected officials should base the information they report to the public on facts. They could provide sources and data to the public to support their decisions and explain the basis for their decisions.

The time has come to provide incentives for developers to include affordable housing in their developments.

The big issues, such as water quality, water supply, transportation, etc. need to be better coordinated among local jurisdictions. In addition, the statute that allows challenges to community plans should be modified as it interferes too much with the progress of community planning.

There should be concurrency of development and service. Planning responsibility should correlate to the level of responsibility for the service.

We should encourage planned communities, so that development occurs in proximity to the amenities that people need and want to make their communities livable, and address transportation challenges.

Gila Valley Community Town Hall

September 10, 2021 – Thatcher, AZ



Creating Vibrant Communities

Gila Valley Community Town Hall

September 10, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

Generally speaking, we work well together as a community. And, we have a good reputation for being a safe community with responsive law enforcement. While there are always areas for improvement, there is good access to health care with a strong regional hospital, which includes hospital administration who serve the community well. We also have a good supply of dentists.

We have strong non-profits who work together to serve the community, help to maintain a beautiful environment, and act as economic drivers for the community. We have a great natural environment with clean air, beautiful surroundings, and clear, dark skies that support the Mount Gram International Observatory.

Overall, when it comes to parks and recreation our community works together well and is responding better to the different needs of today's children and teenagers.

For a community of our size, our educational opportunities are strong. We have good teachers with high expectations and opportunities for lifelong learning. Eastern Arizona College allows for educational opportunities and support that attract business and economic development. Nonetheless, there are opportunities for improvement, especially for children who are not able to attend pre-school.

As a region we are getting better at responding to the concerns of minorities and tribal communities, although there is still room for improvement.

CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

The pandemic highlighted and exacerbated disparities with access to broadband and education. Schools that had more resources were better able to pivot to more effective online learning. Schools with less resources fell behind as did students and families who did not have access to the internet.

Lack of broadband affects education. It also affects safety, access to care, work opportunities, and access to needed services. Broadband and the ability to effectively use it has become an essential luxury.

It has become increasingly more difficult to operate in our current world without access to broadband. The pandemic has motivated our leaders to take action to make it more available and reliable. Federal funding and community leaders becoming better informed of the immediate need for broadband should allow us to begin to correct these inequities and better prepare for the future.

The pandemic created challenges with access to healthcare. It highlighted disparities in access to healthcare systems, including disparities between rural and urban areas. An unintended consequence of HIPAA was that people didn't know who might have COVID and were unable to effectively respond in some instances. There were also challenges created when families could not visit or communicate with loved ones.

While there were many community conversations and some disagreements over how to respond to the pandemic, the ability of our community to work together and cooperate with each other allowed us to be more resilient respond more quickly and effectively to the many challenges faced through the pandemic.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

Local governments need to better advocate at the federal level to bring greater investment to our communities. This would include applying for grants and an approach that includes a specific local plan for the need being addressed, whether its broadband, education, transportation, affordable housing, youth programs, or employment opportunities for our youth.

Volunteerism is huge in this community. Perhaps we can form regional focus groups that can meet, share information, and then provide our elected leaders with specific guidance from the community for community investment. With respect to community investment, it's important to consider sustainability—especially if the initial funding is a one-time investment. Broadband may be one of the investment opportunities where one-time funding from the federal government would be very beneficial. This may also help support economic development and the creation of new job opportunities for our youth that would keep them here locally.

State leaders should consider our unique needs. This includes providing a larger percentage of the transaction privilege tax (TPT) that comes from the mining operations within our community but that often doesn't come back to benefit our community. Also, wildcat subdivisions create a lot of issues within our communities for infrastructure, parks and recreation, environmental quality, transportation, safety, and quality of life. The state government should allow the county government to have more authority in managing and developing subdivisions.

Government should be here to help us—not to create challenges or burdens that help Maricopa County to the detriment of our local community and that do not allow us to use money in the ways we know will best serve our community.

TAKING ACTION

To make our communities healthier and more vibrant:

1. Addressing our housing issues:
 - a. Create a private-public-non-profit partnership to create affordable and workforce housing.
 - b. Have a local town hall to address housing.
2. Preserving our environment: Work to create a better more vibrant Gila River (Bill will work with others and needs helpers).

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Gila Valley Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Contact Arizona Community Foundation about affordable housing.
- Continue pushing donations to Graham Greenlee Tax Credit Coalition (GGTCC).
- Teach students about scholarship opportunities.
- Be active in local politics.
- Support my local nonprofit organizations.
- Continue river work in order to create a better vibrant river.
- Engage Eastern Arizona College students!
- Continue to attend community events and meetings to identify both short-term and long-term needs of the Gila Valley.
- Advocate for funding and action to be take in support of those needs.
- Volunteer time to assist Graham County and the local towns to create long-range planning goals and zoning politics to generate new jobs and housing with diversification in mind.
- Support and provide funding for youth groups and substance abuse recover and prevention.
- Work to find solutions in my community. Figure out some groups that need individual support (me).
- Do more research and get involved.
- Continue to help the communities that I serve to become sustainable.
- Focus on housing (teacher- and workforce-centric).
- 4 steps: Champion, Helpers, Timeline, Execution.
- Pursue development of: homeless respite center (host a town hall); Graham County Historical Society Museum; renovation of Wet Canyon and Noon Creek (host a town hall); emergency preparedness at the county level; low cost housing (host a town hall); improve communications.
- Increase discussion on furthering the expansion of broadband throughout the Gila Valley.
- Speak with Chamber staff to discuss the opportunity of creating focus groups.
- Be more involved in my community.
- Become more aware of where I am most needed to help my community become more vibrant.

SPECIAL THANKS TO PROGRAM SPONSORS



**Southwest Arizona Town Hall
“Creating a Vibrant Community”
Foundational Forums
Summary Report**

April-September, 2021 – Online via Zoom

Foundational Forum One – April 22, 2021

“Human Opportunities”

OUR VIBRANT COMMUNITY VISION

We believe Yuma County is a thriving community with a promising future, and together we have envisioned what tomorrow's vibrant Yuma community would look like. In such a vibrant community, Yuma County residents would be connected to each other across cities, demographics, and industries. We would play to our strengths and be seen nationally as a center for agriculture, and we would highlight our position as a bi-national area, showing the strength of our proximity to the USA-Mexico border and its access to both local populations. We would have a robust educational system at all levels, a thriving arts and culture community, and job opportunities that people feel passionate about, with accessible resources, available and affordable childcare, and robust transportation options. Our higher education system would nimbly adapt to industry needs, our infrastructure would have needed improvements, and we would have greater community outreach about available resources.

One key element in building a vibrant community is educational opportunity, primarily because educational opportunities within a community are very influential on employment opportunities. An available, educated populace with workforce experience and technical certificates, who are trained and ready to work in skilled positions, is a strong lure for companies, which in turn provides more opportunity for residents. Also, companies looking to locate in Yuma County always ask about education, both K-12 and secondary, as it is important to their own relocating families and management, who look for locations with quality of education for their children. We have a guide to this process in Maricopa County, who is on the cutting edge of attracting additional businesses to their area. It is critically important that Yuma County gain insight on those conversations such that we can be successful in doing the same.

In our envisioned education system, there would be learning opportunities for all members of the community. This means not just traditional college degrees but also on-the-job workforce vocational training, programs for mothers caring for their children, and opportunities to develop skills in seniors, youth, and entrepreneurs. We also would have more early education for children and expanded childcare opportunities to take the burden off of young families, and mothers in particular. We do not need to reinvent the wheel to achieve this, as others have had successful programs in other communities and we ourselves have underutilized existing programs. It would be better to conduct outreach to our citizens, particularly current primary and high school students, on the educational opportunities already available to them. To achieve this, we can use those community members that have degrees and specialized training and are already doing well as mentors and positive influences. We would expand this system by creating better collaboration between businesses and educational organizations to develop resources and get current resources into the hands that need it.

We would love to see all high school students with access to higher education without financial burdens. Through our outreach programs, they would understand the pathways to get there and how to achieve their dreams. While it goes without saying that quality preschool and elementary education is critical, it is equally important and essential to expose the youth to educational opportunities and/or programs that assist with developing career pathways. Students need to be exposed to different occupations so that they are empowered to explore expanded dreams for their future. It would allow students to go into a career they might not have

considered if they had not been exposed early on. Expansion and inclusion of vocational training, CTE, and/or CORE curriculum is critical in this endeavor. Many local programs already offer hands-on experiences through local employers. This should be expanded and made a higher-profile effort that every student knows about and can count on. We should not hesitate to commit more resources to our primary and secondary students to enable them to do more, as they are our pipeline into the future success of our community.

Within today's economy, both parents are likely part of the workforce to meet the needs of their family. In order for them to do so, we need more high-quality, early-childhood systems that will assist parents while shepherding children through school, prioritizing education, and encouraging pathways to get to a higher education. Yuma also needs flexible employers who provide work-life balance opportunities, such as employers that allow a parent to work at home if they have a sick child. Flexibility allows adults and older students to take more credit hours at the college or pursue supplemental training or other educational opportunities around their work schedules. This is also true for working parents where childcare is the limiting factor, and they can gain more flexibility if they had better access to childcare facilities for their children. Higher education and advanced training benefits the entire family unit, as education is key to breaking the generational poverty cycle. Childcare facilities and flexible arrangements should not just be for the affluent. Our schools and community should offer more afterschool programs and early child programs to accommodate the needs of this population.

Certainly, to achieve our vision we must fight the cycle of poverty. There are several programs in Yuma County currently, but it takes outreach to make sure the resources reach all citizens and not just those who lucked upon them by word of mouth. We sell the Yuma community to visitors but not our own locals; we should be equally focusing on outreach of services to our citizens. We should consider Family Resource Centers to serve as hubs within targeted communities currently underserved. A big dream is for businesses to adopt specific communities to break the poverty by assisting with local programs for kids and residents of all ages.

Lastly, another key component of a vibrant community is accessible and affordable transportation and housing, particularly for low-income families. We would also have high-speed and reliable internet and other technology assets that bridge connections across groups and provide easier access to greater resources. Infrastructure like housing, transportation, broadband internet, and other improvements greatly influences human opportunities. Further, companies need certain infrastructure improvements in place to decide to move here. We would have trained and educated individuals to assist with infrastructure development through targeted recruitment and training of our citizens.

EXPANDING COLLABORATIONS: EDUCATION, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, AND INDUSTRY

To achieve our vision, collaboration is vital. Particularly, it is most important for different municipalities to work together as a region, instead of competing with each other. We need to build common language and linkage between the local leaders and systems so that we can share resources. We can improve communication through the development of pilot system partnerships. Overall, we need to collaboratively identify what makes Yuma County a great place as a whole—it may not be the "big cities" of Phoenix and Tucson, but we are a city with many opportunities for all types of people and industry with unique attributes through which we stand apart from other locales within the state and country.

Many who have never been to our area believe we are nothing more than the tiny piece of the city of Yuma the freeway passes through, and they have no idea of the size of our population and the pool of resources and

talent that exists here. We should better market our county and its strengths, because our great community collaboration, particularly between education and industry, the Colorado River region and cross border benefits, and our important agriculture, business, and military assets are often an unknown to outsiders. Through Town Hall and other opportunities, we should provide a well-thought-out and cohesive story that depicts our mission and goals such that others, even our children, can see the issues clearly. People and industries will hear the story and find additional ways to bring more value to our community. Right now, we do not sell it well enough, even to our own residents. Perhaps we can better use those opportunities when the national spotlight is on us for other reasons to reframe the dialogue about our county. There are other proactive ways to broaden our message's reach, like having a welcome committee and welcome packages for people doing business in Yuma County, which would have the additional benefit of allowing businesses to better integrate into the community and to connect with potential employees. Clearly, these types of collaborations between our existing institutions and programs would be helpful in the development of one of our key factors to community success: showing companies they can make money and thrive here with high productivity from a trained workforce and with a good quality of life for their employees. Everything else falls into place once companies know they can be successful in this region.

Development of the educational opportunities in partnership with the needs of the community is also a critical collaboration. As attracting businesses should be our ultimate goal as it serves everyone, we must provide an educated workforce capable of serving those needs while advancing their own personal success. Education needs to check in with existing businesses and potential businesses to see what they need from education in order to for companies to stay in business here or move here. Yuma County already has a great start on collaboration between education and industry, so whatever can be done to build on this relationship would be helpful. For example, one practical example would be an HR assessment regarding what types of available jobs currently exist and what skills and education are needed in order to help narrow the workforce training and education we should develop or expand on. It would also be useful to share this type of information with young people and students so they can make educated decisions on jobs and positions available in our region as they choose their educational paths. We should consider additional and expanded collaborative efforts, like an innovation center that brings new business owners, students, and others together to meet industry needs and help grow the economic environment. Working with businesses to expand offerings of paid internships and apprenticeships also would provide needed training to our workforce. Education and business industry collaboration could help students join the work force already trained and ready to work.

Unfortunately, many residents do not realize the opportunities that educational institutions and community organizations already have in place for them despite the doors that educational opportunities open and the advantages to income and growth, particularly with business partnerships. Career and vocational technology programs in high schools have advisory boards for licensing and certification, but we need to get the word out throughout Yuma County to get a better connection with the industries we are training for. We need to concentrate on keeping the students and our future workforce here in Yuma County and avoid a "brain drain." Making sure that students and young people in the area are aware of the opportunities for them here would help with job creation and workforce retention so these people do not move away from the area with their skill sets. Perhaps a marketing or educational/awareness campaign with "educational ambassadors" would be beneficial as would programs that allow high school students to better learn about the possibilities and opportunities.

To best achieve these goals, we must also address the gaps in access to education and resources in minority communities due to transportation and accessibility. We should target poverty pockets to close the gaps between communities. We need to eliminate the stigma of 'South County' and evolve into ONE Yuma County with a united goal of promoting and developing our community.

We must also continue to enhance our community benefits to attract new residents and companies. This includes affordable and accessible healthcare for the entire family, as well as competitive salaries where people can earn more than minimum wage. Programs through organizations like the City of Yuma, the Parks and Recreation department, and partnerships with non-profits provide additional tangible and intangible benefits improving quality of life. Development of additional Pre-K and childcare options are critical.

All these items will take the involvement of many parties and interest groups, and all should have input on how they should be built and designed. There are opportunities for collective impact, where local leaders can come together to try and solve specific issues. We must identify backbone agencies that already exist and function within these spaces to facilitate gatherings of interested stakeholders to develop new collaborations, solutions, and programs.

ACCOMPLISHING THE VISION

Accomplishing this vision takes leadership from individuals who the community respects and trusts. We need people from the region who bring together passion, business investment, and non-profit resources to create plans and ideas for our community's future. The right people need to be at the table: people with strong commitment and accountability.

Business leaders are critical, particularly from our core industries. But we also need to include small, start-up businesses and entrepreneurs here in Yuma to get information on what worked, did not work, and what needs to change to allow new local businesses to thrive. Investors also need to be included. Additionally, successful collaborations need to have more than the business industry at the table. We also should include families, students, industry, chambers, agency partners, and anyone who is passionate about these issues. We need to reach more broadly to bring in community members with drive and commitment, such as members of service organizations, which are typically more engaged in local needs and have outside connections. Local elected officials need to be included in these collaborations. Cities, like the City of Yuma, which help provide the environment that young professionals seek, should also be part of the discussions. We also need to include more minorities and young people in these conversations, particularly considering our county demographics.

We must continue to develop underserved areas identified for development. The purpose is it not to focus on what we do not have, but what we envision could be, with consideration of the different goals in different sectors of the community, like transportation. We should bring leaders together to address the stigma of 'South County' to look at a broader vision for a cohesive county. We should recognize that many families are so busy working that they often do not have the time to engage, and we must seek ways to include them. Others complain of a lack of flexibility of employers in letting employees continue their education, despite the potential return on investment, and we should seek better industry collaboration with access to education. Many students lack guidance to assist in determination and development of interests and career paths, and there are opportunities for community volunteers to bridge this gap. Access to reliable transportation plagues many segments of our community. We also need better capacity on grant writers in Yuma County, especially for our local non-profits, and should seek more unified ways to get more funding. We should adopt community blocks for better understanding on the long-term vision of our various populations. Those collaborations need to be attended by the "do-ers" of businesses and the community and other critical stakeholders in order to formulate a good plan of action, with actionable and measureable milestones.

During COVID many people came to Yuma, especially from California. COVID-19 made people appreciate their family more and shifted priorities, and it may be easier to convince people to stay in Yuma or come back, whereas perhaps this would not have occurred without the pandemic. We need to capitalize on this new sentiment in our marketing plan. Growing families needs to be marketed to keep our residents and students here and encourage relocation from other areas of the country to our community.

For all these goals, involving journalism is also vitally important, as it helps educate the community on growing opportunities and promote the area to businesses here and those considering moving here. Also, social media influencers should be included, as they can highlight what Yuma County has to offer in an increasingly relevant way, particularly to younger generations.

PERSONAL ACTIONS TO IMPACT CHANGE

Committing to a change that one is passionate about or capable of effectuating, no matter how small, will make an impact on our community's vision. Many community members offered their own action goal to impact change. A selection of these goals include:

- Encourage United Way of Yuma County to continue working to break poverty cycle and educate the participants. Start to Finish!
- Articulate an elevator speech and pitch that speech to your local service agency.
- Invite people to see the wonderful things going on.
- Research the right people within your groups/agencies to further market the good things.
- Reviving plans of action that were put in place pre-COVID.
- Improving access to care.
- Opening myself to opportunities that keep the conversation moving to stir up more ideas/collaborations outside of the typical network to find common goals to unite.
- Seeking more grants.
- Coordinating fundraising.
- Offering paid internships.
- Speaking publicly.
- Continue to be involved in discussions like these.
- Support students through the educational pipeline through job attainment.
- Using the Yuma Sun to promote programs in the community.
- Creating a plan to see the big picture to determine where I fit.
- Being active in my school and helping others to participate as well.
- Bringing an innovation center to Yuma County.

- Work as a board member.
- Highlight the bi-national character of the region.
- Develop a strategic plan for economic development with input from various community groups and from different perspectives and look to South County for growth opportunities.
- Promote the opportunities at Arizona Western College.
- Convince businesses to join the conversation particularly re: bringing more business to the region.
- Serving as an ambassador and speaking positively about Yuma County.
- Providing professional training to others.

Foundational Forum Two – June 11, 2021

“Access to Healthcare and Quality Affordable Food”

THE QUALITY HEALTHCARE VISION

Members of our community agree: an important element of a vibrant community is quality healthcare. The Yuma County community has a vision of how to develop quality healthcare, which includes a desire for healthcare to be more integrative, including traditional health, overall wellness, and collaboration between specialists. These categories are necessarily broad and encompass improved access to healthcare (from traditional medical services to mental health and substance abuse providers), to healthy eating habits and food security, to expanded children's services. Yuma County is well known for relations and collaborations across broad industry groups and interests and by using this strength to create an integrated approach to quality healthcare, we can become a model for the state. In fact, it was partnerships such as these, forged collaboratively through different groups, that alleviated the severe nurse and physician shortages Yuma used to experience. These efforts have been so successful that a shortage of space is the biggest limitation now.

Elements of this quality healthcare vision include services not just for “normal,” traditional healthcare needs, but also for the special needs populations, especially children with cancer or severe handicaps, and mental health care. For mental health and substance abuse, our community does not have enough outpatient programs to support our residents' physical, emotional, gifted, and disability needs, especially for children and adolescents. We acknowledge that psychiatry and mental health care expansion is very complicated and will require partnerships with specialized institutions, in the hopes that we can entice qualified providers to choose Yuma as a place to practice. But solving this problem brings many tangible advantages apart from improved health, including reducing pressure on law enforcement, as implementation of mental health response teams could avoid escalation to law enforcement responses and lower incarceration rates.

Indeed, more community- and outreach-based programs focused on preventing the formation of health issues and complications altogether would serve our community well, and not just in mental health and substance abuse care, but also in traditional medical services. For example, for chronic illnesses such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and heart disease, medical professionals need the training to learn to listen to patients who cannot express themselves well and find ways of meeting the patient's total needs. Community health workers and nutritionists are key for success in this area. Only by working together with other health, education, and other community organizations can we find a solution to quality healthcare and access for our community.

Further, greater efforts to improve communication between all the various providers would significantly benefit community members regarding the status of his or her healthcare as well as provide greater access to preventative care. YRMC has enhanced healthcare in Yuma County by utilizing systems such as the MyCare patient information system, which coordinates all their contracted providers. It would be even more valuable if all providers (including nursing homes, healthcare providers, urgent care facilities, hospitals, etc.) utilized this system for patient records to avoid any mistakes.

Lastly, quality healthcare also means improving access to various clinics and more diverse medical care providers, as well as providing assistance to citizens with understanding available benefits. One large problem with access to healthcare is cost, so emphasis should be put on quality healthcare at affordable prices.

OPPORTUNITIES IN PARTNERSHIP

As identified above, a true strength of Yuma County is its willingness to collaborate with various stakeholders and groups across industries and interests to reach innovative solutions that could not be accomplished individually. It is necessary to avoid working in isolation and collaborate with multiple organizations to meet the need. The agencies in Yuma County work very well together already but we can enhance the partnership by increasing greater participation by members of the public. With more participation, greater advantage may be taken of those resources that have yet to be tapped in Yuma County, especially as it relates to preventative healthcare and care for those who may be more dependent on others to assist them and/or advocate of them. Priorities include addressing affordable housing, transportation, technology, and healthcare. However, it is clear that the biggest focus should be on improving access to quality nutrition in order to improve the health of children and adults, as access to quality, affordable food is a key element of a vibrant community.

In Yuma County, we produce a lot of fresh produce for the entire country, but that does not mean that healthy food is abundant and accessible in our own back yard. Yuma County is actually a group of separated communities, with food deserts and a need for more access points. Further, a lack of transportation is a barrier to accessing resources and services for many individuals. Improving access to quality, reliable transportation is the type of partnership that can greatly assist with food security. While the Yuma Community Food Bank travels to San Luis, Somerton, and Wellton, we need to think of inviting ways to deliver food to the community, such as drive-thru's, home delivery, and year-round school or library pick-up locations. It is necessary to remove barriers for food box access – such as IDs or limiting families to one box a month. Currently, people that rely on the Food Bank can only get food at most 3 to 4 days a week and need more consistent access. Additionally, in many cases schools provide food to the students, including both school meals and a backpack of food for the weekend, but this service ends in the summer. Other programs are needed for the summertime as well as for the rest of the family.

Yuma County has a great potential of creating community cooperatives to work together to overcome these obstacles, particularly by incorporating non-profits into this mission and including the agriculture companies located here. Non-profit organizations can also assist with land and resources to build new pathways to deliver food, including churches, which are another key provider of food to the community. However, more grants and other financing needs to be found to increase food purchases and for any service expansion such as a mobile pantry. Consolidating the efforts of the various groups that deal in food products, including but not limited to food production, sales, and distribution, as well as those who may be aware of those who are in need (churches, etc.), would provide greater resources and outreach, decreasing food waste and improving the supply of quality, affordable food. This will take effort to address liability, harvest costs, and distribution, but there are already some protections and solutions in place that just need to be communicated to potential organizations.

Lastly, increased efforts at education are critical. It is challenging to compete with the convenience industry that offers high-calorie dense food with poor nutrition value at low costs. We need to educate our residents about the benefits of cooking and consuming healthy food as education is the key to changing culture. A large portion of the community does not have adequate information on fueling their bodies. Trained dieticians

are needed to combat diabetes, heart disease, and obesity for total health and wellbeing through education of adults and at-risk children. Even more elementally, working with local schools, colleges, and universities to offer courses on healthy food preparation is essential. It is time to bring back home economics courses to our schools. Nutrition is no longer taught in the schools, so people often don't know how to cook and eat healthy even if they have access to good quality food. Many of our schools have state-of-the-art kitchens that are underutilized. Schools should teach budgeting and financial wellness so that more families are able to provide for themselves. Putting this type of essential "life skill" training back in the schools or through other community outreach programs would help with both hunger and healthiness. Programs must be available in English and Spanish through different modalities and locations.

PERSONAL ACTIONS TO IMPACT CHANGE

Committing to a change that one is passionate about or capable of effectuating, no matter how small, will make an impact on our community's vision. Many community members offered their own action goal to impact change. A selection of these goals include:

- Providing staff and program support through Yuma County's organizational leaders, such as YRMC, Sunset, RCFBH, schools, on-profits, etc.
- Applying for grants, including the Yuma Community Foundation's \$50,000 currently available to non-profits.
- Networking with people who are passionate about the subject.
- Bringing together subject matter experts to collaborate and work.
- Taking the step to set up that one meeting that can make a difference.
- Investing in more parks and multi-use pathways at the city and county level to promote healthier lifestyle.
- Paying attention to our own personal health.
- Being willing to serve on a task force.
- Seeking alternatives to crop destruction when left unharvested, such as donation.
- Research and developing ways to logistically harvest produce set for destruction.
- Calling local government leaders.
- Advocating for folks with disabilities to better address their needs.
- Educating the public of what they can do to assist those groups that already are set up to provide assistance.
- Fostering the partnerships we have here in Yuma and connecting my patients with community partners—not just referring them to digital resources and a handout.
- Encouraging others to volunteers with non-profits.

Foundational Forum Three – July 16, 2021

“Equitable Living (Transportation and Affordable Housing)”

THE EQUITABLE TRANSPORTATION AND AFFORDABLE HOUSING VISION

A central theme around all discussions in the community about equitable living is adequate affordable housing and access to resources, which hinges on available, affordable, and convenient transportation. Transportation and housing are key to economic opportunity and jobs, and all people, regardless of income or background, must have a safe, comfortable, and affordable home and reliable and accessible transportation to get to their jobs and required services.

A vision for a vibrant future includes robust housing with walkability or bike-ability. Development of affordable housing only on the fringes of communities compounds transportation issues and removes options for non-vehicular or public transportation. Currently, our community faces a two-year wait time for affordable housing. There are other ways to break this logjam, including increasing education financing and credit management services to prepare individuals for home purchases. Housing affordability targeted at 30% of budget remains a key metric, and the development or preservation of affordable housing at that percentage of income should be a priority for the community. Of course, we must always also focus on raising the income levels within the community such that people can obtain housing without a lot of public subsidies; this is achieved by expanding job training and recruiting employers, and by improving the community's other components (i.e., education) as a whole).

As a compliment to affordable housing, residents need transportation in order to work and access resources. There must be viable transportation options for those citizens without vehicles. Public transportation in Yuma is improving and increasing, particularly with the bus system. Public transportation should have a regional focus beyond the confines of a particular city or town so that more people can utilize community services. Improved public services, such as sheltered bus stops, stops with air conditioning or wifi access, and other amenities can also make public options more attractive and useable. With improvements to bike lanes and access, we already see an increase in bicycles usage as a viable transportation option. Emerging technologies like self-driving cars could ease transportation costs and assist with burdens on personal budgets. Full-service transportation passes, supported by educational or employment, giving opportunity to transfer from different transportation modalities could also assist (busses to ride-share or taxis).

Ultimately, combining both goals can work in tandem. We should develop housing that incorporates both bicycling and walking accessibility. Housing within walking or biking distance of jobs, services, and businesses assist with both housing and transportation burdens, and alleviate the burden on current transportation and budgets.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN THE SECTORS OF TRANSPORTATION AND HOUSING

Demands for housing opportunities in live/work/play communities prioritizing walking or biking as the main transportation mode are increasingly being seen as a key to economic prosperity and a greater quality of life. Yuma County needs to identify more opportunities for mixed-use development and the governments should prioritize it over development on the fringes of our communities. Mixed-use developments where live/work/play is walkable or rideable alleviate transportation burdens, as neighborhoods that are spread out into the countryside end up making transit harder and can also make economic opportunity more difficult. We should take advantage of current development, utilizing more density in the heart of our city, where services and utilities are already in place. Generationally, young people are not in hurry to obtain a driver's license, and public transportation options and walking or biking are increasingly more important. The next generation will choose to live in communities that invest in these transportation options and that prioritize these mixed-use live/work/play developments.

To achieve this, the community should bring the interested stakeholders to the same table, including citizens, transportation providers (public and private), and businesses, all of whom are invested in growing jobs in quantity and quality. Transportation investments will not only increase quality of life within the community but will ultimately save money for interested stakeholders. Specific collaborations between entities that make sense—such as YCAT and Arizona Western College, or builders and transportation hubs—will also be beneficial to implementing innovative solutions.

OPPORTUNITIES TO LEVERAGE COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Yuma needs well-planned communities, where residents rarely need to travel for day-to-day services. We do not have to reinvent the wheel to do this: a prime example is the Verrado development in the West Valley of Phoenix. While it is located immediately adjacent to Interstate 10, the residents do not need to utilize the freeway for most services. It is an example of the live/work/play concept.

Yuma County is a combination of publicly and privately owned land. Our community needs collaboration between different governmental entities and the private sector. Yuma is at a tipping point with development. Investment into transportation and housing is an investment into business development and economic prosperity. The goal is career employment through business development. Simply put, companies will not consider locating or relocating to Yuma unless the workforce is strong, and this includes healthy transportation options and robust housing options to include modern mixed-use developments.

Yuma's biggest export is our next generation talent. Without collaboration, Yuma shifts into a retirement community which makes it more difficult to obtain political will for investment into transportation, education, or affordable housing. A shift to robust housing options is seen as a way to retain talent and expand opportunities. A cultural shift is needed. We must target a younger generation using YCAT and other public transportation options. If you have density, they you can create a credible transit system.

Some of these goals can be achieved simply through better communication. Political leadership has vision for future and private sector has vision for the future, but those visions are not always understood by the general public. Placing it all in a single accessible place may assist with this. Communities should be targeted with information specific to them and via community partnership. Sponsorship programs and assistance with

fees can help bring awareness of these services to communities. Ground level involvement to spread awareness and better understand community needs will also serve to tailor options to the community.

Currently, over 92% of people who use transportation for work purposes go by single occupancy vehicle. We should be viewing transit as a social service option and funding it accordingly. Funding remains large hurdle for investment into transportation methods or emerging technologies. A fair distribution of state shared gas tax as well as local control over road monies would go far in achieving appropriate funding. Obtaining knowledge of how transportation and housing is funded, through tax programs or even the business community, is essential to understanding and modifying existing programs.

Foundational Forum Four – August 13, 2021

“Community Safety”

COMMUNITY SAFETY IN A VIBRANT COMMUNITY

What does the vision of community safety look like in a vibrant community? Well, one with no crime! While that may not currently be possible, there are things that can lead us closer to that vision.

The community needs to deal with the root causes of crime rather than just prosecuting those that need help. This includes marginalized segments of our society like LGBTQ and other minorities. More understanding of these segments might allow us to stop crime before it starts. For example, there has been a resurgence of displaced and homeless individuals who live/camp in public places, for example in the wetlands areas. This gives a perception of lack of safety. There needs to be a serious discussion of how to solve this problem, as it leads to wildfires, crime, injuries, and other issues. This will require dealing with underlying issues that this population and first responders face. Mental health first responders could be attached to police and fire departments so we have qualified people to help with their issues.

Community design should focus on removing “pockets” of income inequality and crime rates and equalizing opportunities across town. Education regarding ongoing issues—such as drug awareness and water safety—will help reduce the number of calls through prevention, allowing available resources to focus on more serious matters. Education, retention, and recruitment requires unique thinking and an eye on targeting the youth. Interaction with the community by safety personnel will assist in preventing the need for emergency services, creating trust with the citizens, aiding in recruiting personnel, and further educating through boots-on-the-ground efforts. Access to Parks and Recreation should be expanded to keep youth engaged, productive, and off the streets. Funding parks and recreation should be a priority. Encouraging and fostering community involvement will help keep citizens safe and create ownership and pride in our community. Better lighting increases actual safety which increases the willingness and desire to go outside and get involved.

Vibrant and extensive transportation is critical to moving throughout the region and providing access to the workforce. Yuma also struggles due to a large number of people not residing in the city, but still affecting Yuma’s community safety. Retention and recruiting are a necessary focus.

When it comes to physical safety, the desert environment offers many unique challenges that could be reduced with education about desert safety. Bicycling safety can be increased with signage, bike lanes and other ways to increase visibility. Embracing bicycling as a quality-of-life issue is advantageous for both residents and visitors. These issues need to be included in municipal general plans and education efforts.

Allowing people to be free to create ideas to solve a lot of these issues can go a long way to providing viable solutions. This means, though, eliminating many government regulations and interference in the economic arena such as minimum wage laws, permits, and other regulations of that type. Society as a whole is too complex for a group of select people to plan. By allowing each individual to plan their life and/or in conjunction with others, the marketplace will see to it that the correct solution will be implemented. However, people need to be allowed to work together with a very minimum of regulations.

COLLABORATING ACROSS SECTORS TO IMPROVE COMMUNITY SAFETY

Yuma's location on the border presents unique challenges that must be faced. There is much more to our community than agriculture. Current funding for infrastructure and tourism could be directed to actual tasks and projects that would enhance our community so that we are more of a destination. But no matter how many great activities we have here, people will not come if they perceive safety threats. We all have responsibility to keep our community safe and provide opportunities for our youth so that they don't make bad choices with their life. We should use our excellent ability to collaborate and not just depend on our first responders.

When we look at the segments of our community, we should look at who is impacted the most by crime. Finding ways to help people provide for themselves, rather than just providing a handout, will improve crime rates. Poverty is directly linked to crime, and communities of color are the most impacted by poverty due to lack of higher education. Higher paying jobs will entice people to work and reduce crime. Thus, increased access to higher education can ultimately help with economic development, jobs, and reduced crime.

We need to strive for a grassroots approach rather than grasstops. Impacted communities must be at the table as solutions are formulated, or the "Smart People" "solutions" will just be a band-aid. A collaborative effort of the County, cities, education, non-profits, and churches, where everyone focuses on the greater good rather than taking credit could really move solutions forward. The Capstone Town Hall is a great opportunity to move in this direction. It is important that these discussions don't just end up as a report on the shelf. Participants should take it upon themselves, or be organized, to impact activities like municipal general plans.

Involve middle school and high school students in citizen academies and ridealongs with emergency personnel to counteract the negative messages of media and social media. Camp Inferno is a good example of such an academy. Encourage neighborhood watch groups to increase the sense of safety and form relationships among neighbors. Interaction by law enforcement with those groups, or other smaller groups, will help further dispel negative messages. Exposure is the best way to foster positive feelings and experiences. This will serve to also encourage members of our communities to pursue careers in emergency services. Create and increase opportunities for open discussion community forums – such as Coffee with a Cop.

Communities, governments, and emergency services need to embrace technology and create a bigger footprint on the platforms used by our youth to better connect with them and get them the information they need. Services and programs should be put in place around the city to provide alternatives for children after-school and provide access to strong mentors. It is necessary to target these programs to the much younger children, as high school may be too late. The criminal justice system needs to be incorporated into the discussion and programs need to be crafted to address those who are better served by non-criminal justice programs – such as the mentally ill. There need to be more than discussions. Action plans are critical to moving forward. Being innovative in addressing these various issues will draw people to our community.

ACCOMPLISHING THIS VISION VIA COLLABORATION

Our communities are too interconnected to not be unified. Together, mayors, administrators, representatives of the business community, non-profits, youth organizations, Tribal, Latino, and black leaders, mentally ill and homeless advocates, etc., should be gathered at one table to develop a master plan for the County as a whole. Real-world perspectives of crime and the tough situations that lead up to it need to also be represented in planning for solutions. The Capstone Town Hall would be a good start, so all of those entities should be encouraged to participate. This can be accomplished through community service clubs and other venues.

After the Capstone Town Hall, we should form an action group that would encompass all aspects of our community and be given enough influence so that they can impact policy bodies where decisions are made. Realizing that society as a whole is too complex for a group of select people to plan, a grassroots movement may need to be created to strengthen the efficacy of this advocacy. Such movements need youth, elders, people of color, and others that are most impacted working respectfully together in support of each other. This kind of movement, along with minimizing regulation so that the marketplace will offer solutions, may help individuals properly plan their own lives, leading to true solutions.

We should focus on the younger years and getting all the stakeholders in one discussion, including teachers, parents, and community leaders. The community needs to provide support to our youth programs through not just finances but by taking an actual leadership role and being involved. School Resource Officers are a great and positive opportunity to teach youth that law enforcement is there to assist and support the community. The SRO program should be expanded, particularly at the elementary and middle school level while children are still forming opinions. However, it is also critical to open up a dialogue with high school children, who have greater contact with society and may need answers. Continuing to have open dialogue and talking through issues is the best way to move forward, meet our goals, and generate creative ideas. Follow-through is critical to accomplishment. We should target afterschool clubs and lunch periods for education and interaction among the youth and emergency services. Law enforcement should increase its presence as teachers and leaders at community events. We should identify communities that are more efficient and effective at meeting their goals and utilize their programs as our foundation. We have to remember that we are creating our community for the next generation, and their input and dreams should be a focus to get them excited about the future of Yuma.

