AN  Antioch Branch
BN  Blue Springs North Branch
BR  Blue Ridge Branch
BS  Blue Springs South Branch
BU  Buckner Branch
CL  Claycomo Branch
CP  Camden Point Branch
CR  Colbern Road Library Center
   » SC  Square One Small Business and Career Services
DE  Dearborn Branch
ED  Edgerton Branch
EL  East Lee's Summit Branch
ES  Excelsior Springs Branch
FV  Farview Neighborhood Library
GH  Green Hills Library Center
   » CC  Culinary Center
GN  Grain Valley Branch
GV  Grandview Branch
KE  Kearney Branch
LJ  Lone Jack Branch
LS  Lee's Summit Branch
MGC Midwest Genealogy Center
NI  North Independence Branch
NO  North Oak Branch
OG  Oak Grove Branch
PC  Platte City Branch
PV  Parkville Branch
RB  Red Bridge Branch
RS  Riverside Branch
RT  Raytown Branch
SI  South Independence Branch
SM  Smithville Branch
WE  Weston Branch
WI  Withers Branch
WN  Woodneath Library Center
   » SC  The Story Center
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Executive Summary

Mid-Continent Public Library last conducted a community needs assessment in 2017 as part of the Library’s strategic planning process (Mid-Continent Public Library Reports, 2017). Since then, communities have experienced a pandemic and economic changes and impacts both related and unrelated to the pandemic. Changes in the past six years are identified in both demographic data as well as reported by leadership across the communities. These changes include but are not limited to: population fluctuations and shifts in generations and families in certain areas, changes to and lack of affordable housing, economic and employment changes, and changes in how people communicate and seek information and resources.

As in 2017, the Library’s 2023 community needs assessment and strategic planning processes were based on recommendations from the Public Library Association (Nelson, 2008). Between December 2022 and April 2023, Mid-Continent Public Library conducted 20 community meetings with participants from across various organizations in each community area. Library staff, leadership, and community members participated as stakeholders in the objective of learning more about the current state and needs of the communities within Mid-Continent Public Library’s service area. Leaders from organizations across service area communities joined for one-hour meetings over the lunch hour to answer questions and offer insights regarding needs in their geographic areas.

Intended Use and Users of Community Needs Assessment

Needs assessments and evaluations have many uses. One of the primary uses is to communicate an independent assessment of the successes, barriers, and service and program needs of a community that is impacted by an organization’s services and programs. The focus of this needs assessment is to gather input from a wide range of organizations and community representation to understand the barriers and needs of the communities. The objective is to apply that knowledge to inform strategic planning, programming choices, and partnership opportunities.

The audience for this assessment includes Library staff and leadership, community partners, and any individual interested in learning more about the outcomes of this work.
Community Needs Assessment Approach: Mixed Methods Framework

A “mixed methods approach” designs an assessment including quantitative and qualitative methods for the purpose of collecting data that each is best suited for, as well as offering a form of cross reference. Quantitative data provide measures that can numerically be compared and referred to by time points (e.g., year over year or from one assessment to the next). It offers a proportion of instances across participants, and in this case, a comparison across subsectors of organizations and geographic communities. Qualitative data adds contextual firsthand experiences to illustrate areas that quantitative numbers may summarize, as well as areas that cannot be quantified, such as perceptions, engaged conversation across organizations to pool information and identify overlapping concepts, and personal firsthand accounts that detail what summaries mean. Assessing a group of survey responses allows for a numerical breakdown of categories, and qualitative interviews and community forums allow for the description of those categories providing lived experiences to deepen understanding of the quantitative values and information that would otherwise be non-trackable.

The summary below provides a review of the assessment and determinations of the quantitative and qualitative data provided. Given the mixed methodology of this assessment, the components of the assessment—and subsequently the sections of this report—are not meant to stand alone but rather inform one another and be supportive of one another in the overall insights of the assessment. However, each section will allow for emphasis in the areas the method is stronger in and the contribution of each.

After completing data gathering from the community meetings, MCPL representatives worked with Library Community Resource Specialists to identify customers in the community who are experiencing the challenges identified in the meetings. Their experiences are captured throughout this report.

Limitations and Opportunities

There are a variety of factors leading to the response rates and distribution of responses by category. The survey was deployed at the beginning of May 2023 and remained open for two weeks. This is a relatively short time frame and nearing the end of a school year for educators. For this reason, responses may have been higher for those working in school districts earlier in the year. The timing of the survey was a result of the identification throughout the community meetings that a supplemental survey would serve to allow contribution from areas of the community not present in the meetings either due to lack of contacts, capacity, or the number of invitees due to space limitations. As described in the Participant Summary section, the number of participants yields meaningful insights, but may not be fully representative of what the broader community would share based on the meeting structures and participants.
Quantitative Data Sources

- Demographic and Location Data (retrieved in Savannah/OrangeBoy and sourced from Census data)
- Community Needs Assessment Survey

Demographic Summary of Communities

Tables 1 and 2 show an overview of population totals and metrics for each community grouping to orientate to the size of each geographic area and the challenges each area may be facing as depicted in the community meetings and survey.

