CITY OUTCOMES

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT REPORT

**CENTER FOR
PUBLIC DELIBERATION**
COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

PREPARED FOR THE CITY OF FORT COLLINS BY
THE CSU CENTER FOR PUBLIC DELIBERATION

CONTENTS

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COLORADO STATE UNIVERSITY

Introduction

This report synthesizes the City of Fort Collins Outcomes engagement series that took place on Thursday, September 28th, Wednesday, October 11th, and Wednesday, October 25[th,] 2023. It includes data and notes from small group facilitated conversations. These events were designed to allow residents throughout Fort Collins to discuss that various City goals mean to them and work together in groups to think through what success would look like if these goals and outcomes were realized in the City of Fort Collins.

Event Context and Meeting Design

In the summer and fall of 2022, the City of Fort Collins and the Center for Public Deliberation (CPD) worked together on engagement around the proposed budget. During this process, community members gave a considerable amount of feedback that indicated the way City outcomes (more simply goals the City would like to achieve during any given budget cycle) were defined in the City's budget did not necessarily align with community needs. As a direct result of this feedback, the City sought to bring in public voice earlier in the strategic planning and budgeting process to make sure they understood how the community viewed their distinct outcomes.

In the fall of 2023, the CPD, in partnership with the City of Fort Collins, designed a series of three community engagement opportunities which aimed to foster robust conversation around the City's public-facing outcome areas. City partners alongside the CPD created simple handouts and worked on a process that would allow the community to share what specific outcome areas meant to them while envisioning what successful programs and services might look like in each of the areas. Members of the community were invited to these events in various ways: the Center for Public Deliberation email list, social media posts from the CPD and the City of Fort Collins, and in-person recruitment through various City partners and local groups. To encourage a wider diversity of participation, the City and CPD utilized a Language Justice Model for all three events which allowed Spanish-speaking community members to attend and participate fully in their first language. Additionally, the City allowed participants to opt-in for a $50 King Soopers gift card for attending these events. Community members could opt to attend as many of the three events as they liked, and many did join us for all three events which allowed them to provide feedback on six total City outcomes. Small group conversations began each night at 6pm, and participants were invited to arrive at 5:30pm to eat dinner and begin getting to know the other community members at their table.

At each event, small groups were facilitated by a student associate at the Center for Public Deliberation. There was also a note-taker in each breakout group tasked with recording all comments, questions, and information shared by participants. Student facilitators guided the conversation in two 45-minute sections. This allowed all participants to discuss each outcome for the night for as long as possible. For each outcome, participants were asked the same set of questions:

1. When you see this outcome, what immediately comes to mind? How would you define this outcome area in your own experience?
   a. What does it look like to you?
   b. What would our community look like if this outcome was fully realized?

2. When thinking of programs and services, what could the City provide to make sure this outcome is achieved?
    a. How might these programs and services help the City achieve this outcome?

The nightly outcome areas for the events were as follows:

Thursday, September 28th: Transportation and Economic Health

Wednesday, October 11th: Neighborhood Livability & Social Health and Environmental Health

Wednesday, October 25th: Culture & Recreation and Safe Community

At each engagement event, partners with the City of Fort Collins provided a brief introduction to discuss the purpose of the event as well as the outcome areas. Leadership at the Center for Public Deliberation introduced the student facilitators and conversation ground rules before beginning small group conversations.

After the three events were complete, a small team of students compiled notes from all events. Once this was complete, each comment in the notes was thematically coded in two rounds. In the sections below, we share demographic breakdowns for attendance at each engagement event, as well as major themes we identified.

While participants were asked distinct sets of questions, we noticed that all conversations eventually started to blend into a two-pronged discussion of challenges and community vision for what the outcome could be and services or programs that could help that vision be achieved. As such, we will divide the themes for each event into a ***Challenges*** section, and a ***Community Vision*** section. Each outcome section will start with a bulleted list of themes and then be followed by a short summary of the conversations. Items on the bulleted lists are organized based on frequency, with most common themes at the top.