Foundational Forum Five – September 10, 2021

“Community Design—Parks and Recreation”

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY DESIGN

A vibrant, thriving community would include many different elements. The viewpoint of each stakeholder group impacts the hierarchy of importance of each element within that segment. For example, the youth may choose broadband as the most important element of community design, whereas business stakeholders may choose access to water or stable power. Collaborative effort is key to developing all these elements. We must together decide what is “steak” to our community and what is “sizzle”; which of these design elements are foundation components (i.e., broadband, infrastructure) and which go on top of that to draw people here with a flair.

Certainly, there is concern about the level of water supply remaining sustainable. Water, in particular, is crucial for our community: we are “river people.” Without water, there is no community. Some communities are utilizing wastewater plants to help supplement and sustain community water resources. Yuma has ground water supplies that could be further utilized.

Also certainly, broadband access is critical. There are areas in Yuma County where broadband is inconsistent, and this causes frustration with residents and stymies growth.

But on top of these foundation elements, a vibrant Parks and Recreation effort adds to overall health for community residents and long-term benefits. This area plays a huge role in providing opportunities for families and youth to be outside. The PAC softball fields add to our community in many ways for local residents and visiting teams. Free outdoor recreational areas that are easily accessible to residents are desired and appreciated. Parks and recreation should invest in more staff to help connect the other parts we have talked about in previous discussions: housing, lower income, older population with social needs. By creating programs with non-profits, other government agencies, nursing homes, preschools, colleges, we can help our community.

We must also directly engage with the historic components of Yuma. This is expressly connected to our Old Town community and the riverfront, and these are key sites for focus and development. This expands the identity of Yuma in a way that “sizzles,” like Tombstone in Southern Arizona/Tucson. This development can balance the twin aspects of local community use and engagement alongside an expansion of Yuma as a tourist destination. The use of the spaces can range from outdoor hobbies (birding, activities in/on/around the water, etc.) as well as a constant and considered arts opportunity. Together, this combines the twin goals of (local) recreation and tourism as allied rather than distinct efforts. Moreover, this was posited to be developed with a key eye toward youth so that those who are here can have pride and enjoyment of their town while also being beneficial and attractive for their return if they go away for opportunities like college, thereby drawing them back to Yuma. Altogether, these proposals and ideas (the expansion of the arts, the further redevelopment of Old Town and the river areas, better infrastructure for connecting to the sites such as the Territorial Prison that facilitates both vehicular and foot traffic) demonstrate how the city could work to better strengthen its ability to market itself both locally and beyond. Indeed, we could even utilize the allure of a National Heritage Area and National Historic Landmark, as it is a big deal. That is why we are here, to tell the Yuma story and of how the Colorado River drew people to its shores.

COLLABORATION BETWEEN SECTORS: INFRASTRUCTURE AND RECREATION

Good community design requires collaboration between the community and utilities. Planning for the future needs input from interested stakeholders. As the population grows, the community system needs to be upgraded. We are “on the path of all of the above,” as in, the community is moving in this direction, but lacking in some physical infrastructure.

To move in the right direction, there should be a clearer connection between development and the future industries and employment opportunities of Yuma. The lack of industry-ready development (especially in terms of spaces and buildings) currently limits expansion. Thus, collaboration with industry for current and future needs so that Yuma is ready is vital. There are a wide variety of stakeholders both in the city and the broader region. Currently, they are all operating somewhat autonomously, so facilitating a more formal sit down between these constituencies so that the various plans, intentions, needs, and wants can be shared and addressed, can enable working together so these goals and efforts are complementary. Collaborative effort will also reduce possible conflicts in the short-term and long-term plans when the individual entities have possible ideas for similar places. There need to be incentives to support collaboration to maximize the benefits to our community. Collaboration can lead to cost savings. This has occurred with utility companies and cities.

Throughout this, a focus on infrastructure is important, with key attention paid to roads, rails, etc., so that access to the various places is enabled (whether it is so businesses/industries can operate or for people to access our sites and new hotel developments). Similarly, other elements like strong internet, especially broadband, are important and beneficial so that Yuma is able to keep up with other communities. This forms both locals and businesses gaining stronger engagement with, and access to, a broader array of resources. It is important to invest into stable, employment opportunities within the city itself (with formal ties to the county more broadly), including expanding various part-time jobs into full-time positions, thereby offering more stability in the work being done as well as expanding the capacities of that work.

Similarly, it is vitally important for education to keep up with the workforce needs and articulate what these are. Collaboration is key. Through discussions with companies, education can design curriculum to meet workplace needs. These discussions have taken place in Yuma County throughout the levels of education and industry and have focused on how to train and retain an educated workforce.

Parks and recreation also are important for quality of life, especially for families. To keep families in Yuma County and retain them, accessible outdoor recreation activities are necessary. Lifestyle opportunities are also a reason for industry choosing Yuma County as a location.

ACCOMPLISHING THIS VISION THROUGH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

There are two key ideas around how the city can move forward and facilitate these ideas and opportunities. One is centered on a more formal engagement with the college and universities, highlighting interests in specific coursework and degree pathways that could be leveraged immediately on a local scale. Specific offerings in hotel/restaurant management, parks management, and recreation should be expanded. Alongside this, the 2% tax that is set to sunset in 2024 should be considered for extension. This tax represents millions of dollars for city and parks and recreation. Ideas around whether this needs to be reintroduced in a nearly identical form so that its time is extended, or possibly even working to increase the amount slightly, in line with other localities, thereby expanding the economic impact of the tax, should be considered.

It is important to work with various constituencies in and beyond the city so that this could be planned, with an emphasis on meetings with actionable goals for swifter implementation. A key example of the needs for this sort of coordination, cooperation, and communication is highlighted by the Avenue D extension conflicting with the plans for Rolle Field. By operating independently of each other without coordination, long-term plans can be put in jeopardy and the strongest possible routes for space utilization may be lost.

Community organizations, such as Visit Yuma, are essential for discussions on vibrant communities. Resident and tourist location draws, such as Telegraph Pass, would benefit from trees and facilities. The Bureau of Reclamation is an important stakeholder and collaborator since they have oversight over much land in the area. The military community has a significant presence in Yuma County and should be involved in discussions on community design. Active military look for activities and local areas would benefit as would the military personnel from local activities.

Incentives would help encourage collaboration. These could include tax incentives, a competition environment, reduction in regulations, and more. Each member of Yuma County needs to know how they, personally, will benefit from different elements of the community. People ask, "what can I gain from this?" In the end this helps in more ways than one, as even grant funding is more open to areas that demonstrate collaboration.

Yuma is a unique community where family is very important. Connecting with industry and partnering with education will enable our community to move forward successfully into the future. A cohesive community narrative will protect our mission of a vibrant community.

Foundational Forum Six – September 24, 2021

“Underserved Communities”

THE CURRENT STATE OF UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES

While we explored the underrepresented communities of African Americans, Latina females, LGBTQ, farmworkers and the disabled, other important underrepresented communities in Yuma include the Native American community, Veterans and elderly communities, youth, incarcerated persons, substance abusers and those at risk for suicide. Others include those with mental health issues (including veterans with PTSD), the homeless population, migrant families, Hispanic males/Latinos, and Asian/Pacific Islander and Middle Eastern populations.

Yuma lacks resources and services needed to support these communities, which are part of the backbone of our community. Sometimes programs don't offer complete solutions and are thus not helpful. For example, vouchers for housing cannot be used because of high rental prices or even lack of available housing. Mental health and other challenges need to be addressed by our entire community. By meeting these needs, our community will become more attractive. Providing training and opportunities for these communities is necessary to incorporate them into our community. It is important that we learn about the symptoms and signs of challenges for these underserved communities, so that we can better respond. Providing proper educational facilities and opportunities is one way to make sure that such needs are met.

THE VISION OF A SUPPORTED UNDERSERVED POPULATION

In an ideal world, our community would be understanding and supportive, and everyone would have equal access to the benefits of a vibrant community. In some cases, misperceptions caused by lack of understanding will lead to continuing challenges. Education is a two-way street. In order to provide the support needed we must assure that everyone is able to recognize groups that are underrepresented and have challenges that need to be addressed.

We should strive to realize that we are all humans and have different needs. Rather than reacting negatively to different people, we should act with support and work to remove barriers. Social and conventional media could be used by municipalities and support groups to reach out to the underserved with information about support services. Awareness that underserved communities are made up of individuals with individual needs will allow us to tailor our support as needed. If people would use their personal responsibility to respect and honor individuality, we could take care of everyone as a whole.

To be a vibrant community, we envision the best support and equitable opportunities to include:

- Diversity on local boards, committees, and organizational leadership. This ensures a platform for all voices, including those from underserved communities, to be heard and represented.
- Coordinating town halls and open conversation such as this at local schools.

- Participation from underserved populations with local non-profits and civic organizations. There should be more awareness and outreach by these organizations to underserved communities.
- Respecting other opinions and perspectives. Online culture has made it more acceptable to be disrespectful and 'ugly.'
- Engaging with influencers from underserved communities. Get them actively involved so they can encourage others.
- Providing opportunities in all areas of our county, not just the 'Cities'. Wellton has unique needs and issues.
- Continuing to just do what we're doing. Labor of Love is a great example, it is a program that shows appreciation for our local farmworkers. San Luis does a great job of showing appreciation of our farmworkers through events like Dia de la Campesina.
- Starting the conversation at home. We need to work with parents to ensure they are offering an open space at home to engage in open and caring conversation.
- Creating spaces/opportunities for underserved communities to come together, such as Dream Big where youth and senior centers are combined. Seniors love to share their experiences and knowledge with our youth.

ACCOMPLISHING THIS VISION VIA COLLABORATION

We have very powerful personal stories and experiences within our populace and these minds and voices need to get more exposure in our community. Simulations are a good way of helping people to understand their internal biases and what other communities face. School counselors can help shine a light on what realities are faced by the youth in these communities, helping the community at large to understand the challenges faced by others. To accomplish this vision, we need to work together and think of the greater region. Thinking regionally ensures opportunities are equally shared.

People in the underserved communities need to be able to take active leadership roles, but they often do not have role models to make them want to do it. All elements of our community need to be engaged. Students and even adults are not aware of where they can volunteer, so more effort at outreach to these communities is critical to their engagement. Community events should strive to make space available for support organizations to be present. Employers and the business community can play a major role in implementing needed changes by empowering individual employees to take action. We also need to better inform elected leaders so that they can do a better job of making the wider community aware of the needs of underserved communities. Municipalities constantly have openings on boards and commissions, which would be a good place to provide a voice and representation for the underserved. They also have leadership programs that could better reach out to underserved communities for participation. Business organizations should take an active role in educating their members about the importance of supporting underserved communities, and intentionally include diverse membership on their boards and other leadership roles. Non-profits always need volunteers, but if they do not actively reach out to diverse people, they may not get involved. Programs like the Heart of Yuma are important ways to provide inspiration about the reasons to volunteer, and they hopefully appeal to people who would not otherwise be motivated to do so. Community events that spread the word about volunteer and leadership

opportunities may go a long way to helping people get involved and represent their communities. Bottom line is, we all need to be not just accepting of people who are different than us, but we need to actively reach out to such individuals and encourage their inclusion and participation in our community.

It is our job as a community to listen and make an effort to understand all perspectives. To accomplish this, the following groups must be included in the collaboration:

- Private and public sector organizations. They can support community outreach and help fund needed programs.
- Civic groups. They are essential to organizing people and events.
- Volunteers. We have so many community members who are willing to help when needed.
- First generation residents. Their perspective is much different than those who have assimilated into American culture, and it is often overlooked.
- Military. They are a vital part of our community and can support.
- Joint venture partnerships with larger entities. They can help financially or provide needed services.

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Verde Valley Community Town Hall

October 8, 2021 – Verde Valley, AZ and Zoom



Creating Vibrant Communities

Verde Valley Community Town Hall

October 8, 2021 – Report of Recommendations

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS AND OPPORTUNITIES

When we consider the Verde Valley we think of people, passion, perspective, personality, purpose, partnership, preservation, and public safety.

One of our most significant strengths is our commitment to volunteerism and collaboration. Community members donate tens of thousands of hours, and we see extensive civic engagement and strong regional organizations such as Verde Valley Regional Economic Organization. Each of our local communities have their own identities from Sedona to Cottonwood, Clarkdale, Jerome, Camp Verde, and Yavapai County.

We are a very safe community. We have access to health care even though we are a rural community. We have excellent libraries and educational resources and involvement at all levels from pre-K through our community college.

The Verde Valley has become effective at connecting people in need with the resources they need, and this was made apparent during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, we could do more to leverage the available resources.

Public transportation options, including paratransit and transportation for the elderly, are scarce and could be improved.

Parks and recreation are a strength, as is environmental quality. As a community that is close to natural parks and public resources, we do a good job of leveraging our location for recreation and tourism.

VERDE VALLEY CURRENT EVENTS AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

It has been said that we should never let a good crisis go to waste—instead we should look for opportunities to make lives better. COVID-19 has identified how interrelated our communities are and has highlighted disparities and needs which have including housing, health care, broadband, sustainable food availability, and transportation.

Organizations around the Verde Valley rose to the many challenges we faced. Yavapai County Health Services established a phone bank providing access to information, testing and vaccines. Verde Valley Caregivers delivered health care services to seniors. Manzanita Outreach provided food to the community and resources to our children through local schools. Many other organizations also made major contributions.

Inequities continue to be prevalent in the Verde Valley. COVID-19 both amplified and revealed the disparities in health care, housing, and other basic services. There are diverse elements of the community whose voices have not been heard, although the increased use of Zoom and electronic media has made meetings more accessible.

Not all members of the community have access to all elements of the wheel. Different groups have different levels and means of accessing the elements on the wheel. While Zoom and electronic platforms have improved inclusiveness, communities such as Cornville and many vulnerable communities remain excluded because they do not have reliable access to broadband internet. This can lead to social isolation and lack of awareness of available resources. It also made remote health care inaccessible to those without online communication access. The move to online education further exposed the lack of internet access many of our families have. A bright spot is that Yavapai County has committed half of its CARES Act funding to expanding broadband throughout the County.

There is a shortage of health care workers that has been made worse by the pandemic. Some hospitals were so overrun by COVID-19 cases that they were unable to serve people with other conditions in need of care. The pandemic has also increased awareness of substance abuse and mental health needs in the community.

Water continues to be a major issue and drinking water remains a significant concern. Native American community needs were exposed including lack of potable water for drinking and maintaining health. More integrative water planning needs to be addressed.

The lack of affordable housing poses a huge problem and directly impacts workforce development. Many workers who need housing cannot afford to live in the community. We have exposed an increase in the number of people in the Verde Valley experiencing homelessness. Some people have moved to the outskirts and live on undeveloped land, highlighting their needs and leading to environmental and public safety issues. While all communities are working on workforce housing, Sedona and Cottonwood have selected a single joint housing leader for both communities to address these issues.

Families found themselves without adequate transportation resources. Improving the shuttle schedule also could help to relieve the problem of unavailability of rental housing in Sedona by making it more convenient for workers to commute.

WHAT I WOULD TELL ARIZONA'S ELECTED LEADERS

- We need more local control as one size does not fit all and we need to eliminate unfunded state-imposed mandates. This includes issues such as local control over short term rentals and taxes.
- Our schools are underfunded, and we should not continue to be 49th in the nation in public funding—we need better outcomes for our children and higher pay for teachers.
- We need to continue to work toward strengthening families.
- We need to embrace data driven decisions, cross the aisle, and move away from politicization.
- We need to diversify our leadership, encouraging youth and people of color to actively participate.
- We need integrated water management and planning.
- We should increase efforts to educate high school students and voters on civics and local issues and strongly encourage the importance of civic engagement through voting in primary and general elections.
- We need to see broadband communications expanding throughout all our local communities.
- The Verde Valley needs to continue to work together including the redistricting process.

- People are not always aware of resource availability—we need to have a single point of contact where people could go to be referred to the help they need.
- Funding for non-profits has been challenged by the pandemic. We need to promote and incite volunteerism and funding for non-profits that fulfill vital public services. Meals on Wheels, for example, is a vital, lifesaving service. Its costs have increased, and fundraising abilities have decreased due to COVID-19.
- The lack of affordable and workforce housing is the single biggest issue for people in this region.
- Workforce development needs to promote livable wage jobs.
- State officials should become as accessible and responsive as local officials.

TAKING ACTION

Recognizing that the power to change the future begins with each individual, participants committed to take personal actions based on their experience and discussions during the Verde Valley Community Town Hall. Below are individual actions that were shared.

I WILL...

- Complete the broadband whitepaper and include PPP management opportunities.
- Energize the advocacy and research committee of VVREO as a board member.
- As president of the Cornville Community Association, I am working to bring more local residents into our organization in order to keep community involvement at a high level so that all are involved in the important decisions affecting Cornville.
- Ensure the work of Local First Arizona is always focused on the community needs and make an effort to attend similar events to hear directly from community members.
- Foster relationships and actions to leverage the full diversity of voices and talents in our region. One specific direction is a cross-sector collaboration to develop a pipeline of BIPOC leaders for conservation-related organizations and build momentum on tackling environmental justice issues.
- [Help to create] coalitions for every issue with working members.
- Be better at “Well Done” than “Well Said!”
- Continue to promote the Meals on Wheels program to Arizona’s elected officials to inform them of the real plight of the elderly. Every official should take a trip with a MOW driver and home-deliver meals.
- Update the referral list we offer to our clients to be sure we are including all available resources in the Verde Valley.
- Pay attention to the primary elections and educate myself to make good voting decisions.
- Restart teen council.
- Reach out to state elected leaders to educate.
- Be more aware of political position and priorities of individuals running for office.

- Continue to talk to a variety of members of our community, listen to their needs and try to connect them to resources and leadership and elevate their voice.
- Work to amplify the voice of rural Arizona in the legislature, especially on education issues, by facilitating testimony in Phoenix on how rural answers differ from urban answers.
- Work with my colleagues to identify ways to support Verde Valley communities in efforts to build on strengths/assets for healthy, vibrant communities.
- Find a way to get involved in the Verde Valley as a citizen.
- Find ways to create pathways in collaboration with my K-12 partners.
- Learn basic Spanish.
- Go in person to meet students and leaders of the Yavapai-Apache Nation.
- Be more public in representing Yavapai College for accessibility.
- Research solutions for affordable housing and connect with the leaders who are working on the issue.
- Continue my work as a leader in my profession as well as work to support the efforts to strengthen families and communities.
- Continue to connect our valuable adults and their experience and introspect to youth to help guide them to support our community.
- Share the Camp Verde water study and the sinkhole study.
- Work with the state land trust to educate the public on education funding.
- Work with VVREO to be a collaboration to the Valley.
- Continue to inform on the failure of our public education—now 38th—40th worldwide down from #1. Only choice will free [us] from the failure nationwide of public schools.
- I have a unique talent of bringing people together to have difficult conversations and will help create, design, and implement community conversations around difficult topics.
- Bring my expertise to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) so that people feel included at the table conversation related to Verde Valley growth.
- Actively engage with the Yavapai-Apache Nation.
- Shop local.
- Join an impactful and passionate board of directors.
- Follow up with Linda Buchannan to contribute ideas and resources to Arizona Town Hall Future Leaders initiatives.
- Visit with Arizona state legislators (representatives and senators) and Congressman Tom O'Halleran regarding the importance of "Keeping the Verde Valley Together" as well as major themes from Verde Valley Community Town Hall.

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**C R E A T I N G
V I B R A N T
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BACKGROUND REPORT

CREATING VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

THE 113TH ARIZONA TOWN HALL

BACKGROUND REPORT

Lead Editors

Jon Ford, Kelsey Otten, Amanda Nelson



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Welcome to another breakthrough topic for Arizona Town Hall. Last year's "Strong Families Thriving Children," was an interdependent, multi-sector exploration focused on the family unit. "Creating Vibrant Communities" is a holistic investigation built on the many interdependent elements of thriving at the community level.

A vibrant community is – at its core – a healthy, supportive, and resource-rich environment for all. It is a community that inclusively taps human, economic, and natural capital to thrive and grow together.

Creating Vibrant Communities

The task of creating vibrant communities asks us to understand root causes and structures in such communities and to collaborate across community sectors. It is our tendency to “break things down” and single-focus – to say, “we need better education,” for example. However, better academic performance is not just a function of teacher quality, school budget, or operation, but also of a child’s readiness to learn. A child who shows up with their prefrontal cortex “offline” due to lack of sleep, hunger, and/or household insufficiency and instability is *physiologically* deterred from entering learning. At best, the teacher’s task is great. Worst case, the education system alone will be considered to have failed. Seeing holistically and solving for vibrancy focuses on multiple causes and has the capacity to shift the odds significantly in favor of success for children, families, teachers, schools, and communities.

Vibrant communities are the product of many components. While the topic asks us to think holistically, this report is structured to introduce elements of a vibrant community through an exploration of current models, existing data on emerging issues and trends, current systemic barriers faced by communities, and ways in which community action and policy change can create a healthier Arizona for all.

What are the Components of a Vibrant Community?

Community vibrancy is dependent on community well-being and health. This big picture view of health includes multiple domains, of which medical care is a small part – by most estimates, somewhere between 10 and 20 percent of – what determines a population’s health, and in turn, vibrancy.¹

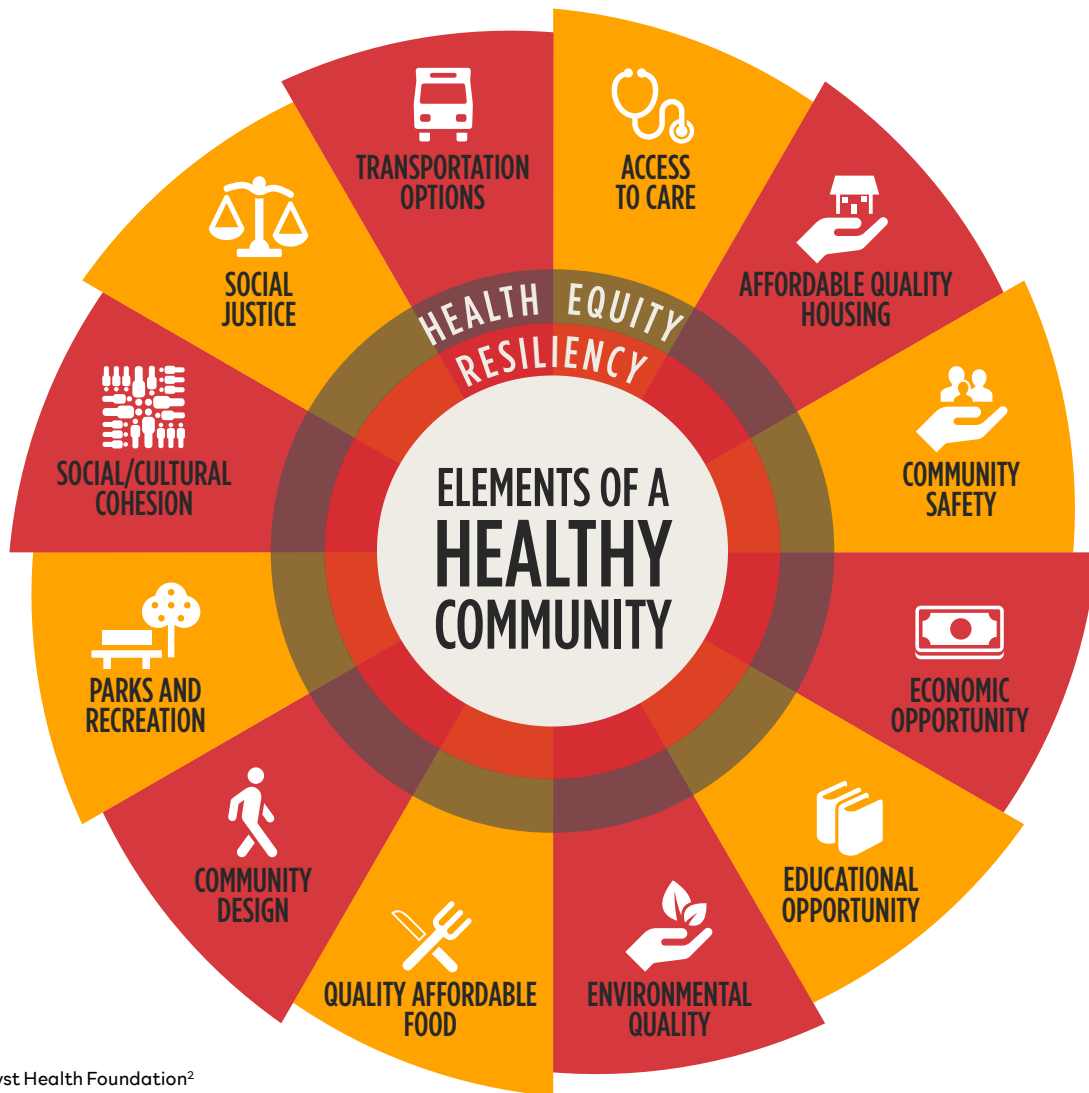
This report examines community vibrancy through Vitalyst Health Foundation’s Elements of a Healthy Community – a framework built by statewide community partners using data and science from national and international sources. Fourteen elements are identified that are present and robust in vibrant communities.

When all these elements are intentionally cultivated, coordinated, and mutually aligned, communities thrive and prosper.

- Access to Health Care
- Affordable Quality Housing
- Community Safety
- Economic Opportunity
- Educational Opportunity
- Environmental Quality
- Quality Affordable Food
- Community Design
- Parks and Recreation
- Social/Cultural Cohesion
- Social Justice
- Transportation Options
- Health Equity
- Resiliency

¹ Magnan, S. (9 Oct 2017). *Social Determinants of Health 101 for Health Care: Five Plus Five*. Retrieved from: <https://nam.edu/social-determinants-of-health-101-for-health-care-five-plus-five/>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

ELEMENTS OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY



Source: Vitalyst Health Foundation²

"A healthy community is one where people have the opportunity to make healthy choices, in environments that are safe, free from violence, and designed to promote health."³

- 2 The elements are informed by the work of the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The Elements of a Healthy Community wheel was designed and produced by Vitalyst Health Foundation in collaboration with community partners. It is acknowledged that the model carries implicit Western bias – an issue Vitalyst has begun to address by developing a culturally-relevant tribal version.
- 3 Build Healthy Places Network. (2020). *What Makes a Healthy Community?* Retrieved from: http://www.buildhealthyplaces.org/network_resources. Access date: 5/30/2020.

Why Is It Important to Build Vibrant Communities?

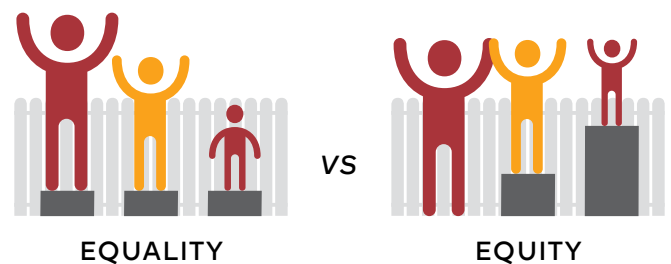
To put it simply, the places we live, work, and play matter. In Arizona, a child born in zip code 85256 has a life expectancy of 65.8 years; meanwhile, a child born in the adjacent zip code of 85251 has a drastically longer life expectancy of 80.89 years.⁴ As that child grows, the ability to make healthy decisions throughout life depends on availability and accessibility of healthy choices. Communities are vibrant for all only when they have fairly offered options for different kinds of development, mobility, and autonomy, such as: (1) supportive spaces for community and development, (2) a diverse array of affordable, quality foods, (3) livable, supportive, and affordable housing, (4) educational attainment, and (5) economic opportunity.

Crucial building blocks to a vibrant community also include pivotal social elements like equity, civic engagement, social cohesion, and community safety. Furthermore, they include air, water, and community elements both inside and outside of household living spaces. When community infrastructure is planned for sustainability, social connections, and well-being, then all Arizonans have the opportunity to thrive.

How Do We Create Vibrant Communities?⁵

Driving change that creates resilient, equitable, and thriving communities takes time and intentionality. The following list details the ingredients necessary to create effective and sustainable change:

1. **Shift the Paradigm:** Elevate thinking about vibrancy beyond individual sectors and individual behaviors to include holistic social conditions, systems issues, and structural inequities.
2. **Change Policies, Systems, and Environments:** Transform problems by concurrently understanding issues "on the ground" and at the systems level - and develop transformational changes to address both.
3. **Support Community-Driven Solutions and Build Trust:** Work with a community rather than for a community. This includes a power-building, assets-focused approach that fosters community ownership and leadership from the outset. It all starts with trust.⁶
4. **Utilize Multi-Sector Partnerships:** Engage stakeholders from multiple sectors to improve vibrancy innovatively, efficiently, and effectively.
5. **Embed Equity:** Recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to a vibrant community. Some of the most effective solutions have historically come through the voices of communities experiencing the largest vibrancy gaps.



Source: Image adapted from Annie E. Casey Foundation's interpretation of Craig Froehle's original illustration.

4 National Center for Health Statistics. U.S. Small-Area Life Expectancy Estimates Project. (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/usaleep/usaleep.html>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

5 Adapted from Build Healthy Places Network, Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Voices for Healthy Kids' *Messaging Guide for Policy Advocates*, and Vitalyst Health Foundation's *Ingredients for Change*.

6 Vitalyst Health Foundation. (2019). *Pre-Community Engagement: Setting the Stage for Authentic Community Engagement*. Retrieved from: <http://vitalysthealth.org/wp-content/uploads/VitalystSpark-PreCommunityEngagement.pdf>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

What is the Current State of Affairs in Arizona?

Community capacity for vibrancy varies widely in Arizona, as it does across the United States. Here is a sample of current issues and disparities Arizonans are facing:

- 35.1% of people living in urban areas have low access to healthy food.⁷
 - Statewide, 12.4% of individuals are considered food insecure.⁸
- Low-income individuals spend 58% of their income on transportation, on average, with higher percentages spent in rural areas.⁹
 - In 2016, motor vehicle crashes caused dramatically more deaths than violent crime.¹⁰
 - Arizona is the 9th most dangerous state for people walking in the U.S.¹¹
- In Arizona, 45% of rented homes are rented at 30% or more of household income.¹²
 - Homelessness in Arizona increased almost 10% from 2017 to 2018.¹³
- One in four adults in the state meet physical activity guidelines.¹⁴
- Only 21.9% of Arizonans report conversing with their neighbors; such conversation is used as an indicator to measure social cohesion within communities.¹⁵

Additionally, when examining disparities in Arizona, communities of color, low-income communities, rural and tribal populations, and other groups that have traditionally been marginalized experience increased risks, worse outcomes, and greater barriers in accessing resources:

- In Arizona, the poverty rate of American Indians/Alaska Natives is 34%, 19% for Hispanic or Latino individuals, and 19% for Black or African Americans. Meanwhile, the poverty rate for White (not Hispanic or Latino) individuals is 9%.¹⁶

7 USDA- ERS. (Updated 31 Oct 2019). *Food Access Research Atlas*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

8 Yazmiene, D. (21 Nov 2019). *Food Insecurity is at a Decade Low in Arizona, Report Says*. Retrieved from: <https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/2019/11/21/arizona-food-insecurity/>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

9 HUD Exchange. (3016). *Location Affordability Index*. Retrieved from: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/location-affordability-index/>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

10 Fatality Analysis Reporting System. (n.d.). *Detailing the Factors Behind Traffic Fatalities on our Roads*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nhtsa.gov/research-data/fatality-analysis-reporting-system-fars>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

11 Smart Growth America. (2019). *Dangerous by Design 2019*. Retrieved from: <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

12 U.S. Census. (2018). *ACS 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/data.html>. Access date: 5/31/2020.

13 Arizona Department of Health Services. (2019). *Arizona State Health Assessment*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/operations/managing-excellence/2019-state-health-assessment.pdf>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

14 Ibid.

15 NCoC Analysis of U.S. Census Current Population Survey Civic and Volunteering Supplement. (2017). Retrieved from: <https://ncoc.org/category/research/>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

16 Kaiser Family Foundation. (2018). *Poverty Rate by Race/Ethnicity*. Retrieved from: <https://www.kff.org/other/state-indicator/poverty-rate-by-raceethnicity/?currentTimeframe=0&sortModel=%7B%22colId%22:%22Location%22,%22sort%22:%22asc%22%7D>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

- The poverty rate in rural Arizona is 26.9%, compared with 13.4% in urban areas of the state.¹⁷
- People of color are far less likely to build generational wealth through access to home ownership than their White counterparts.¹⁸
- 73% of extremely low-income, 34% of very low-income, and 7% of low-income Arizona households spent more than half their income on housing.¹⁹

The Price of Breaking New Ground

It is important to note that, by choosing to pursue the topic of “Creating Vibrant Communities,” Arizona Town Hall has opted to explore important work that is nonetheless relatively new. It is emergent in three key ways:

1. Cross-sector collaboration focused at the community level has not been a standard practice historically. Case studies are not abundant, and most examples are more regionally located in larger population areas.
2. While 14 elements are recognized as key, not all of them have deep wells of data, research, or cross-collaborative experience in Arizona. Some of the key elements also lack clear champions in the state. As such, this report includes chapters with more developed elements and others discussed much less.
3. Research and data collection are at early stages. While work is aggressively being done in the areas of research and data, no widely accepted measure of vibrancy has yet been adopted. Further, key qualitative data and case study results demonstrate the efficacy and importance of this work, but the list of data gaps at the zip-code level is long.

In short, being early means being patient. It also means accepting what we have as compelling emergent evidence and using that evidence to develop vibrant communities robustly and consistently for all in Arizona.

It should also be noted that “element overlap” occurs frequently in this report. Housing and education are discussed in the food chapter for example. Equity and Economic Opportunity do not have separate chapters. Instead racial inequity and income statistics are found in multiple chapters. This is not a mistake. It is a key reminder of the interdependent nature of these elements. Over time, it is important to have more such data overlap, not less. For many chapters, you will find a short sidebar noting these interdependencies that are currently most often recognized.

17 USDA-ERS. (2018). *State Fact Sheets: Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?StateFIPS=04&StateName=Arizona&ID=17854>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

18 Center for American Progress. (21 Feb 2018). *Systemic Inequality: How America’s Structural Racism Helped Create the Black-White Wealth Gap*. Retrieved from: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2018/02/21/447051/systematic-inequality/>. Access date: 6/1/2020.

19 National Low-Income Housing Coalition. (2018). *Arizona State Data Overview*. Retrieved from: <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/arizona>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

The Amplifying Power of COVID-19

As of this document's publication, we still have a great deal to learn about the novel coronavirus' impact on our cities, state, country, and the world.

What is abundantly clear from the start of the pandemic, however, is that this Town Hall topic, its holistic approach, and underlying elements of community vibrancy all need our attention, comprehension, and innovation now more than ever.

The COVID-19 pandemic has deeply tested Arizona's economic, housing, food, education, and health systems. It may also be showing us changes to the ways we live, work, learn, and play. The current pandemic has exposed significant issues and disparities that can be transformed into key opportunities for more vibrant communities. It is impossible to predict in these pages what is rapidly being discovered and learned about Arizona communities' capacities for resiliency, but it is crucial that we view what does happen in coming weeks, months, and years through the prism of 14 contributing elements and recognize the potential for cross-sector, community-driven solutions to make our communities better and stronger going forward.

Vibrancy, Elements, and Funding

This Town Hall topic proposes holistic discussion of community vibrancy – and that can be good news when it comes to funding. Rather than “single source” investments and wondering where we could possibly find enough money to do it all, what if we could help identify root community elements that could result in “an ounce of prevention” over a “pound of cure?” What if supportively housing people turned out to cost much less than providing health care for those experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness? A great example of healthcare and housing working collaboratively can be seen in efforts made by Circle the City, an organization that provides healthcare services to people experiencing homelessness, and assists them in the journey out of homelessness.²⁰ In addition, more material on housing-healthcare partnerships will be explored later on in the chapter, “The Intersection of Housing and Vibrant Communities.”

What if the answer to helping a child show up at school ready to learn is simultaneously the key to improving a school's academic performance and a big part of why a community is becoming more resilient and vibrant across all generations? Later, in this report in the chapter, “The Intersection of Education and Vibrant Communities,” the story of the Heart of Isaac will showcase how enhancing a child's surroundings can foster an environment that allows for educational success. These are not what-ifs. They are the returns on investment of breakthrough projects in Arizona that you can read about in this report.

One of the key opportunities for the 113th Arizona Town Hall topic is identifying and championing transformative, collaborative, and cost-effective strategies. With the right stakeholders at the table, effective solutions to challenges are not always about more money.

This report invites you to explore and discuss the elements that create vibrant, resilient, and equitable communities, through data, through emergent research and examples, and through lived experience and thus lived expertise, so that we can collectively help to ensure a healthier and more vibrant Arizona for all.

20 For more information visit: <https://www.circlethecity.org/>.

An Emphasis on Equity

Vitalyst Staff

Place-, race-, gender-, social-, and economic-based inequities contradict the potential for vibrant communities. Advocates have been working toward greater equity for decades. Evidence of the connection between inequity and community capacity for vibrancy has continued to accumulate. Through the first seven months of 2020, COVID-19 and George Floyd's death are freshly fueling a sense of immediacy for action to meaningfully address race, gender, and social inequities. Regardless of whether that urgency to change now persists, the path to vibrant communities includes transforming policies, systems, and environments that impede a more equitable community.