Table 1 – Community Area Population Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch Location</th>
<th>Active Customers</th>
<th>Active Households</th>
<th>Avg. Household Size</th>
<th>Population Density (Pop. per Square Mile)</th>
<th>Total Children Age 0–9</th>
<th>Total Households</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antioch &amp; Claycomo</td>
<td>18,321</td>
<td>13,599</td>
<td>5.01</td>
<td>3,623</td>
<td>9,615</td>
<td>31,419</td>
<td>74,503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Springs North &amp; South</td>
<td>14,727</td>
<td>11,226</td>
<td>5.38</td>
<td>2,552</td>
<td>8,023</td>
<td>23,520</td>
<td>63,023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Ridge</td>
<td>9,450</td>
<td>7,595</td>
<td>2.54</td>
<td>2,042</td>
<td>7,198</td>
<td>18,950</td>
<td>48,462</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckner</td>
<td>1,505</td>
<td>1,069</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>103</td>
<td>685</td>
<td>2,161</td>
<td>5,837</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colbern, East Lee's Summit, &amp; Lee's Summit</td>
<td>28,721</td>
<td>21,678</td>
<td>5.29</td>
<td>1,701</td>
<td>14,618</td>
<td>42,718</td>
<td>113,848</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excelsior Springs</td>
<td>2,308</td>
<td>1,827</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>614</td>
<td>1,490</td>
<td>5,737</td>
<td>12,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain Valley</td>
<td>7,354</td>
<td>4,608</td>
<td>2.78</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>3,025</td>
<td>7,183</td>
<td>20,008</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandview</td>
<td>5,297</td>
<td>4,106</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>1,302</td>
<td>3,840</td>
<td>10,407</td>
<td>26,275</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Hills, North Oak</td>
<td>29,329</td>
<td>17,309</td>
<td>2.42</td>
<td>2,840</td>
<td>11,799</td>
<td>36,556</td>
<td>89,779</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kearney</td>
<td>5,998</td>
<td>4,350</td>
<td>2.77</td>
<td>169</td>
<td>2,329</td>
<td>7,652</td>
<td>21,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Jack</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>315</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>566</td>
<td>1,545</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Quantitative Data Sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch Location</th>
<th>Active Customers</th>
<th>Active Households</th>
<th>Avg. Household Size</th>
<th>Population Density (Pop. per Square Mile)</th>
<th>Total Children Age 0–9</th>
<th>Total Households</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>North &amp; South Independence</td>
<td>25,559</td>
<td>19,038</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>2,539</td>
<td>12,749</td>
<td>44,029</td>
<td>106,681</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Grove</td>
<td>1,656</td>
<td>1,277</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>900</td>
<td>1,242</td>
<td>3,031</td>
<td>8,449</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkville &amp; Riverside</td>
<td>10,932</td>
<td>8,417</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>2,308</td>
<td>5,969</td>
<td>20,303</td>
<td>50,405</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platte City &amp; Weston</td>
<td>5,255</td>
<td>3,988</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>2,873</td>
<td>9,822</td>
<td>25,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raytown</td>
<td>8,147</td>
<td>6,521</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>2,056</td>
<td>4,986</td>
<td>17,784</td>
<td>43,162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Bridge</td>
<td>7,501</td>
<td>6,101</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>1,502</td>
<td>4,324</td>
<td>18,853</td>
<td>41,323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smithville</td>
<td>3,798</td>
<td>2,772</td>
<td>2.69</td>
<td>225</td>
<td>1,545</td>
<td>4,805</td>
<td>13,021</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withers &amp; Woodneath</td>
<td>22,812</td>
<td>15,735</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>1,702</td>
<td>10,390</td>
<td>24,618</td>
<td>67,628</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2 – Community Area Demographic Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch Location</th>
<th>Households Below the Poverty Level</th>
<th>Households with Population Age &lt;18</th>
<th>Language Spoken Other than English</th>
<th>Median Age</th>
<th>Median Household Income ($)</th>
<th>No HS Diploma Age 25+</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antioch &amp; Claycomo</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>69%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>56,974</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Springs North &amp; South</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>86,859</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Ridge</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>44,357</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Buckner</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>69,545</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colbern, East Lee's Summit, &amp; Lee's Summit</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>78%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>39.5</td>
<td>93,382</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excelsior Springs</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>52,970</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grain Valley</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>77,863</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grandview</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>49,972</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green Hills, North Oak</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>75,890</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kearney</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>87,925</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lone Jack</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>83,929</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North &amp; South Independence</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>54,835</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oak Grove</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>43%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>59,128</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parkville &amp; Riverside</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>40.5</td>
<td>83,624</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Platte City &amp; Weston</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>79,912</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Raytown</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>55,215</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Bridge</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>58,944</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smithville</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>92,873</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withers &amp; Woodneath</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>88,941</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Community areas of multiple ADIs (Areas of Dominant Influence) is the rounded median average of the multiple values.*
Quantitative Data Sources

Community Survey Results

The community survey was sent to 228 community leaders and community members who were identified as organization representatives by Library managers and staff who work closely in the communities or have awareness of the subsector categories as they’re represented in each geographic area. Given the reach and staff size of the school districts, the Library asked those within the school districts who received the survey to share it with colleagues. From those who received the survey, 53 responded for a response rate of 23% from the original list. The representation of survey responses across areas of the community are shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1 – Community Sector Survey Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child and Family</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Center</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goods and Services</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While the community meeting framework aimed to have a balanced representation of the various areas of service and support in every community with a range of organizations present, the survey was sent to all community organization types, including those not present in the meetings. In structuring the meetings this way due to scope and availability of space, it was determined that a broader reach could be met with a supplemental survey. The survey offered the opportunity for more representatives to respond. Of those who took the opportunity to provide feedback, 25% indicated they work in a department of government. City, fire department, and police department staff across communities participated in the survey. The next highest response category, with 23% of the responses, came from school district staff across all communities.

The communities had consistent representation at each of the community meetings, but the survey was more imbalanced in representation across communities and disproportionate to the size of those communities. While this is something to be aware of when considering the responses, it is not intrusive of the results of the survey given that across both the community meetings and the survey responses, the needs and issues addressed are mostly shared across geographic locations. The distribution of survey responses by community is shown in Figure 2.
Of those responding to the survey, 64% indicated they live in the community they work in and were responding on behalf of, meaning that those working in many of these organizations serving the community and growing the knowledge of the needs of each community, are also residents of that community. This is notable for foundational knowledge. While the implication is not that living in the community one works in provides an advantage in insights, it is a lived experience to be a resident of the community as well and speak from the perspective of both.
Of the community leaders and community members responding to the survey, the roles they hold vary widely, as shown below:

- Assistant City Administrator
- Assistant Superintendent
- Attorney
- Before and After School Liaison/Coordinator
- Bilingual Therapist
- Board Member and Committee Chair(s)
- Career Navigator
- CEO/Executive Director
- Chief Development Officer
- Community Center Manager
- Community Development Manager/Development Specialist
- Community Education Manager
- Community Engagement Manager/Director
- Community Policy Manager
- Director of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Arts
- Economic Development Director
- Family Advocate
- Fire Chief
- Intake Specialist
- Librarian/Library Media Coordinator
- Mayor
- Police
- Program & Resources Manager
- Program Coordinator
- Retired Community Leader
- Senior Coordinator
- Service Coordinator
- Superintendent
- Therapist
- Writer/Media

Survey respondents were mostly in leadership roles and have been in their roles for at least a few years. The majority of respondents were ages 40+, with 40–49 yielding the largest response by age breakdown. 80% of respondents were women and 20% were men. 81% were White/Caucasian and 15% were Black or African American, with 4% identifying as Hispanic, Mixed Ethnicity, or Other.