Transportation and Economic Health: Participant Demographics

There were 26 attendees at the first event on September 28th, 2023. The following information was voluntarily provided by participants when they filled out the RSVP form. ***Where numbers do not equal 100, participants declined to specify, or arrived as an unregistered participant.***

Age Group	Percentage
25-34	8%
35-44	19%
45-54	8%
55-64	15%
65-74	15%
75+	11.5%

Gender	Percentage
Female	61%
Male	15%
Gender Non-Conforming	1%

Race	Percentage
White	50%
Asian	7%
Jewish	3%

Income Range	Percentage
$10,000-$14,999	3%
$15,000-$24,999	19%
$25,000-$34,999	3%
$35,000-$49,999	7%
$50,000-$74,999	7%
$75,000-$99,999	7%

Ethnicity	Percentage
Hispanic/Latino	30%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	30%
Tibetan	3%
Jewish	3%

*A clarification on the terms race and ethnicity. **Race** as a term is meant to describe physical characteristics while **Ethnicity** describes cultural characteristics based on geographic region: things like language, heritage, religion, and customs.*

Transportation Challenges:

- Concerns about the geographic coverage and frequency of service for bus routes throughout the city.
- Concerns about the safety of alternative methods such as biking, e-scooters, and walking
- Concerns about the accessibility and safety of public transportation, including issues related to the homeless population and safety at bus stops.
- Concerns about lack of access to senior centers and other community hubs via public transit.
- Concerns about the over-reliance on personal vehicles and negative environmental impacts as well as traffic congestion.
- Concerns about the social, economic, and cultural opportunities that are lost due to lack of public transit as well as a concern about the divide this creates between people with cars and people without cars.
- Concerns about the accessibility and availability of parking. This is particularly salient for elderly community members and those with disabilities.

Summary:

These challenges reflect an overall concern for the safety of our current transit structures including bussing, biking, and Spin bikes/e-scooters. Some of these concerns are tied to the danger of biking in a community that feels "car centric". Coupled with these concerns were worries about environmental pollution tied to overutilization of private vehicles rather than more environmentally friendly alternatives. Other concerns related to the safety of bus stops or rides on the bus. Some community members expressed concern about interactions with the City's homeless population while riding public transit or walking to stops, while others mentioned the behavior and driving ability of Transfort drivers as well as their inability to appropriately communicate with Spanish-speaking riders.

Additionally, accessibility issues for elderly and disabled residents were discussed, alongside frustration about where the bus routes go and how often they run. Participants noted that bus lines were scarcer on the South side of the city and also expressed frustration about how challenging it can be to travel East/West using transit. Some participants shared that even the location of bus stops is a barrier because they must walk so far to get to them. Once they are on the bus, some noted having to make multiple transfers just to get to a grocery store which requires them to add multiple hours onto their trip for the day. Many felt that the lack of public transit created a divide between community members who own cars and those who don't. Many also noted that lack of more robust public transportation services limited access to social participation, job opportunities, and helped further exacerbate economic disparities throughout the city.

Language access was also presented as a challenge for many of the Spanish-speaking community members. They mentioned that most communication about bus lines and brochures about bus services are in English and it is almost impossible to understand how the bus routes work when you cannot read the information about them, and the bus driver is unable to communicate with you. In fact, even some English-speaking participants noted that information about bus routes was confusing.

Overall, these discussions highlighted various concerns tied to safety, convenience, and accessibility of our local transit options.

Community Vision for Transportation:

- Increased frequency of bus services and increased geographic coverage of bus routes.
- Bus routes that stopped at various services: senior and community centers, grocery stores, banks, etc.
- Language accessibility in bus route information and bilingual staff.
- Urban planning and infrastructure that focused on creating safer biking lanes and trails throughout the city.
- Increased education for cyclists and motorists about the various traffic laws and how to create a safer environment for all.
- Visions of a more walkable Fort Collins and increased accessibility of transit.
- Infrastructure that created additional designated bus pull-off areas.