Community inequities across the United States are the result of focused, systemic outcomes of structural racism, lack of educational and economic opportunities, chronic disinvestment, and intergenerational and historical trauma. In this regard, COVID-19's dramatic and disproportionate impact on the Navajo Nation is tragic and unsurprising. Native American tribal communities in the United States have long experienced systemic oppression and racism, whether that be through forced relocation, loss of land, forced assimilation practices, or federal policies that hinder rather than support tribal communities' well-being. The physical and psychological impacts of historical and intergenerational trauma are well documented, such as posttraumatic stress disorder, general loss of meaning and sense of hope, and internalized oppression,²¹ all of which decrease both individual and community well-being. In May 2020, the Navajo Nation was highlighted across the country as a hotbed for coronavirus cases, surpassing New York and New Jersey for highest per-capita infection rates in the U.S.²² Some reasons for this include lack of access to running water and living in a food desert, both of which mean that many people must travel far to acquire food and water, while also running the risk of exposure to other people while obtaining these necessities. When factoring in the high rates of unemployment, poverty, and comorbidities²³ found in many tribal communities, along with limited access to quality, affordable healthcare,²⁴ the picture begins to become a little clearer. These systemic issues are the result of generations' worth of oppression, racism, and lack of resources and funding, which in 2020 means the Navajo Nation is at a much higher risk for COVID-19, a highly contagious disease that most dramatically impacts the elderly and those with underlying chronic health conditions.²⁵

21 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). "Tips for Disaster Responders." Retrieved from: <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma14-4866.pdf>. Retrieved on 17 July 2020.

22 Silverman, H., Toropin, K., and Sidner, S. (18 May 2020). "Navajo Nation surpasses New York state for the highest COVID-19 infection rate in the U.S." CNN. Retrieved from <https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/18/us/navajo-nation-infection-rate-trnd/index.html>. Retrieved on 17 July 2020.

23 Comorbidity refers to the simultaneous presence of multiple diseases in an individual.

24 Certain zip codes in Navajo county have over 36% of individuals lacking health insurance. Source: U.S. Census American Community Survey 5-year estimates (2014-2018). Retrieved from: <https://reports.mysidewalk.com/6f751f7f36>.

25 Sequist, T. (6 July 2020). "The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color." *New England Journal of Medicine*. Retrieved from <https://catalyst.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/CAT.20.0370>. Retrieved on 17 July 2020.

The impacts of COVID-19 have not only disproportionately impacted the Navajo nation, the White Mountain Apache Tribe, and other tribal communities, but also other communities of color throughout Arizona, many of whom have experienced the negative effects of COVID-19 at higher rates than their white counterparts. For example, on a national scale, Black individuals are currently 2.5 times as likely to die from COVID-19 compared to Whites.²⁶ Unfortunately, though unsurprising, this issue is not unique to the coronavirus pandemic. Communities of color, specifically tribal communities, African Americans, and Latinos in Arizona have disproportionately worse health outcomes when compared to their White counterparts. While this report does not detail the physical, emotional, and mental impacts of structural racism, we want to acknowledge the intergenerational impact it has on the health outcomes of communities of color.²⁷ Structural racism shows up in many ways, and *this* is what we aim to illustrate throughout each chapter of this report, whether it be through food deserts, lack of access to affordable, quality housing and safe transportation options, or poor education outcomes. Data is incredibly important in addressing equity, as it is through disaggregated data that disparities are quantitatively revealed, so we have embedded this throughout each chapter while recognizing that these are highlights and do not capture the full story of any one community.

Beyond the timeliness of this topic in 2020 is the *timeless* need to embed equity into the larger conversation at the heart of the 113th Arizona Townhall: Creating Vibrant Communities. We cannot talk about one without discussing the other. In other words, we cannot have a vibrant community without also having an equitable one. By looking at this report through an equity lens, the focus is placed on those with the greatest disparities so that we can build vibrant communities for *all*.



To hear from those working on the ground to create vibrant communities in Arizona, subscribe to the Vitalyst Spark Podcast available on Spotify, Apple Podcasts, or wherever you get your podcasts.



For a deeper dive into the data behind the Elements of a Healthy Community wheel, visit the Vitalyst Health Data Dashboard. This dashboard takes you "behind the wheel" with interactive data maps, compelling data infographics, and stories from around the state.

26 The Atlantic. (2020). "The COVID racial data tracker." *The COVID Tracking Project*. Retrieved from: <https://covidtracking.com/race>. Access date: 7/31/2020. This statement reflects data that is current at the time this report is being written, July 2020.

27 Gee, G. and Ford, C. (2011). Structural racism and health inequities: old issues, new directions. *Du Bois Rev.* Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4306458/>. Access date: 7/20/2020.

The Role of Tribes and Tribal Relations in Creating a More Vibrant Arizona

Holly Figueroa, Health Choice Arizona

Miriam Jorgensen, Native Nations Institute, The University of Arizona

Joan Timeche, Native Nations Institute, The University of Arizona

Arizona's rich history begins with its Native inhabitants.²⁸ Since time immemorial, Native Peoples built their own vibrant communities in the region's river valleys, high deserts, mountains, and forests. Western archeologists affirm this long occupancy; they document ancestral Puebloan, Sinagua, Hohokam, Mogollon, and Patayan peoples living in the southwest more than 13,000 years ago.²⁹ By contrast, Arizona achieved statehood only in 1912.

The impact of American Indians' long-time presence in Arizona is both considerable and enduring. Numerous county, city, and town names derive from Indigenous words. Phoenix's earliest irrigation canals depended on Native peoples' engineering prowess. Many of the state's most-beloved tourist attractions are located on Indian lands. And through economic progress achieved over the last 20 years, tribes have become major regional employers and key contributors to the well-being of many predominantly non-Native communities.

European settlement has largely had the opposite effect on Arizona's Native communities: entire tribal populations have been relocated; Native peoples' access to their lands, waters, and resources has been severely constrained; Native children have been removed from their tribal homes; and state and federal government policies have created systems of discrimination that have made the mere survival of American Indian people and their communities a challenge.

Today, the 22 federally recognized Native nations that share a geography with Arizona are integral to the future of the state and to the vibrancy of Arizona communities – but the vitality of Arizona's Native people also depends on state, local, and organization leaders making decisions that support and sustain tribes. While this chapter explores these issues in a standalone fashion, interconnections matter: Arizona thrives when its tribal communities thrive.

Vibrant Tribal Communities

A vibrant tribal community is dynamic, opportunity-rich, and culturally strong. Community members, connected to one another through shared heritage and tribal citizenship, work together with leaders in tribal government, the commercial sector, and grassroots organizations to advance well-being, generate access to quality goods and services, ensure proper relationships with the nonhuman world, and uphold sustainable cultural values, so that the old, the young, and the generations yet to come all enjoy well-being, resiliency, and access to the tribe's way of life. Native youth have summarized these ideas well in their responses to the question, "When you have

28 The terms "American Indian," "Native American," "Native" and "Indigenous" are used interchangeably throughout this chapter. The terms "tribe" and "Native nation" are used interchangeably. The term "Native people" refers to all Native individuals, while the term "Native Peoples" refers to their collectives and is somewhat synonymous with "tribes."

29 Archaeology Southwest. (2020). *Ancient Cultures*. Retrieved from: <https://www.archaeologysouthwest.org/ancient-cultures/>. Access date: 7/17/2020.

children your own age, what kind of community do you want them to live in?" In their words, a vibrant tribal community is one "where our children are safe from drugs and crime; where people are healthy; where they have good educational and job opportunities; where their tribal government is strong and politically stable; where their land and resources are protected; where they have a voice and are heard; and where they speak their Native language and practice their cultural ways."³⁰

An Overview of Arizona Indian Country

Twenty-two federally recognized tribes share geography with the state of Arizona.³¹ Despite jurisdictional overlap with federal, state, and county authorities, these Native nations hold sovereign status equivalent to – and in some ways exceeding – that of the state of Arizona itself.

QUICK FACTS³²

- **Population:** >353,000 Native Americans, nearly 7% of Arizona's population, 3rd highest Native population in the U.S.
- **Languages:** Navajo, Apache, O'odham, Hopi, Yaqui, and other Pai & Yuman languages
- **Per capita income:** Pre-COVID-19 \$9,817 to \$19,169, 11 reservations with poverty levels of >35%
- **Unemployment on AZ reservations:** Pre-COVID-19, ranged from 6% to 75%, with an average of 21%
- **Land base:** Tribes control nearly 20 million acres, or 27% of Arizona's overall land base. Tribes also own vast natural resources (forests, minerals, scenic & natural wonders, millions of acre feet of water)

Map source: Arizona Department of Transportation.

RESERVATIONS THAT SHARE GEOGRAPHY WITH ARIZONA



30 This quotation is a composite of responses collected by Joan Timeche during her many years working with Native youth.

31 The 22 Native nations that share geography with Arizona are: Ak-Chin Indian Community, Cocopah Indian Tribe, Colorado River Indian Tribes, Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, Fort Mojave Tribe, Gila River Indian Community, Havasupai Tribe, Hopi Tribe, Hualapai Tribe, Kaibab-Paiute Tribe, Navajo Nation, Pascua Yaqui Tribe, Pueblo of Zuni, Quechan Tribe, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, San Carlos Apache Tribe, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, Tohono O'odham Nation, Tonto Apache Tribe, White Mountain Apache Tribe, Yavapai-Apache Nation, and Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe. These 22 are among the 574 Native nations recognized by the United States government as of August 1, 2020.

32 The total population value comes from the 2010 Decennial Census, while socio-economic information is from the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS) 5-year averages (for 2014-2018). We made this choice because of the well-known tendency toward undercounting American Indians in the American Community Survey. Sources: Norris, T., Paula L. Vines, & Elizabeth M. Hoeffel. 2012. *The American Indian and Alaska Native Population: 2010*. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/history/pdf/c2010br-10.pdf>. Access date: 7/17/2020; Campbell, L. (1997). *American Indian Languages*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK; U.S. Census. *American Community Survey Data Profiles*. (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/acs/www/data/data-tables-and-tools/data-profiles/>. Access date: 8/2/2020; Natural Resources Council of Maine. (2005). *Public Land Ownership by State Augusta, ME*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nrcm.org/documents/publiclandownership.pdf>. Access date: 7/22/2020; U.S. Forest Service. (Apr 1997). *Appendix D: Indian Nations in Forest Service National Resource Guide to American Indian and Alaska Native Relations*. Retrieved from: <https://www.fs.fed.us/spf/tribalrelations/documents/publications/national-resource-guide-ver2.pdf>. Access date: 8/2/2020.

The 22 Native nations are diverse. Their cultures, traditions, and customary practices; languages spoken and language fluency; governmental forms; land bases, geography, and natural resources; and approaches to economic and community development all vary. Many share traits with rural communities; others are deeply embedded in Arizona's urban landscapes. All are constantly influenced by western values and lifestyles, while also, to varying degrees, striving to sustain and reinvigorate their own Indigenous values and lifestyles. (Indigenous people refer to this navigation between western and Indigenous ways as "living in two worlds.")

Among all U.S. states, Arizona's Native population is the third largest. More than 353,000 Native Americans live in Arizona. A substantial number of these Native residents do not live on reservation lands. Approximately 44,000 live in Phoenix and 20,000 in Tucson, figures that rank these cities third and eleventh, respectively, among urban areas with large Native populations.³³ While some of these urbanites are citizens of Arizona tribes, others are not: education, employment, and quality of life opportunities draw Native people from across the United States to Arizona. This points to a population in flux. Strong ties to family, land, culture, and ceremony encourage many American Indians to move back and forth – over the course of a year or after several years – from off-reservation cities to "home" Native communities. In part, they are responding to the expectation that any knowledge and skills gained "abroad" will be invested back into their tribes.

Arizona hosts the third largest Native veteran population. Native Americans have a long history of serving in the U.S. military, a tradition begun even before American Indians were recognized as United States citizens (through the Indian Citizenship Act of 1924, which also secured American Indians the right to vote in U.S. elections). In 2015, 9,552 Native veterans lived in Arizona, the third largest AIAN veteran population in the United States.³⁴

Development choices vary by tribe. While all Native nations share a deep respect for the land, natural resources, and environment, they do not all make the same decisions concerning the development of these resources. Various Arizona tribes are involved in the agriculture, oil and gas, finance, outdoor recreation, hospitality, entertainment, and tourism industries, among others. In fact, tribes may have a disproportionate impact on Arizona's tourism sector: more than half of the visitors to Arizona's tribal lands (54.7%) report that "the tribe was main destination of their trip."³⁵ Opportunities for eco-cultural tourism were a top reason why.

Profits from tribally owned businesses fund tribal governments. Tribal governments own many businesses in Indian Country and either manage those businesses directly or rely on their economic development authorities to do so. Such public sector business ownership is not typical in other Arizona communities but necessary for tribes because they lack the tax bases available to state, county, and municipal governments: net revenues from these businesses (including tribal casinos) help fund tribal government operations.

33 Norris et al., 2012.

34 U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs. (Aug 2017). *American Indian and Alaska Native Veterans: 2015 American Community Survey*. Retrieved from: <https://www.va.gov/vetdata/docs/SpecialReports/AIANReport.pdf>. Access date: 8/3/2020.

35 Arizona Hospitality Research and Resource Center. (2006). *Survey of Visitors to Arizona's Tribal Lands, prepared for the Arizona Office of Tourism*. Retrieved from: https://tourism.az.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/3.4_NicheTourismStudies_Statewide-NA-study-Executive-Summary-final.pdf. Access date: 7/22/2020.

Indian gaming benefits Arizona. Since the passage of the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act in 1988, tribal government-owned gaming enterprises have helped fuel economic growth for all Arizona tribes. In 2020, 16 tribes own and operate 25 casinos. The other six tribes do not have casinos but do have compacts with the state of Arizona providing them with an allocation of gaming machines, which they may lease to tribes with casinos. Each tribal government determines how to utilize its gaming proceeds, with essential tribal governmental operations, health, and education being typical tribal priorities. Some Arizona tribes opt to distribute a portion of these revenues to tribal citizens on a per capita basis. Not all tribes with casinos are “rich,” nor are their citizens; gaming revenues, like the revenues from other tribal enterprises, help tribes restore individual and governmental capacities that were stripped away through colonization. Moreover, tribal government-owned casinos do not solely benefit tribes. In 2014, tribal casinos contributed more than \$4 billion to Arizona’s economy (through direct, indirect, and induced effects), a figure that includes \$1.9 billion in wages to more than 37,000 Arizonans, most whom are non-Indian. Indian gaming also generated \$769 million in state and federal taxes and other payments to state and local government agencies.³⁶ “Other payments” include the one to eight percent of tribes’ net win, that by compacted agreement, must be paid to the state of Arizona for education, health care, and other programs and is split 88%-12% between the Arizona Benefits Fund and cities, towns, and counties. In fiscal year 2019, these other payments from Native nations the state totaled a record high \$111.3 million.³⁷

The economic dynamics of tribal gaming worsen COVID-19 impacts in Native communities. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, tribal casinos closed for weeks and re-opened only at reduced capacity. Tribal governments whose primary revenues are generated through gaming face significant financial shortfalls, resulting in a “triple punch” for some tribal citizens: extremely high transmission rates in Native communities combine not only with job furloughs and diminished wages but also with reductions in tribal government programs.

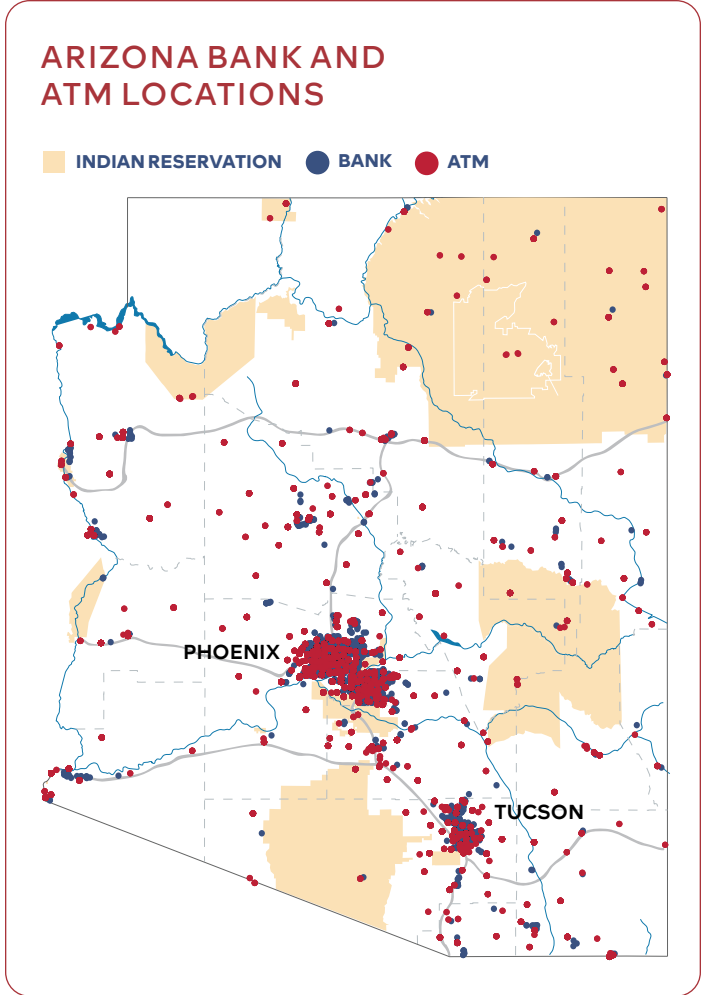
The private sector in Arizona’s Native communities is small. While the public sector tends to play a large role in Arizona’s Native communities, the on-reservation private sector is generally quite small. Many businesses are micro-enterprises, which makes them too small and too specialized to together meet tribal citizens’ needs, and as a consequence, tribal citizens often travel to nearby “border towns” for groceries, services, and entertainment. Under these circumstances, the lack of access to public or personal transportation can be a barrier to accessing shopping (as well as necessities such as healthcare). The primary exceptions to these conditions are the on-reservation shopping districts developed by the Salt River Pima Maricopa Indian Community and Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe, which reverse the flow and bring non-Indian shoppers to the reservations.

36 Meister, A. (Nov 2018). The Economic Impact of Tribal Gaming: A State-by-State Analysis. Retrieved from: <https://www.americangaming.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Economic-Impact-of-Tribal-Gaming-Two-Pager-11.5.18.pdf>. Access date: 8/3/2020.

37 Arizona Department of Gaming. (2019). *Annual Report, Fiscal Year 2019*. Retrieved from: <https://gaming.az.gov/sites/default/files/ADG%20Annual%20Report%20-%20Fiscal%20Year%202019.pdf>. Access date: 7/17/2020.

Access to capital and credit are additional barriers to development.

On many of Arizona’s rural reservations, cash and barter economies are the norm. Banks and even ATMs are few.³⁸ Securing a business or home loan can be difficult if one earns a cash income, has a poor credit history, and offers nontraditional collateral. In response to these challenges, the Hopi Tribe, Navajo Nation, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, San Carlos Apache Tribe, and Tohono O’odham Nation have established Native community development financial institutions (CDFIs) to build the capacity of Native borrowers and fill lending gaps. Several other tribes administer revolving loan funds, and there is regional Native CDFI that offers services to Natives across Arizona. While credit score analysis reveals a larger gap between on-reservation and off-reservation creditscores in Arizona than in other states with large Native populations (80 points in 2012),³⁹ the credit landscape is improving. Related research shows that over the period 2013-2017, “exposure” to a Native CDFI improved credit outcomes for all low-score consumers, Native and non-Native, by an average of 45 points.⁴⁰



Native Americans pay taxes. Like all U.S. citizens, Native American individuals are subject to taxation, as are Native citizen-owned businesses operating off-reservation. In Arizona, only those Native Americans living and working on their reservations are exempt from state taxation.⁴¹ Tribal-owned enterprises enjoy the tax-free benefits of governments, much like business enterprises owned by municipal governments (e.g., a public golf course).

38 Jorgensen, M & Akee, K. Q. R. (2017). *Access to Capital and Credit in Native Communities: A Data Review*. https://nni.arizona.edu/application/files/6514/8642/4513/Accessing_Capital_and_Credit_in_Native_Communities__A_Data_Review.pdf. Access date: 7/16/2020.

39 Dimitrova-Grajzl, V., Grajzl, P., Guse, J., & Todd, R. M. (2015). *Consumer Credit on American Indian Reservations*. *Economic Systems* 39(3): 518-540.

40 Dimitrova-Grajzl, V., Grajzl, P., Guse, J., & Kokodoko, M. (2020). *Community Development Financial Institutions and Individuals' Credit Risk in Indian Country Working Paper*. Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis.

41 Arizona Department of Revenue. (29 May 1996) *Arizona Individual Income Tax Ruling Ltr 96-4*. Retrieved from: https://azdor.gov/sites/default/files/RULINGS_INDV_1996_itr96-4.pdf. Access date: 7/17/2020.

Indian educational outcomes lag behind statewide outcomes.

⁴² In 2014, American Indian and Alaska Native children in Arizona constituted 5.6% of statewide school enrollment, with 80.8% of Native children attending public schools, 6.5% charter schools, and 12.6% Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) or tribally controlled schools. Twenty-four percent of Arizona's Native students attend rural schools, and 44% are in poverty. Arizona's American Indian students appear to struggle in these environments: 11% of Native fourth-grade students demonstrated proficiency in math on the National Assessment of Educational Progress compared to 30% of all Arizona fourth graders; 15% of Native eighth-grade students demonstrated proficiency in reading compared to 35% of all Arizona eighth graders; and 63% of Native students graduate from high school compared to 87% of White students.

Some tribal funding for Arizona schools is unavailable to tribal schools. The BIE operates 18 K-12 schools in Arizona and funds 36 more tribally controlled schools.⁴³ While BIE-operated schools

spend more money per pupil than public schools (the national average is 56% more), the sound reasons for these differences, including student socioeconomic profiles (see above) and the schools' remote locations and small sizes,⁴⁴ may also suggest that these "high" spending levels are still too low. The coronavirus pandemic has laid bare this concern; if students lack computers and access to broadband, how can BIE-controlled and BIE-funded schools engage students in online learning unless they support the supply and build-out of needed technologies? These resources may be available through federal assistance, although the record to date is poor.⁴⁵ By contrast, public schools in Arizona have funds to tap for such purposes. Quarterly contributions from Native nations' gaming revenues to the state's Instructional Improvement Fund range from \$12-13 million each quarter.⁴⁶ These

ARIZONA STUDENT PROFILE

YOUNG CHILDREN

6%

of Arizona population age 18 & under is American Indian.

7,000

American Indian children between the ages of 0-5 live in Arizona.

HIGHER EDUCATION

2,200

students are served by tribal colleges in Arizona.

7.2%

of American Indians in Arizona have a Bachelors degree or higher.

COMMUNITY

87%

of schools with a high proportion of Native students hosted community members to share Native culture and traditions.

35%

of American Indians in Arizona do not have access to a personal computer.

42 Data source for paragraph: National Indian Education Association. (2017). *State Profile: Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5cfff319973d7000185377f/t/5e3b3073ff74cd2b8b4b3d5d/1580937333197/NIEA-StateProfileStats-Arizona-Production-v2.pdf>. Access date: 7/27/2020.

43 Bureau of Indian Education. (n.d.). *BIE Schools Directory*. Retrieved from: <https://www.bie.edu/schools/directory>. Access date: 8/3/2020.

44 Government Accountability Office. (13 Nov 2014). *Bureau of Indian Education Needs to Improve Oversight of School Spending GAO report 15-121*. Retrieved from: <https://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-15-121>. Access date: 8/3/2020.

45 Henson, E., Hill, M., Jorgensen, M. & Kalt, J.P. (24 Jul 2020). *Federal COVID-19 Response Funding for Tribal Governments: Lessons from the CARES Act COVID-19 Response and Recovery Policy Brief #5*. Retrieved from: https://ash.harvard.edu/files/ash/files/policy_brief_5-cares_act_lessons_24july2020_final_for_dist.pdf?m=1595612547. Access date: 8/3/2020.

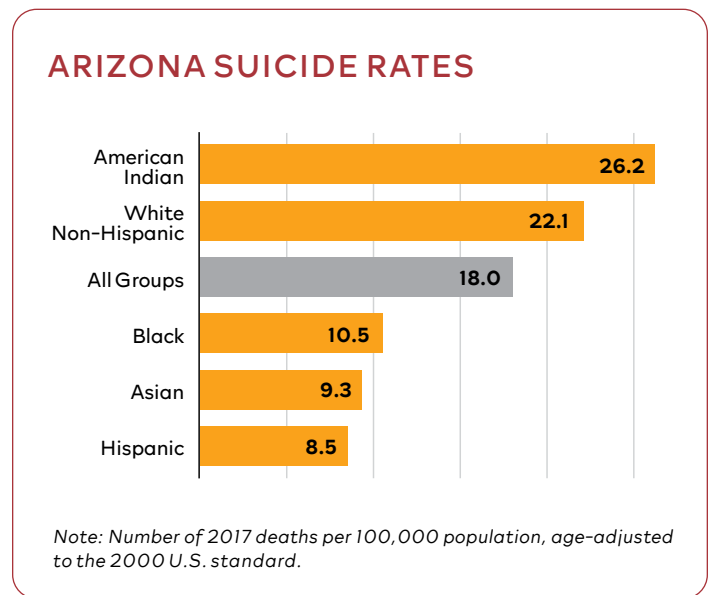
46 See, for example, Staff reporter. (2 Aug 2018). *Tribal Gaming Contributions Continue Growth*. <https://arizonadailyindependent.com/2018/08/02/tribal-gaming-contributions-continue-growth/>. Access date: 8/3/2020.

monies may be used for teacher compensation, maintenance and operations, dropout prevention, and instructional improvement programs. However, "...none of these funds are specifically targeted for Indian education."⁴⁷

One bright spot in the overall education picture is the growth and development of the tribal college and university (TCU) sector. Arizona boasts three TCUs on tribal lands: Dine College, founded in 1968; Tohono O'odham Community College, founded in 1998; and San Carlos Apache College, founded in 2017.

Housing is inadequate both on and off reservations. In the United States as a whole, 40% of on-reservation housing is considered substandard, compared with 6% outside of Indian Country.⁴⁸ Nearly one-third of reservation homes are overcrowded, and fewer than half are connected to public sewer systems. Increasing the supply of quality homes is difficult; inventory is constrained by low-functioning housing markets in Indian Country, limited federal appropriations for Native community rental housing, and a lack of tribal land set aside and prepared – with infrastructure – for housing development. These conditions not only create scarcity and but also threaten the affordability of housing on reservations. Housing problems on tribal lands in the Arizona/New Mexico region rank second only to housing problems in Alaska Native villages.⁴⁹ Forty-three percent of all Indian households living on reservations in Arizona/New Mexico and 58% of low-income Indian households reported at least one housing problem—where the problems studied were plumbing deficiencies, overcrowding, and lack of affordability. Affordability and lack of financing options on reservations in Arizona are evident in data on manufactured housing: over the period 2012-2016, more American Indian borrowers residing on Arizona reservations applied for manufactured housing loans, and more were denied such loans, than in any other U.S. state.⁵⁰

Native Americans face a number of health challenges. In 2018, American Indians resident in Arizona "... ranked worse than the statewide average on 50 of 65 health indicators."⁵¹ The data show high mortality rates, a high incidence of adverse maternal



47 Arizona Department of Education Accountability & Research Division and the Office of Indian Education. (2019). *Arizona 2018 Arizona Indian Education Annual Report*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azed.gov/oie/files/2019/11/8.28.19-AZ-2018-Indian-Education-Annual-Report.pdf>. Access date: 7/27/2020.

48 All national-level statements concerning housing are drawn from: National Congress of American Indians. (2020). *Housing and Infrastructure*. Retrieved from: <http://www.ncai.org/policy-issues/economic-development-commerce/housing-infrastructure>. Access date: 7/30/2020.

49 Biess, J., Hayes, C., Kingsley, Levy, D., T. G., Pindus, N., Nancy Pindus & Simington, J. (Jan 2017). *Housing Needs of American Indians and Alaska Natives in Tribal Areas: A Report From the Assessment of American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian Housing Needs*. Retrieved from: <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/HNAIHousingNeeds.pdf>. Access date: 8/4/2020.

50 Johnson, K. & Todd, R. M (4 Dec 2018). *Race, Location, and Manufactured-Home Loans on American Indian Reservations*. Retrieved from: <https://www.minneapolisfed.org/article/2018/race-location-and-manufactured-home-loans-on-american-indian-reservations>. Access date: 8/4/2020.

51 Arizona Department of Human Services. (2018). *Health Status Profile of American Indians in Arizona: 2018 Data Book*. Retrieved from: https://pub.azdhs.gov/health-stats/report/hspam/2018/part_1.pdf. Access date: 7/27/2020. For more information on suicide rates see *Arizona Department of Health and Human Services Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injury: Arizona, 2006-2017*. <https://pub.azdhs.gov/health-stats/report/suicide/2018/suicide-report-12-2018.pdf>. Access date 7/24/2020.

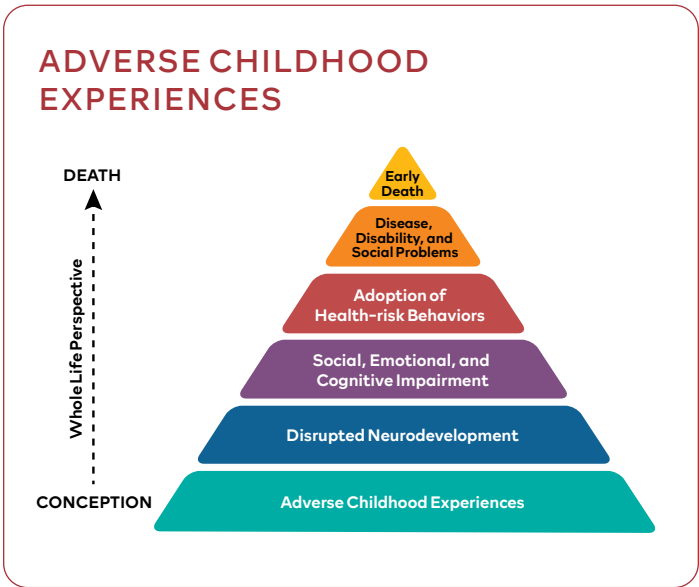
lifestyles, high rates of violence and injury, and high rates of specific debilitating diseases. For example, among American Indians, the 2018 suicide rate was 1.87 times higher than the all-Arizona rate, the poor prenatal care (fewer than five visits) rate was 2.08 times higher, the unintentional injury rate was 2.56 times higher, the assault rate was 2.93 times higher, the septicemia rate was 3.05 time higher, the diabetes rate was 3.20 times higher, the young adult mortality (ages 20-44) rate was 3.26 times higher, and the motor vehicle-related injury rate was 4.31 times higher.

Arizona’s Native children endure high rates of adverse childhood experiences, which affect adult behavioral health.

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are traumatic events experienced before the age of 18 and remembered as an adult. In adults, they are associated with negative effects on social, cognitive, and emotional development.⁵² Arizona’s Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System shows that in 2014, 72% of American Indians experienced at least one ACE, which is the highest exposure rate among all Arizonans.⁵³ This disproportionality is in line with other behavioral health disparities Native Americans suffer, including high rates of posttraumatic stress, depression, and substance abuse. Through epigenetic responses, ACEs may even be a contributing factor to those later-in-life health problems.⁵⁴

Per person federal spending on Indian health care is one-third the amount spent on other Americans.

Health care on reservations in Arizona may be provided directly by the Indian Health Service (IHS) or by a tribe or Native nonprofit that receives funding via a contract from the IHS. IHS direct and contracted facilities range from small ambulatory care clinics to full-service hospitals, most of which are located on reservations. In total, 37 medical health



LOCATION OF INDIAN HEALTH SERVICE FUNDED MEDICAL FACILITIES IN ARIZONA

	On-rez	Off-rez	Total
Indian Health Service direct service program	13	1	14
Tribally operated contract programs	18	3	21
Urban Indian health programs	0	2	2
Totals	31	6	37

52 Felitti, V. J. (1998). *Relationship of Childhood Abuse and Household Dysfunction to Many of the Leading Causes of Death in Adults: The Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study*. American Journal of Preventive Medicine 14(4), 245-258.

53 Arizona Department of Health Services. (2015). *Adverse Childhood Experiences in Arizona: Findings from the 2014 Arizona Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System*. <https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/prevention/womens-childrens-health/reports-fact-sheets/issue-briefs/ACEs-report-2014.pdf>. Access date: 7/24/2020.

54 Brockie, T., Gill, J. & Heinzlmann, M. (9 Dec 2013). *A Framework to Examine the Role of Epigenetics in Health Disparities among Native Americans*. Retrieved from: <https://doi.org/10.1155/2013/410395>. Access date 8/4/2020.

facilities (clinics and hospitals) serve Native Americans in Arizona.⁵⁵ Although tribal citizens have access to health care as a matter of right,⁵⁶ two 21st century reports by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights have cited health care as egregiously underfunded by the U.S. government.⁵⁷ In 2017, for example, “IHS health care expenditures per person were \$3,332, compared to \$9,207 for federal health care spending nationwide.”⁵⁸ Tribes feel strongly that more funding would create better health outcomes for Arizona’s tribal citizens – which is a key reason why, despite the obligations of the U.S. government, some Arizona tribes invest their own revenues in health care programming.

Arizona is among the top three states nationally for missing and murdered Indigenous women and girls cases. The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW) movement calls attention to the vulnerabilities of Native women to violence and crime and to a lack of law enforcement commitment to learning their fates. For 2016, for example, the National Crime Information Center recorded 5,712 reports of missing Native women and girls; by contrast, the U.S. Department of Justice’s missing persons database logged only 166 cases.⁵⁹ Murder is the third-leading cause of death among American Indian and Alaska Native women and girls age 19 and younger,⁶⁰ and American Indian and Alaska Native women are up to twice as likely to be sexually assaulted than women in the general population.⁶¹ Among 71 cities across the U.S. for which MMIW data were gathered, Phoenix, Flagstaff, Tempe, and Tucson together contributed 52 of the 506 cases uncovered, placing Arizona in the top three states for MMIW. Tucson ranked fourth on the list of cities with the most cases.

Native Americans vote, but not without obstacles. In Arizona, Native Americans did not have right to vote until 1948, when the Arizona Supreme Court overturned an earlier ruling (in *Harrison v. Laveen*) banning them from voting. By employing literacy tests, the state continued to prevent Native people from participating in elections until 1975, when the prohibition of such tests became a permanent part of the Voting Rights Act. Since then, Native Americans have faced continued, albeit different, difficulties voting in Arizona. The Arizona voter identification law, which resulted in a sharp decrease in Native voters in 2006, has been one method.⁶² Under the law, Arizona residents must present a valid ID, with a photograph and with an address that both matches poll records and a physical residence. Especially on large, rural reservations, the latter requirement is onerous, as “addresses” may be more directions than street numbers (“2 miles from

55 Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System. (Dec 2015). *Indian Health Service (IHS), Tribally Operated 638 Programs, and Urban Indian Health Programs in Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azahcccs.gov/Shared/Downloads/ITUList.pdf>. Access date: 8/4/2020.

56 Indian Health Service. (Jan 2015). *Basis for Health Services*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/basisforhealthservices/>. Access date: 8/4/2020.

57 U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. (2003). *A Quiet Crisis: Federal Funding and Unmet Needs in Indian Country*. Retrieved from: <https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/na0703/na0204.pdf>. Access date: 8/4/2020; U.S. Commission on Civil Rights. (2018). *Broken Promises: Continuing Federal Funding Shortfall for Native Americans*. Retrieved from: <https://www.usccr.gov/pubs/2018/12-20-Broken-Promises.pdf>. Access date: 8/4/2020.

58 Ibid.

59 Urban Indian Health Institute. (2018). *Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women & Girls*. Retrieved from: <http://www.uihi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Missing-and-Murdered-Indigenous-Women-and-Girls-Report.pdf>. Access date: 7/23/2020.

60 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). *Leading Causes of Death – Females – Non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native – United States 2016*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/women/lcod/2016/nonhispanic-native/index.htm>. Access date: 8/4/2020.

61 Rosay, A. B. (2016). *Violence Against American Indian and Alaska Native Women and Men: 2010 Findings from the National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249822.pdf>. Access date: 8/4/2020.