Figure 3 – Community Survey Response Age Distribution
The community meetings are useful to provide context to major themes that surface across several participants and across locations, but it can be challenging to quantify those themes to reliably generalize them across a larger group. The joining of the contextual community meeting qualitative conversations alongside the survey data helps to shape more understanding about common themes and the weight of each. When survey respondents were asked to apply a rating of how much more is needed across categories, a resulting collective rating from the survey offers a comparison to what was heard in the community meetings (Figure 4).

**Figure 4 – Rating of Community Needs**

![Figure 4 - Rating of Community Needs](chart)

- Information channels to find resources needed
- Partnerships between community organizations
- Community Center
- Cultural events and opportunities
- Mental health resources
- Affordable housing
- Adult reading, writing, math, continued education classes
- English as a Second Language classes (ESL)
- Public parks and facilities
- Access to legal services
- Access to transportation
- Access to healthy affordable food
- Affordable after-school care for school aged children
- Affordable childcare for ages 3-5 (Pre-K)
- Affordable childcare for infants/toddlers (0-3)
- Services for veterans
Qualitative Data Sources

- Open-ended comments in the Community Needs Assessment Survey
- Community Meeting Discussions

Participant Summary

A strategic process of including Library branch managers in decision-making around which community leaders and organizers should be included in the community meetings was a starting point for the participant selection. Each branch manager provided names and organizations they thought might be informed and engaged participants in a community meeting forum. After collecting lists from each location and collating the list to determine a balanced cross-section of organization types and geographic location representation, a narrowed list of community representatives was selected. The reason for narrowing to a subset of the total list of contacts was due to space and time constraints.

Across 20 community meetings, there was an opportunity to provide meeting space and staff time on a limited basis. Consideration of the most suitable time to offer these meetings for leaders in the community was of high priority. It was determined that the lunch hour would offer the best opportunity to gather community leaders together who may not live in the area but represent the area through their work. It offered time within their workday, but in a timeframe that allowed the Library to offer lunch and then have a conversation about their work in the community. A limited number of seats ensured that those invited to attend would have space for their voice to be heard. Strategically, the larger list of contacts was identified as contacts for a similar framework of questions via the survey, which would allow opportunity for the broader community to respond. The community meetings provided embedded representation and lived experience through focus group-style question-and-answer sessions.

The community meetings resulted in 265 participants and nearly as many different organizations and city departments. Saturation in interviews, or when no additional new data can be found, may be obtained in fewer than 20 interviews, depending on how similar the experiences of the participants are (Hennink and Kaiser, 2022). This level of participation, along with the survey responses, provides a substantial level of insights from community leaders’ perspectives.
Community Meetings Summary

Regardless of location, communities are experiencing challenges in some common areas. Affordable housing, food insecurity and access to healthy food, transportation needs, and effects from COVID are some of the main issues most communities are facing. As community members navigate current economic challenges, problems communities may not have faced before are becoming more widespread.

Several community leaders indicated a shift in the types of challenges they’re facing. Many described challenges that were once thought of as more of an urban issue as becoming widespread in suburbs and smaller communities. The most consistent example of this across communities is in affordable housing. Most communities shared that inflation and the high cost of housing, particularly apartments and rentals, has impacted their community members.

In addition to housing costs, inflation has impacted the cost of food and basic need items. Reportedly, the resources in area nonprofit organizations remain strong to support their communities, but the impact of economic hardship is increasing the demand on these resources.
Qualitative Data Sources

Despite the challenges communities are facing, there are positive commonalities. Many communities reported a renewed sense of pride in their community along with an influx of new families and residents moving into areas that have created an energy and desire for new types of businesses, services, and involvement. Communities are also seeing a diversification of ages and income levels because of these shifts. With the positive aspects of renewal of certain neighborhoods and areas within these communities, there is also an awareness of the needs these new community member groups bring to the area that may not have been a focus before. With an increase in families in certain communities, for example, there is a larger need for early childhood care and services, support for parents and caregivers, and an emphasis on educational and health needs, according to community leaders.

Awareness and communication around services and support, as well as transportation to reach the services community members need, are two access points frequently mentioned across all communities. Community members may not realize what resources are available and may not be able to physically get to the resources or places where they could learn more about the support they need. In terms of communication about services, there is some challenge felt with social media. Some indicated that while social media is still a great way to reach people and communicate available resources, there is also a lack of staffing to support a consistent social media presence. Additionally, social media platforms like Facebook have suffered diminished reputations, resulting in community members turning away from using it in the same way they once did. There is an awareness among community leaders that access to information about available resources is still an issue and that, despite established use of platforms like Facebook, Nextdoor, and others, a need remains to support one another in providing information about resources to the community.
Qualitative Insights

Themes of Community Meetings

The community meetings yielded several consistently reported needs and challenges, along with some consistent points of success and pride for the communities (see Appendix C). The insights gained from the community meetings are opinions of the community leaders who participated; however, qualitative coding for themes was conducted to surface recurring or common themes (Creswell, 2013). The themes are dependent on those participating and may or may not be consistent with a larger or different group of participants, but one objective of holding several community meetings across a range of service areas was to assess differences and commonalities, and to aim for representative feedback. There is risk for bias in focus group-style meetings such as these (CDC, 2018), but choices regarding the number of meetings are an attempt to lessen this.

Throughout, nearly all communities indicated a “small town feel” or a feeling of a “tight-knit community.” Some of the more populated areas indicated a feeling of change and transition in their communities, particularly in population growth and an increase in the number of younger families moving to their areas. COVID-19 and social outcomes of the isolation during the pandemic was mentioned in more than one-third of the community meetings, with community leaders stating that there is a feeling of increased disconnect among community members since the pandemic. Methods for communication remain mostly in the social media space, particularly with the use of Facebook pages for communities and organizations, but there was a common desire expressed across the community meetings for more person-to-person, “warm touch,” and human interaction to communicate. Additionally, about one-third of the communities shared that they feel a need for a centralized or coordinated communication effort to share resources and services in the area, particularly with local media and newspapers closing in recent years. Some have attempted this in recent years. There is a collective recognition that a desire for community connection is present.
Challenges

The top consistently mentioned challenges faced across communities are summarized below.