Summary:

When discussing potential solutions or opportunities to improve this outcome, various participants discussed how to make Fort Collins more walkable with more consistent access to public transportation. Some noted that one way to make the city more walkable and accessible was to consider creating local business clusters where various services could be accessed in a centrally located area. Numerous conversations reflected a desire for Fort Collins to become more accessible in similar ways, encouraging the City to think creatively about how businesses, services, and transit lines could be planned for maximum walkability for those in the community who either don't have a car, or would like to use their personal vehicles less often. Many participants wished for bus stops located more closely to their homes to reduce the amount of time they had to spend walking just to get to the stop.

Other solutions discussed across the groups involved increasing the geographic coverage of our bus services and decreasing the wait time between pickups. Participants acknowledged that the City would need to work intentionally to provide the infrastructure and improved planning necessary to accommodate the city's growth. Participants also desired more direct routes via public transit to places like senior centers, community centers, grocery stores, and manufactured home communities. There was also a call for improved language accessibility for our public transit services; potentially employing bilingual drivers and a focus on providing information in languages other than English at various bus stops.

In terms of biking and walking, participants discussed the potential of adding more protected bike lanes to improve the safety of biking. Many also shared the need for additional lighting on various trails so those who were walking could feel safer getting to their destinations. The idea of placing emergency phones along walking trails was floated as another potential way to build safer walking experiences for residents. Many groups noted that increased education for drivers and cyclists would be key to helping create a safer biking experience throughout the city. They also noted that increased communication between the City and relevant authorities about traffic laws might help.

Overall, the participants in these conversations envisioned a more walkable Fort Collins with more consistently and geographically dispersed bus services as well as a safer commuting environment for cyclists and pedestrians through improved education and communication.

Economic Health Challenges

- Concerns about the overall cost of living in Fort Collins and its impact on the economic health of the city.
- Concerns about income disparities and the impact of these disparities on marginalized and undocumented populations.
- Concerns about limited accessibility of support services or struggles to navigate the bureaucracy of these services.
- Concerns about rapid growth and its impact on the affordability of housing.
- Concerns about rising rents and issues of requiring credit scores and income guidelines for rental housing.
- Concerns about lack of transparency and/or accountability in local decisions and the City budget.

Summary

Challenges in these conversations focused heavily on the lack of access to various services across the city that would help community members be more financially stable or economically healthy themselves. This was especially true in conversations about the growing homeless population in Fort Collins and how various services are challenging for them to access. Various conversations also focused on how resources are difficult to access if you are not an English-speaker or don't have access to reliable technology to fill out various forms or read emails and information. Additionally, participants noted it is a struggle for even the most well-versed community member to navigate all the bureaucratic structures throughout the city.

Another large challenge discussed throughout the participant groups was related to the overall cost of living in Fort Collins, with many noting that housing costs make it difficult for them to feel like the city is economically healthy. In fact, much of the conversation about economic health, or the lack thereof, was tied in some way to the affordability of housing. Participants mentioned it is becoming increasingly difficult to live in Fort Collins on a fixed budget and expressed concern about those in the lower- and middle-income brackets. Many acknowledged that these challenges were caused, in part, by the rapid growth experienced over the last several years. What we noted here is that our participants linked individual economic health with the overall economic health of the city. They noted that if the people living here are struggling to get by, that has lasting impacts throughout all sectors that are worthy of consideration.

Finally, numerous participants shared concerns about the lack of transparency amongst various City agencies as it related to the budget and other local decisions. Some participants felt like information about the City budget and other priorities were not readily available or accessible to community members, which in turn made them feel like there was a lack of accountability to residents for ensuring local decisions were beneficial to them.

Community Vision for Economic Health

- Streamlined community resources that are available in various languages and accessible to all members of the community, regardless of documentation or housing status.
- More community engagement and involvement in things like the City budget.
- Creating a culture that incentivizes supporting local businesses and keeping money in our local economy.
- More equitable and diverse housing options.
- Increased affordability of cultural events, museums, and other local services.
- Increased transparency in government spending.
- Providing financial education from an early age and helping community members build financial literacy.
- City support for increasing digital access and purchasing various technologies required to work and do business in a virtual context.