62 See, for example: Ferguson-Bohnee, P. (2016). *The History of Indian Voting Rights in Arizona: Overcoming Decades of Voter Suppression*. Retrieved from: http://arizonastatelawjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/Ferguson_Final.pdf. Access date: 7/17/2020; and, Indian Legal Clinic. (6 Mar 2018). *Native Vote – Election Protection Project, 2016 Election Report*. Retrieved from: <https://law.asu.edu/sites/default/files/pdf/2016-native-vote-election-protection-report.pdf>. Access date: 7/24/2020.

post 50 on Hwy 264"). The list goes on: county election administrators must know precisely where voters live in order to provide the correct ballots and to direct voters to the correct polling places; mail-in voting is less feasible when the post office is an hour away and the process of retrieving, filling out, and returning a ballot requires multiple trips; and, if the voter has limited proficiency in English, Indigenous language services will be necessary in order for that individual to exercise the franchise. In the 2016 general election, on half of the reservations in Arizona where voter participation was tracked, turnout was less than 50%.⁶³

Government-to-Government Relations

Good government-to-government relationships are built on a foundation of understanding. As many reservations are neighbors to Arizona towns and cities, that includes an understanding among state and municipal elected and civic leaders of tribal government. Indigenous peoples have always governed themselves. Over time, many Arizona-based tribes have adapted their governing systems to address changing circumstances, but within these systems, tribal citizens continue to use their values to solve problems, resolve disputes, and advance their priorities. Today, most tribal governments in Arizona appear similar to western governments, with legislative, executive, and judicial branches – although four of the Hopi Tribe's 12 villages continue to use traditional forms of government and the Navajo Nation employs customary law alongside contemporary Navajo law.⁶⁴

Tribes are sovereign nations. As sovereigns, the powers of tribal governments are vast and include, among others, the power to establish citizenship criteria, determine governmental form, make and enforce law (including tax law), resolve disputes in their own courts, and develop and regulate their lands, waters, and other natural resources. However, tribes' capacities to exert these powers tend to vary by population, territorial expanse, government revenues, and administrative prowess.

The success of an intergovernmental project or relationship often turns on a partner government understanding the types of decision makers within tribal government. With this knowledge, it is easier to approach the right "level" of tribal decision-maker needed to make the collaboration work.⁶⁵

- The tribal council or legislature is the official governing body or decision-making entity within tribal government. The majority of Arizona tribes elect tribal council members as representatives of political subdivisions of the nation, such as a district, chapter, or village. Terms of office vary by tribe.
- A tribe's top elected official may be called the president, governor, or chairman,⁶⁶ and is assisted by a vice president, lieutenant governor, or vice chairman. Some top elected officials have considerable decision-

63 Indian Legal Clinic, 2018.

64 For anyone interested in learning still more, two useful resources are the website of the Native Nations Institute at the University of Arizona (www.nni.edu), which provides users with an array of ways to learn more about tribal governments, and *Rebuilding Native Nations: Strategies for Governance and Development* (edited by Miriam Jorgensen and published by the University of Arizona Press in 2007), which describes the ways Native nations are working to strengthen their foundations, develop stronger and more capable governments, become better partners with other polities, and thereby serve their citizens better.

65 The points shared here derive from the Native Nations Institute's long experience working in partnership with tribes.

66 Those that use the term "president" are the Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, Quechan Tribe, Navajo Nation, San Juan Southern Paiute Tribe, Salt River Pima-Maricopa Indian Community, and Yavapai-Prescott Indian Tribe. Those that use the term "governor" are the Gila River Indian Community and Pueblo of Zuni. The remainder use the term "chairman."

making authority as provided in their nations' constitutions, while others may be limited to those powers delegated by the council. These top two positions are elected at large by tribal citizens and upon election, serve three- to four-year terms.

- The tribal council may delegate decision-making authority in areas related to housing, land, realty, natural resources, etc., to the executive or administrative branch or to specialized commissions, boards, or authorities that are both part of, and separate from, the tribal government. Some Arizona tribes are subdivided into districts, chapters, or villages that have their own governments and operate much like counties or municipalities. Thus, approval from the governing body of a district, chapter, or village may be the first step when seeking a relationship (for development or other purposes) with a tribe.
- In some tribes, governmental action requires the official sanction of non-elected leaders such as religious or clan leaders.
- Three other important but non-tribal decision-makers are the U.S. Department of Interior Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), BIE, and IHS. These federal agencies either deliver core governmental functions and services directly or fund tribes who choose to contract with the federal government to take over administration of a particular funding stream (e.g., a tribe may contract with the U.S. government to manage the funding stream supporting policing, health care, social services, education, etc., on the reservation).
- Lastly, attention always should be paid to those with implicit authority, such as individuals with traditional land use rights. These individuals may simply be identified as community-member "stakeholders" but nonetheless may have significant license to review and approve projects, research, changes, and deliverables.

Indian Country jurisdiction is complex. While tribes in Arizona have their own Law and Order codes, police and law enforcement divisions, and courts, and 13 Arizona tribes also have detention facilities,⁶⁷ no two tribes are alike in their ability to engage in justice activities. These differing capacities overlay what many have termed a "jurisdictional maze": Native nations, the federal government, and the state of Arizona share law enforcement functions on tribal lands, with each having different, although sometimes overlapping, responsibilities. The federal government has jurisdiction over major crimes committed on tribal lands if either the alleged perpetrator or victim is a member of an Indian tribe. Tribal governments in Arizona take responsibility for all other criminal infractions by Indians and may enact a full complement of civil laws that Indian and, in general, non-Indians must obey. Finally, the state of Arizona has jurisdiction over non-Indians who commit crimes against other non-Indians on tribal lands. Matters become more complicated if a tribe opts to exercise concurrent jurisdiction over major crimes against Indians on tribal lands or to create civil penalties to govern the behavior of non-Indians on tribal lands. Similarly, the federal government and state of Arizona may hold authority over roads, rivers, rights of way, etc. that cross reservations. Alleged criminals may flee from state lands to tribal lands, and vice versa. The demand for government-to-government relationships in law enforcement is substantial.

67 Cowhig, M. & Minton, T. D. Todd D. (5 Dec 2017). *Jails in Indian Country, 2016*. Retrieved from: <https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=6146>. Access date: 8/4/2020.

Indian Country has a unique system for public finance. Because of the trust status of their lands and the fact that Arizona has asserted primacy over many forms of taxation, tribes do not – as noted above – have the same kind of tax bases that states and municipalities do. Instead, tribal governments rely on federal and state programs, private and non-profit entities, revenues from their business endeavors, and, to the extent possible, modest tax and fee strategies to support governmental functions and provide needed services. In other words, tribes have long been required to be more innovative than other governments in order to fund their operations and meet the needs of their citizens.

The Native non-profit sector is growing. Both on and off reservations, the number of Native-serving non-profit organizations has been growing. A recent uptick occurred as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Because charitable contributions typically flow to certified non-profit corporations, only tribes with a pre-existing 501c3 organization were in a position to accept these gifts. Looking to these examples, other tribes moved to catch up. In other cases, donations flowed to newly established, independent, COVID-19-specific fundraising organizations. The end result has been sector growth and improved channels for both government-to-government and community-to-community collaboration across jurisdictional lines.

Challenges Heightened by COVID-19

Even *prior* to the COVID-19 pandemic, many Arizona Native nations faced the challenges of unemployment and poverty, health disparities, vexing social issues, inadequate physical infrastructure, and poor-quality housing. While nothing about the pandemic is good for Indian Country, it has made these issues more visible to all Arizonans: more and more Arizona residents are gaining awareness of the high rates of COVID-19 infection suffered by their tribal neighbors, as well as of the disparities between Native and non-Native communities that exacerbate spread and make containment more difficult.

The following is an incomplete list of both new and ongoing challenges for tribes as a result of the new coronavirus:

- **Funding for essential tribal government operations has become scarce.** As a result of the pandemic, tribal enterprises were shuttered, tribal government revenues plummeted, and the demands on tribal treasuries mounted for protective equipment, remote learning support, and food and water. Federal relief arrived, but only after a lengthy wait (longer than that experienced by states and municipalities), caused in part by U.S. Department of the Treasury's use of an arcane allocation methodology. Re-opening has begun, but occupancy restrictions and consumer confidence continue to suppress tribal earnings, while the demand for essential government functions is as great as ever.

- **Clean water is not always available.** On some reservations, it has long been a struggle to access clean water. During this pandemic, one of the main messages has been to wash hands often. Without accessible, uncontaminated water, tribal governments have had to address the issue with creative thinking, such as providing portable hand washing stations. Nonetheless, this very short-term solution begs for a long-term, sustainable approach.
- **Broadband and telecommunications equipment are required for education and employment.** The closure of schools and businesses and a reduction in some health care services have impacted tribal communities across the nation. In Arizona, some tribal communities lack computer equipment and broadband capability that can support employment, allow youth to continue their schooling, provide the option of telehealth visits, and keep families connected. It may be particularly important to shift some attention to small tribes, whose technology capacity-building challenges loom large even though their population numbers do not.
- **Poor quality roads hinder response and recovery.** Roads on tribal lands connect people to essential services, including schools and healthcare. Unfortunately, they often are unpaved and not well maintained, and bad weather can easily make them unpassable for days. Funding constraints and overlapping jurisdictions make improving and maintaining roads on tribal lands challenging – and at the same time, mandate intergovernmental collaboration for solutions. In this pandemic, poor roads have curtailed tribal governments' abilities to be responsive; in the next, better roads could contribute to Native communities' resilience.
- **Access to health care is complex.** While it has many entry points, the Indian health system is complex: tribal members in need of care can seek services from a tribally funded provider, from the federal Indian Health Service, through the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System, or from a private provider. A collaborative effort across tribal, federal, and state systems could help tribal citizens better understand their options and access more appropriate care. It might also streamline and coordinate services, saving money for all payers. For example, the Havasupai must carefully coordinate health care, as the helicopter flies into the Grand Canyon on a limited number of days, and round-trip transportation and lodging often must be secured at short notice. Telemedicine may also offer opportunities for complementary action; there are large connectivity and training gaps that are difficult for any one system to fill but that all might benefit from.
- **The "food desert" problem has become more acute.** The U.S. Department of Agriculture defines a food desert as an area where people have limited access to a variety of healthy and affordable food. Because of the pandemic, tribal citizens already suffering from the loss of local agriculture and who had become resigned to long trips to the grocery store now find it harder to make such trips. When they do reach the store, they face even higher prices, reduced selection, and less healthy choices. Students reliant on school breakfasts and lunches also experience worsening diets in the move to remote learning. There is renewed energy around educating young people about planting and gathering, and momentum is building, but change takes time and will not solve the immediate food crises.

The Power of Collaboration

Native nations that share geography with the state of Arizona imagine a future in which they dynamically engage with other Native and non-Native communities to strengthen their citizens, cultures, and economies. There is an opportunity for Native and non-Native communities in the state to work together toward that vibrancy. The following list provides guidance for those interested in cultivating or strengthening meaningful collaboration with tribes:

- Respect and understand tribal sovereignty when developing partnerships. Tribes govern themselves and have many of the same powers that federal and state governments do to regulate their own affairs.
- Recognize the unique character of each of the 22 tribes that share geography with the state of Arizona; not all tribes are the same. The Native nations in Arizona vary in location, population size, language, and cultural beliefs, although many have similar stories and teachings.
- Incorporate an orientation to the American Indian tribes in Arizona into your work or project. This would include an overview of tribal history; an overview of tribal, western, and traditional government structures; information about funding streams; and an introduction to various tribes' locations, languages, beliefs, and values. Staff of tribal programs or businesses, Native faculty and staff at Arizona colleges and universities, or staff of Native-serving nonprofits may be good connections and may have presentations at the ready.⁶⁸
- Consider hiring a Cultural Broker/Tribal Liaison. This staff member could strengthen your organization by offering guidance and insight related to Arizona tribal nations. When meeting with a tribe, especially at an initial introductory meeting, it is strongly encouraged that the meeting be in person and on the tribe's lands (as long as such an invitation is made). A Tribal Liaison can help educate your team about these cultural protocols and better prepare your organization to earn the respect and trust of tribal partners.
- Work to improve tribes' eligibility for and access to state and pass-through federal funding. Providing improved eligibility and accessibility to federal and state funding for programs and services helps establish tribal governments on a more even footing with non-tribal governments.

QUICK TIPS

- Uphold and value tribal sovereignty
- Abandon your presumptions
- Learn about each other's government and community
- Have respect and act respectfully
- Forge meaningful and lasting relationships
- Work toward equity in funding and programming

Quality, impactful collaboration requires hard work. This includes making a real commitment to understanding each other's policies, culture, infrastructure, situation, and constraints. The learning process is part of the investment in, and nurturing of, a lasting relationship, one that extends beyond the current project or immediate

⁶⁸ Contact one of Arizona's universities, tribal colleges, or tribal nonprofits. As an example, the Native Nations Institute at the University of Arizona has an existing "Native Know How" non-credit seminar from which a significant portion of this chapter was derived.

challenge. Remarkably, the COVID-19 crisis creates space for such relationship building: the cooperation, friendships, and ventures developed through this crisis strengthen partnerships and provide opportunities for future collaboration. Tribal governments, their communities, the state of Arizona, counties, and municipalities, and every individual citizen of the state, are pieces of the Arizona puzzle. When all of these pieces are put in place and work together, Arizona may realize its most vibrant vision for all of its peoples. As a tribal elder instructed: “Tell me and I’ll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I’ll understand.”

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Resilience and Vibrant Communities

Dr. Patricia Solís and Dr. Elizabeth Wentz, ASU Knowledge Exchange for Resilience

Dr. David Hondula, ASU School of Geographical Sciences and Urban Planning

This topic intersects and explores these elements of a vibrant community:



RESILIENCY



ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY



SOCIAL JUSTICE



AFFORDABLE QUALITY HOUSING

Introduction

All communities face unanticipated shocks. To build and maintain vibrancy, communities must build resources and systems for resilience. A resilient community is distinguished by the way it can respond to profound stresses and abrupt shocks – even in the face of long-term stressors such as stagnant wages, aging infrastructure, chronic hunger, substance abuse, demographic changes, and workforce challenges. That shock might be a climate disaster (fire, drought, excessive heat, flood), or an economic/civic event (market “crash,” housing bubble, racial crisis). In 2020, as Arizona works to understand and address COVID-19, that shock – no longer hypothetical – is a pandemic.

Two effects tend to consistently rise to the forefront during unanticipated shocks:

1. Collective vulnerability increases because shocks expose the interdependencies of work, education, childcare, economic stability, housing, food, and other elements of a healthy community.
2. Shocks disproportionately impact the state’s most vulnerable communities – people disadvantaged by geographic bias (e.g. tribal, rural vs. urban), policies and systems (e.g. zoning, redlining, lack of political power), a history of under- or dis-investment (at municipal, state, and federal levels), and discrimination based on race, gender identity, status, or ethnicity. All these factors together contribute to Arizonans who present as vulnerable at very young or very old ages, at low- and moderate-incomes, or when experiencing a disability. Unfortunately, vulnerable communities tend to lack the social, economic, or physical capacity to withstand stresses and shocks.

A striking example of how these two effects have played out during the present COVID-19 pandemic is the public health crisis’ disproportionate impact on the Navajo Nation. The Navajo people are among the most resilient communities in Arizona, having withstood a long history of systematic oppression impacting traditional lands, culture, heritage and natural resources for more than 250 years. The shock of the pandemic exacerbated and exposed multiple elements of vulnerability that led to one of the highest per capita COVID-19 infection rates in the country.⁶⁹ Similarly, in other contexts across the state, infection rates among marginalized groups are consistently higher as well.⁷⁰

As COVID-19 makes evident, resiliency is an important lens for developing and maintaining vibrant communities.

69 Sedgwick, J. (19 May 2020). *Navajo Nation Reports Highest Per-Capita COVID-19 Infection Rate in U.S.* Retrieved from: <https://www.fox10phoenix.com/news/navajo-nation-reports-highest-per-capita-covid-19-infection-rate-in-us>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

70 Golden, S. H. (20 Apr 2020). *Coronavirus in African Americans and Other People of Color.* Retrieved from: <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/conditions-and-diseases/coronavirus/covid19-racial-disparities>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

Ingredients and Actions for Resilience

Judith Rodin, recent President of the Rockefeller Foundation, has identified that resilient communities are developed by becoming increasingly more:⁷¹

- **AWARE:** possessing knowledge of strengths and assets, liabilities and vulnerabilities, and threats and risks
- **DIVERSE:** leveraging different sources of capacity so the community can successfully operate even when elements of that capacity are challenged, drawing upon a range of capabilities, ideas, information sources, technical elements, people, or groups
- **INTEGRATED:** coordinating functions and actions across systems – including the abilities to bring together disparate ideas and elements, work collaboratively across elements, develop cohesive solutions, and coordinate actions
- **SELF-REGULATING:** operating in a way that it is “safe to fail,” where cascading disruptions do not result when the entity suffers a severe dysfunction
- **ADAPTIVE:** adjusting to changing circumstances and applying existing resources to new purposes or for one element to take on multiple roles

Aiming toward these characteristics creates a trajectory toward collective ability to bounce back quickly and effectively. When community resilience is done well, community dividends result. Dividends are the unanticipated positive benefits associated with a community response to a potential system shock. For example, a flood control system designed to also function as a community park (as opposed to restricted concrete infrastructure) creates community dividends of community gatherings, recreation, urban cooling, and natural habitats. Scottsdale’s Indian Bend Wash is such a project.

Actions that can advance community resilience include:

1. Identifying vulnerabilities, assets, and current response mechanisms proactively.
2. Collecting, analyzing, visualizing, and communicating knowledge using diverse data inputs.
3. Mobilizing a multi-sector network of collaborators capable of investing and responding.
4. Allocating human and financial resources for systemic/systematic impact and transformation.

These actions may help anticipate and prepare for both the expected and the unexpected across *all* communities. It is important to buffer against the threats to which Arizona is most susceptible, with responses that can improve collective well-being, make communities stronger, and generate more prosperity, even in times of relative normalcy.

Residents and organizations may benefit from working together across regional organizations, municipalities, and agencies to share, discover, and respond to shocks and stresses. This collaboration can lead to ways that help to collectively “bounce forward” and transform challenges into solutions.

71 Rodin, J. (2014). *The Resilience Dividend: Being Strong in a World Where Things go Wrong*.

How Resilient is Arizona?

In Arizona, economic and social data analysis reveals the need to increase community vibrancy and resilience:

- GDP has grown but at a rate lower than the national average.⁷²
- Per capita income has *decreased*.⁷³
- Arizona has the 10th highest poverty rate in the U.S.⁷⁴
- Arizona currently has a high school graduation rate of 78.02%, one of the lowest in the country.⁷⁵
- 45% of Arizona renters and 22% of homeowners pay more than 30% of their income toward housing.⁷⁶
- Between 2010 to 2015, the number of Arizonans with low access to a food store increased from 34.56% to 36.37%.⁷⁷
- Already, significant inequities and disparities are increasing, as evidenced by the cumulative effect on life expectancy by zip code.⁷⁸

This means that when health, environmental, social, or economic crises like those we face today inevitably occur, Arizona as a whole is more economically and socially vulnerable. Therefore, resilience is crucial.

Interdependent Elements Case: Excessive Heat, Income, and Housing in Maricopa County

Arizonans are at risk for drier, longer, and hotter conditions with implications to interrelated systems including health, economic opportunity, transportation, and housing. These are often referred to as cascading effects or threat multipliers.

The number of heat-related deaths reported in Arizona has risen dramatically in recent years. In Maricopa County, the 2017-2019 annual average number of heat-related deaths was more than twice as high as during the period 2013-2015, even after accounting for population growth. Arizona State University researchers did not find any strong evidence that 2017-2019 should have been more threatening based on outdoor weather conditions. Instead, they suggest that the trend must be driven by a deterioration of some key social systems and processes that represent the Elements of a Vibrant Community and community resilience. Contributing factors to the recent rise in heat-related deaths may be related to changing dynamics about the adequacy of shelter that vulnerable people may lack: indicators such as homelessness, less affordable housing, increased rent and utility prices, and growing eviction.

72 Bureau of Economic Analysis. (2020). Retrieved from: <https://www.bea.gov/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

73 Ibid.

74 World Population Review. (2020). *Poverty Rate by State 2020*. Retrieved from: <https://worldpopulationreview.com/states/poverty-rate-by-state/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

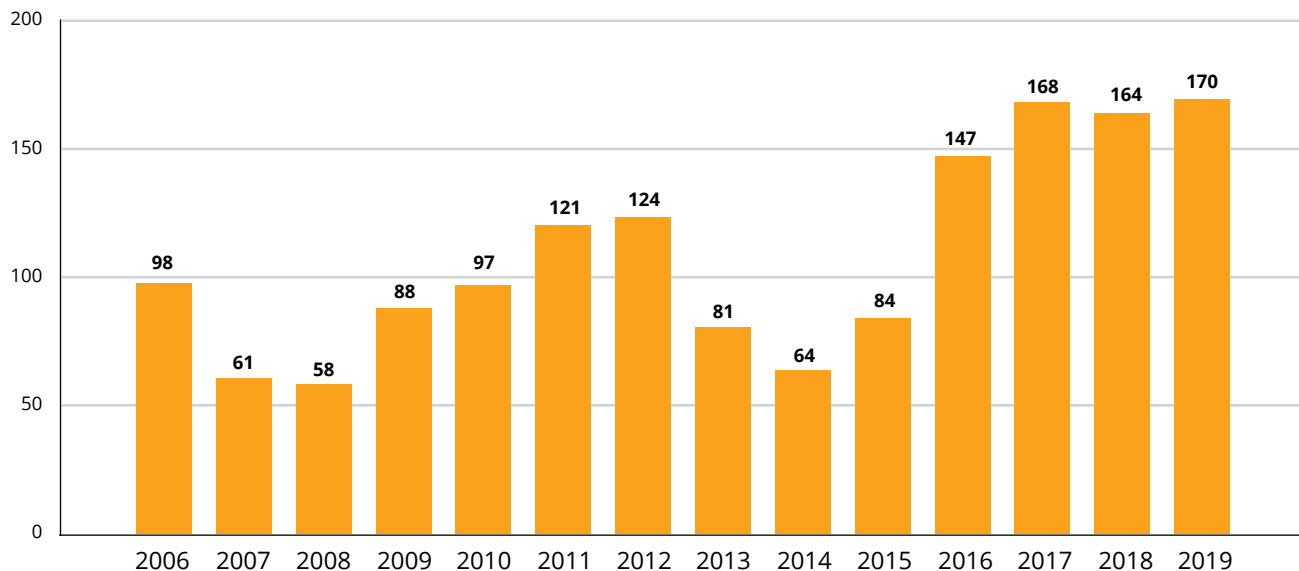
75 Arizona Department of Education (n.d.) AZ school report cards. Retrieved from: <https://azreportcards.azed.gov/state-reports>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

76 U.S. Census. (2018). *ACS 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/data.html>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

77 USDA ERS. (updated 27 Aug 2019). *Food Environment Atlas*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-environment-atlas/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

78 National Center for Health Statistics. U.S. Small-Area Life Expectancy Estimates Project. (2018). Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/usaleep/usaleep.html>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

HEAT-RELATED DEATHS IN MARICOPA COUNTY, 2006-2019



Source: Maricopa County Department of Public Health.

Socio-economic and built-environment issues also add to the challenge. Average Phoenix rents recorded an 8% rise from 2019,⁷⁹ while electricity costs for one of the major utilities are expected to rise 5.4% in 2020.⁸⁰ Families are at risk of eviction when unable to pay both rent and utilities, and people of color suffer evictions at higher rates. Nationally, 11.9% of African American households had faced eviction, as compared to 5.4% of White households.⁸¹ In 2017, more than 25,000 evictions moved through the Maricopa County Justice Courts, registering as the 5th highest total in county history and a 12% jump from the year before.⁸² Home-owning people of color typically suffer foreclosures disproportionately, too. An estimated 44% of African-American and Latino families lost homes to foreclosure at disproportionately higher numbers relative to their share of mortgage originations during 2007-2009 during the housing crisis.⁸³ Nearly 8% of both African Americans and Latinos have lost their homes to foreclosures, compared to 4.5% of Whites. Still recovering, Latinos were hit hardest by the 2008 housing crisis.⁸⁴

79 Dean, E. (6 Jan 2020). *The Hidden Homeless: Growing Number of Older People Living on the Streets*. Retrieved from: <https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/2020/01/06/hidden-homeless/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

80 Randazzo, R. (31 Oct 2019). *APS Seeks Electricity Rate Hike. See how Much it May Cost You*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azcentral.com/story/money/business/energy/2019/10/31/aps-seeks-another-rate-hike-following-report-it-is-overearning/2489249001/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

81 Holder, S. (30 Oct 2017). *Where Evictions Hurt the Most*. Retrieved from: <https://www.citylab.com/equity/2017/10/where-evictions-hurt-the-most/544238/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

82 Arizona Housing Coalition. (n.d.). *Addressing the Eviction Epidemic in Arizona*. Retrieved from: https://www.azhousingcoalition.org/uploads/1/2/4/9/124924903/addressing_the_eviction_epidemic.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

83 Bocian, D., Li, W. & Ernst K. (18 Jun 2010). *Foreclosures by Race and Ethnicity: The Demographics of a Crisis*. Retrieved from: <https://www.responsiblelending.org/mortgage-lending/research-analysis/foreclosures-by-race-and-ethnicity.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

84 Rugh, J. (4 Nov 2014). *Double Jeopardy: Why Latinos Were Hit Hardest by the U.S. Foreclosure Crisis*. Retrieved from: <https://academic.oup.com/sf/article-abstract/93/3/1139/2332222?redirectedFrom=fulltext>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

For those experiencing homelessness, summertime heat exposure due to lack of shelter has devastating effects. In 2018, heat took the lives of 182 people in the Phoenix metro area with 42 of those cases being individuals experiencing homelessness.⁸⁵ This is combined with the challenge of potential mental illness, and the 40% spike in homelessness among individuals over age 62 in the last three years,⁸⁶ where approximately half of them were homeless for the first time. Additionally, data shows that African Americans are significantly less likely to be homeowners (one of the most common forms of permanent housing) than their White counterparts (34.02% for African Americans vs 66.9% for Whites).⁸⁷

In Arizona, clear disparities relating to heat, income, and housing can be seen when examining the effects of excessive heat. Visitors to Arizona represent only a small fraction of heat-related deaths recorded in the state; most cases occur among individuals that have lived in Arizona for a long period of time. Older individuals are at the highest risk, but people across the age spectrum have died from heat in Arizona in recent years. Men account for more than twice as many heat-related deaths as women. The heat-related death rate is higher among African American and Native Americans than White residents in Maricopa County, while the heat-related death rate is typically much lower among individuals who identify as Hispanic. Both outdoor and indoor heat pose risks to health and well-being. In Maricopa County, upwards of 40% of cases of heat-related death are associated with indoor exposure, and nearly all of those cases occur in homes with air conditioning units that are off, not functioning properly, or in a state of disrepair. People who live in older mobile homes in Maricopa County are particularly susceptible: they are 8 times more likely to die than residents in other types of housing.⁸⁸

Beyond heat-related illnesses and deaths that are registered in official administrative records, heat has far-reaching effects on people's sense of well-being and quality of life.

COVID-19

While there is still much to learn about the coronavirus pandemic, emerging data suggest that COVID-19 has a similar but exponentially faster capacity to exploit community vulnerabilities. How does one stay-at-home and isolate if one does not have a home? How does an individual experiencing homelessness shelter from excessive heat if the shelter itself presents risk of novel coronavirus infection? How does a family struggling to balance rent payments and utility payments avoid eviction (once the statewide temporary eviction moratorium ends) when the employment rate rapidly sinks to lows not seen in decades?⁸⁹ Resilience practices are not specifically designed for the effects of a community shock, but they are formulated to address Elements of a Healthy Community that can enable communities to potentially "bounce forward."

85 Totiyapungprasert, P. (7 May 2019). *Heat Deaths in Phoenix Reached a Record High in 2018*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/phoenix/2019/05/07/heat-deaths-phoenix-arizona-reached-record-high-2018/2539975002/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

86 Gilger, L. (13 Jan 2020). *"Humanitarian Crisis": Arizona Shelters See Spike in Homeless Seniors*. Retrieved from: <https://kjjz.org/content/1392536/humanitarian-crisis-arizona-shelters-see-spike-homeless-seniors>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

87 U.S. Census. (2018). *ACS 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/data.html>. Access date: 6/1/2020.

88 Maricopa County Public Health Department. (2019).

89 For more information on the intersection between COVID-19 and heat, see the following: *Arizona Republic*, "Self-isolating from COVID-19 in a mobile home? That could be deadly in Arizona." OpEd with Mark Kear, Patricia Solís, Margaret Wilder, David Hondula, and Mark Bernstein. <https://bit.ly/2WsytKN>; *Arizona Mirror*, "Experts fear COVID-19 pandemic will lead to more summer heat deaths," Allison Stevens. <https://bit.ly/3ga1Fia>; *Los Angeles Times*, "Coronavirus could worsen death toll of summer heat waves, health officials warn," Anna M. Phillips and Tony Barboza. <https://lat.ms/2YFTtAd>; *National Geographic*, "As summer arrives, how will the most vulnerable escape deadly heat and COVID-19?" Stephen Leahy. <https://on.natgeo.com/2YISFdX>.

Fostering Increased Resilience

To catalyze the work of building community resilience, 100 cities⁹⁰ across the globe joined to change the state of community challenges such as aging infrastructure, political ineffectiveness, climate events, and social inequality. Known today as the Global Resilient Cities Network, member cities define community resilience as “the capacity for communities, institutions, and individuals to respond and adapt to shocks and long-term stresses.”⁹¹ The Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust partnered with the Institute for Sustainable Communities, an international non-profit organization, to interact with more than 200 leaders in Maricopa County to explore what community resilience means. Published in 2016, the takeaways of this exercise identified assets and vulnerabilities of the human and natural capital of the region.⁹² Working now as ASU’s Knowledge Exchange for Resilience (KER), the resilience dividend drives decision-making because it cuts across energy, economic security, health, and shelter themes. For example, cooling homes and businesses more efficiently and reducing personal heat exposure not only provides relief from high temperatures, but also saves the wallets of residents and employers by reducing expenses and increasing residential and commercial assets.

Focusing on the resilience dividend exemplifies the way that private individuals, commercial entities, non-profit organizations, and governmental agencies could converge to offer innovative, data-driven solutions to not only to solve specific carefully defined risks, but also to transform community resilience broadly. In the community resilience framework developed by ASU KER, actions, and policies are:

1. **Data-driven:** Entities need to reflect on the knowledge they possess and “liberate” the data, making it available and converging across many organizations to give meaning and situational awareness of risks that may otherwise be hidden in plain sight. Married to official data, this kind of data from within organizations can help provide robust evidence for targeting threats to well-being that have greater impact than “shotgun” approaches.
2. **Collaborative, multi-sector:** Proposed solutions, co-developed and put into place with the lived experiences of community members most affected, should leverage partnerships across a diverse set of actors to integrate solutions across the built environment, and landscape of economic and social capital. This essential perspective helps to guide community resilience building to be more equitable.
3. **Dividend-bearing:** By exchanging our distinct sources of knowledge into spaces of our county, we aim to break the cycle of cascading effects to create self-regulated solutions that can be implemented towards the resilience dividends of community health solutions, and to adequately adapt to a changing demography and climate.

The frameworks, ingredients, actions, and developing collaborations noted in this chapter are – while Maricopa County-centric – emerging pathways and resources for building resilient communities globally. Rodin’s resilience characteristics framework, the goal of creating resilience dividends, the actions to develop community resilience,

90 100 Resilient Cities. (2020). Selected Cities. Retrieved from: <https://www.100resilientcities.org/cities/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

91 Rodin, J. (2014). The Resilience Dividend: Being Strong in a World Where Things Go Wrong.

92 Virginia G. Piper Charitable Trust. (2020). Advancing Community Resilience. Retrieved from: <https://pipertrust.org/nonprofit-support/advancing-community-resilience/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

and local analysis of key community challenges (like Maricopa County's excessive heat events) are all tools to be considered so that vibrant communities can sustain shocks and "bounce forward." While developing resilience within specific communities is crucial, it is also necessary to work toward resilience in a way that strives for systemic transformation.

As Arizona makes its way through the novel coronavirus pandemic, the integrative lens of resilience presents a strong alternative to currently dominant debates between seemingly conflicting priorities of public health and economic activity.

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The Role of State, County, and Local Governments in Creating Vibrant Communities

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This topic intersects and explores these elements of a vibrant community:



SOCIAL JUSTICE



HEALTH EQUITY



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



RESILIENCY

The structure of our communities – and their capacity for vibrancy – is shaped by the rules, policies, and systems by which we live together in neighborhoods, towns, cities, counties, and states. In other words, governance significantly shapes and influences community vibrancy, whether the lens is close-up or zoomed out.

The precondition for vibrancy is life itself. Since the mid-19th century, average life expectancy in the U.S. boomed from 38 years to 79, more than doubling time on earth.⁹³ Most of that improvement resulted from governments formulating and instituting public health measures that reduced deaths early in life.⁹⁴

A person who made it to age 70 in the mid-19th century could expect to live another 11 years to 81 years of age. Now, a person who makes it to age 70 can expect to live another 15 years, which is only four years longer than people more than 150 years ago, despite the increasing use of healthcare, especially in later years.⁹⁵ In other words, life expectancy only marginally increased due to enormous healthcare expenditure. The rest of the increase resulted from evidence-based policy, systems, and environmental improvements implemented by local, state, and federal government agencies.⁹⁶

Water and sewer sanitation dramatically decreased intestinal disease; little more than a century ago, one in ten died from a waterborne disease. Meanwhile, food safety greatly reduced other dangerous intestinal illnesses. Improvements in housing and working conditions decreased overcrowding, which resulted in plummeting rates of tuberculosis and other infectious diseases long before medical treatment for such illnesses existed.

93 Hoyert DL, Kochanek KD, Murphy SL. (1999). Deaths: Final Data for 1997.

94 Bunker JP, Frazier HS, Mosteller F. (1994). Improving Health: Measuring Effects of Medical Care.

95 National Center for Health Statistics. (8 Oct 2019). Death Rates and Life Expectancy at Birth. Retrieved from: <https://data.cdc.gov/NCHS/NCHS-Death-rates-and-life-expectancy-at-birth/w9j2-ggv5>. Access date: 5/31/2020.

96 Lindsay, G., Merrill, R., & Hedin, R. (31 Oct 2014). The Contribution of Public Health and Improved Social Conditions to Increased Life Expectancy: An Analysis of Public Awareness.

Perhaps nowhere are these lessons more applicable than with COVID-19. Historically, universal vaccination programs and resulting “herd immunity” made once widespread infectious diseases rare. Likewise, workplace and other safety standards set by governments dramatically cut deaths from accidents.⁹⁷ The unique properties of coronavirus (high transmissibility, long asymptomatic incubation, no known medical treatment beyond oxygen therapy, high death rate) constitute a mix of threats that requires communal agreement facilitated by science and government. Policy interventions like stay-at-home orders and other social distancing recommendations require a coordinated and collaborative response through governance at the federal, state, and local level.

Historically, progress like sanitation and automotive safety laws has been achieved through various policies, laws, and regulations. One consistent commonality between these improvements is that those public policies were informed by scientific evidence and implemented in ways that dramatically benefited everyone. Despite the controversy and debates that surrounded many of those policy decisions at the time, evidence-driven policies were eventually enacted, resulting in greater longevity and well-being for all.

The circumstances of COVID-19 are analogous:

1. The bacterial threat of poor sanitation in the 19th century was “invisible” and as potentially capable of “superspreading” outbreaks as coronavirus is today.
2. The communal agreement to develop and abide by “rules of the road” (such as speed limits, traffic signs/signal, traffic laws, seat belt laws) when it came to automotive safety in the 20th century compares favorably with the opportunity to develop and abide by new communal “rules of COVID-19” today (like frequent handwashing, social distancing, public mask-wearing).

Federal, state, and local agencies have already come a long way and have the potential to go even further to ensure community vibrancy. Opportunity is high for improvements, as data shows significant gaps by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Residents from a zip code two miles from Arizona’s state capitol building die an average of 14 years earlier than those in another zip code 20 miles away.⁹⁸

Some of these differences are the result of varying access to health care, but most of it has been found to be due to the social determinants of health, or differences in physical and social environment. These determinants took the form of overcrowding and poor sanitation a century ago. Today they look more like economic status, educational opportunity, and other factors.⁹⁹

COVID-19 death disparities based on race, income, and place provide another statistical confirmation that the social determinants of health are key to community vibrancy. The cumulative generational effect of inequitable policies and systems is resulting in higher percentages of people of color dying. COVID-19 hotspots include lower-income factory settings (i.e. meat packing plants) and senior congregate living facilities that are under-resourced and populated by residents often suffering cumulative effects of “co-morbidities” – conditions connected to social determinants of health.

97 Lindsay, G., Merrill, R., & Hedin, R. (31 Oct 2014). The Contribution of Public Health and Improved Social Conditions to Increased Life Expectancy: An Analysis of Public Awareness.

98 Chiang, CL. (1968). *The Life Table and its Construction*. In: *Introduction to Stochastic Processes in Biostatistics*.

99 Marmot, M. (8 Nov 2008). *Closing the Gap in a Generation: Health Equity through Action on the Social Determinants of Health*.

