

Oak Park and River Forest Community Health Plan Community Themes & Strengths Assessment

PURPOSE

In Phase Three of the Mobilizing for Action Through Planning and Partnerships, or MAPP, process, four different assessments are conducted to paint a comprehensive picture of health in the community.

The Community Themes and Strengths Assessment (CTSA) gathers perspectives from community members using qualitative approaches. It answers questions like:

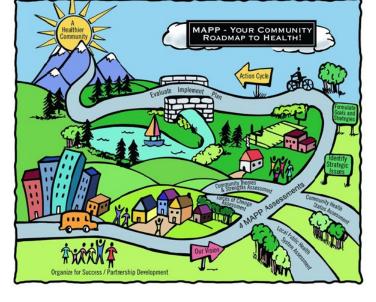
- What is important to community members?
- How is quality of life perceived in the community?
- What assets and barriers exist in the community?

PROCESS

The IPLAN core team used several methods to gather community perspectives. The primary one was an online community survey conducted between April and June 2022 which was distributed widely throughout Oak Park, River Forest, and neighboring communities. Community members were asked questions about themselves, their families, and the overall community. Questions covered overall health, access to care, mental health, substance use, disabilities, safety, and climate change, with additional optional sections on nutrition, maternal health, transportation, COVID-19, and violence.

A total of 751 respondents took the survey. Respondents were demographically diverse and came from across Oak Park, River Forest, and other adjacent communities.

In addition, the IPLAN core team gathered open-ended feedback through a public comment period on the health department's website during fall 2021, one-on-one phone interviews conducted during June and July 2022, and a brainstorming activity on community assets and barriers at an in-person meeting in July 2022.



Self-identified demographics of survey respondents

62% from Oak Park, 8% from River Forest, 30% other/unknown

78% white, 8% Black/African American, 8% Asian

13% Hispanic/Latino

74% female, 22% male, 1% nonbinary, 1% gender fluid

5% transgender

83% heterosexual, 7% gay/lesbian, 5% bisexual, 1% pansexual

Mix of ages from 20 to 80+

Mix of incomes from <\$40,000 to >\$130,000

RESULTS

Common themes emerged from the survey and other qualitative feedback methods around barriers to accessing health care, traffic safety and community violence, the impact of mental health, substance use, and climate change, and concerns about service availability, awareness, and coordination.

Key Survey Findings

When asked about barriers to accessing health care:

- 11% of respondents report not having time to see a health care provider
- Other barriers included COVID-related concerns (6%), being uninsured or underinsured (6%), not having access to a provider (5%), and not trusting the health care system (5%)
- 6% report another barrier, including high cost of care, complexity of insurance, finding providers that take their insurance, and finding specialists

within plan local offices provider drive become holistic area covid times pay work time healthcare e prohibitive cost providers care costs barriers child long finding difficult retired specialist doctors even psychiatrists new primary underinsured **ACCESS** good wait expensive

Word cloud of open-ended responses to other barriers to accessing health care

When asked about mental health and substance use:

- 29% of respondents report their mental health significantly impacting their daily activities over the last four weeks either very or somewhat often
- 27% report that someone in their household had experienced symptoms related to a mental health or substance use challenge in the last six months
- 10% reported that they or someone in their household struggles with alcohol, 7% with marijuana, 5% with tobacco, and 1-2% each with stimulants and opioids

When asked community safety:

- 66% of respondents report being concerned about community violence, such as gun violence, drug related crime, or auto thefts while 11% are concerned about interpersonal violence like domestic violence, child abuse, or sexual assault. 18% are concerned about both.
- More than 75% of respondents report being somewhat or a good deal concerned about carjacking, gun violence, and property crime
- Top pedestrian safety concerns included concerns about particular intersections (40%), concerns about crime/physical safety (38%), and not feeling safe crossing busy streets (31%)
- Top bicyclist safety concerns included car traffic (77%), lack of bike lanes on routes they take (30%), crime/physical safety (23%), and poorly maintained bike lanes (14%)

Other key findings:

- 12% of respondents worried about whether their food would run out before they had money to buy more at least a quarter of the time during the past 12 months
- 46% of respondents report currently or already had faced negative impacts of climate change
- 47% of respondents report feeling extremely unprepared or unprepared to face the impacts of climate change

Other Themes

From the other methods, some emergent themes included:

- Assets include senior services, library services, other Village services, schools, parks/green spaces, and general population affluence, education, and diversity
- Barriers include affordable housing, awareness of services available, substance use, access to mental health services, traffic safety, gun violence, and inequities in neighboring communities
- Need for greater services for young people and older adults, and vaccination for all ages
- Need for more coordination across agencies and municipalities



Word cloud of open-ended feedback from public comment period on health department website