Summary

In conversations about what Economic Health might look like in Fort Collins, our participants had robust discussions about various ways to achieve this outcome. Language accessibility was a key piece in many of the conversations, with some noting that making information available in various languages, employing bilingual staff, and improving ease of access for undocumented individuals would be excellent steps in improving the overall economic health of the city. Numerous conversations also focused on ways we could keep resources within our community through potentially providing incentives for utilizing local businesses as well as looking into stronger promotion of local food systems like community gardens. Additionally, many participants noted how important it is to make sure that cultural events and museums throughout the city were affordable as those could create greater economic and social health as well.

Housing was discussed again with a call for the City to work on providing more diverse and equitable housing to ensure community members could continue to afford living here. Some noted that the continued building of what they termed "luxury apartments" was doing nothing to help the affordability crisis and expressed a desire for more housing that was attainable for community members in low-and middle-income brackets. Again, in these conversations our participants made a link between individual economic health and the overall economic health of the community.

Finally, many of our participants expressed a desire for more robust involvement and community engagement around things like government spending and overall decision-making processes throughout the city. These conversations focused on the deep need to understand where tax dollars are being spent and what benefits the community should expect to gain from those expenditures.

Neighborhood Livability & Social Health and Environmental Health:
Participant Demographics

There were 44 attendees at the second event on Wednesday, October 11th, 2023. The following information was voluntarily provided by participants when they filled out the RSVP form. ***Where numbers do not equal 100, participants declined to specify, or arrived as unregistered participants***.

Age Group	Percentage
18-24	4.5%
25-34	9%
35-44	16%
45-54	7%
55-64	16%
65-74	9%
75+	4.5%

Income Range	Percentage
Less than $10,000	2%
$10,000-$14,999	4.5%
$15,000-$24,999	18%
$25,000-$34,999	2%
$35,000-$49,999	7%
$50,000-$74,999	9%
$75,000-$99,999	7%
$150,000-$199,999	2%
Over $200,000	2%

Gender	Percentage
Female	52%
Male	15%
Gender Non-Conforming	9%

Race	Percentage
White	59%
Asian	7%
Black/African American	2%
Jewish	3%

Ethnicity	Percentage
Hispanic/Latino	18%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	45%
Tibetan	2%
Jewish	2%

*A clarification on the terms race and ethnicity. **Race** as a term is meant to describe physical characteristics while **Ethnicity** describes cultural characteristics based on geographic region: things like language, heritage, religion, and customs.*

Neighborhood Livability and Social Health Challenges

- Concerns about social isolation and safety within the community.
- Concerns about displacement caused by affordability issues.
- Difficulty accessing services due to language barriers or lack of information.
- Struggles to maintain a community identity through population changes caused by increased growth and/or pricing out of current residents.
- Concerns about the growing homeless population and their lack of authentic access to engagement.
- Concerns about unequal distribution of resources.

Summary

The terms "neighborhood livability" and "social health" were slightly unwieldy for our participants in these conversations at first, but once conversations started flowing, many were able to identify some key challenges related to these outcomes. Concerns about housing affordability and the overall cost of living in Fort Collins were shared numerous times and discussions about the City's growing homeless population were also quite frequent with many participants struggling to determine the best way to solve this ever-growing issue. Many noted that it is challenging for community members to feel a sense of belonging if they are concerned about making ends meet, and that often our homeless neighbors are excluded from these important conversations. In addition, some expressed concern that numerous community members may not even have access to essential services like gas, water, and sanitation. They stated that without these essential items, it is impossible for anyone to focus on something like social health.

Some participants tried to grapple with the growing and changing population of Fort Collins, wondering how we can continue to build a tight-knit community when we are experiencing such consistent growth. Some pointed out this population change is also partially due to people *leaving the City* due to affordability issues. The concern here was that younger families with children would continue being pushed out because the cost of living is too high for families just starting out. This conversation was coupled with an acknowledgement that our individualistic culture sometimes makes it challenging to build more communal events and opportunities, especially when combined with the challenges noted above.