There have been many advancements in Arizonans' health. Yet, even prior to COVID-19, it was clear that there was still much work to be done. Now, the need for governance focused on community vibrancy and public health is more pressing, yet:

- Arizona's public health funding is almost 50% below the national average, ranking 47th in the country.
- Per person, the U.S. dedicates \$86 from state and federal funding to public health while Arizona only delegates \$50.¹⁰⁰
- 22.1% of Arizonans report being physically inactive and 29.5% experience obesity,¹⁰¹ which often leads to diabetes – a condition highly susceptible to COVID-19 complications.
- 25.2% of adults with less than high school education report having a health high status while 62.7% of college graduates report having a high health status.¹⁰²

Today, the benefits of public policy measures like food safety, clean water, and disease control have been mostly, though not completely, realized. New tools and strategies are most likely to be necessary to continue improving community vibrancy. Without question, public health resources are key to the fight against coronavirus; but government agencies can support our communities over the long-term by concurrently addressing underlying issues like affordable housing, economic opportunities, affordable child-care, transportation options, access to affordable healthy foods, safe and secure neighborhoods, access to safe areas to recreate, minimum wage laws (particularly as hourly service workers suffer the greatest coronavirus impacts economically), and environments that are more walkable and bikeable.

The new model for public well-being is moving beyond core historic services and into inter-sectoral collaboration with private, non-profit, and public sector partners who can influence the policy elements that influence the social determinants of health. Public health can best succeed through the collaborative support of its governmental partners. Functionally, this means that directors of local health departments are choosing to collaborate with and educate local government partners to influence policy in other sectors, while also taking action to influence elected officials in order to pass policies that improve these social determinants.¹⁰³

This type of work is called the "Health in All Policies" approach. In the near term, this includes "the battle," including specific steps like more robust health surveillance infrastructure (testing and contact tracing in the case of COVID-19). At the same time, Health in All Policies strategies can focus on winning "the war" by addressing root causes of community vulnerability such as the significant issues of inequity, economic challenges, housing/homelessness, and food insecurity that have become evident during the coronavirus pandemic.

100 Arizona Department of Health Services. (2019). *Arizona State Health Assessment*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/operations/managing-excellence/2019-state-health-assessment.pdf>. Access date: 5/31/2020.

101 America's Health Rankings: United Health Foundation. (2019). *Public Health Impact: Public Health Funding*. Retrieved from: https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/PH_funding/state/AZ. Access date: 5/31/2020.

102 America's Health Rankings: United Health Foundation. (2019). *Public Health Impact: Disparity in Health Status*. Retrieved from: https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/healthstatus_disparity/state/AZ. Access date: 5/31/2020.

103 Brennan-Ramirez LK, Baker EA, Metzler M. (2008). *Promoting Health Equity: A Resource to Help Communities Address Social Determinants of Health*.

Health in All Policies: Coffelt-Lamoreaux Public Housing Redevelopment

Government agencies struggled with what to do about Phoenix's oldest public housing project. Built in 1953 in what was then an agricultural area, the Coffelt-Lamoreaux site with 296 housing units is now surrounded by a highway and industry. As such, demolition and relocation of residents was considered. Residents, however, wanted to remain and make Coffelt better. Prior to redevelopment, a collaboration between residents, government agencies, a developer, and several nonprofits took a Health in All Policies approach by first conducting a Health Impact Assessment (HIA).

HIAs are data-driven, place-based analyses that are used to shape and assess the impact of pending or future decisions – in this case, to inform how Coffelt-Lamoreaux might be redeveloped to support community vibrancy. During an HIA, public and private sector partners come together to understand health consequences, discuss possible solutions for these potential consequences, and to ensure the voice of the community is recognized throughout the HIA process.

The Coffelt-Lamoreaux HIA was completed in 2013. Many of its recommendations and insights were implemented. Here is a sampling of key community solutions with significant "return on investment": (1) improving housing units with additional bathrooms, climate control to better mitigate heat, and pollution and noise mitigation to lessen negative effects of the neighboring industry and highway, (2) redesigning the streetscape for safety and to promote pedestrian connectivity (specifically including a crucial safe crosswalk for bus access to work, school, and food), (3) multiple community changes to improve healthy food access (a new on-site small grocery store, local store incentives to expand healthy foods, free community shuttle bus service to larger supermarkets, a community garden, and a school gardening program), and (4) improved lighting, tree and shade canopy, and landscaping to activate open space for community interaction and physical activity. Today, Coffelt-Lamoreaux is a significantly more attractive, supportive, and vibrant community through a Health in All Policies approach.

Health in All Policies can flip the script on traditional approaches to community health and has been proven to create cross-sector collaboration that produces more vibrant communities. Coffelt is not unique. Health Impact Assessments have been performed statewide in Arizona, in rural and suburban settings. County government agencies – notably, Maricopa County, Cochise County, Pima County, and Yavapai County – have produced Community Health Improvement Plans focused on the social determinants of health. Cities and towns ranging from Flagstaff to Yuma and Payson to Bisbee are employing a social determinants lens to address root causes of vibrancy and enhance governmental decision making. Arizona's state health department¹⁰⁴ is also working with the Department of Corrections to help improve its prison release plans. When inmates are released they are: (1) already enrolled in their state's Medicaid plan, (2) linked to substance abuse treatment agencies, and (3) connected with job training and placement organizations.

104 Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System. (2020). *Support for Individuals Transitioning out of the Criminal Justice System*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azahcccs.gov/AHCCCS/Initiatives/CareCoordination/justiceinitiatives.html>. Access date: 5/31/2020.

Today's state and local government agencies are becoming increasingly more aware that they need to move beyond core 20th Century public health services and into inter-sectoral relationships with all manner of state and county government agencies to continue to make progress. They also recognize the need to help elected officials at all levels understand these new approaches to community vibrancy, so that public policy takes into consideration its influence on the social determinants of health.

About the Authors

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Will Humble is a long-time public health enthusiast and is currently the Executive Director for the Arizona Public Health Association (AzPHA). His 30 years in public health include more than 2 decades at the Arizona Department of Health Services, where he served in various roles including as the Director from 2009 to 2015. He continues to be involved in health policy in his role as the Executive Director for the Arizona Public Health Association. He has a BS in Marketing from NAU, a BS in Microbiology from ASU, and an MPH from the University of California at Berkeley. He was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Science from the U of A for engaging partnerships between academic and executive public health. Will is a believer in using evidence-based health policy to improve health outcomes and in leading and managing with emotional intelligence.

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The Role of Built Environment in Creating Vibrant Communities

Vitalyst Staff

Leslie Dornfeld, PLAN*et

This topic intersects and explores these elements of a vibrant community:



TRANSPORTATION OPTIONS



FOOD ACCESS



COMMUNITY DESIGN



PARKS AND RECREATION



Building Vibrant Communities

Thoughtful attention to our built environment enables vibrant communities because Arizona communities become more vibrant when healthy choices are easily accessible for all residents. The built environment is defined as the way in which environments are designed and constructed, which includes the arrangement of buildings where people live, shop, and work. This includes recreation sites like parks and trails, places people visit like hospitals and schools, and transportation systems. The built environment within a community has tremendous impact on the well-being of its members, either increasing or decreasing the availability of vibrancy options. This chapter, and subsequent chapters focused on housing, transportation, and food systems, examines the current built environment of Arizona's communities as well as explores opportunities for improvement.

Arizona's Built Environment is Influencing Vibrancy

Transportation Systems

Walkability – or having the option to walk to places where we can shop, recreate, work, and socialize – is an important facet of healthy community design that supports active lifestyle and social cohesion. It is well known that an active lifestyle is positively associated with better health outcomes while inactivity is linked to many leading causes of death in the United States.

In 2017, Arizona's leading cause of death was heart disease, with other top causes including stroke (#6), diabetes (#7), suicide (#8), and hypertension (#10).¹⁰⁵ The death rate from hypertension in Arizona is the fourth highest in the nation, and the state is nationally ranked 16th highest for diabetes-related deaths.¹⁰⁶ The United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) states physical activity helps

¹⁰⁵ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (13 Apr 2018). *Stats for the State of Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/states/arizona/arizona.htm>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

control the body's sugar levels and lowers the risk of heart disease and nerve damage.¹⁰⁷ It also contributes to preventing hypertension.¹⁰⁸

Vibrantly designed communities not only increase physical activity but also increase social interaction and improve overall community cohesion, which serve as mitigating factors for feelings of isolation. Social isolation, or a lack of contact with individuals and society, is statistically significant and potentially twice as harmful to physical and mental health as obesity.¹⁰⁹

When assessing community walkability, Arizona scores poorly, with the top 46 largest cities in the state scoring an average of a 23 out of 100 Walk Score.¹¹⁰ Arizona's car-dependent suburbs and rural areas do not offer many options for people to choose to walk or bike to their regular destinations, including work, school, and other daily errands. This means that Arizonans tend to be heavily dependent on auto or public transit options to get around. Studies show that in addition to the well-documented negative health impacts of auto emissions, individuals with obesity who commute by car have a 32% higher risk of death from any cause compared to those of a normal weight who commute by cycling and walking.¹¹¹

A 2018 Benchmarking Report by the League of American Bicyclists¹¹² shows that Phoenix experienced an almost 26% increase in the percent of obese people and has one of the lowest percentages of people who walk or bike to work. The report also found that from 2010–2016, in Phoenix, there was a more than 47% increase in adults with diabetes and an almost 11% increase in adults with high blood pressure from 2011–2015.¹¹³ Both of these chronic conditions can often be effectively managed with diet and physical activity, which are two outcomes of a built environment focused on health. For Arizonans who rely on alternate transportation, either by choice or because they have no other options, the outlook is not much better. The current reality of poorly designed, car-centric streets may put people who walk or bike in unsafe situations. For example, Phoenix, a city of 1.6 million people, had only 15 fewer pedestrian deaths in 2017 than New York City (population 8.5 million).¹¹⁴

Housing Options

A 2016 Regional Plan Association report found that 56% of Millennials and 46% of Baby Boomers prefer to live in more walkable, mixed-use neighborhoods.¹¹⁵ This demand is further evidenced by sharp increases in rents in

107 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (24 Apr 2018). *Get Active!* Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/diabetes/managing/active.html>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

108 Diaz, K.M., & Shimbo, D. (2013). *Physical Activity and the Prevention of Hypertension*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3901083/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

109 American Psychological Association. (May 2019). *Social Isolation: It Could Kill You*. Retrieved from: <https://www.apa.org/monitor/2019/05/ce-corner-isolation>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

110 Walk Score. (2020). *Cities in Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://www.walkscore.com/AZ/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

111 European Association for the Study of Obesity. (27 Apr 2019). *Being a Car Commuter with Obesity Linked to a 32% Increased Early Death Risk*. Retrieved from: <https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2019/04/190427201946.htm>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

112 The League of American Bicyclists. (3 Sep 2019). *Bicycling & Walking in the United States*. https://bikeleague.org/sites/default/files/Benchmarking_Report-Sept_03_2019_Web.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

113 Ibid.

114 Schmitt, A. (24 Apr 2019). *Phoenix Will Continue to Let People to Die in the Streets*. Retrieved from: <https://usa.streetsblog.org/2019/04/24/phoenix-council-votes-to-continue-letting-people-to-die-in-the-streets/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

115 Regional Plan Association. (Feb 2016). *The Unintended Consequences of Housing Finance*. Retrieved from: https://static1.squarespace.com/static/53dd6676e4b0fedfbc26ea91/t/56c4e43cab48de9641559379/1455744066769/rpa-the-unintended-consequences-of-housing-finance__final.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

recent years. Providing mixed-use, transit-accessible neighborhoods that reduce auto-reliance is a growing trend in suburban developments, as these types of developments free up income that would be used for housing and maintaining a second car.¹¹⁶ Reduced transportation costs enable people to spend more on housing and healthcare, which may have positive health impacts. The National Low-Income Housing Coalition found that in 2017, 78% of extremely low-income, 38% of very low-income, and 7% of low-income Arizona households spent more than half their income on housing.¹¹⁷ The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation states, “high housing-related costs place a particular economic burden on low-income families, forcing trade-offs between food, heating, and other basic needs.”¹¹⁸ One study found that low-income people with difficulty paying rent, mortgage, or utility bills were less likely to have a traditional source of medical care and more likely to postpone treatment and use the emergency room for treatment.¹¹⁹ Another study showed that children in areas with higher rates of unaffordable housing tended to have worse health, more behavioral problems, and lower school performance.¹²⁰

Access to Food

The built environment of a community either supports or impedes people’s ability to access quality, affordable food. In many areas across Arizona, individuals must travel more than ten miles to access healthy food. In urban areas, there are many places where people must travel over a mile to access healthy food. Research shows that, while not the only factor, these “low food access” conditions (sometimes called “food deserts”) are associated with high rates of obesity and chronic diet-related diseases.¹²¹ Food deserts can be a result of a combination of income and land use policies, which discourage walkable, mixed-use communities. Typically, a food desert is defined as: (1) low-income, urban-area census tracts where at least one third of the population is more than one mile, and (2) low-income rural-area census tracts where at least one third of the population is 20 miles, from a supermarket that offers fresh food. A study found that one in ten Arizonans have limited access to healthy foods, and Maricopa County, Arizona’s most urbanized area, contains 55 food deserts.¹²²

Building Communities that Enhance Vibrancy

The built environment results from intersections of many economic, regulatory, social, and cultural factors. With few exceptions, Arizona’s current land use is guided by designs that reduce traffic congestion, minimize mixed-use (residential and retail, for example), and keep population densities consistently low outside the

116 Florida, R. (8 Jun 2014). *The Financial Benefits of Living in Transit-Friendly, Walkable Areas*. Retrieved from: <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2011/06/the-financial-benefits-of-living-in-transit-friendly-walkable-areas/240075/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

117 National Low-Income Housing Coalition. (2018). *Arizona State Data Overview*. Retrieved from: <https://nlihc.org/housing-needs-by-state/arizona>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

118 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (1 May 2011). *How Does Housing Affect Health?* Retrieved from: <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2011/05/housing-and-health.html>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

119 Harkness, J. & Newman, S. (31 Mar 2010). *Housing Affordability and children’s well-being: Evidence from the national survey of America’s families*. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/10511482.2005.9521542>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

120 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (1 May 2011). *How Does Housing Affect Health?* Retrieved from: <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2011/05/housing-and-health.html>. Access date: 2/29/2020.

121 National Research Council. (2009). *The Public Health Effects of Food Deserts: Workshop Summary*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK208018/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

122 Blue Cross Blue Shield of Arizona. (30 Oct 2017). *Nourishing Arizona Week Brings Focus to Food Deserts*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azcentral.com/story/sponsor-story/livingwell/2017/10/30/nourishing-arizona-week-brings-focus/107181010/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

light rail line and certain areas within the metropolitan area. Change in the built environment begins with a shift in evaluating new development opportunities. Consider how new development approaches can positively contribute to a healthier community, such as providing at least two viable transportation options that offer access to parks and open spaces, services, and employment. A 2017 study found that healthy design components, including sidewalks, trees, parks, and bike lanes in neighborhoods, resulted in more physical activity within that neighborhood.¹²³ In areas that are already developed, opportunities can be found through activation of vacant lots, reimagining private open space that may currently be used as concrete passive plazas, and integrating art and other amenities into sidewalks and public spaces that could encourage walking and physical activity.

Many regulations affect the built environment, however, there are some large-scale policy responses that may promote healthier design and increase walkability. One approach to change might be to examine regulations that direct the design of the built environment, such as zoning regulations, street standards, park/recreation plans, and general plans.

Zoning regulations direct the types of uses and their placement on a site. Setbacks, curb cuts, height regulations, front, back, and side yards, as well as parking, are all regulated on a site-by-site basis by zoning. Traditional (Euclidian) zoning is based on separating uses. Other types of zoning, including Form Based, Performance, and Flexible zoning can allow for development on a single site and within blocks that mix use, reduce the need for vehicle storage (parking and driveways), and provide more open space. Phoenix's adoption of the Walkable Urban Code (WUCODE) along the light rail line and Tempe's downtown code reflect many of the principles of these alternative zoning approaches. While a bus system is a viable means of public transportation, a light rail system is an investment that has long-term return on investment (ROI) and encourages investors to build property near the area. Tempe also recently approved "Culdesac," a new development that is sited next to the light rail and will have no parking for residents. Culdesac is under construction now and is located in an area that provides a range of other mobility options including light rail, sidewalks, scooters, and bike lanes. The developers of the project are also considering sites in Dallas, Denver, and Raleigh-Durham, North Carolina.¹²⁴ Additionally, to help support a more transit-friendly, diverse, and mixed set of land uses within the urbanizing city, Flagstaff adopted a Form Based code for downtown in 2016. The code stresses the built form and how it provides for a better built environment above the particular use in any given building.¹²⁵

General Plans are another land use tool that can encourage vibrant communities. In Arizona, state law requires cities, towns, and counties to update or re-adopt their General Plans every ten years.¹²⁶ Each updated or readopted plan must include a land use map that identifies densities and intensities of land uses throughout

123 McCormack, GR. (Jun 2017). *Neighbourhood Built Environment Characteristics Associated with Different Types of Physical Activity in Canadian Adults*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28614045>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

124 Richardson, B. (25 Nov 2019). *Developer Breaks Ground on a Neighborhood in Tempe, Arizona, for People- And No Cars*. Retrieved from: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/brendarichardson/2019/11/25/developer-breaks-ground-on-a-neighborhood-in-tempe-arizona-for-people-not-cars/#2f8e24637f0d>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

125 Flagstaff City Council. (Updated Feb 2016). Retrieved from: http://cityweb.flagstaffaz.gov/docs/2016/CCMTG/20160216_432/2061_CC_Transect_FBC_Tutorial2016Feb16PDF.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

126 Arizona State Legislature. (n.d.). *Adoption and Amendment of General Plan; Expiration and Readoption*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azleg.gov/ars/9/00461-06.htm>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

the jurisdiction as well as a transportation map. State law requires that zoning conform to the General Plan Land Use Map. This provides an opportunity for communities to encourage land uses that result in mixed use that supports a variety of housing types, broad access, and accessible parks. Depending on the size and growth rate of the community, General Plans must also address other areas that affect community health including parks and recreation, the environment, and housing. This provides an opportunity for communities to consider new policies that can encourage the design of vibrant communities. Over the past five years, many Arizona communities have considered health, vibrancy, and valuing community character in their General Plans. Some communities dedicate a chapter of the plan to health, while others have integrated well-being considerations throughout their General Plan.

Providing a range of mobility options may encourage physical activity and enhance access to places that can support vibrant lifestyles including parks, health care facilities, and healthy food stores. This may also enhance community members' ability to participate in social activities like community events. Enhancing mobility could be addressed in multiple ways, some of which are outlined below:

Complete Streets and Vision Zero are two solutions that are outlined in detail in the chapter, "The Role of Transportation and Safe Streets in Creating Vibrant Communities".

Active Transportation is any self-propelled, human-powered mode of transportation, such as: walking, skateboarding, or bicycling. Many Americans view walking and bicycling within their communities as unsafe due to heavy traffic and a scarcity of sidewalks, crosswalks, and bicycle facilities. Improving these elements has internationally been shown to encourage active transportation, such as children biking to school or employees walking to work. Safe and convenient opportunities for physically active travel also expand access to transportation networks for people without cars while spurring investment in infrastructure that improves the on-road experience of active modes to all people.

The Last Mile connection encourages the location of mixed-use developments, free/rental bicycles and scooters, and enhanced pedestrian connections to reduce the difficulty of using transit for access and egress to destinations. A 2018 study of New Delhi commuters found that the overall walkability environment offered to transit commuters is crucial in the share of walk trips for the last mile commute and the distance commuters are willing to walk.¹²⁷

Additional implementation strategies include:

- implementing Safe Routes to School and Safe Routes to Parks programs that enable children to walk and bike to school or local parks safely
- connecting shared-use trail networks
- separating motor-vehicle traffic from non-motorized traffic with physical barriers, such as the construction of bicycle boulevards
- prioritizing infrastructure improvements near transit stops and public transportation stations

¹²⁷ Urban Studies and Public Administration. (2018). *Effect of Walkability on Users Choice of "Walking" the Last Mile to Transit Stations: A Case of Delhi Metro*. Retrieved from: <http://www.scholink.org/ojs/index.php/uspa/article/view/1257/1444>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

- providing safe and convenient bicycle and pedestrian connections to public parks and recreation areas
- promoting safe roadway crossings through use of small block sizes, pedestrian refuge islands, and crosswalks
- providing streetscape amenities such as benches, landscaping, lighting, and public art
- encouraging wayfinding with signs, maps, and landscape cues to direct people who walk or bike to the most direct route
- building bicycle parking at workplaces and transit stops
- designing and building street-level activity along pedestrian and bicycle routes
- educating people who walk or bike on state and local laws, as well as on safe practices¹²⁸

"Think of an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old that you love; build the city for them. "If an 8-year-old cannot safely do something as simple as get an ice cream down the street, by themselves, then our city is failing them. If an 80-year-old has to be on the defense to get across the street safely, our city is failing them. If we are keeping them in mind as we develop and build our city, they, and everyone else (of all ages) will benefit."

- Gil Penalosa

About the Author

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Leslie Dornfeld, FAICP, CSBA is the owner of PLAN*et, a community planning, policy, and design firm. Her career highlights include national, regional and local award-winning projects including the American Planning Association National Planning Achievement Award for the Greening Lower Grand Avenue Plan, and Arizona Planning Association award-winning Queen Creek General Plan, Casa Grande General Plan, Goodyear City Center Specific Master Plan; Phoenix Indian School Plan; Desert Spaces Plan, and Pedestrian Area Policies and Design Guidelines for the Maricopa Association of Governments. Leslie is an active member of the Urban Land Institute Technical Assistance Panel. She also guest lectures at the University of Pennsylvania School of City and Regional Planning.

¹²⁸ Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2011). Transportation Health Impact Assessment Toolkit. Retrieved from: https://www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces/transportation/promote_strategy.htm. Access date: 5/29/2020.

The Intersection of Housing and Vibrant Communities

C.J. Eisenbarth Hager, Vitalyst Health Foundation

This topic intersects and explores these elements of a vibrant community:



AFFORDABLE QUALITY HOUSING



COMMUNITY SAFETY



SOCIAL JUSTICE

SOCIAL/CULTURAL

Introduction

The health impacts of housing are broad and complex. Housing can have immediate impacts on health, lingering for generations. The “better housed” one is, the more benefits for health. Moreover, the forces are bi-directional; not only does housing impact health, but health also impacts what housing is available.

How Housing Impacts Health

One framework of connecting health and housing considers the inter-relationship of three dimensions: quality, affordability, and neighborhood context.

Quality

Shelter is one of the most basic of human needs, providing safety, security, and stability. The physical condition of the home influences the extent to which basic human needs are met. Those experiencing homelessness are exposed to a host of threats to health and well-being, from increased exposure to violence, to lack of a safe place to store medicine or recover from a medical procedure.¹²⁹ Toxic environmental materials, such as lead paint and asbestos, poor maintenance, and aging housing stock can result in a dangerous living environment. Unintentional injury, communicable and chronic disease, mental illness, and poor childhood development can result from, and be compounded by, poor housing conditions.¹³⁰

Illustrative Data Points

- 32.82% of buildings in Arizona were built before 1979, thereby increasing the risk of lead paint exposure.¹³¹
- 58 out of every 1,000 Native American households lack plumbing in comparison to 3 out of every 1,000 White households.¹³²

129 Medline Plus. (27 Apr 2020). *Homeless Health Concerns*. Retrieved from: <https://medlineplus.gov/homelesshealthconcerns.html>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

130 Krieger, J. & Higgins, D. L. (May 2002). *Housing and Health: Time Again for Public Health Action*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1447157/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

131 U.S. Census. (2018). *ACS 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/data.html>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

132 U.S. Water Alliance. (2019). *Closing the Water Access Gap in the United States: A National Action Plan*. Retrieved from: http://closethewatergap.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Dig-Deep_Closing-the-Water-Access-Gap-in-the-United-States_DIGITAL_compressed.pdf. Access date: 5/31/2020.

Affordability

Affordability is a straightforward calculation, defined as paying no more than 30% of a family's income on total housing costs.¹³³ This formula reflects a more complicated connection, though: the relationship between prevailing housing costs and prevailing incomes.

Financial burden associated with housing can result in tough trade-offs, such as foregoing or delaying healthy food, preventative healthcare, or essential medications to manage chronic conditions. This trade-off is felt most frequently by lower-income renters and those experiencing homelessness. Extreme financial burden can strain social and mental health as well. Non-payment of rent is the most common cause of eviction; non-payment of rent is also closely tied to a family's income.¹³⁴ Not surprisingly, prevailing rents that are out of proportion with prevailing wages create a complex mix that can lead to evictions and ultimately homelessness.¹³⁵ Evictions and homelessness can be devastating to health with both immediate and lasting impacts.

Additionally, affordability impacts the other housing dimensions of quality and neighborhood context. A family may sacrifice housing quality for the sake of its affordability or pay higher rent to live in a neighborhood with good schools.

Illustrative Data Points

- 45% of Arizona renters and 22% of homeowners pay more than 30% of their income toward housing.¹³⁶
- In some census tracts, (such as tract 04013116733 west of Phoenix) nearly all renter households pay more than 30% of their income on housing costs.¹³⁷
- In Arizona, to afford a modest one-bedroom rental, one would have to work 57 hours a week when making minimum wage.¹³⁸

Neighborhood Context

Where we live, or the neighborhood or community context, also impacts health. Neighborhood context describes how housing interacts with the other elements highlighted in *Creating Vibrant Communities*.

Residing in a home in close proximity to community assets, such as schools, open or green spaces, and healthy food retailers, encourages interaction with these health-promoting resources.¹³⁹ Neighborhood context and social dynamics can either reinforce health or undermine it.

133 Schwartz, M. & Wilson, E. (n.d.). *Who Can Afford to Live in a Home?: A Look at Data from the 2006 American Community Survey*. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/housing/census/publications/who-can-afford.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

134 Badger, E. (12 Dec 2019). *Many Renters Who Face Eviction Owe Less Than \$600*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/12/upshot/eviction-prevention-solutions-government.html>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

135 Desmond, M. (Mar 2015). *Unaffordable America: Poverty, Housing, and Eviction*. Retrieved from: <https://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/fastfocus/pdfs/FF22-2015.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

136 U.S. Census. (2018). *ACS 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/data.html>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

137 Ibid.

138 National Low-Income Housing Coalition. (2019). *Out of Reach 2019: Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/arizona#>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

139 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation: Commission to Build a Healthier America. (Sep 2008). *Where We Live Matters for Our Health: Neighborhoods and Health*. Retrieved from: <http://www.commissiononhealth.org/PDF/888f4a18-eb90-45be-a2f8-159e84a55a4c/Issue%20Brief%203%20Sept%2008%20-%20Neighborhoods%20and%20Health.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

Communities Most At-Risk

People of Color

America has a tragic history of housing policies purposely designed to harm or exclude people of color.¹⁴⁰ Exclusionary zoning regulations, loan risk assessment guidelines, and urban renewal programs are just a few examples of how people of color have been harmed by government housing policies. Although many of these practices are now illegal, the health impacts continue to be felt decades later. For example, because people of color faced additional barriers or outright exclusion from favorable mortgage products, homeownership rates are lower for most people of color.¹⁴¹ Homeownership is a common strategy for families to accumulate wealth. In turn, low homeownership rates impact wealth accumulation for families of color.

Some researchers cite housing segregation as a leading cause of racial health disparities.¹⁴² Segregation impacts housing quality, affordability, neighborhood context, and ultimately access to community assets that support health like education and jobs.

Illustrative Data Points

- While the White homeownership rate in Arizona is 66.9%, the rate for American Indians is 53.41%, 52.46% for Hispanics, and 34.02% for Blacks.¹⁴³
- Similarly, the percentage of Whites in Arizona experiencing renter cost burden is 43.5%, for Hispanics this increases to 48.8%, and for Blacks this increases even more to 52.2%.¹⁴⁴

Low-Income

As a family's income falls, so do housing choices that fit its budget. For every 100 Arizona families who earn the median income, 104 rental homes would fit their budget.¹⁴⁵ In contrast, for 100 extremely low-income families, the number drops to just 26 rental homes.¹⁴⁶ Demand outstrips supply. Families with fixed incomes likewise face challenges. For example, Arizona's Supplemental Security Income monthly payment is \$771, which would allow for just \$231 per month for housing costs; however, market rate for a studio apartment is \$702.¹⁴⁷ Homeownership is seen as a strategy to stabilize housing costs, which is especially important to families with limited incomes. Yet, the most common barriers to ownership trace back to income constraints, including saving for a down payment, credit scores, and home prices.¹⁴⁸

140 Maxwell, C. & Solomon, D. (7 Aug 2019). *Systemic Inequality: Displacement, Exclusion, and Segregation*. Retrieved from: <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/race/reports/2019/08/07/472617/systemic-inequality-displacement-exclusion-segregation/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

141 Vox. (5 Dec 2019). *The Sordid History of Housing Discrimination in America*. Retrieved from: <https://aas.princeton.edu/news/sordid-history-housing-discrimination-america>. Access date: 8/13/2020.

142 Williams, D. R. & Collins, C. (Sep 2001). *Racial Residential Segregation: A Fundamental Cause of Racial Disparities in Health*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1497358/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

143 U.S. Census. (2018). *ACS 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/data.html>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

144 Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. (2016). *Renter Cost Burdens by Race and Ethnicity (1B)*. Retrieved from: https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/ARH_2017_cost_burdens_by_race. Access date: 5/29/2020.

145 National Low-Income Housing Coalition. (2018). *Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://reports.nlihc.org/gap/2018/az>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

146 Ibid.

147 National Low-Income Housing Coalition. (2019). *Out of Reach 2019: Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://reports.nlihc.org/oor/arizona>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

148 Goodman, L., McCargo, A., Golding, E., Bai, B., & Stochak, S. (Sep 2018). *Barriers to Accessing Homeownership: Down Payment, Credit, and Affordability*. Retrieved from: https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/99028/barriers_to_accessing_homeownership_2018_4.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

Illustrative Data Points

- 87% of the extremely low-income families (\$21,650 per year for a family of 4)¹⁴⁹ in Arizona pay more than 30% of their income toward housing costs; 73% pay more than half of their income.¹⁵⁰
- During 2016, the average White family had about 10 times the wealth of the average Black family (\$163,000 vs \$16,000);¹⁵¹ Similarly, the typical White family held over 7 times the wealth of the average Hispanic family (\$163,000 vs \$22,000).¹⁵²

Other Historically Marginalized People

In addition to people of color and those with low incomes, other groups face bias, exclusion, and systemic barriers in meeting their basic housing needs. These groups include:¹⁵³

- rural communities
- tribal communities
- people with disabilities
- people who were formerly incarcerated
- people who are LGBTQ
- families with children
- people who receive government assistance
- foreign-born or immigrant

Emerging Issues and Trends

- Federal funding for housing affordability has been falling;¹⁵⁴ increasingly, states and cities are asked to take a more prominent role.¹⁵⁵
- Currently, the most impactful and productive public investment in housing affordability is a federal tax credit.¹⁵⁶ In Arizona, the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) has produced about 16,000 housing units since 1987¹⁵⁷ and relies heavily on private sector investors and developers. While an important asset to the state, the affordability parameters are limited. Even when receiving LIHTC assistance, some families may still be cost-burdened or need additional public assistance to achieve affordability, like Housing Choice Vouchers (formerly known as Section 8).¹⁵⁸

149 HUD User. (2020). *FY2020 Income Limits Summary*. Retrieved from: https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/il/il2020/2020summary.odn?inputname=STTLT*0499999999%2BArizona&selection_type=county&stname=Arizona&statefp=04.0&year=2020. Access date: 5/29/2020.

150 National Low-Income Housing Coalition. (2018). *Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://reports.nlihc.org/gap/2018/az>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

151 Asset Funders Network. (2016). *The Wealth Gap*. Retrieved from: <https://assetfunders.org/the-issue/the-wealth-gap/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

152 Ibid.

153 Urban Institute. (n.d.). *Exposing Housing Discrimination*. Retrieved from: <https://www.urban.org/features/exposing-housing-discrimination>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

154 Sard, B. & Rice, D. (25 Feb 2009). *Decade of Neglect Has Weakened Federal Low-Income Housing Programs*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/decade-of-neglect-has-weakened-federal-low-income-housing-programs>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

155 National Low-Income Housing Coalition. (2019). *State and City Funded Rental Housing Programs*. Retrieved from: <https://nlihc.org/state-and-city-funded-rental-housing-programs>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

156 National Housing Law Project. (2017). *Low-Income Housing Tax Credits*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nhlp.org/resource-center/low-income-housing-tax-credits/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

157 Arizona Capitol Times. (15 Jan 2020). *State LIHTC Can Help Meet Rental Housing Market's Spiking Demand*. Retrieved from: <https://azcapitoltimes.com/news/2020/01/15/state-lihtc-can-help-meet-rental-housing-markets-spiking-demand/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

158 Arizona Department of Housing. (n.d.). *Arizona Public Housing Authority – Section 8*. Retrieved from: <https://housing.az.gov/general-public/arizona-public-housing-authority-section-8-0>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

- Rental units continue to be built but do little to address the affordability crisis. Average apartment rents in the Metro Phoenix area climbed 8% during 2018, which is almost triple the U.S. rate.¹⁵⁹ Luxury apartments now make up about 87% of new rental construction in metro Phoenix.¹⁶⁰
- Hospitals and healthcare insurers see the impact of poor housing conditions on their patients, as well as their balance sheets. As a result, the healthcare sector is experimenting with how it can support good quality, affordable housing.¹⁶¹ One closely watched pilot is in Phoenix, where UnitedHealthcare provided financing for Chicanos Por La Causa to rehabilitate and operate rental housing.¹⁶²
- Homelessness is up throughout the state. After declining for a number of years, the number of people experiencing homelessness started to increase in 2017.¹⁶³ Maricopa County's rates have been increasing since 2015, with the sharpest increase among those who are unsheltered and literally living on the streets.¹⁶⁴

What barriers need to be addressed?

- **Arizona provides little state funding to support housing affordability and supply.** Historically, the Arizona Housing Trust Fund has been the key state-funded program that supports housing affordability. During the Great Recession, the Legislature depleted the Fund and capped its annual allocation at \$2.5 million, which is down from a high of \$40 million.¹⁶⁵ Since then, the Legislature made a one-time additional investment of \$15 million in 2019 for projects that were largely preselected.¹⁶⁶
- **Not In My Backyard (NIMBY) sentiments** have always slowed development processes, but have picked up new acolytes, including renters and those living in urban centers.¹⁶⁷ Additionally, fervent NIMBY sentiments are often directed at the residents of the housing built for these populations: families with low incomes, those experiencing homelessness, and people who were formerly incarcerated.

What are possible community and policy responses?

- **Establish a state housing tax credit.** Seventeen states have developed a state housing tax credit to leverage the impact of the national Low-Income Housing Tax Credit.¹⁶⁸

159 Reagor, C. (6 Sep 2019). *For \$25, Arizona Home Buyers Can Help Solve the State's Affordable Housing Problem*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azcentral.com/restricted/?return=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.azcentral.com%2Fstory%2Fmoney%2Freal-estate%2Fcatherine-reagor%2F2019%2F09%2F06%2F25-arizona-home-buyers-can-help-solve-states-affordable-housing-problem%2F2211944001%2F>. Access date: 8/12/2020.

160 Reagor, C. (7 Oct 2018). *Almost 90% of New Metro Phoenix Apartments Requiring Hefty Rents*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azcentral.com/story/money/real-estate/catherine-reagor/2018/10/07/most-new-metro-phoenix-apartments-luxury-requiring-heft-rents-survey-rentcafe-apartmentlist/1501030002/>. Access date: 8/12/2020.

161 Bailey, P. (17 Jan 2020). *Housing and Health Partners Can Work Together to Close the Housing Affordability Gap*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cbpp.org/research/housing/housing-and-health-partners-can-work-together-to-close-the-housing-affordability>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

162 Simon, H. (21 Aug 2019). *A Health Insurer and a CDC Collaborate to Move the Needle on Housing and Health*. Retrieved from: <https://shelterforce.org/2019/08/21/a-health-insurer-and-a-cdc-collaborate-to-move-the-needle-on-housing-and-health/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

163 National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2020). *Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/homelessness-statistics/state-of-homelessness-report/arizona/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

164 Maricopa Association of Governments. (2020). *Point-In-Time Homeless Count*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azmag.gov/Programs/Homelessness/Point-In-Time-Homeless-Count>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

165 National Low-Income Housing Coalition. (15 Jul 2019). *From the Field: State Commits \$15 Million to the Arizona Housing Trust Fund*. Retrieved from: <https://nlihc.org/resource/field-state-commits-15-million-arizona-housing-trust-fund>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

166 Ibid.

167 NYU Furman Center. (30 Aug 2018). *The Stoop*. Retrieved from: <https://furmancenter.org/thestoop/entry/city-nimbys>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

168 NOVOGRADAC. (2020). *Affordable Housing Resource Center: State LIHTC Program Descriptions*. Retrieved from: <https://www.novoco.com/resource-centers/affordable-housing-tax-credits/application-allocation/state-lihtc-program-descriptions>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

- **Encourage private and philanthropic efforts.** Recognizing the potentially devastating impacts of a poorly developed housing ecosystem, private and philanthropic partners are pitching in. For example, the recently established Arizona Housing Fund uses a unique source of funding to support the increase in housing affordability and supply – voluntary donations triggered by real estate transactions, such as when buying, selling, or renting a house.¹⁶⁹
- **Address a key driver of housing development costs: land.** Since 2012, increasing land prices have led to higher development costs; by one estimate, land costs increased by over 80% in Maricopa County and over 43% in Coconino County.¹⁷⁰ Community land trusts maintain permanent ownership, stewardship, and control over land, while offering affordable homeownership options for housing structures situated on the land.¹⁷¹ Arizona has several successful examples, including City of Flagstaff’s program,¹⁷² Pima County Community Land Trust¹⁷³ and Newtown Community Development Corporation.¹⁷⁴
- **Preserve what we have.** Affordable housing is disappearing at a notable rate. One study estimates that over a six year period in the 2010s, Flagstaff lost almost 43% of units renting for less than \$800 per month, while the Phoenix-Mesa-Scottsdale area lost over 36%, and Tucson lost over 21% of similarly priced rentals.¹⁷⁵ Because of the costly and time-consuming nature of new construction, maintaining the existing affordable housing supply and quality – both for rent and for purchase – is a strategy embraced by many communities.¹⁷⁶ Preservation can be supported in a number of ways, including grants, financing options and policies.