**Affordable Housing**

Affordable housing was mentioned by multiple community leaders at nearly every community meeting (see Appendix C). The comments regarding challenges and areas where increased focus is needed were consistent across four main areas, with affordable housing cited most frequently. This varied by community as to the reasoning the community leaders gave. In areas where there is more tourism, Airbnbs, residential policies and codes for types of housing, and limited development space were cited. In areas that are in more transition in terms of population growth or re-development, issues of funding and opportunity to create affordable housing and/or compete with developers was cited. The summary across most of the communities is that there is limited affordable housing to either attract new residents or sustain those already in the area. Many areas also face an issue of a lack of public transportation access, adding to the dilemma of who works and lives in each community and how they are navigating this.

Available data on income and housing costs in MCPL’s district corroborates the feedback given by community leaders at the meetings. Figure 5 provides a summary of the median income, housing costs for homeowners and renters, and home values in MCPL’s service area.

“My biggest thing right now is trying to find housing and somewhere to go,” said one Blue Ridge Branch customer. “I don’t want to live in my car.”

“And I’m having difficulty trying to have my family help me because literally everyone is going through something.”
### Qualitative Data Sources

**Figure 5 – MCPL Community Housing Statistics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>MCPL District</th>
<th>Clay County</th>
<th>Jackson County</th>
<th>Platte County</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Median Gross Annual Household Income</td>
<td>$72,873</td>
<td>$75,634</td>
<td>$69,222</td>
<td>$78,676</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Home Value Index</td>
<td>$303,088</td>
<td>$314,713</td>
<td>$270,686</td>
<td>$375,212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Monthly Mortgage Estimate**</td>
<td>$2,074</td>
<td>$2,141</td>
<td>$1,865</td>
<td>$2,551</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Monthly Rent Cost</td>
<td>$1,465</td>
<td>$1,716</td>
<td>$1,357</td>
<td>$1,368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median Monthly Net Income***</td>
<td>$4,937</td>
<td>$5,108</td>
<td>$4,829</td>
<td>$4,025</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average % of Monthly Net Income to Afford Rent</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average % of Monthly Net Income to Afford Mortgage</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*All data is based on MCPL’s district population using zip codes. Kansas City Public Library’s population is excluded from the data in Figure 5. Household income is sourced from Savannah, the Library’s data insights tool. Home value, mortgage, and rent is sourced from Zillow.com and is based on zip codes within the district.*

**Monthly mortgage cost was calculated using Zillow.com values, assuming a 30-year fixed-rate mortgage, 20% downpayment, moderate credit score, and current interest rates between 6% and 7%.

***Monthly net income was calculated using Smartasset.com tax rate estimates, assuming a married filing jointly status.

**Communication Platforms**

The next most cited challenge communities are facing is a lack of centralized and comprehensive communication outlets—or platforms—for residents to learn about the various resources available, how to access them, and where there are community organizations offering needed support. Additionally, community organizations indicated a need to cross-reference among one another more effectively in order to better serve their community members.

Many community leaders indicated that Facebook is the dominant outlet for communication, but that it is limited in its ability to effectively communicate resources, support, events, etc., given that it seems to have lost popularity in recent years. There are segments of the community not using it or who do not have access to technology to use this as a main outlet for communication. There is fragmented communication among various Facebook pages across organizations and communities.

A desire for a centralized or comprehensive resource and organization hub was suggested in many of the community meetings, but also an understanding of the time and commitment an effort like this would require.
Transportation

Access to transportation was cited as a main challenge in many of the communities, along with infrastructure regarding navigating their communities in general. Limited or nonexistent public transportation options are seen as a hindrance to communities connecting to other communities for housing and employment, and to maintain businesses within some of the smaller communities.

The issue of low-quality infrastructure in some areas was also mentioned, including updated and improved roads, sidewalks, and planning to make areas more walkable.

OATS Transit was mentioned in several communities as an option for seniors, but limited schedule and availability were noted. According to community leaders, this impacts access to events, activities, shopping, and getting needs met for many individuals.

Mental Health

A recurring topic stated by several communities was the need for mental health and behavioral support resources in the form of awareness, direction to resources, and access to resources. Some felt this is associated with impacts of the pandemic. A majority of those who mentioned mental health as an area needing more awareness and potential resources also highlighted children and families at the center of the need for support.

"Whenever I’m running into people out here [South Kansas City], I frequently hear, ‘Oh I haven’t eaten in three or four days,’” said Mary, Street Outreach Worker with ReDiscover Mental Health. “There is absolutely nothing out here, and there is only one bus. So if you want to go get food on a day, you’re going to spend the whole day on the bus, and you hopefully are going to make it to the meal because if the busses are running late, you’re not going to make it.”

“Some people like to say, ‘Pull yourself up by your bootstraps, and it’s not even possible because there is no transportation.’"
Qualitative Data Sources

Impacts of COVID-19 and Community

Several communities shared that since the pandemic, many residents are more isolated. This is an anecdotal perception in some cases and is based on feedback they are hearing in some areas, particularly from seniors and families. School-aged children shifted to homeschool or moved in with family in other areas since the pandemic, creating a change in the schools, the community, and how people are involved or not.

Approximately one-third of the community meetings discussed how the pandemic highlighted the need for access to mental and behavioral health resources, as previously stated. Additionally, the hubs of communication and connection in the past had often been churches, but it is reported that attendance is down, and there is a gap in connection across communities that organizations are hearing about and observing.
Conclusion

The main objective of this assessment was to collect data to understand the current successes, barriers, and needs of the communities within Mid-Continent Public Library’s service area, to apply that knowledge to planning and programming choices, and to increase awareness of opportunities to engage.

A combined total of 318 community leaders and community members participated in this study, providing their feedback regarding the strengths and challenges within the communities Mid-Continent Public Library is a part of. This assessment describes the feedback from these participants, along with supportive data of the communities the Library serves. For reasons related to the number of people who could participate, the process for compiling a list of contacts for inclusion in the community meetings and survey components of the assessment, and the voluntary participation rate of those components, there are some limitations to drawing insights from the information gathered. However, the feedback received proved to be consistent and indicative of four major themes: Affordable Housing, Communication Platforms, Transportation, and COVID-19 Impact and Community. As with any assessment, the results are not prescriptive, but rather informative to the process of learning more about the communities the Library is a part of and understanding how the Library might fit into any potential solution or service.