Finally, numerous tables shared concerns about the unequal distribution of, and access to, resources throughout our community. This was highlighted as another potential stumbling block to creating a true sense of belonging throughout Fort Collins. Some noted they did not have easy access to a park or open space in their neighborhood and that their neighborhood was not well cared for overall. Some also shared they were nervous about neighborhoods being gentrified which would then displace the communities already living there.

Community Vision for Neighborhood Livability and Social Health

- Pathways to know and help neighbors, foster community connections, and provide neighborhood representatives.
- Effective, clear, and accessible communication and community engagement.
- Increased walkability of neighborhoods and access to services.
- Increased representation and cultural sensitivity in City departments and community initiatives.
- More concrete definitions and examples of "social health" and "neighborhood livability".
- More variety and acceptance of diverse types of yards and creative uses for them.
- More comprehensive solutions to the issue of homelessness: using vacant buildings, more programming to address the causes of homelessness, increased education.

Summary

A large emphasis in these conversations was placed on fostering stronger connections throughout the Fort Collins community with many noting these connections are vital not only for the overall health of the community, but for the mental health of the people living here as well. Participants discussed the potential of City initiatives to build out more robust networks of neighborhood representatives who could help create and sustain more connections in various locations. Some shared examples of the "Neighborhood Night Out" programming and suggested expanding these programs might be a way to increase neighborhood livability and foster more social health as well.

In terms of what neighborhood livability or social health looked like in practice, some noted concrete activities such as being able to grow a garden in their yard, utilize clotheslines rather than a dryer, and even raise chickens! Overall, these participants sought more control over what they could do in their own yards and ways to make their neighborhoods feel more welcoming with improved sidewalks and access to parks. Additionally, numerous participants noted the link between housing stability/affordability and social health, mentioning that community members who are housing burdened are likely less able to be a part of their neighborhood or the wider community due to financial strain or the need to work multiple jobs. Much like the economic health section, many were tying individual well-being and security to our ability to be part of the larger community.

Improved walkability and public transit were another theme we saw echo across all three events. Participants noted that reducing the burden of commuting, helping make the community more walkable, and adding more protected walking trails and bike lanes would help increase neighborhood livability throughout the city.

Finally, participants shared the importance of continued community engagement and intentional efforts by the City to make sure residents are included in conversations about things happening in their own neighborhoods.

Environmental Health Challenges

- Concerns about air pollution caused by personal vehicles.
- Frustrations about current waste management and recycling services.
- Concerns about the accessibility of "eco-friendly" lifestyles for those in marginalized communities.
- Disparities in access to green space, difference in air quality and pollution in low-income areas.
- Concerns about chemical usage on lawns/landscapes.
- Concerns about plastic waste, even after the plastic bag ban.

Summary

Participants in these conversations discussed numerous challenges related to the concept of environmental health. One challenge was echoed from a previous night: pollution caused by personal vehicles due to the "car centric" nature of Fort Collins and its lack of walkability in certain areas. Concerns about air pollution were especially salient in discussions about community members who may live in lower income areas. They shared their concerns that certain areas of town are more likely to have pollution issues than others. Many also brought up frustrations with the current approach to waste management, noting there are not proper disposal methods for all the waste we create: large electronic items, batteries, etc. Some noted concern about the delayed frequency of trash pickup or viable recycling options in their neighborhoods. In addition to this, many expressed concerns about a lack of clarity for how to appropriately recycle certain items. This left some feeling skeptical that our current recycling system was effective as-is. Some participants also mentioned the issue of light pollution throughout the City and had a desire for there to be more spaces throughout Fort Collins where community members could see the night sky.

Additionally, conversations seemed to focus on the challenges lower-income community members might face to adopting more "eco-friendly" practices and a disparity in access to open spaces for many marginalized communities throughout the city. Here it felt clear that numerous participants felt that environmental consciousness was also closely tied to income and was not necessarily accessible to everyone. There was considerable conversation about the amount of plastic waste in the City even after the plastic bag ban took effect with participants wondering about the best ways to address many of these issues on a community-wide scale.