“Eviction is a cause, not just a condition, of poverty.”

– Matthew Desmond, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City*

About the Author

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C.J. Eisenbarth Hager is Director of Healthy Communities for Vitalyst Health Foundation. She oversees Vitalyst’s built health community strategies, including food systems, transportation options, green space access and affordable housing. She works with partners to bring health into the public policy decision-making process through tools like health impact assessments and health in all policies. C.J. received her undergraduate degree in Economics from Marquette University and a graduate degree in community planning from Kansas State University.

169 Arizona Housing Fund. (2019). AZ is at a Tipping Point. Retrieved from: <https://arizonahousingfund.org/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

170 Hermann, A. (22 Jul 2019). Increasing Land Prices Make Housing Less Affordable. Retrieved from: <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/blog/increasing-land-prices-make-housing-less-affordable/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

171 Community-Wealth.org. (n.d.). Overview: Community Land Trusts (CLTs). Retrieved from: <https://community-wealth.org/strategies/panel/clts/index.html>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

172 The City of Flagstaff Arizona. (n.d.). Land Trust Program. Retrieved from: <https://www.flagstaff.az.gov/928/Community-Land-Trust-Program>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

173 Pima County Community Land Trust. (n.d.). Community Land Trust. Retrieved from: <https://www.pcclt.org/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

174 Newtown CDC. (2020). What We Do: Community Land Trust. Retrieved from: <https://newtowncdc.org/what-we-do/community-land-trust.html>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

175 Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University. (2020). The Low-Rent Stock in Most Metros Has Declined Substantially Since 2011. Retrieved from: <https://www.jchs.harvard.edu/son-2019-low-rent-units-map>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

176 Treskon, M., McTarnaghan, S. (25 Aug 2016). Preserving Affordable Housing: What Works. Retrieved from: <https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/preserving-affordable-housing-what-works>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

The Role of Transportation and Safe Streets in Creating Vibrant Communities

Emily Yetman, Living Streets Alliance

This topic intersects and explores these elements of a vibrant community:



Introduction

There are many opportunities to improve vibrancy by re-examining and re-imagining how our communities interact with streets and transportation. This is because Arizona was largely developed in the era of, and to accommodate the movement of, the personal automobile. During much of the past century, the economy boomed, and cities grew and spread out across open space. Now, data points to unintended consequences of rapid growth. Traffic deaths and injuries are at an all-time high, chronic diseases linked to inactivity are becoming more common, and poor air quality is damaging people's physical health, especially among the youngest and oldest community members. Arizona cities and towns alike struggle to keep up with the financial burden of maintaining current transportation infrastructure, and any sort of upgrade competes with other essential programs and services, such as emergency response systems, parks and libraries, and job training. More recently, small towns are losing their brightest youth to big cities with more opportunities to live car-free or car-lite, while cities struggle to manage congestion and the sheer volume of people needing to move around on a daily basis.

Re-imagining how transportation can improve community vibrancy begins with two key points:

1. In most municipalities, streets are the largest form of public space, greater than parks and open space combined.
2. While many think of streets as just spaces to move through, they are packed with potential to become environments that foster community engagement with art, connection, socialization, and safety for families and multiple generations.

Traditionally, transportation in Arizona has been straightforward: build roads to move cars to get to places. Yet communities are learning that improved social, health, and economic outcomes are seen over time in communities that have gone beyond using streets for a singular purpose. Now is an important opportunity for Arizonans to consider what kind of future they want and to consider acting based on this data to forge a new path forward. While transportation is crucial for allowing Arizonans to get to and from work, healthcare appointments, grocery stores, and many other important aspects of life, it may also be beneficial for Arizonans to make a fundamental shift in the way communities view, utilize, and manage one of their greatest assets: their streets.

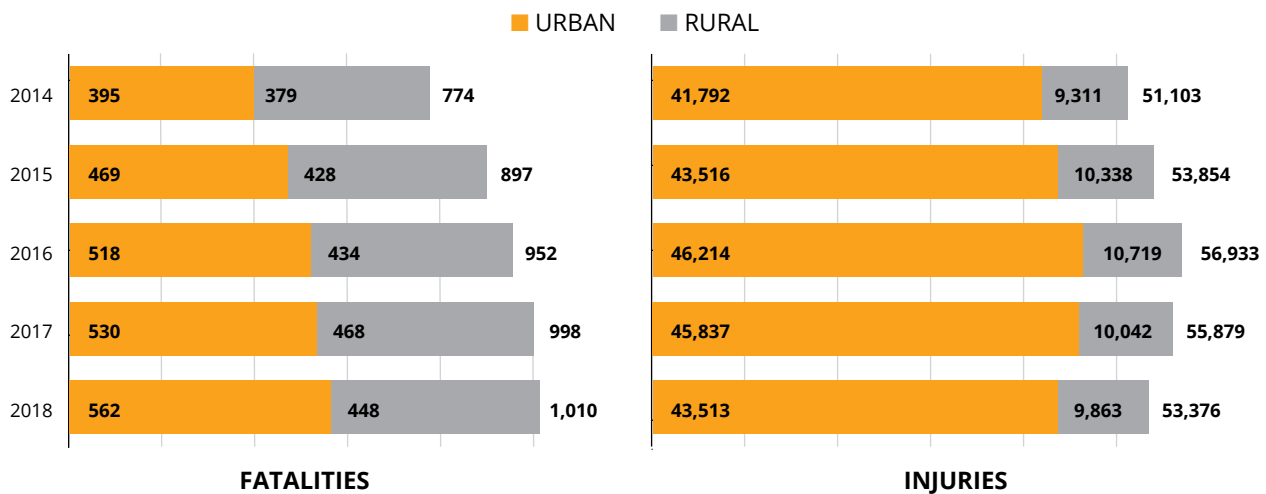
Unsafe Streets Limit Vibrancy

Currently, many areas and corridors within Arizona are unsafe for both people who drive and walk. Data increasingly reveals that streets are built in such a way that makes it more likely for individuals to do something that will result in a crash. Over a thousand people are killed in traffic crashes in Arizona every year, and tens-of-thousands more are injured. It is the leading cause of death from injury for people between the ages of 5 and 24 in Arizona.¹⁷⁷ These statistics are staggering, and even though most people have either been in a crash themselves, or are closely connected to someone who has, the deeper toll that traffic violence takes on communities largely goes unnoticed. When added up, external costs like missed productivity at work, emergency response, medical bills, legal costs, damage to personal property, and life impact create a major cost for individuals, families, and municipalities. For a financially stable family, it can be a huge inconvenience or setback. For a family struggling to get by, it can be devastating, creating a debt cycle that becomes extremely difficult to escape, which impacts all aspects of family well-being.

Outside of crash injuries, other negative physical health outcomes can result from the way streets are built. Inactive lifestyles can result in several chronic diseases, including obesity. Poor air quality also contributes to adverse health outcomes, including asthma and other respiratory disease development in younger children.

While crash and traffic injuries and fatalities are high in metro and urban areas, rural areas make up a significant amount of injuries and fatalities, as seen in the figure below. As shown, it is estimated that in 2018, rural traffic fatalities made up 44.3% of all Arizona traffic fatalities.

ARIZONA TRAFFIC FATALITIES AND INJURIES¹⁷⁸



Source: Arizona Department of Health Services.

¹⁷⁷ Arizona Department of Health Services. (n.d.). *Arizona Injury Prevention Plan, 2012-2016*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/prevention/womens-childrens-health/reports-fact-sheets/injury-prevention/az-injury-surveillance-prevention-plan-2012-2016.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

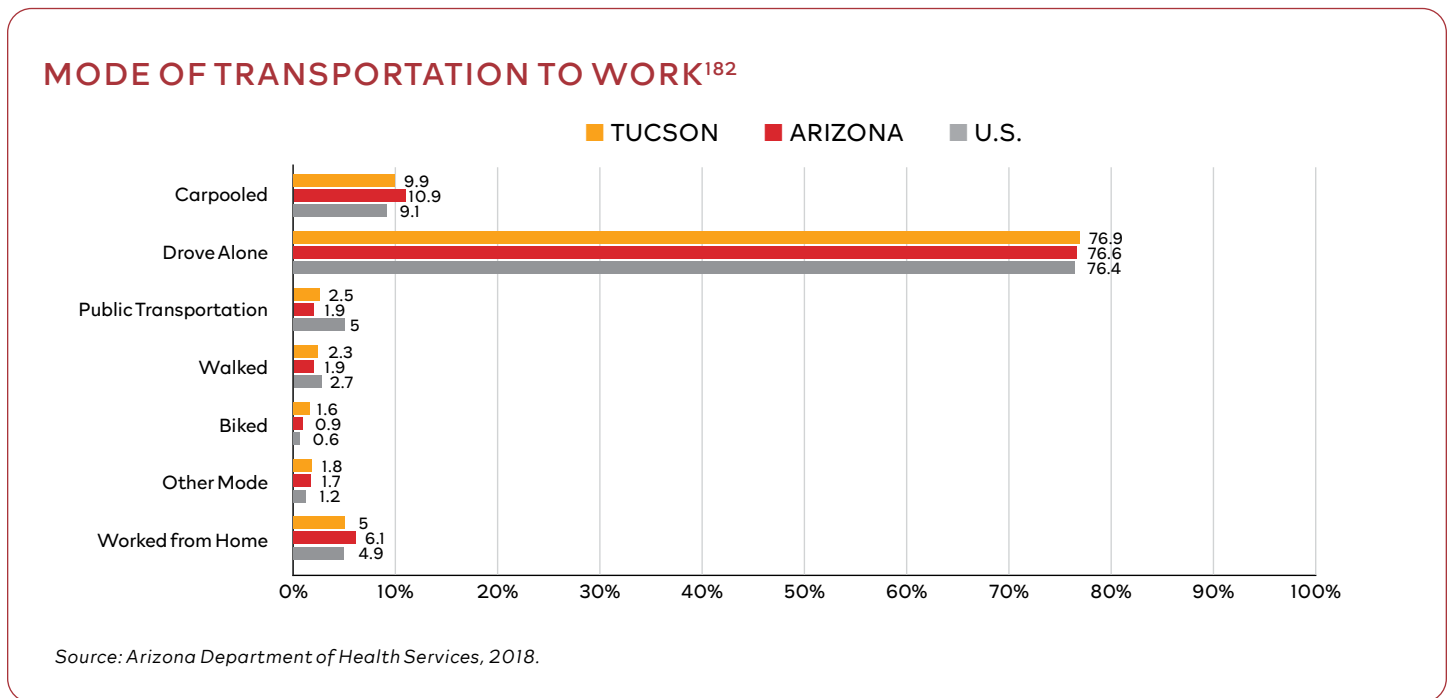
¹⁷⁸ The Arizona Department of Transportation. (18 Jun 2019). *2018 Motor Vehicle Crash Facts for the State of Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://azdot.gov/sites/default/files/news/2018-Crash-Facts.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

Additionally, the current built environment around transportation serves as a well-being and vibrancy barrier in communities. Freeways and major thoroughfares have divided many communities over the years, resulting in social fragmentation, isolation, and loneliness. This lack of social interaction is occurring in so many communities that in a survey conducted by Cigna, in 2019, 61% of Americans reported being lonely.¹⁷⁹

Furthermore, Arizona is ranked as the 9th most dangerous state for people walking in the U.S.¹⁸⁰ This means that people of low socioeconomic status are disproportionately put at risk, as they are more likely to rely on biking, walking, and transit while also living in disinvested parts of town that force them into unsafe conditions.

The Need for Safe Streets and Community Spaces

While the majority of Arizonans choose to drive alone to work (as seen in the figure below), people with disabilities are twice as likely to have inadequate transportation options.¹⁸¹ Without reliable, connected, and multi-modal transportation options, they miss out on opportunities to thrive and stay connected to their communities.



Despite existing barriers, cities and towns all over the world are experiencing success with improving outcomes and overall quality of life by making a firm commitment to streets designed with *people* in mind. This includes people of all ages, abilities, and socioeconomic statuses; people on foot, on bike, using transit, *and* in cars.

179 Cigna. (2020). *Loneliness and the Workplace*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cigna.com/static/www-cigna-com/docs/about-us/newsroom/studies-and-reports/combating-loneliness/cigna-2020-loneliness-infographic.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

180 Smart Growth America. (2019). *Dangerous by Design 2019*. Retrieved from: <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/dangerous-by-design/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

181 Making Action Possible for Southern Arizona. (2018). *Transportation to Work*. Retrieved from: <https://mapazdashboard.arizona.edu/infrastructure/transportation-work>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

182 American Association of People with Disabilities. (n.d.). *Equity in Transportation for People with Disabilities*. Retrieved from: <http://www.civilrightsdocs.info/pdf/transportation/final-transportation-equity-disability.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

The Availability and Consequences of Arizona Transportation Systems

While the current transportation system in Arizona has weaknesses, many Arizonans do not even have reliable access to the system. For instance, in a poll distributed to over 400 Arizona residents in 2012, nearly 70% are unsatisfied with the state's transportation system, and almost one-third of participants reported there being a lack of public transit.¹⁸³ In addition to this, the high volume of those traveling by motor vehicle has severely impacted Arizona's air quality. In 2019, while Tucson's air quality was rated to be good 61.6% of the time, this was only true of 13.7% of days in the Phoenix area.¹⁸⁴

Even when reliable transportation is available, it can be expensive. For example, it is expensive to own a car and drive, as it comes along with additional expenses like car insurance, gas, and basic maintenance. If the need to use a car is eliminated or decreased, it would likely lead to extensive economic and health benefits overtime. With Arizona's current infrastructure, there are several major transportation-related costs, such as:

- Maintenance of streets and highways: Currently, there is \$50 million budgeted for FY23 for just improvement of the I-10 freeway, and \$78 Million to replace and expand a *single* bridge across the Gila river in the FY21 budget.¹⁸⁵
- Cost of crashes: In 2018, it is estimated that motor vehicle crashes were responsible for \$19.349 billion worth of economic losses in Arizona.¹⁸⁶
 - Medical bills: In 2013, the medical costs relating to crash deaths in Arizona were estimated to be about \$11 million.¹⁸⁷
 - Police and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) response associated time and costs.
 - Property damage costs due to motor vehicle crashes, which totaled close to \$972 million in 2018.¹⁸⁸
- Health costs resulting from lack of physical activity.¹⁸⁹
- Annual congestion cost: In 2017, the total annual value of travel delay and excess fuel consumption for each auto commuter in the Phoenix-Mesa area was \$3.3 billion.¹⁹⁰

183 Arizona Forward. (Oct 2012). *Are We There Yet? The Role of Transportation in Driving Arizona's Global Economy*. Retrieved from: https://www.arizonaforward.org/resources/Pictures/ARE_WE_THERE_YET.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

184 Making Action Possible for Southern Arizona. (2019). *Air Quality*. Retrieved from: <https://mapazdashboard.arizona.edu/quality-place/air-quality>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

185 Ducey, D. (Jan 2020). *State of Arizona Executive Budget*. Retrieved from: https://azgovernor.gov/sites/default/files/related-docs/budget_summary.pdf. Access date: 6/1/2020.

186 The Arizona Department of Transportation. (18 Jun 2019). *2018 Motor Vehicle Crash Facts for the State of Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://azdot.gov/sites/default/files/news/2018-Crash-Facts.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

187 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2015). *Motor Vehicle Crash Deaths: Costly but Preventable*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/motorvehiclesafety/pdf/statecosts/AZ-2015CostofCrashDeaths-a.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

188 Arizona Department of Transportation. (2018). *2018 Motor Vehicle Crash Facts for the State of Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://azdot.gov/sites/default/files/news/2018-Crash-Facts.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

189 American Public Health Association. (Mar 2010). *Backgrounder: The Hidden Health Costs of Transportation*. Retrieved from: https://www.apha.org/media/files/pdf/topics/transport/hidden_health_costs_of_transportation_backgroundunder.ashx. Access date: 5/29/2020.

190 Texas A&M Transportation Institute. (2019). *Urban-Mobility Report: Phoenix-Mesa, AZ*. Retrieved from: <https://mobility.tamu.edu/umr/congestion-data/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

While improving streets and sidewalks may incur costs, there is potential for positive return on investment (ROI). By providing more options to travel than driving or taking the bus, the wear and tear on the transit network would likely decrease significantly. In addition to this, the costs of improving streets often can be less than expected. For example, changing signal timing at intersections to allow more time for pedestrian crossing costs nothing, while adding countdown clocks can be as little as \$2,000 per intersection.¹⁹¹ While larger, more costly changes can result in significant positive health outcomes, making small, little to no cost changes can also see significant ROI and increase community safety.

New Approaches and Potential Solutions

There are currently many approaches being explored and adopted in Arizona communities, as well as in other states and internationally, that work to address issues outlined in this chapter. These solutions often require change at the level of policies, systems, and environments, which makes collaboration imperative. The Arizona Department of Transportation (ADOT) is responsible for planning, building, and maintaining the highway system in the state so collaboration with ADOT to implement changes within Arizona's transportation system is critical in creating systemic change. Such collaboration includes providing input on ADOT's Five-Year Plan, which provides guidance on how ADOT funds get allocated over a five-year period.¹⁹² Coordination and partnership with ADOT is particularly important for rural and tribal communities, as national best practices around land use and active transportation are typically more focused around urban or suburban areas. This further illuminates the importance of incorporating community input in the planning process.

A couple of specific, notable approaches that have proven to be successful in improving health outcomes through systemic changes within transportation include Vision Zero and Complete Streets:

- **Vision Zero:** Vision Zero is a data-driven approach to the goal of eliminating crashes and fatalities related to roadways. This is done by exploring different ways of modifying and redesigning streets and roadways to minimize the number of crashes that happen in that area. This framework originated in the Netherlands and in Oslo, the Norwegian capital; their success with Vision Zero has resulted in zero pedestrian and cyclist fatalities in 2019.¹⁹³ Tucson is working on implementing this approach¹⁹⁴ and the City of Tempe also adopted a Vision Zero policy approach in 2019.¹⁹⁵

191 Smart Growth America & National Complete Streets Coalition. *Costs of Complete Streets*. Retrieved from: <https://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/app/legacy/documents/cs/factsheets/cs-costs.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

192 Arizona Department of Transportation. (2020). *Tentative Five-Year Program*. Retrieved from: <https://azdot.gov/planning/transportation-programming/tentative-five-year-program>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

193 Coulon, J. (7 Jan 2020). *Oslo Just Proved Vision Zero Is Possible*. Retrieved from: <https://www.bicycling.com/news/a30433288/oslo-vision-zero-goal-2019/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

194 City of Tucson. (n.d.). *Mayors' Challenge for Safer People, Safer Streets*. Retrieved from: https://www.tucsonaz.gov/files/transportation/Mayors_Challenge_Assessment_Final_for_Web_0.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

195 City of Tempe. (2020). *Vision Zero*. Retrieved from: <https://www.tempe.gov/government/engineering-and-transportation/transportation/vision-zero>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

- **Complete Streets:** The premise of Complete Streets emphasizes the importance of changing a street based on the context around it. This approach identifies safety as a key consideration when designing spaces and streets for people of all ages and abilities, regardless of whether they drive, walk, bike, or use public transportation. Complete Streets policies are set at the state, regional, and local levels and are frequently supported by roadway design guidelines.¹⁹⁶ In Arizona, eight entities including Metropolitan Planning Organizations (federally funded and mandated transportation policy-making organizations) have adopted some type of Complete Street policy, resolution, or guideline.¹⁹⁷

Building physical activity into the way communities get around is not only about modifying means of transportation, but also about reconsidering land use. People are more likely to walk or bike to places if they are nearby, so it may be important to consider orienting places, like coffee shops and grocery stores, so that they are more accessible to other modes of transportation. Such a shift in thinking about community design could greatly benefit the vibrancy of a community.¹⁹⁸ This is especially true in rural communities, where people live 10-20 miles or more away from the nearest grocery store.

For many individuals, a barrier to exploring other means of transportation is the mindset that if they are trying to change how they get around, they need to do this for all their trips. A few changes can make a big impact. For example, walking or biking to the grocery store but continuing to drive or take the bus to work is still going to have an overall positive impact. A similar barrier is present when exploring the topic of changing street design. As previously mentioned, small changes can have a large impact; not every street needs to be "complete." Not every corridor has to be walkable and bikeable. Instead, communities may benefit from context-relevant changes that encourage complementary multi-modal transportation options in parallel corridors that take land use variation into account.

Vibrant Communities and Transportation

Reliable transportation, whether it be by foot, bike, bus, or car, is necessary for the daily life of almost all Arizonans. How people and communities get to and from where they are going drastically affects their well-being, environment, and community. Even if an individual has full healthcare coverage, money for food, can qualify to attend an educational institution, and is employed at a steady job, they are unable to access any of those things without adequate transportation. In addition to this, environments that do not allow for multi-modal means of transport often force community members to use cars and feel unsafe or unable to walk or bike outside their place of residence. This greatly impacts the physical and mental health and wellness of many Arizona communities. Transportation is an important piece of what enables or inhibits community vibrancy.

196 U.S. Department of Transportation. (24 Aug 2015). *Complete Streets*. Retrieved from: <https://www.transportation.gov/mission/health/complete-streets>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

197 Smart Growth America. (2020). *Complete Streets Policies Nationwide*. Retrieved from: <https://smartgrowthamerica.org/program/national-complete-streets-coalition/publications/policy-development/policy-atlas/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

198 For more information on Community Design and Built Environment see chapter titled: "The Role of Built Environment in Creating Healthy Communities".

To Learn more

- <https://www.strongtowns.org>
- <https://www.880cities.org/>
- *The Pop-up Placemaking Toolkit* recently released by AARP Livable Communities. Download at: https://cp.email.aarp.org/LC_Downloadhttps://nacto.org/

"When you say "no" to something, you say "yes" to something else. This is especially important because there are so many hidden costs to decisions. We need to make sure that if we are saying "no" to housing density, we are saying "yes" to sprawl, or that if we say "no" to a bike lane on our street, we are saying "yes" to air pollution."

- Gil Penalosa

About the Author

Emily Yetman, Founder, Living Streets Alliance

Emily Yetman is founder and Executive Director of Living Streets Alliance (LSA), a non-profit organization that advocates for a thriving Tucson by creating streets for everyone. With a vision of streets as living public spaces that connect people and places, LSA has played a key role in advocating for the recently adopted Tucson Complete Streets policy as well as Proposition 407, the 2018 voter-approved \$225M bond to improve parks and create biking and walking connections within the city of Tucson.

The Role of Food Systems in Vibrant Communities

Adrienne Udarbe, Pinnacle Prevention

This topic intersects and explores these elements of a vibrant community:



For many Arizonans, healthful food is out of reach. Bringing food from the farm to the table involves a resilient, high-functioning system of growing, harvesting, production, processing, distribution, waste, and all the many layers in between. A vibrant and resilient food system addresses access to quality food with consideration for history, place, culture, and policy. Food is a fundamental aspect of life, and as such, intentional community design around access to quality, affordable food is a vital consideration for overall health outcomes in Arizona.

The Food Systems Landscape Amid COVID-19

COVID-19 has resulted in greater awareness of how critical food systems are in our everyday lives. In some cases, we have seen declining farm income due to business closures and in other cases we have seen increased demand for local foods resulting from supply chain interruptions and distribution restrictions. We are seeing increased demand for local food delivery services without the infrastructure to meet the demand. While food is often what brings people together, we have had to explore what this looks like in a different way. We have seen increased isolation and increased food insecurity resulting from income losses and increased unemployment which puts a greater demand on the emergency food system. We have also seen amazing resilience and innovation in response to changing needs. Farmers Markets have quickly adopted and implemented online pre-ordering systems and drive-thru markets. Farmers have increased availability of and accessibility to pre-ordered fruit and veggie boxes. Tribal nations have increased distribution of food, water, and included native foods in new delivery models. Now more than ever, there is an opportunity to imagine a new system.

The Consequences of Food Insecurity

When individuals lack access to quality, affordable foods, they are vulnerable to experiencing both physical and mental health issues, which may evolve into chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and obesity. Poor food access may also impact other social determinants of health in a person's life, such as educational outcomes, economic opportunity, and housing. The tolls of hunger and malnutrition are vast. Feeding America¹⁹⁹ released national data that indicated over 58% of households they serve have a member that suffers from high blood

199 For more information on Feeding America, visit this website: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/>.

pressure and 33% of households they serve contain an individual suffering from diabetes.²⁰⁰ In addition to this, children who are at risk for hunger are proven to be more likely to struggle in school.²⁰¹ This interconnectivity reveals the importance of addressing the need for increased access to quality, affordable food in Arizona communities. Discussion about food insecurity is most productive when considering: “What is needed to establish a healthy environment and support a healthy relationship with food?”

In Arizona, one in eight people struggle with hunger and one in five children experience hunger. In total, this accounts for about 979,000 individuals.²⁰² Furthermore, there are clear disparities seen when examining populations that experience the highest rates of food insecurity. Tribal and rural communities are greatly burdened by food insecurity, which results from stagnating wages, insecure work, and minimal social protections. Older adults also face food insecurity disproportionate to other populations. It is estimated that in order to meet the food needs of those facing hunger in Arizona, it would cost over \$450 million per year.²⁰³

Roadblocks to a Healthy Food System and How to Overcome Them

Today, conversations around food and health may result in feelings of shame – either about one’s physical appearance or the type of food they eat. This concept of “healthism” is best defined by Dr. Lucy Aphramor, PhD, RD as “a belief system that sees health as the property and responsibility of an individual and ranks the personal pursuit of health above everything else, like world peace or being kind. It ignores the impact of poverty, oppression, war, violence, luck, historical atrocities, abuse and the environment from traffic, pollution to clean water and nuclear contamination, and so on. It protects the status quo, leads to victim blaming and privilege, increases health inequities, and fosters internalized oppression. Health-ism judges people’s human worth according to their health.”²⁰⁴ Registered Dietitian, Christy Harrison, goes on to further describe the healthism diet culture as “a system of beliefs that worships thinness and equates it to health and moral virtue; promotes weight loss as a means of attaining higher status; demonizes certain ways of eating while elevating others; and oppresses people who don’t match up with its supposed picture of ‘health’.”²⁰⁵

Nourish – a nutrition movement from Pinnacle Prevention – was born out of conversations with community members who reported often equating shame with food and nutrition work, or health work in general. There is also an underlying political and economic context that relies on individualism, which additionally impacts the work in this space. There are also omnipresent retail food marketing practices that influence Arizona’s food paradigm and buying habits.

200 Feeding America. (2020). *Importance of Nutrition on Health in America*. Retrieved from: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/impact-of-hunger/hunger-and-nutrition>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

201 Ibid.

202 Feeding America. (2019). *Hunger in Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/arizona>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

203 Ibid.

204 O’Toole, J. (6 Oct 2016). *Healthism*. Kartini Clinic for Children and Families. Retrieved from: <https://benourished.org/what-is-health-ism/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

205 Harrison, C. (10 Aug 2018). *What is Diet Culture?* Retrieved from: <https://christyharrison.com/blog/what-is-diet-culture>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

This leads into the policy work. A good portion of conversations with public officials involves dispelling myths and perceptions about those who are 'unhealthy' or are participating in public assistance programs. Furthermore, many organizations working to reduce food insecurity and foster food system change face a lack of federal, state, and local funding. Despite this lack of funding, there are still many examples of successful initiatives within Arizona that work to deliver fresh, healthy, and affordable food to underserved populations.

One example is the Double up Food Bucks program.²⁰⁶ This program gives SNAP (The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) eligible people incentive to buy more Arizona-grown fruits and vegetables. For every \$1 spent on SNAP eligible food items, participants receive \$1 to spend on fresh fruits and vegetables for up to \$20 per day. Another successful program is the Sun Produce Cooperative initiative,²⁰⁷ which assists with the economic development of local food sources. This initiative has been successful, as it has increased consumption of local food within the state.

In addition to the barriers addressed previously, many Arizonans struggle to gain access to healthy food due to socio-economic status. In 2018, almost 29.1% of low-income households (households with incomes below 185% of the poverty threshold) were defined as food insecure compared to the 11.1% national average.²⁰⁸ Poverty and income can greatly affect a person's ability to access healthy, affordable food for a multitude of reasons including: lack of transportation, lack of funds, lack of time (due to holding multiple jobs), and distance from local grocery stores or farmers markets.

Responses at the Federal and State Level

While there is much that needs to be addressed in the Arizona food system, there are programs and cooperatives working to mitigate many of these issues. For example, the coordinated Hunger Relief Program run through the Arizona Department of Economic Security is a partnership among many hunger relief organizations such as food banks and action alliances working to help communities apply for nutrition assistance benefits.²⁰⁹ In addition to this, the Arizona Hunger Advisory Council released an "Arizonans Preventing Hunger Action Plan" in 2017 that contains goals and suggestions that may be effective in preventing hunger in Arizona.²¹⁰

At the federal level, there are three potential actions that might enhance food systems: (1) protect and strengthen SNAP funding and continue to incentivize healthy food options for SNAP families, (2) protect and strengthen beginner farmer and rancher programs, streamline farmer and rancher regulations to reduce burden, and consider farmer student loan forgiveness programs, (3) increase funding and culturally relevant options in Child Nutrition Reauthorization.

206 Double Up Food Bucks Arizona. (n.d.). *Double Up Food Bucks Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://www.doubleupaz.org>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

207 Sun Produce Cooperative Initiative. (n.d.). *About*. Retrieved from: <https://sunproducecoop.com/pages/about>. Access date 5/29/2020.

208 United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service (USDA-ERS). (2018). *Food Security Status of U.S. Households in 2018*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-us/key-statistics-graphics.aspx>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

209 Arizona Department of Economic Security. (2020). *Coordinated Hunger Relief Program Community Partners*. Retrieved from: <https://des.az.gov/services/basic-needs/food-assistance/coordinated-hunger-relief-program-community-partners>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

210 The Arizona Hunger Advisory Council. (2017). *Arizonans Preventing Hunger Action Plan 2017*. Retrieved from: <https://des.az.gov/sites/default/files/media/Arizonans-Preventing-Hunger-Action-Plan-July-2017.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

At the state level, there are many opportunities and actions that could strengthen food systems:

1. Support economic development within the food system, including advancing farming as a pathway to entrepreneurship and source of security for Arizona communities. Another example might include directing funding to regional food supply chain infrastructure development and healthy food business investments in underserved communities through financing and grants.
2. Establish targets for state-funded institutions to procure Arizona-grown products.
3. Leverage federal funding opportunities for state-led/state pass-through-programs that develop healthy regional food systems.²¹¹
4. Implement working lands conservation programs for small food producer land access.
5. Increase cross-sector collaboration, as seen with the Arizona Food Systems Network.²¹²

In the 2020 Legislative Session, SB1221 (Recurring Appropriation for AZ SNAP Fruit and Veg Incentive Bill) was proposed, and would reinstate the appropriation from 2018, and SB1206 (AZ Agriculture Workforce Development bill Appropriation) would provide incentive to food producing agricultural organizations to hire interns and partially reimburse their costs.²¹³ Both bills ultimately did not pass due to the early closure of the session due to COVID-19; however, the AZ SNAP Fruit and Veg Incentive did receive one-time COVID relief funding from the Governor's office in response to the pandemic. These food system bills are projected to be revisited in the next regular session.

Responses from Other States

Collaboration is key to systems change and establishing productive coalitions has been proven to effectively foster systems change and catalyze community involvement. An example of a coalition that did exactly this is the Native Farm Bill Coalition. The goal of this coalition was to campaign for indigenous nutrition that advocated for and protected Native American interests during the curation of the 2018 farm bill. This effort resulted in 63 different provisions within the farm bill that benefited Indian Country across the United States.²¹⁴

211 Examples of this include but are not limited to: CDC's Chronic Disease and Health Promotion: Food Access and Regional Food System Development, USDA AMS Specialty Crop Block Grants, USDA Farmers Market Equipment Grants that provide SNAP processing equipment and state-led technical assistance, HUD Downtown and Community Economic Development funding and technical assistance to support healthy food businesses, farmers markets and food supply chain infrastructure. HUD CDBG funding to support infrastructure for healthy regional food supply chains and healthy food businesses; USDA Rural Development funding and technical assistance to support small and medium-sized farmers, minority farmers, new and beginning farmers, healthy food businesses, farmers markets and food supply chain infrastructure.

212 Arizona Food Systems Network. (2018). About the Arizona Food Systems Network. Retrieved from: <https://www.azfsn.org>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

213 Arizona Legislature. (2020). SB1206. Retrieved from: <https://www.azleg.gov/legtext/54leg/2r/bills/sb1206p.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

214 Seeds of Native Health: A Campaign for Indigenous Nutrition. (2019). *Native Farm Bill Coalition*. Retrieved from: <https://seedsofnativehealth.org/native-farm-bill-coalition/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

To Learn More

- Talk Poverty: <https://talkpoverty.org/>
- Civil Eats: <https://civileats.com/>
- The Counter (Formerly The New Food Economy): <https://thecounter.org/>
- National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition: <https://sustainableagriculture.net/>
- Fair Food Network: <https://fairfoodnetwork.org/>
- Food Tank: <https://foodtank.com/>
- Change Lab Solutions: <https://www.changelabsolutions.org/>
- Center for Good Food Purchasing: <https://goodfoodpurchasing.org/>
- Food Policy Action: <https://foodpolicyaction.org/>
- Food and Environment Reporting Network: <https://thefern.org/>
- National Farm to School Network: <http://www.farmtoschool.org/>
- UConn Rudd Center for Food Policy and Obesity: <http://www.uconnruddcenter.org/>
- Berkeley Media Studies Group (BMSG): <http://www.bmsg.org/>
- Seeds of Native Health: <https://seedsofnativehealth.org/native-farm-bill-coalition/>

"People try to make healthy choices under radically different conditions, depending on their income, employment status, educational level, and access to resources – all of which are shaped by entrenched racial, class, and gender inequalities. The prevalence of cheap unhealthy food, low-wage labor, and exclusionary welfare policies conflicts with the real health needs of a low-income population that cannot afford to self-regulate in the way that more affluent Americans do."

– Maggie Dickinson, Author of Feeding the Crisis

About the Author

Adrienne Udarbe, Founding Director, Pinnacle Prevention

Adrienne Udarbe is founding Director of Pinnacle Prevention where she leads innovative efforts in food systems, active living, health policy, and research. With more than a decade of experience in public sector settings, Adrienne is a passionate advocate inspired by good causes, good people, and good food.

The Intersection of Education and Vibrant Communities

Vitalyst Staff

This topic intersects and explores these elements of a vibrant community:



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY



SOCIAL JUSTICE



SOCIAL/CULTURAL COHESION



HEALTH EQUITY

Education plays an essential role in creating vibrant communities. In fact, education may be considered “the single most important modifiable social determinant of health.”²¹⁵ Educational attainment, or the highest level of education completed, has been positively associated with income level, access to resources, overall health outcomes, and even life expectancy.²¹⁶ In other words, the higher the level of education that a person completes, the more likely they are to live a healthier, wealthier, and longer life. Educational opportunity similarly influences social cohesion, and community safety, while tending to reduce criminal justice involvement. Education systems have a unique opportunity to increase connectivity between children, families, and the communities they serve.²¹⁷ Importantly, there are intergenerational impacts of education, as the parents’ educational attainment impacts their own children’s education experiences.²¹⁸ This chapter provides a snapshot of current education data with a focus on highlighting opportunities.

[Note: as previously discussed in “Funding Pre-K-12 Education” (110th Arizona Town Hall report), many sources publish Arizona education data, oftentimes inconsistently.²¹⁹ Data used here are reconciled within this report and include source citations.]