From these findings, the Library can incorporate what has been shared by the communities as a part of its planning, which includes, but is not limited to, topical choices for programming and services, funding allocation to various areas of programming and services, and community partnership opportunities. Additionally, the information serves to inform Library staff of the barriers and challenges their community members face and brings awareness to areas where increased information access and education may be more impactful.
Appendix A
### Appendix A: Community Meeting Dates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>12/6/2022</td>
<td>Green Hills and North Oak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12/13/2022</td>
<td>Excelsior Springs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/18/2023</td>
<td>North and South Independence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1/31/2023</td>
<td>Antioch and Claycomo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/2/2023</td>
<td>Kearney</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/7/2023</td>
<td>Parkville and Riverside</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/16/2023</td>
<td>Red Bridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2/22/2023</td>
<td>Lone Jack</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/7/2023</td>
<td>Blue Springs North and Blue Springs South</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/9/2023</td>
<td>Oak Grove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/14/2023</td>
<td>Grandview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/16/2023</td>
<td>Camden Point, Dearborn, and Edgerton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/22/2023</td>
<td>Blue Ridge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3/29/2023</td>
<td>Grain Valley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/3/2023</td>
<td>Buckner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/5/2023</td>
<td>Smithville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/6/2023</td>
<td>Colbern Road, East Lee's Summit, and Lee's Summit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/7/2023</td>
<td>Platte City and Weston</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/10/2023</td>
<td>Raytown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4/12/2023</td>
<td>Withers and Woodneath</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Community Meeting Questionnaire Protocol and Script

Mid-Continent Public Library Community Needs Assessment 2022-2023

Branch manager welcomes attendees and introduces self and facilitator, hands over floor to facilitator

- Facilitator introduces self and shares purpose of meeting.
  
  We’ve gathered a range of representatives from the community here today to offer perspective on strengths and opportunities for growth in this community. MCPL is focused on hearing from community stakeholders, like all of you, who have valuable feedback to help us better understand our community and how we fit into that. We want to make sure the Library’s services and outreach are relevant to the community and representative of its needs.

- Introductions of stakeholders

- Overview of MCPL and process
  
  - 3-county library system that serves 850,000 people from 33 locations
  
  - Previous assessment in 2017 and results informed current strategic plan.
    Hoping the results of this assessment inform our new strategic plan
  
  - 20 meetings grouped by branch location

  We have a list of questions we’d like to ask and we’ll be taking notes and recording the session so we can capture what everyone has to share. Those notes and recordings will stay within a small group of MCPL staff and researchers who are helping us conduct these community meetings, and then what we learn across all the community meetings we hold will be synthesized for a public report, which we can share with you when it’s completed.

We’ll get started with some guidelines for our time together:

We ask that you share your name and the organization you’re representing when you answer a question for the first time, so we can get to know who is here and have that information with your response for data-gathering purposes.

We have a limited amount of time today, and we want to be respectful of the time you’re giving us, so we’ll aim to get through as many of our questions as possible, hear from everyone, and end on time. We’ll try to keep things moving and make sure everyone who has something to share on a topic gets a chance.

If anyone has follow-up questions, we’d love to answer those after our official session is completed, so that way if anyone needs to get going for their day, they can, and then we can be available after.
QUESTIONS:

1. What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?
2. What are some areas of strength or growth in this community?
3. What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?
4. What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?
5. How interested and engaged is the leadership in this community? How about organizations?
6. How engaged are members of this community?
7. Are there groups or community members that you feel need more support than what organizations and/or businesses are currently providing (for example, families and children, seniors, people who are unhoused/experiencing homelessness, etc.)?
8. “If we think about ways we can build a stronger community, some of the areas that we, at the Library, think of are: developing personal and workforce skills for people, creating safe spaces for people to access resources and connecting them to other organizations in the area that can support them, and encouraging a culture-rich and open environment for all community members.”

If we think about ways we can build a stronger community, what are some of the areas you feel are priorities?

9. How about our network of organizations and businesses? Do you feel it’s easy or difficult for people to find the resources they may need? Whether that’s through various groups like those of us in this room offering referrals to groups, or on community boards and presence in the community.
10. How sufficient are the resources for this community for those who are seeking shelter, nutrition, health and wellness resources, and housing?
11. Do you feel there is access to affordable housing in this community?
12. Have you experienced any changes in housing availability or affordability in this community in recent years?
13. Do you feel community members have access to healthy food? Do you feel there are adequate resources available in the community to make this accessible to everyone?
14. In your experience, are there available resources for mental health counseling or other types of counseling for community members? Do you feel there are enough resources in this area?
15. Do you feel this community actively encourages a culture-rich environment through opportunities for the arts, ongoing education, and philanthropy?
Appendix C: Community Needs Assessment Meetings Vignettes

Each community meeting offered feedback that was often generalizable to the larger Kansas City area, as well as specific to local areas. The following pages provide a representative snapshot of feedback from several of the community meeting locations in the date order the meetings were conducted. The feedback that was provided and qualitative data analysis from the complete feedback captured via video/audio is dependent on who participated and engaged in the focus group-style question-and-answer format. While the protocol of questions for each meeting were the same, not all questions were asked or had answers provided to them dependent on timing, discussion topics, participants in attendance with varying expertise, and responses of the participants.

The number of meetings, an increase from the past community needs assessment, allowed for more opportunities to hear from community leaders and assess any repetitive themes of barriers and needs. Local, community-specific challenges were outlined in each of the meetings as surfaced by participants. The survey component of the assessment then aims to add to the feedback and identify the central needs communicated.

The following pages provide a vignette summary of several community meetings. The paraphrased comments are taken from direct quotes of participants and are opinions of those in attendance at the meeting, not the opinion of the Library. Feedback is paraphrased to protect the identity of the participants and to compress similar comments. Those selected were representative of the comments overall or repeated throughout.
What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?

- Northland community pride
- Diverse community
- Involved and engaged community members who want to give back

What are some areas of strength or growth in this community?

- Business and economic development has created more jobs.
- Schools and community organizations partner well together.

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- There is a growing number of people needing resources and who have recently lost employment.
- Population growth brings a need to support and proactively offer resources to people experiencing homelessness.
- There are no overnight shelters in the Northland.
- Many unhoused individuals are children and students.
- There is an increasing need for affordable housing.
- There are varying perspectives of the degree to which homelessness is an issue in the area.

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Most communication is conducted via social media platforms.
- Communication misses those who do not have access to or do not use social media.
- Email and mail are still good options for communication and are still used by some organizations.