Overall, participants addressed various interconnected challenges our community is currently facing to increase our environmental health. These conversations demonstrate the need for an intentional and inclusive approach to solutions and perhaps a focus on how to make sustainable lifestyles more accessible to the broader community who want to engage in these practices.

Community Vision for Environmental Health

- Increased education about recycling programs, xeriscaping, and other environmental issues.
- Addressing language barriers in communication by hiring bilingual staff and providing more accessible information to the full community.
- Increased advocacy and financial support for sustainable home practices: growing native plants, xeriscaping, using renewable energy resources, etc.
- Improved transportation services to help limit air pollution.
- Improved access to "eco-friendly" lifestyles through additional financial support programs.
- More active involvement by the City in regulating dangerous chemicals.

Summary

There was an incredibly robust conversation about community vision and potential ways to address many of these challenges. One of the largest themes we uncovered in this discussion was an overall need for more education about various environmental issues. Participants noted a need for increased education about recycling, composting, resources, and incentives available for electric vehicles, e-bikes, and xeriscaping, as well as more language accessibility for all this information. What we note here is a larger need for more accessible information about the programming and support available throughout the city to help everyone become more environmentally conscious. Participants discussed the need for this information to be available in various formats: text, alongside utility bills, in inclusive engagement or information sessions, on bulletin boards at grocery stores, etc.

Some also expressed a desire for the City to be more actively involved in regulating dangerous chemicals used in lawn and landscaping, noting these can pose health risks to the community. In fact, participants noted many areas that the City could be more actively involved in fostering environmental health: subsidizing composting efforts, accessible drop off locations for things like batteries and electronics, exempting individuals on SNAP from bag fees, and City-wide competitions to promote recycling and sustainability were but a few of the suggestions.

Transportation was also a key factor in many of these themes as our participants worked to find ways to combat air pollution. Much like the conversation during our first event, many discussions focused on the need for viable alternatives to personal vehicles which also require infrastructure and funding. Here participants also echoed the need for improved biking infrastructure and safer walking paths.

Culture & Recreation and Safe Community: Participant Demographics

There were 40 attendees at the final event on Wednesday, October 25th, 2023. The following information was voluntarily provided by participants when they filled out the RSVP form. *Where numbers do not equal 100, participants declined to specify, or arrived as an unregistered participant.*

Age Group	Percentage
25-34	5%
35-44	15%
45-54	5%
55-64	12.5%
65-74	8%
75+	5%

Gender	Percentage
Female	50%
Male	12.5%
Gender Non-Conforming	5%

Income Range	Percentage
$10,000-$14,999	54.5%
$15,000-$24,999	17.5%
$25,000-$34,999	2.5%
$35,000-$49,999	5%
$50,000-$74,999	2.5%
$75,000-$99,999	2.5%
$150,000-$199,999	2.5%
Over $200,000	2.5%

Race	Percentage
White	42.5%
Asian	2.5%
Black/African American	2.5%
Jewish	2.5%

Ethnicity	Percentage
Hispanic/Latino	25%
Non-Hispanic/Latino	30%
Jewish	2.5%

*A clarification on the terms race and ethnicity. **Race** as a term is meant to describe physical characteristics while **Ethnicity** describes cultural characteristics based on geographic region: things like language, heritage, religion, and customs.*

Culture and Recreation Challenges

- Overall lack of diversity in Fort Collins and less access to culturally significant activities/events.
- Language barriers and lack of bilingual staff at various community centers, museums, etc.
- Lack of engaging and safe activities for youth, especially teens.
- Affordability issues make recreation inaccessible to community members in lower income brackets.
- Concerns about a generational gap; lack of robust opportunities for younger community members to engage with older community members.

Summary

The conversations here reflected a mix of concerns related to community engagement, access to recreational and cultural opportunities, and the promotion of diversity and inclusion in Fort Collins. One of the main concerns noted here was language access. Numerous participants shared they had a hard time accessing information about recreational centers due to a lack of bilingual staff. These were like the concerns expressed in previous events about difficulty communicating with various staff across this city if English is not your first language.