An Arizona Report Card: Failing

Arizona is ranked 49th for public education in the United States (including Washington D.C.).²²⁰ An inadequate educational system has deeply negative consequences for overall well-being and Arizona’s future vibrancy. The state’s youngest students are ground zero. Early childhood education plays a critical role in brain development and prepares children for primary education. In Arizona, only 22% of three- and four-year-olds are enrolled in high quality preschool settings.²²¹ Early childhood development and enrollment in high quality education are

215 McGill, N. (2016). *Education Attainment Linked to Health Throughout Lifespan: Exploring Social Determinants of Health*. The Nation’s Health. Retrieved from: <http://thenationshealth.aphapublications.org/content/46/6/1.3>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

216 Zajacova, A. and Lawrence, E.M. (2018). *The Relationship Between Education and Health: Reducing Disparities Through a Contextual Approach*. Retrieved from: <https://www.annualreviews.org/doi/pdf/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-031816-044628>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

217 Oder, Elizabeth. (2005). “The social cohesion role of educational organizations: Primary and secondary schools.” *Peabody Journal of Education* 80(4), 78-88. doi:10.2307/3497053.

218 McGill, N. (2016). *Education Attainment Linked to Health Throughout Lifespan: Exploring Social Determinants of Health*. The Nation’s Health. Retrieved from: <http://thenationshealth.aphapublications.org/content/46/6/1.3>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

219 Arizona Town Hall. (2017). *Funding Pre-K-12 Education*. 110th Arizona Town Hall background report. Retrieved from: <https://aztownhall.org/resources/Documents/110%20Funding%20preK-12%20Education%20Background%20Report%20web.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

220 McCann, A. (29 Jul 2019). *States with the Best & Worst School Systems*. Retrieved from: <https://wallethub.com/edu/e/states-with-the-best-schools/5335/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

221 Arizona Early Childhood Funders Collaborative. (2020). *Born to Learn AZ*. Retrieved from: <http://borntolearnaz.com/the-facts/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

associated with positive, long-term education outcomes, including increased high school graduation rates – which is a crucial milestone for vibrant communities. In 2018, Arizona’s overall four-year high school graduation rate was 78.02%,²²² one of the lowest in the country.²²³ According to the Arizona Education Progress Meter, the majority of jobs require post-high school education, yet only slightly over half of students enroll in higher education or advanced training after high school.²²⁴ Meanwhile, 13% of Arizonans ages 16–24 who are neither enrolled in school nor working are categorized as “Opportunity Youth.” Data analysis suggests a correlation between the Opportunity Youth designation and negative individual outcomes, as well as community-level economic and social consequences.²²⁵ Finally, conversations around the education system cannot be held without considering Arizona’s teachers. According to a 2017 report, Arizona elementary teacher pay is ranked last in the country while high school teacher pay is ranked 49th (adjusted for cost of living).²²⁶

Educational attainment is a useful predictor of short- and long-term outcomes, but a focus on quality education is paramount to vibrant communities. Quality education goes beyond test scores and graduation rates to focus on the growth of the whole child –intellectually, emotionally, and socially. Quality education recognizes the critical need to apply an equity lens, acknowledging that education is not currently created equally for all children.²²⁷

Inequities within Arizona’s School System

For students of color, those living in rural areas, and students experiencing poverty, available data reveals significant differences in education outcomes. For example, when comparing graduation rates, White students’ four-year graduation rate was higher (82.87%) than African American students (73.85%), Latino students (74.56%), and Native American students (66.97%).²²⁸ Students considered to be of low socioeconomic status also experienced a lower graduation rate (72.34%).²²⁹

Additional examples of systemic disparities, which have a significant impact on student success, include the following:

- In Arizona, schools that serve mostly non-White students get 46% fewer dollars than mostly White schools. This is a \$7,613 difference per student. High poverty White school districts have \$10,964 more per student compared to high poverty non-White school districts.²³⁰

222 Arizona Department of Education (n.d.) *AZ School Report Cards*. Retrieved from: <https://azreportcards.azed.gov/state-reports>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

223 Kerr, E. and Shin, M. (2020). *See High School Graduation Rates by State*. U.S. News. Retrieved from: <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-high-schools/articles/see-high-school-graduation-rates-by-state>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

224 Expect More Arizona. (2020). *Arizona Education Progress Meter*. Retrieved from: <https://www.expectmorearizona.org/progress/?location=State::Arizona>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

225 Ibid.

226 Expect More Arizona. (2020). *Teacher pay*. Retrieved from: https://www.expectmorearizona.org/progress/teacher_pay/. Access date: 5/29/2020.

227 Slade, S. (2016). *What Do we Mean by a Quality Education?* Retrieved from: https://www.huffpost.com/entry/what-do-we-mean-by-a-qual_b_9284130. Access date: 5/29/2020.

228 Arizona Department of Education (n.d.) *AZ school report cards*. Retrieved from: <https://azreportcards.azed.gov/state-reports>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

229 Ibid.

230 Dale, M. & Kuhn, C. (27 Feb 2019). *Study: White Arizona School Districts Get More Funding Than Non- White Districts*. Retrieved from: <https://kjzz.org/content/782391/study-white-arizona-school-districts-get-more-funding-non-white-districts>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

- Latino students now comprise 45% of the student population while only 12% of Arizona teachers are Latino.²³¹
- While 5% of the state's students are African American, they accounted for 13% of all out-of-school suspensions. Native American students accounted for 9% in the 2015–2016 school year.²³²
- While the Native American student population is 5%, from 2008–2014, Native American students accounted for the highest rates of drop-outs at 7%, compared to Latino (4%), African American (4%), White (2%), and Asian students (1%).²³³
- Compared to their White and Asian counterparts (55% and 70%, respectively), in 2014, lower percentages of African American (37%), Native American (34%), and Latino students (34%) met the Arizona Board of Regents' eligibility requirements to attend one of Arizona's three public universities.
- Latino students represent almost half of the student population, yet three of the combined 30 members of Arizona's State Board of Education, Board of Regents, and State Board of Charter Schools are Latino.²³⁴
- Some rural counties have higher rates of third graders who read below grade level compared to other counties.²³⁵

Without increased access to quality education, the chances for students who experience the most educational disparities to obtain better wages, good working conditions, health insurance, and access to resources that promote better health outcomes and longer life expectancies are lower. Approaching these barriers with an equity lens, while utilizing community-driven solutions that allow those most impacted to define and lead the efforts with decision-making ability, may result in lasting change within Arizona's education system. Two possible community and policy responses to addressing this very complex and multifaceted issue are: (1) eliminate systems and policy barriers for Latino, African American, Native American, rural, and low-income student achievement, and (2) achieve equitable representation in education leadership at all levels.

Opportunities for Systemic Change in Arizona's Educational Systems

Education systems are vast and complex, and this report does not cover every possible area of improvement. The following examples highlight just a few of many considerations in creating an Arizona education system that enhances vibrant communities:

231 Welch, D. (29 Aug 2019). *DISPARITY: Hispanics Make up Almost Half of Arizona Students but Only 12% of Teachers*. Retrieved from: https://www.azfamily.com/news/arizona_schools/disparity-hispanics-make-up-almost-half-of-arizona-students-but/article_5ff2e394-cacf-11e9-8fe2-9fa4d9486723.html. Access date: 5/29/2020.

232 Altavena, L. (15 Apr 2019). *Black Students are Suspended at the Highest Rate from Arizona Schools, Data Shows*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/local/arizona-education/2019/04/15/nonwhite-students-arizona-suspended-higher-rates-data-shows/3205724002/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

233 Arizona Department of Education. (28 Aug 2018). *Arizona 2018 Indian Education Annual Report*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azed.gov/oie/files/2019/11/8.28.19-AZ-2018-Indian-Education-Annual-Report.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

234 Welch, D. (29 Aug 2019). *DISPARITY: Hispanics make up almost half of Arizona students but only 12% of teachers*. Retrieved from: https://www.azfamily.com/news/arizona_schools/disparity-hispanics-make-up-almost-half-of-arizona-students-but-only-12-of-teachers/article_5ff2e394-cacf-11e9-8fe2-9fa4d9486723.html. Also see <https://azsbe.az.gov/>, <https://www.azregents.edu/>, and <https://asbcs.az.gov/>. Access date 8/21/2020.

235 Edwards, M. (2014). *Preparing Rural Students for Economic Success*. Retrieved from: <https://www.expectmorearizona.org/blog/2014/07/22/preparing-rural-students-economic-success/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

Improving Data: It is important to have a clear understanding of the problem at hand as well as data from efforts that currently exist. Fragmented education data presents a barrier; there is no single education data clearinghouse in Arizona. Consistent standards for collection and reporting do not exist for data like 2-year and 4-year certificates and school discipline data, making developing an understanding and responsive solutions difficult. It may be beneficial for Arizona to create a hub that could house this valuable information so that it is more accessible; in doing so, solutions could be data-driven, which may lead to more equitable and unified efforts.

Addressing Inequity in School Policies: Policies that appear to promote equality in their formulation may result in inequity in practice. For example, Arizona has operated on a system of school choices since the 1980's, meaning that parents have the option to choose what school their child attends regardless of attendance boundaries that typically drive public school enrollment. While this provides a variety of options for some parents, not all students live in an area that affords them any selection other than the local public school.

Evaluating Arizona's Education Financing Model: As discussed in the 110th Arizona Town Hall background report, "Funding Pre-K-12 Education," financing the education system in Arizona is complex, with intricate formulas that work to take into account the diverse school system.²³⁶ While Arizona ranked 11th in the nation in 2017 for general fund²³⁷ dollars spent on K-12 education, but 49th in educational outcomes.²³⁸ In 2017, the state Legislature voted to establish the Results-Based Funding Fund, which puts emphasis on student AzMerit test scores.²³⁹

Creating Trauma-Informed School Districts: As will be covered in the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) chapter, ACEs are quite common and can drastically impact a child's development. ACEs are also inversely linked to education outcomes; that means that adults reporting higher ACE scores are more likely to report less educational success.²⁴⁰ Notably, education is considered among the most important mitigating factors for the negative effects of ACEs.²⁴¹ Trauma-Informed principles, according to the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), include: safety, trust, peer support, collaboration, empowerment, and cultural sensitivity. Trauma-Informed schools create a safer, more successful learning environment that benefits all students, with benefits extending to staff as well as into the larger community.²⁴² Currently in Arizona, there are a few examples of schools and school systems that are implementing Trauma-Informed practice including Holiday Park Elementary School and the South Mountain W.O.R.K.S. Coalition Community Health and Resiliency Program.²⁴³

236 Arizona Town Hall. (2017). *Funding Pre-K-12 Education*. 110th Arizona Town Hall Background Report. Retrieved from: <https://aztownhall.org/resources/Documents/110%20Funding%20preK-12%20Education%20Background%20Report%20web.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

237 The state's general fund is the primary state fund from which ongoing expenses of state government (like education) are paid.

238 National Association of State Budget Officers. (2016). *State Expenditure Report*.

239 Arizona Town Hall. (2017). *Funding Pre-K-12 Education*. 110th Arizona Town Hall background report. Retrieved from: <https://aztownhall.org/resources/Documents/110%20Funding%20preK-12%20Education%20Background%20Report%20web.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

240 Childhood Domestic Violence Association. (2018). *The Circular Impact of ACEs, Education, and Long-Term Health*. Retrieved from: <https://cdv.org/2018/11/the-circular-impact-of-aces-education-and-long-term-health/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

241 Ibid.

242 Eilers, E. (n.d.) *How Trauma-Informed Schools Help Every Student Succeed*. Retrieved from: <https://www.crisisprevention.com/Blog/Trauma-Informed-Schools>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

243 Please see ACEs chapter for more information on holiday park and the South Mountain W.O.R.K.S. Coalition Community Health and Resiliency Program.

A Case Study: Isaac School District

In 2016, the Isaac School District (ISD) partnered with the community to address the social determinants of health in ways that would improve learning outcomes and community vibrancy.

The challenge was great. ISD serves approximately 6,500 students across 11 schools in Maryvale and Central City South. It is a 100% Title I school district, providing free and reduced lunch to all students. The median household income is \$30,760, and the population is approximately 98% Hispanic.²⁴⁴ ISD is a community that experiences above-average poverty rates, and high unmet health and social service needs. Residents also face language and cultural barriers, as well as fear for their families when attempting to access resources and navigate community systems.²⁴⁵ Due to the enormous inequities inherent in the community it creates the conditions where most would identify the ISD neighborhood as "at-risk". Although these statistics illustrate a very deficit-based narrative, the ISD community brings a wealth of assets, comprised of the myriad of gifts and talents each resident brings.

Recognizing the various strengths of the community, ISD partnered with parents and staff using a "community driven" approach to strengthen community and educational outcomes. A strengths and needs assessment was developed at all 11 school sites in collaboration with principals, school site leaders, counselors, and parents. 30 parent leaders and 40 community stakeholders were engaged to develop the Family Resource Center Steering Committee. This cross-sector, inclusive collaboration transformed an old, vacant, dilapidated house (donated to ISD many years ago) from an uninhabitable storage site to a vibrant community point of pride and opportunity. The community had little cash capital on hand in the beginning so, for months, the majority of the work was offered as resident and business "sweat equity" in masonry, painting, roofing, plumbing, deep cleaning, carpentry, landscaping, and support activities, such as cooking and childcare. The momentum became contagious; it inspired the Arizona Chapter of the Interior Design Association (IDA) to select the center for a badly-needed, \$500,000 "extreme makeover" of architectural design, construction, interior design, and furnishings.

The Heart of Isaac Community Center opened in November 2017. Named in recognition of the people who made it possible at the heart of the Isaac community, the house today provides a place where community members can access health and social services through organizational partners that regularly offer clinics, workshops, information, and other resources. Services include dental care, primary care, legal services, and health insurance support, as well as educational opportunities such as English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, General Educational Development (GED) workshops, and computer classes.

Heart of Isaac is the first community-driven Family Resource Center implemented within an educational setting in Arizona. In partnership with First Things First, it is also one of the highest performing/serving Family Resource Centers in the South Phoenix Region. Most importantly, Heart of Isaac is sustainable because it is led and owned by the community and supported by unique collaborations with cross-sector organizations, including the Isaac School District itself.

244 Zipatlas. (2020). *Median Household Income in Phoenix, AZ by Zip Code*. Retrieved from: <http://zipatlas.com/us/az/phenix/zip-code-comparison/median-household-income.htm>. Access date: 8/21/2020 & Isaac School District.

245 First Things First. (2014). *2014 Needs and Assets Report Central Phoenix Regional Partnership Council*. Retrieved from: <https://files.firstthingsfirst.org/regions/Publications/Regional%20Needs%20and%20Assets%20Report%20-%202014%20-%20Central%20PHX.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

The Heart of Isaac serves as a community-inspired, community-driven, "community hub" where the Isaac community can offer support to help overcome challenges, create healthy connections, and participate in opportunities that promote leadership and giving back. It is a model for the power and success that comes from working through an equity lens and centering the strengths and capabilities of those most impacted in defining and driving solutions. When this approach is taken, solutions are more often positive, effective, and sustainable.²⁴⁶

[For additional reading on the Education System in Arizona, particularly related to Funding, please refer to the 110th Arizona Town Hall Report.]

²⁴⁶ Isaac School District #5. (2020). *Heart of Isaac Community Center*. Retrieved from: <https://www.isaacschools.org/domain/272>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

Adverse Childhood Experiences in Arizona Communities

Kelly Eckhoff, Kominote Community Consulting

Shomari Jackson and Sanghoon Yoo, South Mountain Prevention W.O.R.K.S.

This topic intersects and explores these elements of a vibrant community:



EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY



SOCIAL/CULTURAL COHESION



SOCIAL JUSTICE



HEALTH EQUITY

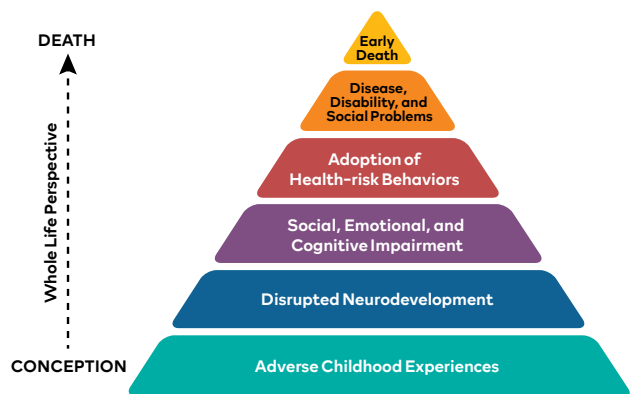
Introduction

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are defined as stressful and traumatic events that occur before the age of 18.²⁴⁷ ACEs often result in toxic stress, which can disrupt brain development and impair a child's ability to cope, function, focus, form healthy relationships, make positive choices, and lead a stable life.²⁴⁸ Arizona's percentage of children birth to 17 years old who have experienced two or more ACEs is the highest in the nation.²⁴⁹ In 2019, 27.3% of children in the state had experienced two or more ACEs; this is significantly higher than the national average of 20.5%.²⁵⁰

This is problematic as ACEs can have serious and long-lasting negative implications on physical and mental health. Ample research documents health disparities among adults who experienced ACEs. These include

higher rates of heart disease, cancer, substance misuse, depression, and suicide, and health outcomes worsen as the number of ACEs experienced increases.²⁵¹ ACEs also result in elevated involvement in criminal and juvenile

HOW ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES CAN INFLUENCE HEALTH THROUGHOUT LIFE



247 Arizona Town Hall. (2019). *Strong Families Thriving Children*. Retrieved from <https://aztownhall.org/resources/Documents/112%20Strong%20Families%20Thriving%20Children/112%20Stong%20Families%20Thriving%20Children%20Background%20Report%20web.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

248 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. *Violence Prevention*. (April 2020). Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/aces/fastfact.html>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

249 Arizona Town Hall. (2019). *Strong Families Thriving Children*. Retrieved from <https://aztownhall.org/resources/Documents/112%20Strong%20Families%20Thriving%20Children/112%20Stong%20Families%20Thriving%20Children%20Background%20Report%20web.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

250 United Health Foundations' America's Health Ratings. (2020). *Health of Women and Children Report 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/learn/reports/2019-health-of-women-and-children-report>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

251 National Advisory Committee on Rural Health and Human Services. (Aug 2018). *Exploring the Rural Context for Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)*. Retrieved from <https://www.hrsa.gov/sites/default/files/hrsa/advisory-committees/rural/publications/2018-Exploring-the-Rural-Context-for-ACEs.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

justice systems, social services, public housing, health care, and behavioral health systems. Therefore, the cost of failing to address the impact of ACEs is profound. According to a study published in 2019, the total annual costs attributable to ACEs in North America were estimated to be \$748 billion.²⁵²

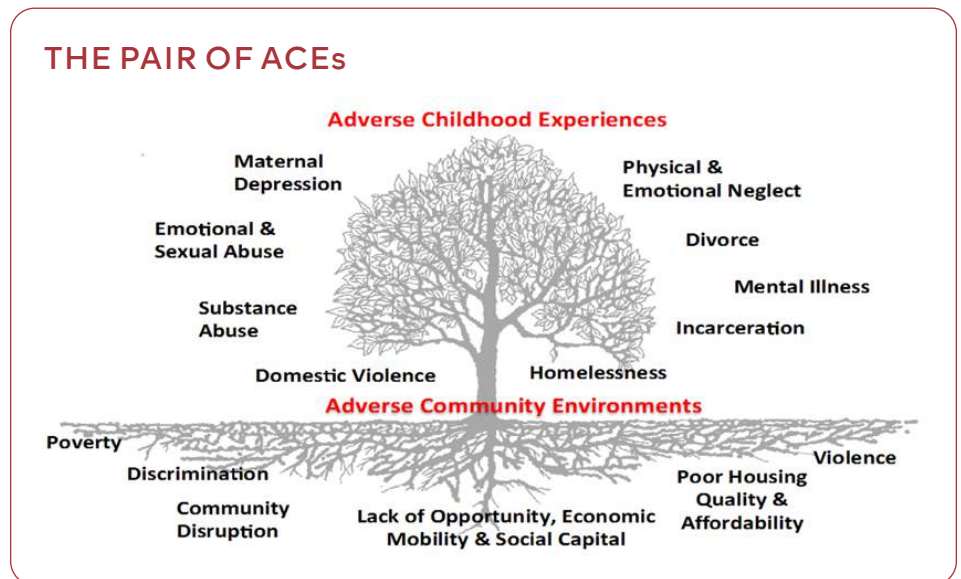
Preventing ACEs

The ideal solution is to prevent children’s exposure to adverse conditions and experiences by creating systemic, environmental changes that effectively address the root causes of ACEs. *The Pair of ACEs* graphic to the right shows the landscape of ACEs causes and effects. The roots represent systemic, adverse community environments, and the branches represent the resulting ACEs.²⁵³ By addressing pervasive, adverse community environments, childhood trauma can be reduced.

Even without sweeping, systemic changes, there are promising strategies for preventing youth from experiencing ACEs, many of which are active around the state and yielding positive results. According to Arizona Adverse Childhood Experiences Consortium,²⁵⁴ these strategies include the following:

- home visiting programs for pregnant women and families with newborns
- parent education and social support programs
- domestic violence prevention
- teen pregnancy prevention
- treatment for mental illness and substance misuse
- high-quality, affordable childcare
- sufficient income support for lower-income families

These strategies yield dividends in improving the health and well-being of individuals and communities.²⁵⁵



252 Bellis, MA., Hughes, K., Ford, K., Ramos Rodriguez, G., Sethi, D. & Passmore, J. (Oct 2019). *Life Course Health Consequences and Associated Annual Costs of Adverse Childhood Experiences Across Europe and North America: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/31492648>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

253 Building Community Resilience. (n.d.). *Pair of ACEs Tree*. Retrieved from https://publichealth.gwu.edu/sites/default/files/downloads/Redstone-Center/Resource%20Description_Pair%20of%20ACEs%20Tree.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

254 United Health Foundations' America's Health Ratings. (2020). *Health of Women and Children Report 2019*. Retrieved from <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/learn/reports/2019-health-of-women-and-children-report>.

255 Arizona Town Hall. (2019). *Strong Families Thriving Children*. Retrieved from <https://aztownhall.org/resources/Documents/112%20Strong%20Families%20Thriving%20Children/112%20Strong%20Families%20Thriving%20Children%20Background%20Report%20web.pdf> Access date: 5/29/2020.

Overcoming ACEs

Although the negative impacts of ACEs can last a lifetime, they do not have to. Research has found preventative factors – such as safe, supportive relationships with caring adults – can help prevent or reverse the damaging effects of ACEs by building resilience. Healthy adult relationships are one of the most promising, well-documented ways to mitigate the effects of ACEs. These relationships can be with a family member, caregiver, teacher, or other safe adult. These crucial, supportive relationships are one reason mentoring programs are an effective intervention for youth who have experienced early adversity. Research repeatedly demonstrates that just one safe and supportive relationship with a caring adult can buffer children from the long-term, harmful effects of ACEs.²⁵⁶

The Need for Implementing Trauma-Informed Approaches

The collective understanding of experts, researchers, and direct service providers in the fields of child welfare, youth development, and trauma is that expanding universal best practices of Trauma-Informed care is a crucial step in mitigating the effects of ACEs. As the Arizona Town Hall's 2019 *Strong Families Thriving Children* background report highlighted, Trauma-Informed care "integrates core principles of neurodevelopment, trauma and attachment with mindful healing to support a comprehensive approach".²⁵⁷ The Trauma-Informed approach seeks to prevent re-traumatization and promote recovery and resilience by being sensitive to the impact of trauma, understanding and employing tools to regulate emotions during stressful times, and identifying and supporting systemic changes needed to reduce re-traumatization.²⁵⁸ By investing in training for existing school staff, healthcare workers, mentors, youth serving organizations, and other adults in children's lives, the negative impacts of ACEs can be effectively mitigated.

This is particularly true in the academic setting because "schools are the single point of connection between home life and community dynamics, and the responsibility of educators to prepare young people to function successfully in the world as adults can only be bolstered with a trauma-sensitive approach."²⁵⁹ In a Trauma-Informed school, staff are trained to recognize and effectively respond to students who have been impacted by ACEs, thus preventing re-traumatization and promoting healing and resiliency. Implementation of Trauma-Informed practices does not require a new or separate program, but rather a shift in school culture, creating a place where students feel safe, connected, and supported. Often, this means incorporating mindfulness, yoga, gardening, and other self-regulation activities into the existing curriculum.

Numerous schools across the country have transitioned to a Trauma-Informed approach and observed positive results. In Arizona, Holiday Park Elementary School in west Phoenix set out to become more trauma-sensitive

256 National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2015). *Supportive Relationships and Active Skill-Building Strengthen the Foundations of Resilience: Working Paper No. 13*. Retrieved from www.developingchild.harvard.edu. Access date: 6/1/2020.

257 Arizona Town Hall. (2019). *Strong Families Thriving Children*. Retrieved from <https://aztownhall.org/resources/Documents/112%20Strong%20Families%20Thriving%20Children/112%20Strong%20Families%20Thriving%20Children%20Background%20Report%20web.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

258 Ibid.

259 Crisis Prevention Institute. (n.d.). *How Trauma-Informed Schools Help Every Student Succeed*. Retrieved from <https://www.crisisprevention.com/Blog/Trauma-Informed-Schools>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

and began implementing Trauma-Informed methods in 2016, with support from Phoenix Children's Hospital. The results have been remarkable. The school has achieved seven growth points on AzMerit, going from a C school to a B (the only school in the Cartwright district to improve a letter grade). Additionally, the number of behavioral issues has decreased, staff turnover is almost non-existent, and Holiday Park is now the second highest rated school in its district. Because of positive results like this, Arizona schools are increasingly adopting a Trauma-Informed approach. In the greater Phoenix area, many schools partner with the Kohl's Mindful Me program at Phoenix Children's Hospital to implement Trauma-Informed strategies for combating ACEs. This unique program focuses on building childhood and family resilience by training and educating communities and school staff on ACEs and providing stress management and self-regulation skills.²⁶⁰

In addition to providing Trauma-Informed professional development opportunities for school staff working directly with students, an integral part of developing Trauma-Informed schools is ensuring school and district policies are created using a Trauma-Informed lens rather than a punitive one. School policies, procedures, and protocols that have been found to be helpful in mitigating the impacts of ACEs include strategies like: balancing accountability with an understanding of undesirable behaviors, emphasizing positive behavioral supports and interventions, prohibiting abusive discipline, creating clear and consistent rules and consequences, modeling respectful, nonviolent relationships, and creating open family communication and relationship-building. By developing Trauma-Informed school systems, Arizona can provide the educational and social-emotional supports students need to reach their full potential.

A Case Study: South Mountain W.O.R.K.S.

The South Mountain W.O.R.K.S. Coalition's Community Health and Resiliency Program (CHRP) is developing Arizona's first Trauma-Informed school system, spanning from elementary school to college. The CHRP will provide ongoing, trauma-specific training to teachers, administrators, staff, students, families, and community members to deepen community-wide recognition and response to the behavioral, emotional, relational, and academic impact of traumatic stress. Each school will be paired with a coach and/or trainer who will support the school through steps of:

- building awareness and knowledge of ACEs and personal trauma
- implementing resilient self-care practices to teachers and students with accountable role-modeling structures
- identifying and improving school discipline policies and practices to promote safety, skills-building, health and wellness, and reintegration
- training and developing community members to advocate for local and state Trauma-Informed policies

Each school will develop cross-system, Trauma-Informed approaches for classrooms, health services, administration, discipline, attendance, guidance, and extra-curricular programming that is inclusive of family and community partners.

²⁶⁰ Phoenix Children's Hospital. (n.d.). *Kohl's Mindful Me Program*. Retrieved from <http://www.phoenixchildrens.org/center-family-health-safety/kohls-mindful-me-program>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

The CHRP will also work to develop policy and practice changes with service providers who may be inadvertently creating and/or exposed to secondary trauma. The CHRP will train and engage different sectors of the community including, but not limited to, first responders, law enforcement, businesses, media, youth serving organizations, civic and volunteer groups, health care providers, substance use organizations, faith-based organizations, and agencies at local, state, and tribal nation levels.²⁶¹

Going Forward

With awareness and data on childhood trauma growing, Arizona has a unique opportunity to address ACEs and improve residents' health and well-being. According to the Arizona Adverse Childhood Experiences Consortium, "Through more effective prevention of ACEs, and better intervention with those who have already had adverse experiences, Arizona will enhance the lives of citizens so they can be healthier and more productive while also reducing the burden ACEs have on our economy, health, and public-benefit systems."²⁶²

About the Authors

Kelly Eckhoff, Co-Founder and Principal Consultant, Kominote Community Consulting

Kelly is a committed champion of non-profit organizations working tirelessly to improve communities around the globe. She supports fund development for a variety of health and human services organizations focused on improving housing stability, health outcomes, child and family outcomes, youth development, and refugee resettlement. Kelly holds a Master's in Social Work from Arizona State University and loves using her skills and experience to enhance the quality of life for all.

Shomari Jackson, Project Coordinator, Southwest Behavioral & Health Services

Shomari B. Jackson is an experienced Project Coordinator at Southwest Behavioral & Health Services, where he has developed and facilitates the South Mountain W.O.R.K.S. Coalition, a nationally known youth substance abuse prevention coalition. He graduated from Arizona State University, with a Bachelors of Science in Psychology in 2015 and a Masters in Public Administration in 2017. Shomari is an experienced trainer in topics of Trauma, Harm Reduction, Substance Use Prevention, and Leadership. He is currently leading the Community Health & Resiliency Program, a Trauma-Informed community building project that develops Trauma-Informed Schools in South Mountain and throughout Phoenix.

261 For more information on the South Mountain W.O.R.K.S. Coalition, visit: <http://southmountainworks.org/south-mountain-works/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

262 Arizona Adverse Childhood Experiences Consortium. (n.d.). *Overcoming Adverse Childhood Experiences: Creating Hope for a Healthier Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://azaces.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/ACEs.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

Rev. Sanghoon Yoo, Founder, The Faithful City

Rev. Sanghoon Yoo founded The Faithful City (TFC) ministry and Arizona Trauma Informed Faith Community (AZTIFC), serving Arizona State University (ASU) and the Phoenix metropolitan area over two decades. He holds Master's degrees in Social Work and Divinity, offering training and consultation on ACEs, Trauma-Informed care and community (TIC) building. He organizes a statewide trauma-informed care conference and leads TIC movement, collaborating with various sectors of the community. As a board member of Arizona ACEs Consortium, he contributed to the authorship of training modules for opioid and substance use prevention, and the revision of ACEs training of trainers modules. As vice-chair of South Mountain W.O.R.K.S., he leads the CHRP project with Shomari Jackson, training schools and organizations to develop trauma-informed community and culture.

Rural Arizona: Challenges, Opportunities, and Options

Jane Pearson, Arizona Partnership for Healthy Communities

This topic intersects and explores these elements of a vibrant community:



SOCIAL JUSTICE



HEALTH EQUITY



ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY



ACCESS TO CARE



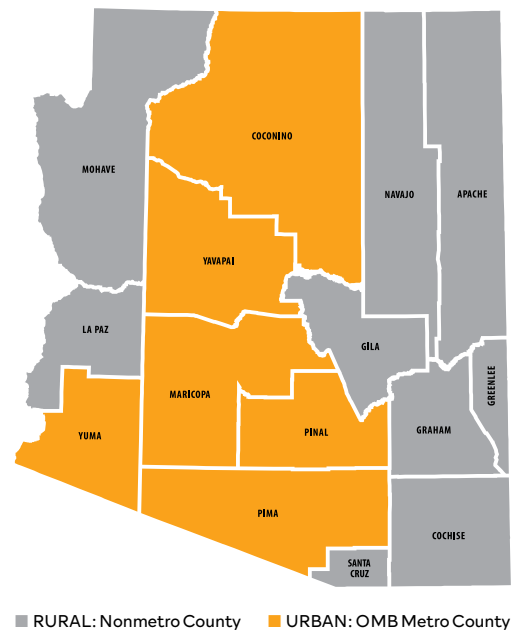
AFFORDABLE

Introduction

Rural areas are defined by the U.S. Census Bureau as places with fewer than 50,000 residents. In Arizona, there are nine rural counties: La Paz, Mohave, Navajo, Apache, Gila, Graham, Greenlee, Cochise, and Santa Cruz.²⁶³ The following characteristics highlight key differences between rural and urban Arizona:

- There are 74 incorporated towns in Arizona with fewer than 50,000 residents.
- Only six counties have a city with a population greater than 50,000.
- Of 7,171,646 Arizonans, 351,316 (5%) lived in rural or frontier communities.²⁶⁴
- Per capita income is significantly different: \$33,388 in rural Arizona vs. \$42,280 in urban Arizona.²⁶⁵
- The poverty rate in rural Arizona is 26.9%, compared with 13.4% in urban areas of the state.²⁶⁶
 - 18.6% of people living in rural Arizona has not

ARIZONA'S COUNTIES



While there are statistics and data reflective of rural Arizona in this chapter, it is important to recognize that there is a constant struggle to find and collect comprehensive, reliable, and updated data within rural areas. This is currently a major barrier in improving rural health and wellness.

263 USDA-ERS. (2018). *Arizona-Rural Definitions: State-Level Maps*. Retrieved from: https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/DataFiles/53180/25557_AZ.pdf?v=39329. Access date: 5/29/2020.

264 USDA-ERS. (2018). *Rural*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

265 Ibid.

266 USDA-ERS. (2018). *State Fact Sheets: Arizona*. Retrieved from: <https://data.ers.usda.gov/reports.aspx?StateFIPS=04&StateName=Arizona&ID=17854>. Access date: 5/30/2020.

completed high school, vs. 13.2% living in urban Arizona.²⁶⁷

- The unemployment rate in rural Arizona is 7.5%, vs. 4.7% in urban Arizona.²⁶⁸
- In 2018, seven of the nine rural Arizona counties had overall mortality rates higher than the state.²⁶⁹
- The mortality rate for unintentional Injury exceeds that of the state rate in six of nine rural Arizona counties.²⁷⁰
- In contrast to other parts of the country, the opioid induced death rate is lower in all rural counties compared to the state rate.²⁷¹

Despite these statistics, rural places are no different than urban areas when it comes to community well-being and vibrancy. Whether towns are walkable, the water is clean, residents are connected to one another, and the local economy works for everyone – all of this has an impact on individuals' opportunities to be healthy and, in turn, their communities vibrant. So, what more do we know about individuals who live in rural communities?

- **There are higher rates of individuals lacking health insurance** residing in rural or non-metro counties compared to their counterparts in urban or metro counties.²⁷² For example, the uninsured rate in Maricopa County is 11.01% while Apache County has an uninsured rate of 23.22%, almost a full quarter of the population.²⁷³
- **Many rural residents face barriers related to access to housing, transportation, food, and water that is safe, healthy, and affordable.** These barriers are particularly problematic for those already struggling financially.
- **Reliable transportation to care can also be a barrier** for rural residents due to long distances, poor road conditions, and limited public transit availability.
- **Rural communities also face many environmental challenges.** Hazardous materials often end up in remote areas where the land is cheap and fewer people overall are put at risk. Rural industries like mining and farming bring with them their own dangers and environmental impacts. Groundwater pumping is threatening natural water supply.

267 2013–2017 ACS data reported by ERS.

268 USDA-ERS. (2018). *Rural*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

269 Arizona Department of Health Services. (2018). *Table 5E-4 Mortality Rates by County of Residence and Year, Arizona, 2008-2018*. Retrieved from: <https://pub.azdhs.gov/health-stats/report/ahs/ahs2018/pdf/5e4.pdf>. Access date: 8/10/2020.

270 Arizona Department of Health Services. (2018). *Table 5E-13 Rates for Selected Leading Causes of Death Statewide and by County of Residence, Arizona, 2018*. Retrieved from: <https://pub.azdhs.gov/health-stats/report/ahs/ahs2018/pdf/5e13.pdf>. Access date: 8/10/2020.

271 Ibid.

272 Center for Disease Control and Prevention. (2019). Table 47. *No Health Insurance Coverage Among Persons Under age 65, by Selected Characteristics: United States, Selected years 1984–2017*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/hus/2018/047.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

273 U.S. Census Bureau. (2018). *American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*. Retrieved from: <https://www.census.gov/data.html>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

While the data can present a discouraging picture of life in rural communities, rural residents themselves embrace their communities and have their own sense of the issues they face. In 2018 and again in 2019, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funded a poll surveying 1,300 and 1,405 adults living in rural areas to better understand the views and experiences of rural Americans on economic and health issues in their local communities.

In 2018, respondents reported:²⁷⁴

- they were **happy where they were living**, liked their jobs, liked their neighbors, and were optimistic about the future.
- over the past five years, **the economy in the region where they live and work had gotten better (about 33%)**.
- **they were active in solving problems in their local community (52%)**, with younger adults reporting higher levels of participation.
- **concern about the opioid epidemic**, the number of **young people who were leaving** their community, and the **unstable job market**.

In 2019, they found that respondents:²⁷⁵

- felt **safe** in their community.
- said **people like them can make an impact** in their community, with 27% believing they can make a *big* impact and 61% belonging to a health, social, or community service group.
- reported that **homelessness is a problem**, with 22% worrying that their housing conditions were affecting their family's health or safety.
- reported that there has been a time in the past few years when they **needed health care but did not get it (26%)**.
- reported that a small but considerable number of residents **struggled with financial insecurity, internet access, housing problems, and accessing affordable, quality health care**.