How easy or difficult do you feel it is for people to find the resources they may need? Whether that’s through various groups like those of us in this room offering referrals to groups, or on community boards and presence in the community.

- There are many good family and child advocates and organizations available in the area. These organizations communicate and coordinate well.
- People don’t always know how to find the information regarding resources that they need.
- There is a need to increase languages spoken in the various community organizations to serve the increasingly diverse community.
What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?

- Small-town feel
- Welcoming to new business and residences
- Adding amenities and community-focused
- Trailblazers for a rural area

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- Downtown is a food desert for those who lack transport, including seniors.
- Support for students and increased awareness on attendance and engagement in the schools
- Historic properties with little to no funding options for restoration and improvements
- Lack of public transportation options
- It is a small town that is growing and shifting. That shifting needs to be considered proactively

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Chambers, rotary clubs, and other regular groups are very involved, but increasing involvement outside of those groups is difficult.
- Social media is not successful in communicating to every group of the community.
- Excelsior Springs has Excelsior Citizen, and community members communicate with Fire and other Emergency Services there.

How interested and engaged is the leadership in this community? How about organizations? How engaged are members of this community?

- Leaders of regular groups are very involved and engaged, but it feels like it's the same group of people doing all coordinating and volunteerism.
- There is a feeling that younger generations may not know how to get involved. Many seniors have been involved for years.
- There is a sentiment that younger people need to be recruited to become involved in community organizations.
- Many parents are working long hours and then focus on their families outside of work, so available time to get involved may be limited. There is a need to make it easier to participate in the community.
How sufficient are the resources for this community for those who are seeking shelter, nutrition, health and wellness resources, and housing?

- There is low-income housing, but there is a waitlist and still a need for some income. Affordable housing is limited.
- The closest shelter is City Union Mission, so there are not options for those experiencing homelessness locally.
- The Housing Authority works with people, but there is still a need for more support.
- Mental health support and resources are needed.
- Along with housing needs comes food and nutrition resources, particularly for children.
- Connecting these resources together and making it easier to understand for those locally is needed.
What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?

- Large, but small-town feel
- A community in transition
- A multigenerational community
- People are from here and stay here.

What are some areas of strength or growth in this community?

- A very engaged business community
- A supportive community that helps when help is needed

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- Affordable housing is a challenge.
- Keeping housing in good condition for future generations is an issue.
- Need for better community connection to services and communication about resources for those in the community that need support
- Access to technology, computers, and internet are issues for some kids.
- Schools are in session four days per week; some kids do not have a good option for the fifth weekday—need safe options.
- Opportunities for kids to engage and participate in activities that don’t involve screens
- Public transportation in this area is a challenge.

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Nextdoor app is used a lot in this area, but need to make sure people are aware of this and possibly help people sign up and get on it.
- Word of mouth is still a primary channel of communication here.
- There is a lot of great collaboration among community organizations, but maintaining and growing this is necessary.

Are there groups or community members that you feel need more support than what organizations and/or businesses are currently providing (for example, families and children, seniors, people who are unhoused/experiencing homelessness, etc.)?

- The unhoused community needs more support and shelter/bed options.
- The teenage population who are close to adulthood need support—many know someone who is struggling with drugs. Fentanyl is in the news and people are seeing this in their community.
- There is a population of grandparents raising young children; support for this group would be helpful.
What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?

- Diverse, with several languages spoken
- Small-town values, integrated in more metropolitan surroundings

What are some areas of strength or growth in this community?

- A community working to revitalize its downtown area
- A forward-thinking community
- There is strong collaboration and partnership.

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- Health equity, mental health support, and access to affordable housing and healthy food
- Apartments are very expensive, at least $1,500 per month.
- Overnight homeless shelters are needed.
- Transportation to access the resources needed and/or make it more of a walkable community

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Current communication is not always effective.
- The challenge is that there are many platforms for communication and not a central resource.
- Need to build trust with areas of the community so they will engage with organizations and the services they offer.
What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?

- It is a growing community, going from a rural community to a larger one.
- The school district, town, businesses, etc., all seem to work well together for the community.
- Small-town feel despite the continued growth
- Community organizations are not competitive, but collaborative.

What are some areas of strength or growth in this community?

- Great school district
- Business growth in response to population growth
- Some chain businesses coming in as a result of the growth

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- There is no public pool, community center, or place for activities.
- There is a need for affordable housing, especially with the population growth.
- Development vs. home ownership—it is hard to compete financially with developers coming into the community. It is becoming a higher-income community.
- Transportation is a barrier to services in the community with limited or unsafe walking routes.

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Facebook is widely used in this community.
- The Chamber of Commerce facilitates networking opportunities and forums for organizations to meet and speak.
- The mayor encourages community involvement and engagement in public meetings/city council meetings.

Are there groups or community members that you feel need more support than what organizations and/or businesses are currently providing (for example, families and children, seniors, people who are unhoused/experiencing homelessness, etc.)?

- Affordable housing is an issue.
- Homelessness is an issue in this community.
- No “starter” homes
- There isn’t a local women’s shelter or organization devoted to housing or shelter issues.
- There is no animal shelter in town.
Parkville and Riverside Branches (2/7/2023)

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- Affordable housing
- Many recent graduates cannot find a job for their degree.

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Before COVID, there were lots of neighborhood meetings, but they have not come back.
- People are wanting to reconnect. The Chamber has done some community events.
- Most communication is done via Facebook.

Red Bridge Branch (2/16/2023)

What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?

- It’s a neighborhood that’s in transition.
- Younger families moving in and long-term residents moving out

What are some areas of strength or growth in this community?

- Coming off COVID, there is concern that kids are just kind of missing in action: homeschool increasing, some moving to be closer to family, etc.

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- A need for public transportation
- Access and awareness of available resources and support—communication of how to find resources

If we think about ways we can build a stronger community, what are some of the areas you feel are priorities?

- Safe place to access resources; centralized information/communication
Lone Jack Branch (2/22/2023)

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?
- Roads, infrastructure, especially due to growing population
- Lacking finances to make many improvements

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?
- Word of mouth and local knowledge of what's available
- Some information is on social media.
- The community is well tuned into one another, but possibly not reaching everyone or sharing all information.

How interested and engaged is the leadership in this community? How about organizations?
- Very engaged and connected; supporting one another
- Leadership is accessible.