Others mentioned how challenging it was to even afford many of the recreation activities in the city and shared a deep concern that Fort Collins was quickly becoming only a place for middle- or upper-class families to afford. In addition, many participants seemed to focus on the lack of recreational and engagement opportunities for youth in our community, noting concerns about a generation gap and lack of pathways to foster meaningful connections between younger people and other generations. This theme was echoed across quite a few tables with participants noting the City really doesn't provide a lot of opportunities for youth to engage in culture or recreation outside of just going to the library.

Another concern that was echoed quite frequently was an overall lack of cultural diversity in the city which many felt limited opportunities for Fort Collins to have robust, engaging, and fun cultural activities, especially when coupled with issues like language barriers, lack of childcare, and an overall lack of affordability throughout the city.

Community Vision for Culture and Recreation

- Increased affordability in recreation centers and other recreational/cultural activities.
- Diverse leadership in recreation programming and City positions.
- More cultural services and events that can cater to diverse nationalities and languages.
- Improved language access for cultural and recreational activities throughout the city.
- Improved communication about existing recreational/cultural opportunities.
- Opportunities for cross-cultural learning of skills.
- Intentional efforts by the City to create a more inclusive environment by holding regular cultural events, and perhaps by employing cultural advisors.

Summary

Many of these conversations reflected a need for inclusive and diverse cultural activities, improved engagement opportunities for youth, and increased accessibility and inclusivity in recreational spaces and programs. Participants noted the importance of celebrating culturally significant holidays such as Dia De Muertos and an overall need for culturally inclusive programs that allow the community to come together to learn not only about various cultures but learn useful skills as well. Overall, it seemed that many participants hoped for a community that could celebrate diverse cultures, foods, and languages without having to do so with formal events. However, many did note that starting with formal events would be an excellent way to foster these attitudes and habits long term. Many also shared the various events already put on by the City and included a call to communicate these more widely and examine how to make them more accessible to people who may have to use public transit to get to them.

There was a large focus on providing more youth programming throughout the city. Participants had numerous creative suggestions for this programming: dance clubs, youth leadership opportunities in parks and government, movie nights, and costume contests to name but a few. The overall emphasis here was to make sure younger populations had more access to recreation that was engaging, age appropriate, and safe.

Additionally, the participants expressed a desire to address various language barriers and encouraged the City to ensure everyone had equal access to recreation and culture, even if English was not their first language. The idea of a cultural advisor was floated by some participants; someone who could act as a guide in the community and promote more inclusivity and access to various recreation programs.

Safe Community Challenges

- Unsafe infrastructure: lack of lighting, unprotected bike lanes, dangerous crosswalks, etc.
- Concerns about the growing homelessness issue concentrated on North College.
- Lack of police support or response in specific neighborhoods.
- Disparities in City services and attention to different neighborhoods.
- Lack of communication between law enforcement and other public entities about matters of public safety.
- Lack of accountability and transparency among City services.

Summary

Participants highlighted various concerns or challenges related to being a "safe community", many of which had to do with environmental safety in some form. They mentioned things like poor lighting in neighborhoods, missing sidewalks, and trouble with harassment while walking through certain areas. Specific concerns were shared about the increased homeless population on North College coupled with the high number of legal marijuana and liquor stores in the area. Some noted the combination of these factors made that area feel unsafe generally.

Some participants also spoke about the lack of communication between law enforcement and the community as well as delayed response times in certain parts of the city. These region-specific disparities were mentioned many times across conversations and participants noted they felt less safe or cared for in their neighborhoods because of this. There seemed to be a feeling that lower-income areas and manufactured home communities were a lower priority for police and emergency services. Some participants noted language barriers and experiences of discrimination often made them feel less safe in the community as well.