The Rural Arizona Dichotomy

Rural Arizona experiences chronic disinvestment, weak infrastructure, and limited financial capital resulting in a lack of good jobs, low wages, scarce or distant services, higher prices for basic goods, poor quality housing, unaffordable health insurance, low access to quality health care, and diminishing opportunity. However, rural Arizona also has valuable assets, from water and natural resources to natural beauty, cultural capital, deep knowledge of place – and committed people with talent, creativity, and resourcefulness. The combination of fewer people, larger geographies, and serious resource constraints motivates collaboration across boundaries.

274 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (1 Oct 2018). *Life in Rural America*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2018/10/life-in-rural-america.html>. Access date: 6/1/2020.

275 Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (1 May 2019). *Life in Rural America Part II*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2019/05/life-in-rural-america--part-ii.html>. Access date: 6/1/2020.

Rural Business and Infrastructure

Rural communities in Arizona share many of the same characteristics as those in other parts of the country. There are some specific issues to consider.

Tourism and its consequences

Arizona is a state of amazing natural beauty, varied seasonal temperatures, and rich cultural history, all of which makes it very attractive to domestic and international tourists. Many of these natural or cultural sites are in rural communities. Tourism brings much needed revenue to these areas but presents challenges as well – and often drives community changes that are detrimental to residents. Sedona, Bisbee, Cottonwood, and others struggle for a balance.

- How should a small community meet tourism's high infrastructure demands?
- How should a community build and maintain its workforce – including affordable housing, education, employment during less busy times, etc?

Single legacy industry

Arizona's four "C"s – copper, cattle, cotton, and citrus – reflect industries (of mining and farming for example) – that are still central in many rural communities in Arizona. Industry changes can rock a community to its core.

- What happens to individuals and families employed in an industry that changes?
- What happens to businesses dependent on the revenues from those employees?
- What happens to the tax base?

The last several years there have been major fluctuations in mining, closure of the Navajo Generating Station, and closure of the Happy Jack sawmill.

Lack of reliable Broadband

One in five rural adults say accessing high-speed internet is a problem for their family, meaning rural communities are unable to participate in the digital economy.²⁷⁶ Many rural Arizona places still have unreliable or non-existent internet access. Residents cannot access basic knowledge, online education, commerce, or telemedicine. Businesses miss out on retail e-commerce, remote work, distance consulting, development, and much more.

²⁷⁶ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. (1 May 2019). *Life in Rural America Part II*. Retrieved from: <https://www.rwjf.org/en/library/research/2019/05/life-in-rural-america--part-ii.html>. Access date: 6/1/2020.

What's Happening in Rural Arizona Today

Residents in rural communities are committed to making their communities better. They not only understand the interrelationship of various sectors (affordable housing, transportation, built environment) they also know the people who work in those sectors. What is lacking is resources – both time and capital. There are several new approaches that may support collaborative efforts.

- Local First Arizona Foundation (LFAF) is bringing multiple initiatives to rural areas:
 - The **Arizona Rural Development Council (AzRDC)** amplifies rural issues and develops solutions. AzRDC focuses on resources and equitable opportunities that support education, health care, economic, and community development.
 - Rural innovation and job creation are being supported with innovative programs like the **Graham County Micro-Loan Fund** to address the commercial loan gap.
 - In partnership with Resolution Copper, LFAF is developing new ways to build a **pipeline of small business providers**.
 - **Youth Retention and Development** work combines science technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEAM) education and entrepreneurship through active and compelling community engagement.
- County health departments produce a **Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP)**, typically updated every three to five years. Plans include key vibrancy issues such as housing, the built environment, and transportation. For example, Cochise County's latest plan prioritizes "Jobs and the Economy." CHIP working groups are resources.
- Similarly, the Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) **State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP)** for 2021-2025 (currently in development) identified Rural Underserved Health as one of its four top priorities.
- Incorporated municipalities are required to adopt a long-range **General Plan** (ARS, Title 9). All plans must include land use and circulation. Populations of 2,500 to 10,000 must also include open space, environmental planning, water resources, cost of development, and growth. Plans often include recreation, preservation, safety, and energy initiatives.
- Organizations like the **Arizona Alliance for Livable Communities (AALC)** have been helping places leverage General Plans for vibrancy. For example, Pinetop-Lakeside innovated a new system of active transportation (school and work) and recreation.
- **Rural Development Hubs** focus on community building that embraces economic development, local institution building, and enhancing cultural, social, and natural wealth. A central function of Hubs is to create collaborative structures, inventive products, services, programs, and tools.²⁷⁷

²⁷⁷ The Aspen Institute. (2020). *Rural Development Hubs: Action Infrastructure for Rural Prosperity*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aspeninstitute.org/events/rural-development-hubs-action-innovators-for-rural-prosperity/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

- Arizona has begun supporting **high speed internet**.
- Arizona's fiscal year 2020 budget allocated \$3 million match to leverage federal funding that accelerates broadband deployment in underserved areas.
- In 2019 the state dedicated \$11 million to leverage \$110 million in federal funds to connect rural schools and libraries.²⁷⁸

What systems barriers need to be addressed?

More community-aligned funding is needed. The Rural Development section of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is the agency responsible for most Federal policies and funding to combat rural poverty and improve rural vibrancy. Federal policy proposals recommend more strategic use of direct services and investments in rural infrastructure, especially broadband. These proposals do little, however, to address structures, systems, and policies that routinely, if inadvertently, disadvantage rural people and places. There is a consistent lack of investment in rural communities by government, private financial institutions, and foundations. Between 2005-2010, only 6-7% of foundation grant dollars went to rural towns.²⁷⁹

- Both philanthropic and government funding may be overly prescriptive programmatically and structurally. Rarely is funding based on a community-driven solution. Requirements often make funding difficult to apply for.
- Private funding is very limited. Rural banks typically lack business loan officers and have a very small CRA (Community Reinvestment Act) responsibility. Rural based CDFIs (Community Development Financial Institutions) are few and limited in scope.
- Technical assistance for rural communities tends to come from urban-experienced consultants. Communities can view this as "outsiders" providing episodic help that lacks understanding of community dynamics, needs, or assets.
- Other federal and state agencies lack the capacity to make investments in smaller communities or projects. State budgets have been cut over recent years leaving limited time and resources to support rural communities.

AN EXAMPLE

Coffee Pot Farms, located on the Navajo Nation in Dilkon, has a mission to increase access to healthy foods for the Navajo people. Coffee Pot's successes include: establishment of the main farm and Teesto Chapter community garden, creation of a "Green Team" co-op of Navajo Nation farmers, distribution at five locations across the Nation, and acceptance of SNAP and Double-Up Food Bucks at all points of sale. But growth is hampered significantly by two issues: water and internet. Lack of consistent internet makes it impossible to process non-cash or SNAP purchases. The farm currently must truck water to its farm because of a broken water pipeline and the lack of a well. Each unique problem threatens Coffee Pot's success and is a window into the basic blockages to rural innovation and success.

278 Arizona Department of Administration. (Feb 2018). *Arizona Statewide Broadband Strategic Plan*. Retrieved from: https://azlibrary.gov/sites/default/files/erate_2018_az_broadbandstrategicplan_final.PDF. Access date: 5/29/2020.

279 Pender, J. L. (Jun 2015). *Foundation Grants to Rural Areas From 2005-2010: Trends and Patterns*. Retrieved from: https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/43991/53165_eib141_summary.pdf?v=42181. Access date: 5/29/2020.

What are possible community and policy responses?

Rural Arizona can benefit from: (1) systemic policy change at federal and state levels, including re-alignment of USDA Rural Development with modern rural realities, (2) a fresh approach to economic and community development, and (3) more people and places that understand and practice it. Some options:

- Federal agencies could provide pre-development grants or infrastructure loans.
- The Arizona Legislature could provide new funding for state technical assistance.
- Federal and state agencies could examine their contract and grant-making activities to identify ways to (1) be more community driven, (2) be less bureaucratic, and (3) prioritize rural.
- State agencies could individually or jointly fund rural cross-sector collaborative efforts.
- Private banks and CDFIs could consider funding regional hubs and rural lending.
- Municipalities could use general plans to address broad cross-cutting issues.
- Foundations could support collaborative practices through technical assistance and grants.
- Communities could formalize already-strong relationships as cross-sector collaborations that guide funding opportunities using community-driven insights and ideas.

What can we learn from new research and best practices?

Step Into Cuba (New Mexico) is a cross-sector collaboration promoting physical activity through development of sidewalks, paths, trails, social support, and opportunities for lifestyle change. The Step Into Cuba Alliance (Village of Cuba, Sandoval County, New Mexico Department of Transportation (DOT), Santa Fe National Forest, Bureau of Land Management, and Continental Divide Trail Coalition) is coordinated by the Nacimiento Community Foundation.²⁸⁰

The Cochise County Community Health Improvement Plan is an example of how a health planning document can stimulate cross-sector partnerships to address core issues in the community. Led by the Cochise Health and Social Services and partially funded by the Legacy foundation, planning in eight towns produced community-driven recommendations for affordable housing, healthy foods, economic development, and mental health/substance abuse.

White Mountain TRACKS Trail System is an example of how rural communities can collaborate to improve their economic health through volunteer work and construction of a 200+ mile major trail system with the goal of preserving the White Mountain non-motorized trails. While this initiative started with no funding, the supporting organizations have raised up to \$100,000, and has seen continued success since 1987.²⁸¹

280 For more information: <https://www.stepintocuba.org/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

281 For more information: <https://www.trackswitemountains.org/about-contact/our-story/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

"In a rural place, there aren't enough resources to go it alone...The model for collaboration that is essential to rural America is the church potluck supper. Everyone brings what they can to the table, and you end up with more than you need to get your job done."

– John Molinaro, Appalachian Partnership, Inc.

About the Author

Jane Pearson has had a distinguished career in the public health and non-profit sector. Over a 20-year period, she held many positions within Arizona Department of Health Services including Assistant Director, Community and Family Health. In 1996, she joined St. Luke's Health Initiatives (now Vitalyst Health Foundation) as Director of Programs and retired in 2012. She has served on numerous state and national boards including the American Public Health Association, Arizona Public Health Association, the Governor's Commission on Women's Health, and the National Advisory Committee for the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Maximizing Enrollment Program. She is a co-founder of Trinity Opportunity Alliance.

Community Safety, Well-Being, and Access to Care

Matt Eckhoff, Kominote Community Consulting

Jesus Rivera, Surprise Fire Medical Department

This topic intersects and explores these elements of a vibrant community:



COMMUNITY SAFETY



ACCESS TO CARE



HEALTH EQUITY



SOCIAL JUSTICE

Introduction

Professionals from fire, emergency medical services, police, and behavioral health crisis response teams and Arizona's 911 dispatchers all play unique, front-line roles at the intersection of public safety, community well-being, and access to care. As such, it is important to understand first responder systems, evolving capacities, and recent transformational work related to building and supporting vibrant communities.

"First responders" include emergency communications, law enforcement, fire and emergency medical services, and behavioral health crisis response professionals tasked with coordinating and responding to many public safety and community needs throughout Arizona, typically initiated by a 911 call or a crisis response call line. In Arizona in 2019, more than 4.3 million 911 systems²⁸² calls for assistance were placed, and in 2018, approximately 47,300 crisis calls were placed in Arizona.²⁸³

Many 911 calls are point-in-time emergencies (e.g. house fire, isolated fall, motor vehicle collision, mental health crisis, robbery, or assault), yet there are a substantial number of calls best served through alternative system resources or interventions (e.g. housing insecurity, chronic disease management, or social isolation).²⁸⁴ Nationally, Medicare data shows that 13–16% of 911 calls resulting in ambulance transport to an emergency room would have been best served via primary care resources.²⁸⁵ In Arizona, about 60% of 911 calls for medical concerns result in an ambulance transport to an emergency department,²⁸⁶ begging the question of how best to deploy resources to serve the needs of many callers.

282 911.gov. (2019). *National 911 Progress Report*. Retrieved from: <https://www.911.gov/pdf/National-911-Program-Profile-Database-Progress-Report-2019.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

283 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. (2019). *Arizona Callers in 2018*. Retrieved from: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Arizona-Lifeline-2018-Report.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

284 Cannuscio CC, Davis AL, Kermis AD, Khan Y, Dupuis R, Taylor JA. (2016). *A Strained 9-1-1 System and Threats to Public Health*. Retrieved from: <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26704911/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

285 Alpert, A., Morganti, K. G., Margolis, G. S., Wasserman, J., & Kellermann, A. L. (2013). *Giving EMS Flexibility in Transporting Low-Acuity Patients Could Generate Substantial Medicare Savings*. Retrieved from: <https://www.healthaffairs.org/doi/full/10.1377/hlthaff.2013.0741>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

286 Arizona Department of Health Services. (2019). *Emergency Medical Services 2019 Annual Report*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/preparedness/emergency-medical-services-trauma-system/reports/2019-ems-annual-report.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

Arizona is already an innovator in better responding, and regional efforts within each system to address caller needs continue to evolve. An example of this is regional deployment of unique resources such as specialized crisis intervention teams by law enforcement,²⁸⁷ fire agencies,²⁸⁸ and crisis lines to address callers' behavioral health needs.

Community differences such as socioeconomic status, cultural demographics, rurality, and tribal sovereignty playsignificant roles in Arizona's FR/PS (first responders/ public safety) systems. For example, the 911 systems of many sovereign tribal nations are separately operated and administered and rural counties experience significant differences in resources versus urban counties with population and resource centralization.²⁸⁹

Law Enforcement

Arizona has approximately 163 law enforcement agencies spanning state and local entities composed of about 14,500 sworn police officers.²⁹⁰ Agencies include entities at the Federal (10+), State (12), Regional (4), County (17), Municipal (79), School/College (12), and Tribal (17) levels. In 2018, Arizona Uniform Crime Reporting (UCR) data indicated a total 213,784 documented crimes, ranging from 16,644 to 19,710 offenses recorded monthly.²⁹¹ The range of crimes classified include murder, rape, property theft, assault, arson, human trafficking and prostitution, and drug trafficking/solicitation. The 2018 Arizona UCR Report indicates an average of the following reported crimes in every 24-hour period: 372 larceny-thefts, 82 burglaries, 51 aggravated assaults, 49 motor vehicle thefts, 18 robberies, 9 rapes, 4 arsons, and 1 murder.

ARIZONA LAW ENFORCEMENT QUICK NOTE²⁹²:

Law Enforcement Officer Ratios

Arizona Ratio Range	10-20 LE Officers per 100,000 population
National Ratio Range	18-26 LE Officers per 100,000 population

287 Balfour, M. E., Winsky, J. M., & Isely, J. M. (2017). The Tucson Mental Health Investigative Support Team (MHIST) Model: A Preventive Approach to Crisis and Public Safety. Retrieved from: <https://ps.psychiatryonline.org/doi/pdfplus/10.1176/appi.ps.68203>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

288 Beagley, D., Minor, B., & Westmiller, J. (2018). Crisis Support Training: Partnering Firefighters and Police on Crisis Calls. 2018 Crisis Intervention Training International Conference. Retrieved from: <http://www.citinternational.org/resources/Documents/Crisis%20Support%20Training.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

289 International Association of Chiefs of Police. (2018). *Practices in Modern Policing: Policing in Small, Rural, and Tribal Communities*. Retrieved from: https://www.theiacp.org/sites/default/files/2018-11/IACP_PMP_SmallTribal.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

290 Arizona Secretary of State. (2019). *Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training (AZPOST) Board*. Retrieved from: https://apps.azsos.gov/public_services/Title_13/13-04.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

291 Arizona Department of Public Safety. (2019). *Crime in Arizona January-December 2018*. Retrieved from: https://www.azdps.gov/sites/default/files/media/Crime%20in%20Arizona%202018_0.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

292 Governing. (2020). *Law Enforcement Officers Per Capita for Cities, Local Departments*. Retrieved from: <https://www.governing.com/gov-data/safety-justice/law-enforcement-police-department-employee-totals-for-cities.html> also see following links: <https://ucr.fbi.gov/crime-in-the-u.s/2018/crime-in-the-u.s.-2018/topic-pages/police-employee-data>; https://icma.org/sites/default/files/305747_Analysis%20of%20Police%20Department%20Staffing%20_%20McCabe.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

Statewide, 14 core training facilities are maintained to provide consistent education to LE (law enforcement) trainees. Funding for these facilities is principally secured through the Criminal Justice Enhancement Fund administered by the Arizona Peace Officer Standards and Training Board.²⁹³ Other sources of funding include state and local tax allocation to municipalities and counties, and (at the state level) addition of the Public Safety Fee in 2018 to fund DPS highway operations. Beyond tax and fee funding mechanisms, LE agencies often generate additional revenue through local administrative fees, the sale of seized property, and the procurement of state, federal, and private grants.²⁹⁴

Fire & Emergency Medical Services (EMS)

Arizona fire and emergency medical services (EMS) are organized at several different levels. Local fire and EMS are delivered by public and private fire departments, fire districts, and private EMS. Arizona's fire service is structured at the state, county, tribal, and municipal levels. There are 63 Municipal Fire Departments, 130 Public Fire Districts, 16 Private Agencies and 42 EMS Agencies (24 Ground, 18 Air).

The National Fire Information Reporting System (NFIRS) notes that 70.6% of reported fire agency incidents in 2018 were related to EMS requests while under three percent were fire related.²⁹⁵ Across the U.S., fire related calls have decreased from 2.9 million in 1980 to about 1.3 million in 2018. Meanwhile, over the same time period, calls for medical aid have increased from about 5 million to over 23 million calls annually,²⁹⁶ credited to community education, prevention, and policy efforts nationally.

Arizona's Emergency Medical Care Technicians (EMCTs) were responsible for about 678,000 911 calls for emergency medical needs in 2018; about 406,000 of those calls resulted in an ambulance transport to an Arizona physical or behavioral health facility.²⁹⁷

While many fire departments/districts have both fire and EMS (ambulance) apparatus, some fire agencies do not maintain ambulance operations and may rely on private EMS response to support this function. Most Arizona fire agencies require fire fighters be certified as an EMCT. Fire apparatus is often outfitted with the same supplies and equipment as an ambulance, enabling emergency medical interventions to take place as quickly as possible for time sensitive emergencies. To be certified, ground and air ambulances are each required to maintain Arizona Department of Health Services (ADHS) inspections with required medications and equipment to serve a wide range of patient medical and trauma needs.²⁹⁸

293 Arizona Joint Legislative Budget Committee. (2019). *Law Enforcement Training*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azleg.gov/ilbc/psdpslawenforcement.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

294 The current vehicle registration fee of \$32 which contributes to this revenue may be going away in July 2021. Read more here: <https://www.azcentral.com/story/news/politics/arizona/2019/05/22/deal-reached-repeal-32-vehicle-registration-fee-over-two-years-senator-says/1197085001/>. Access date: 8/5/2020.

295 Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2019). *National Fire Incident Reporting System, Arizona Fire Loss/Fire Department Profile*. Retrieved from: <https://www.usfa.fema.gov/data/statistics/states/arizona.html>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

296 National Fire Protection Association. (2019). *Fire Department Calls*. Retrieved from: <https://www.nfpa.org/News-and-Research/Data-research-and-tools/Emergency-Responders/Fire-department-calls>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

297 Arizona Department of Health Services. (2019). *Emergency Medical Services 2019 Annual Report*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azdhs.gov/documents/preparedness/emergency-medical-services-trauma-system/reports/2019-ems-annual-report.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

298 Arizona Department of Health Services. (2020). *Ambulance Programs*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/emergency-medical-services-trauma-system/index.php#ambulance>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

Behavioral Health Crisis Response

Throughout the U.S., mental illness impacts about one in five individuals, while only about 43% of individuals with a mental illness reported receiving treatment in 2018.²⁹⁹ Regionally, several Arizona communities see rates of death by suicide that approach or surpass three times the national rate, including La Paz, Navajo, Apache, and Yavapai Counties.³⁰⁰

ARIZONA BEHAVIORAL HEALTH STATUS QUICK NOTES³⁰¹:

Suicide Deaths Per 100,000 Population

Arizona: 19

United States: 14.5

Details Per 100,000 Population

Range: 4.3 (Santa Cruz County) – 46.2 (La Paz County)

Range: 8.3 (New Jersey/New York) – 25.2 (Wyoming)³⁰²

Since 2005, considering mental health trends throughout the United States, the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline has led federally funded efforts to create a hub for crisis call services. Of the 47,344 Arizona callers to the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline in 2018, 29,257 calls were directly served by Arizona's two major behavioral health crisis response systems locally, while 15,032 were served by the Veterans Crisis Line, and 684 elected for the National Lifeline's Spanish Language Line. Of note, the remaining 2,371 Arizona callers were not able to be answered by Arizona crisis line professionals and were answered by a partner crisis line outside Arizona.³⁰³

Current efforts by Congress and the FCC are underway to support the advancement of 988 as the uniform number for accessing suicide prevention and mental health crisis hotline services nationally.³⁰⁴

The Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) is the key funder for crisis services across Arizona. As AHCCCS advances practices to support its Whole Person Care Initiative³⁰⁵ to address the many social components that impact health outcomes, AHCCCS is charging its contracted health plans to advance community outreach, education, and accessibility to Arizona's crisis services. With Arizona having an increasing rate of deaths by suicide, there is a call to increase the capacity of the state's crisis services. Despite this, funding for these services has stagnated since 2011.³⁰⁶

299 National Alliance on Mental Illness. (2020). *Mental Health by the Numbers*. Retrieved from: <https://nami.org/mhstats>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

300 Arizona Department of Health Services. (2019). *Suicide and Self-Inflicted Injury: Arizona, 2006-2017*. Retrieved from: <https://pub.azdhs.gov/health-stats/report/suicide/2018/suicide-report-12-2018.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

301 America's Health Rankings. (2020). *Trend: Suicide, Arizona, United States*. Retrieved from: <https://www.americashealthrankings.org/explore/annual/measure/Suicide/state/AZ>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

302 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *National Center for Health Statistics Suicide Mortality by State*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/pressroom/sosmap/suicide-mortality/suicide.htm>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

303 National Suicide Prevention Lifeline. (2019). *Arizona Callers in 2018*. Retrieved from: <https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Arizona-Lifeline-2018-Report.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

304 Federal Communications Commission. (2020). *FCC Proposes New 3-Digit Number as Suicide Prevention & Mental Health Crisis Hotline*. Retrieved from: <https://www.fcc.gov/fcc-proposes-new-3-digit-number-suicide-prevention-mental-health-crisis-hotline>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

305 Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System. (2020). *AHCCCS Whole Person Care Initiative*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azahcccs.gov/AHCCCS/Initiatives/AHCCCSWPCI/>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

306 AZ Legislature. (n.d.). *Total Behavioral Health Spending – FY 2008 to FY 2016*. Retrieved from: <https://www.azleg.gov/jlbc/bhspending.pdf>. Access date: 8/17/2020.; For 2019 and 2020 see the following: <https://www.azleg.gov/jlbc/20AR/axs.pdf> & <https://www.azleg.gov/jlbc/21baseline/axs.pdf>. Access date: 8/18/2020.

Arizona's two crisis call centers aligned with the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline are designed to support callers in crisis throughout the state regardless of insurance status.³⁰⁷ Following national best practices, Crisis Response Network and La Frontera EMPACT screen caller concerns related to a crisis such as suicidality, assess needs and risk, and link appropriate mobile crisis resources for crisis stabilization, and/or coordinate follow up care³⁰⁸ in partnership with AHCCCS contracted administrators to integrate these services.³⁰⁹

Public Safety and Vibrant Communities

Many cooperative efforts across Arizona have advanced in recent years, especially in key areas of challenge such as the burden of mental illness within each system. Law enforcement and fire/EMS professionals across Arizona have increased access to training, especially related to Crisis Intervention Team (CIT) training. CIT training was originally developed to increase LE officer awareness of issues related to mental illness, seeking to reduce the risk of death or injury during interactions between LE and individuals with mental illness. This remains relevant, as about a quarter of approximately 1,000 individuals fatally shot by LE in the U.S. in 2018 were individuals with mental illness.³¹⁰ CIT training, as well as other curricula like Mental Health First Aid®, have been adapted to also include fire and EMS professionals who are often called to respond to incidents involving patients with mental illness.

Breakthrough Example: Tucson Behavioral Health

The Tucson Police Department's (TPD) efforts to train its officers in mental health crisis dramatically decreased the department's rate of officer-involved shootings. Instead, officers increased utilization of pathways other than arrest to link individuals experiencing mental health challenges with resources such as substance abuse treatment, housing, and other health/social services.

The National Institute of Mental Health details that, "at least as far back as the deinstitutionalization of mental health care and the profound lack of community-based resources to fill service deficits, the role of police as mental health interventionists has been controversial and complex."³¹¹ In support of aligning policing practices with community need, TPD was named a Mental Health Learning Site by the U.S. Department of Justice, allowing agencies across the country to learn from Tucson's success directly.

307 Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System. (2020). *AHCCCS Complete Care Crisis Services FAQs*. Retrieved from: https://www.azahcccs.gov/AHCCCS/Downloads/ACC/View_Crisis_System_FAQs.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

308 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2020). *National Guideline for Behavioral Health Crisis Care*. Retrieved from: <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/national-guidelines-for-behavioral-health-crisis-care-02242020.pdf>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

309 Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System. (2020). *AHCCCS Complete Care Crisis Services FAQs*. Retrieved from: https://www.azahcccs.gov/AHCCCS/Downloads/ACC/View_Crisis_System_FAQs.pdf. Access date: 5/29/2020.

310 Rogers, M. S., McNeil, D. E., & Binder, R. L. (2019). *Effectiveness of Police Crisis Intervention Training Programs*. Retrieved from: <http://jaapl.org/content/early/2019/09/24/JAAPL.003863-19>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

311 Wood, J. D., & Watson, A. C. (2017). *Improving Police Interventions During Mental Health-Related Encounters: Past, Present and Future*. Retrieved from: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/10439463.2016.1219734>. Access date: 5/29/2020.

Breakthrough Example: Regional Community Paramedicine and Treat & Refer

Historically, fire and EMS agencies were bound to respond and transport a patient to an emergency department when any level of care was necessary. Community paramedicine programs that transform EMS from responders to proactive mobile health providers have grown statewide since 2014 to include more than 30 agencies that address community health and social needs proactively, with the goal to prevent 911 calls, reduce healthcare costs, and improve patient outcomes. Directly in response to a 911 call, Arizona's Treat & Refer Program³¹² creates a pathway for fire and EMS agency leadership and medical directors to go beyond just medical transport – providing an opportunity to reduce costs and improve outcomes more effectively. Since Arizona's adoption of Treat & Refer, the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services created the Emergency Triage, Treatment, and Transportation (ET3) Innovation Model to support demonstrating a similar model nationally to support screening 911 callers with low-acuity needs and subsequent linkage to applicable resources.³¹³

Although many additional cross sector collaborations exist to build more vibrant communities across Arizona, these efforts to address the pressing and community wide needs of community members with mental illness align with many other sector efforts such as broader criminal justice system involvement, housing insecurity, higher level access to health care, education, economic, and certainly social justice.

About the Authors

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Matt enjoys working with a broad array of stakeholders to explore and implement sustainable enhancements to improve community health ecosystems. Matt is proud to be a part of work across the U.S. to address root causes of illness and injury through the evolution of Mobile Medicine (Mobile Integrated Healthcare). Matt finds great joy in advocacy planning, stakeholder engagement, and program development to connect what makes a community's health shine. Matt earned a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology/Biology from Northern Arizona University and a Master of Public Health degree from the University of Arizona Zuckerman College of Public Health.

Jesus Rivera, Paramedic and Division Chief, Surprise Fire-Medical Department

Jesus Rivera has served as a member of the Surprise Fire-Medical Department (SFMD) for over 22 years. Jesus is a Paramedic and Division Chief over Surprise's Medical Services programs which includes Mobile Integrated Healthcare, Community Paramedicine and Emergency Medical Services. Jesus received Surprise's Fire Chief's award in 2016, the AEMS Aces of Hearts award in 2018 and Image Trend Hooley Award for Innovation in 2019. Jesus has an Associate's degree in Paramedicine, a bachelor's degree in Public Safety and is currently pursuing a master's in Public Safety Leadership & Administration (Emergency Medical Services-Mobile Integrated Healthcare).

312 For more information on Treat & Refer see here: <https://www.azdhs.gov/preparedness/emergency-medical-services-trauma-system/index.php#tr-ems-agency-recognition>.

313 Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services. (2020). Emergency Triage, Treatment, and Transport (ET3) Model. Retrieved from: <https://innovation.cms.gov/innovation-models/et3> Also see link: https://mfprac.com/web2019/07literature/literature/Misc/EMS-Realignment_Munjaj.pdf. Access date: 6/1/2020.

Pre-Community Engagement

Adapted by Vitalyst Staff from the works of Stephanie Luz Cordel, All Voices Consulting and C.J. Eisenbarth Hager

This topic intersects and explores these elements of a vibrant community:



SOCIAL/CULTURAL COHESION



COMMUNITY SAFETY



SOCIAL JUSTICE

Effective Community Engagement is a “Make or Break” Skill for Vibrant Communities

Communities are vibrant when supported by responsive and effective public policies and investments. Conversely, they are dysfunctional when those policies and investments are ineffective and unresponsive. In this regard, consider that vibrancy can be developed most effectively through inclusive and respectful community participation.

THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC PARTICIPATION (IAP2) CONTINUUM

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 

	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

Source: © IAP2 International Federation 2018. All rights reserved.

Such engagement is distinguished by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) Continuum as moving beyond typical actions of “consulting” and “involving” communities and reaching “collaboration” and “empowerment” levels. In other words, effective community engagement actionably delivers on the promise that either “we will incorporate your advice and recommendations” or “we will implement what you decide.”

“Pre-community engagement refers to the preparation needed to develop a community engagement plan and strategies that inspire community participation and connect with residents in an authentic way”

So how do you get public participation right? Nationally, IAP2 sets a high bar for cities and towns. Locally, Vitalyst Health Foundation commissioned a Pre-Community Engagement study and report of methods, underlying values, and lessons learned that provides guidance on how to invest early and often in ways to get there.

Methodology

Pre-Community Engagement Methodology incorporates three core steps to develop an approach that is meaningful, relative, and personalized to a community: (1) seek to understand the layers within a community, (2) understand a range of community member perspectives, and (3) identify engagement strategies that support community preferences. While this is not exhaustive, it does highlight the upfront work that needs to be done.

1. **Seek to Understand the Layers within a Community.** Not all members within a community are the same. Understand the sub-communities, different groups, and various sectors within a particular “community”:
 - a. **Identify Existing Relationships within a Community.** They are key to more nuanced, honest perspectives and are a starting point for connection and trust.
 - b. **Understand Community Networks.** Find resident leaders, find the history, find the connections, and find the community’s flow of networks.
 - c. **Understand the History of Place through formal and informal sources.** Articles only tell part of the story; oral histories provide unique and valuable perspective.
 - d. **Understand Previous Engagement Efforts.** Knowing the history and lessons of past and recent engagement is key and can provide informative lessons.
2. **Understand a Range of Community Member Perspectives.** Collaborate with community members on barriers that may prevent engagement. Ask about channels (methods and places) through which a community would engage most readily and easily.
3. **Identify Engagement Strategies that Support Community Perspectives.** Collaborate on strategies to address identified barriers. Practice new habits of collaboration and empowerment.

Underlying Values

Authentic community engagement is effective when using a values-driven approach. The “why” and the “how” matter more than the “what” when building relationships and trust. Below is a set of values to center as community pre-engagement and engagement takes place.

1. **Value Lived Experience.** Treat community members’ inherent knowledge and expertise earned through life experience as importantly as formal project expertise.
2. **Recognize History of Place.** Become familiar with the historical context every community has, because it impacts community dynamics, reactions, and connections.
3. **Promote Power to Influence.** Allow community input to influence project trajectory. Allow community members to hold power in how it develops.
4. **Operate with Transparency.** Be open and transparent always to build trust. Be clear and open about the process and how community members will influence it.
5. **Approach with Humility.** Always come from a place of humility and valuing community members’ lived experiences and expertise. Be a facilitator, not a director.
6. **Center Authenticity.** Do the work beyond transaction. Connect authentically, and value people as people rather than data points. Center relationships and trust so that resident input drives change.
7. **Value People’s Time.** Provide tangible value like participation stipends, meals, and/or childcare to help receive all the community input possible. Do not inequitably expect the community to participate for free when everyone else in the room is paid.

A Cautionary Tale: Lessons Learned in South Phoenix

In 2016, the City of Phoenix voted to fast-track a light rail extension from downtown to South Phoenix. Doing so started a multi-year journey of steps and missteps in terms of fostering collaborative and empowering community engagement – culminating in a ballot measure that forced the taking of sides and a win-lose dynamic. In August of 2019, Phoenix voters defeated a ballot question that would have prohibited any further expansion of the light rail system. Analysis of the events and effects that transpired produced the following series of lessons and recommendations:

1. **Prioritize engagement.** Significant investments and policy changes call for commensurate investment in authentic relationships.
2. **History speaks louder than words.** Any barriers to trust created by past city/town decisions and previous engagement efforts inform public perception.
3. **Trust is key to authentic engagement.** Relationships cultivated over time create authentic feedback.
4. **Transparency is important.** Residents want to not only be heard, but to clearly understand how their participation makes a difference.
5. **Power comes through ownership.** Traditional “informing” and “consulting” takes on an extractive quality; residents naturally want participation and power to oversee how their input is converted to action.
6. **There is no “one” community.** Neighborhoods can encompass hundreds or thousands of unique people. Boiling down one demographic group to a single viewpoint can be dismissive if not dangerous. Anticipate complex and diverse opinions.

MORE LESSONS FROM THE SOUTH PHOENIX LIGHT RAIL EXTENSION EXPERIENCE

1

Build Trust: Ensure Residents Have Clear Ways They Influence the Process

Respondents expressed lack of trust with the City of Phoenix as a whole as a barrier to participation. This level of trust is based on previous experience with government entities.

2

Support Resident Understanding of How They Can Influence the Process

Many respondents shared their interest in understanding how their feedback would influence the process. This includes breaking information down into clear language for a range of experience levels and learning styles.

3

Validate Community Contributions

When respondents were asked how they would know the City has taken their feedback into account, many shared specific ways they could be validated.

4

Create a Feedback Loop

Many respondents shared their desire for feedback regarding their participation and the ability to track their contribution within the larger project.

5

Engage through Existing Relationships

Perhaps the most effective way to build trust is to engage residents through established community relationships. It not only increases the likelihood of more people to participate, but there is a stronger chance to have more candid feedback. It also impacts the level of motivation to be involved. Relationships are the foundation of the South Phoenix community.

6

Meet People Where They Gather

There are several locations within the community that residents frequent, including grocery stores, festivals, gatherings, schools, car shows, etc.

7

Collaborative Engagement Approach

Many respondents preferred the engagement to have more community leadership in order to promote a sense of ownership in the activities.

8

Offer a Variety of Engagement Options and Modes of Communication

Several respondents offered solutions to common barriers by promoting the use of a variety of engagement options, particularly to accommodate people's time and availability. There was not one preferred way of reaching out to residents in the community.

9

Provide Informal Engagement Opportunities

South Phoenix residents expressed their discomfort with formal meeting spaces that often feel too structured and rigid to express themselves without judgment.

10

Address Common Barriers of Participation

Respondents shared what they believed to be the most common barriers to participating and offered some possible solutions to consider. Many respondents shared incentives as motivating people towards participation.

Authors Concur: The Keys to Creating Vibrant Communities in Arizona

Vitalyst Staff

This report's authors come from a breadth of sectors. Their experience in their chosen field averages roughly three decades per author. Some were born here. Some are recent transplants bringing lessons from other cities, towns, and states. Their perspectives have every reason to diverge.

Against this background of diversity, broad themes still emerged consistently:

- Data shows the challenge of healthy, vibrant communities is complex and daunting:
 - The numbers can be overwhelming, particularly in most-impacted communities.
 - Systemic, long-term challenges are on the table.
 - What has taken decades to create will take time to change, but opportunities and "early wins" are evident.
- The path to making a difference starts with three key components:
 - Transforming policies, systems, and environments to align with the goals of well-being and community vibrancy.
 - Emphasizing equity and community-driven solutions that are developed at the speed of trust.
 - Collaborating across sectors to make success more comprehensive and less costly.
- To create breakthrough solutions, consider carefully what we identify as "root causes".
 - The cause and effect equation works toward intended outcomes only when we carefully and collectively identify the cause part of the equation first.

Finally, we are making choices whether we think we are or not. To paraphrase Gil Penalosa, the founder and chair of 880 communities and advocate for vibrant communities, "If we don't choose bikes, we choose pollution." To do nothing is to keep Arizona on its current path, where the breadth and depth of challenges to community vibrancy will only increase.

As last year's report, "Strong Families Thriving Children," noted in the lead up to 2019's Community and Statewide Town Halls, this is an exciting time to fully engage in this work, because Arizona is learning and beginning to internalize what it means to actualize a multi-sector, collaborative approach to well-being and vibrancy. Such work applies not just to the individual or families. It is critical to how we improve neighborhoods, communities, municipalities, and the tapestry of policies, systems, and environments woven throughout.

Given those levels and that tapestry, we are without question embarking on a compelling "all hands, all voices" 2020 Arizona Town Hall journey to discover insights and recommendations for vibrant communities.

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