If we think about ways we can build a stronger community, what are some of the areas you feel are priorities?
- Homeschool and early childhood support
- Connection to resources; information about resources

How sufficient are the resources for this community for those who are seeking shelter, nutrition, health and wellness resources, and housing?
- OATS Transit is the only option, and it is limited.
- Transportation hasn’t been much of a concern in this community until more recently.

Have you experienced any changes in housing availability or affordability in this community in recent years?
- There are few rental options, and housing/land is now more expensive.
What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?

- Small-town feel

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- COVID highlighted mental health issues and the need for support in the community.
- Affordable housing
- A feeling of connection
- Representation of diverse community in community leadership
- Support for aging population
- Early childhood education and support for preschool-aged children

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Facebook, but it is difficult with negativity or lack of use of Facebook now

How interested and engaged is the leadership in this community? How about organizations?

- Leadership in community and organizations largely lacks diversity to represent the population.

How engaged are members of this community?

- Organizations are involved and people want to better the town and help, but at-risk community members and those voices who most need to be heard are isolated from development conversations, so needs are not clearly represented.

If we think about ways we can build a stronger community, what are some of the areas you feel are priorities?

- Need to better promote the community resources that are available

Have you experienced any changes in housing availability or affordability in this community in recent years?

- Affordable housing and lack of transportation are issues in the community.
- Many multigenerational families are living in very small spaces or temporary housing due to lack of availability.
Oak Grove Branch (3/9/2023)

What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?

- A supportive feel in this community
- Has grown from a country town to a small city

What are some areas of strength or growth in this community?

- Strong community of churches and congregations
- The school district is a unifier and attracts many people.
- Senior center and services for seniors

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- Transportation
- Retention of small businesses to create a more thriving downtown
- Affordability

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Word of mouth (phone) and you know who to go to—because it’s an established community
- Facebook—for those who use it

If we think about ways we can build a stronger community, what are some of the areas you feel are priorities?

- Mental health resources, and more broadly, healthcare (where to go, resources to get there, and how to pay for it)
- Help with job searches and connecting people with employment opportunities
Grandview Branch (3/14/2023)

What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?

- Small-town feel, growing fast, nervousness about how fast the town is growing
- Edge of suburbs and rural

What are some areas of strength or growth in this community?

- Growth
- Tourism
- School system
- School groups and development projects
- Small business welcome

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- Technology for schools
- Transportation access—traveling to and from the city and areas within the community

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Facebook is used by residents and groups within the community.
- No central resource with information; pieced together on social media
- Many get frustrated with where/how to find information about resources. Seniors share this as a point of frustration.
What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community

- Three separate communities, but intertwined
- Small communities

What are some areas of strength or growth in this community?

- Family values, small town
- New families are moving in and want to get involved.

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- Lack of travel through towns for business growth
- COVID created a more isolated social environment with less support and connection in the community.

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Facebook
- Face-to-face community building is needed.

Are there groups or community members that you feel need more support than what organizations and/or businesses are currently providing (for example, families and children, seniors, people who are unhoused/experiencing homelessness, etc.)?

- Families and mental health resources needed
- Business support

Do you feel this community actively encourages a culture-rich environment through opportunities for the arts, ongoing education, and philanthropy?

- There is a need for increased arts and music opportunities for people of all ages and programs for kids.
What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- A need for development/re-development
- Attract people into the community
- Infrastructure, sidewalks, making it more walkable
- Support for the schools
- Attention to crime in the area and support for law enforcement

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Neighborhood Watch
- Area churches
- First Call for the school district
- Local organizations communicate with one another

Are there groups or community members that you feel need more support than what organizations and/or businesses are currently providing (for example, families and children, seniors, people who are unhoused/experiencing homelessness, etc.)?

- Those needing affordable housing
- Transportation and safe access to get around
- Safe spaces for kids and families

How about our network of organizations and businesses? Do you feel it’s easy or difficult for people to find the resources they may need? Whether that's through various groups like those of us in this room offering referrals to groups, or on community boards and presence in the community.

- There is no central resource for information in the community; need for centralized list of contacts and resources.
- First Call requires a skilled navigator, so a more singular place for information would be helpful.
- There are no hard copies of information, so it is up to the community organizations to keep up with communication about resources that are ever-changing.
What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?

- Little big town, tight-knit
- A feeling of rallying behind one another

What are some areas of strength or growth in this community?

- New projects, roads, businesses
- Community is seeing more younger residents
- Feeling of opportunity
- Good parks and green space/open space

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- Awareness of businesses and opportunities for business to grow
- Senior services (help with taxes and a place to offer that; small home repairs)
- Few childcare options—residents have to go to Lee’s Summit or other areas
- Churches were driving the community, but their numbers are dwindling so they have less money.
- Need for increased security, lighting, and maintenance in parks and elsewhere

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Social media, especially Facebook
- No central resource of information
- Community newspaper closed five years ago, and there is less connection to resource information.
- The parks department went back to physical mailers and seem to be getting good results.

If we think about ways we can build a stronger community, what are some of the areas you feel are priorities?

- Early childhood education, storytime offerings
- Job opportunities within the town for high school students
- More organizational partnerships
Colbern Road Library Center, East Lee’s Summit Branch, and Lee’s Summit Branch (4/6/2023)

What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?

- Growing community that feels like a small town
- Close-knit community
- The school district is great and has extensive programming that attracts people to live in this community.
- Great parks and recreation, wonderful downtown area

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- Affordable housing is needed.
- There is a population driving in to work here, but they do not live here due to cost.
- Need for awareness, support, and opportunities for non-college-bound students (i.e. trade options, local entrepreneurs, training)
- The community has lots of resources, but they aren’t always available—communication about where to access resources is needed.
- People outside of the business world aren’t as sure generally how to plug in to the community and get involved.

Are there groups or community members that you feel need more support than what organizations and/or businesses are currently providing (for example, families and children, seniors, people who are unhoused/experiencing homelessness, etc.)?

- Those experiencing food insecurity, and the organizations supporting this need, could use more support.
- There is a population of unhoused individuals in this area that need support. Warming centers are needed. Many utilize the parks.
- Community is thinking about how to include voices not typically involved or represented.
- Seeking strategies for engaging all members and groups of the community
If we think about ways we can build a stronger community, what are some of the areas you feel are priorities?