Many participants were also able to have a nuanced discussion about how various identities can impact our feelings of safety in certain situations. Numerous people noted that many public places like parks, bus stops, and busses themselves can often feel incredibly unsafe for women, especially women of color. Others noted that lack of lighting in older neighborhoods also makes them feel less safe when moving through those areas. Additional environmental safety concerns focused on the colder months of the year, with numerous participants sharing concerns about lack of snow and ice removal in neighborhoods and parking lots as well as limited public transit options in snow.

Additionally, numerous participants discussed traffic-related safety. Discussions about transportation appeared across almost every outcome area in some way. In these conversations, participants noted they often don't feel safe crossing busy streets or worry that motorists won't see them walking in areas of town that aren't as well-lit. Some also noted that increased population growth has led to even more dangerous traffic situations throughout the city for motorists, pedestrians, and cyclists alike.

Community Vision for Safe Community

- Appropriate resource prioritization across the city to address disparities.
- Improved infrastructure safety: better lighting, safer bike lanes, improved parking lots
- Increased opportunities for community connections and trust building: events, information sessions, "Coffee with a Cop", etc.
- Safety workshops, civility training, and improved mechanisms for residents to share concerns.
- Cultural competency and language access.
- Increased transparency and communication in local government.
- Improved snow plowing operations during winter months.

Summary

In this section, participants emphasized the importance of prioritizing resources based on true community need rather than geographic location. Some also noted that the City could work to provide increased education on the various departments across the organization and what safety functions they are meant to serve. This would help residents have a deeper knowledge of who to contact for issues like dangerous lighting, roadwork, and other environmental safety issues. Participants provided some ideas for tangible items to provide such as bike lights and reflective vests for cyclists and pedestrians. They also expressed a desire for increased snowplow activity in neighborhoods and parking lots during the winter months.

Trust-building and community connections also emerged as key themes here, with many participants discussing the importance of speaking face to face to local law enforcement and other local government employees. "Coffee with a Cop" was shared as a particularly useful example of this type of community building. Overall, there is a strong desire for more community events to help residents feel more closely connected to the personnel who should be working to keep their neighborhoods and communities safe.

Beyond community events with law enforcement and other officials, participants also discussed the importance of building community within their own neighborhoods to foster a sense of communal safety. Many felt it was easier to achieve a sense of safety in a place where you knew most of your neighbors and there was a willingness to provide community support. This also related to a conversation about the importance of feeling included in the community. Participants encouraged an emphasis on respectful interactions and deeper cultural understanding throughout the community as well as more language access and bilingual support.

Conclusion

Overall, these community conversations were well-attended by a wide variety of community members. Our participants had robust conversations with one another about how we can work together to achieve our shared goals. Across all nights of conversations, we noticed lots of requests for more intentional and involved community engagement. The community members who came to these events noted the importance of small group discussions, information sessions, and more intentional outreach by the City. The use of Language Justice at these events also allowed Spanish-speaking residents to participate more fully than they often can, which provided insight that is often missing from event reports like this one.

We encourage the City to continue its inclusive outreach approaches and focus on minimizing barriers to attendance amongst community members. This requires constant work and innovation, but it is essential to ensure our full community can have a voice in local policy. While the City was diligent in addressing many barriers, there was one left unaddressed for these events: several participants brought their children along and in some cases the need to care for them hampered their ability to fully engage in conversations. This highlights the importance of providing on-site childcare during community engagement events. We often hear from our community that they would be more likely to attend these events if childcare was provided and it is worthwhile for the City to look into the feasibility of providing this in future engagement events.

At the Center for Public Deliberation, we believe firmly that bringing our community together, asking tough questions, and encouraging them to be creative can lead to transformative conversations. We saw that across many tables during these events. Members of the community shared honest experiences with one another and thought creatively about ways we can improve the city together. Many had an opportunity to meet new people and hear stories about their lives. In walking through the room during each event, we could often hear laughter echoing at various tables. Despite having to talk through some of our community's challenges, our participants were *having fun.* These moments highlight how useful it can be to sit down with one another and talk honestly about our hopes and concerns. We look forward to continuing this vital work and are hopeful continued events will provide robust and meaningful opportunities to engage around challenging issues.