- Reimagining communication and how to get information to people—a better-connected web of resources as opposed to several different ones where information is missed
- Apprenticeships, training, and trade school options for students that will lead first to jobs and beyond to careers

How about our network of organizations and businesses? Do you feel it’s easy or difficult for people to find the resources they may need? Whether that’s through various groups like those of us in this room offering referrals to groups, or on community boards and presence in the community.

- A better way to keep track of and connect people to all of the various resources available to community members is needed—a database or more centralized source of information. It is difficult to put this together—people do not have time to do this.
- Cross-referencing support and resources is difficult.
- Lots of people are helping all throughout the community, but things could be more connected.

Does the community have adequate transportation for those seeking resources?

- Seniors often use the OATS Transit system, but the schedule is limiting and it is often booked/unavailable.
- After-hours and evenings are even more challenging.

Have you experienced any changes in housing availability or affordability in this community in recent years?

- Yes, this has changed a lot in the past 10 years—things are much more expensive.
- Starter homes are at least $200,000–$300,000. A one-bedroom can be as much as $1,200 to rent, which is difficult on an hourly wage.
- We see low-income housing options being bought by developers.
Platte City and Weston Branches (4/7/2023)

What are some areas of strength or growth in this community?

- Historical preservation and tourism
- Arts and music

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- A feeling that residents are somewhat isolated—they go to work and back home, but they have little interaction within the community given that jobs are elsewhere.
- An emphasis on volunteerism and philanthropy may help this issue—especially among younger residents.

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Communication networks have historically relied on churches and word of mouth.
- The Chamber of Commerce holds meetings.
- Some organizations use social media, but not everyone uses social media, so the communication is inconsistent.

How about our network of organizations and businesses? Do you feel it’s easy or difficult for people to find the resources they may need, whether that’s through various groups like those of us in this room offering referrals to groups, or on community boards and presence in the community?

- If you’ve been here a long time, you might know who to reach out to; but if you’re new, you might not.

Have you experienced any changes in housing availability or affordability in this community in recent years?

- Affordability is an issue.
- Multi-family properties are not allowed in some areas.
- Rising costs are creating a need for different solutions.
- Weston is experiencing companies and individuals coming in and buying/setting up Airbnbs, which creates a challenge for affordability and availability for longer-term housing and rentals.
Raytown Branch (4/10/2023)

What makes this community unique? How would you describe this community?

• Small-town feel, but still close enough to drive many places within 20 minutes
• It is an older community, and there is not much space for new development, so re-development may be a focus.
• The school district has a small-town feel.

What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

• The parks and recreation—especially with a focus on kids
• Access, crosswalks, and infrastructure
• Increase small businesses in the area

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

• More connection and communication is needed—especially in a central, collaborative way.
What aspects of this community need attention, support, or to be challenged?

- There is a need for senior transportation and affordable housing.
- Affordable housing in general, including rentals
- The public schools are attractive to people wanting to be in the community, but housing is expensive.
- Services and resources for those experiencing homelessness
- Access to affordable family mental health support

What is the communication framework or style of this community when there is a need or challenge? Are there meetings, groups, or forums that you regularly use?

- Interested in connecting to surrounding communities and resources—what might be the best platform for this?
Appendix D: Community Needs Assessment Survey

Background

What company or organization do you work for?
[text box: Enter your answer]

What city/community are you located in?
[radio button multiple choice]
- Green Hills/North Oak
- Excelsior Springs
- North Independence/South Independence
- Antioch/Claycomo
- Kearney
- Parkville/Riverside
- Red Bridge
- Lone Jack
- Blue Springs North/Blue Springs South
- Oak Grove
- Grandview
- Camden Point/Dearborn/Edgerton
- Blue Ridge
- Grain Valley
- Buckner
- Smithville
- Colbern Road/East Lee’s Summit/Lee’s Summit
- Platte City/Weston
- Raytown
- Withers/Woodneath

How long (in years) have you been with that company/organization? [radio button multiple choice]
- Less than 1 year
- 1 to 3 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 5 to 10 years
- 11 to 20 years
- More than 20 years

Do you live in this community? [radio button multiple choice]
- Yes
- No

Demographics

Please answer the following demographic questions.
Collecting basic demographic data allows us to identify and categorize the basic characteristics of our surveyed population. These data are valuable to Mid-Continental Public Library’s ability to evaluate our effectiveness in fulfilling our mission “to enrich our citizens and communities through expanding access to innovation, information, ideas, and inspiration.”

What is your age? [radio button multiple choice]
- 18–29
- 30–39
- 40–49
- 50–59
- 60–64
- 65+
Which race or ethnicity best describes you? (Please choose only one.) [radio button multiple choice]

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black or African American
- Hispanic
- White or Caucasian
- Multiple ethnicity
- Prefer not to say

Which gender identity best describes you? (Please choose only one.) [radio button multiple choice]

- Man
- Non-binary
- Woman
- Prefer not to say

Feedback

Please rate the following on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 as No More Services Needed to 5 as Much More Needed: [radio button multiple choice for each item below; see the saved PDF for a visual]

- Services for veterans
- Affordable childcare for infant/toddlers (0-3)
- Affordable childcare for ages 3-5 (Pre-K)
- Affordable after-school care for school-aged children
- Access to healthy affordable food
- Access to healthy food at food banks
- Access to transportation
- Access to legal services
- Public parks and facilities
- English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- Adult reading, writing, math classes, and continued education
- Affordable housing
- Mental health resources
- Cultural events and opportunities (arts, ongoing education)
- Free or affordable events for families
- Partnerships between community organizations
- Information channels to find resources needed
On a scale of 1 as not involved to 5 as very involved, how involved are the community leaders? [radio button multiple choice]

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

On a scale of 1 as not involved to 5 as very involved, how involved are the community members? [radio button multiple choice]

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5

What is this community’s biggest strength? [large text box: Enter your answer]

What is the biggest need or opportunity for growth in this community? [large text box: Enter your answer]

Which groups of community members do you feel need the most support currently? (e.g., seniors, veterans, families, individuals experiencing homelessness, individuals with disabilities, etc.) [large text box: Enter your answer]

What is the main communication channel for community members to learn about services and offerings in the area? [large text box: Enter your answer]

If we seek more information, would you be willing to answer a few questions by phone about your community? [radio button multiple choice]

- Yes
- No

What is your name? [text box: Enter your answer]

What is your preferred contact number? [text box: Enter your answer]

References


