



SOUTH SIDE RESIDENT PULSE REPORT



South Side Thrive
Collaborative

2021 | JULY

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INTRODUCTION

South Side Thrive Collaborative (SS Thrive) is a place-based, collective impact initiative with a mission to support South Side residents in living healthy, fulfilling lives by strengthening the collective efforts of community partners. As a network of health and human service organizations, businesses, and community groups, SS Thrive leverages and aligns community assets to more holistically support residents with low to moderate income.

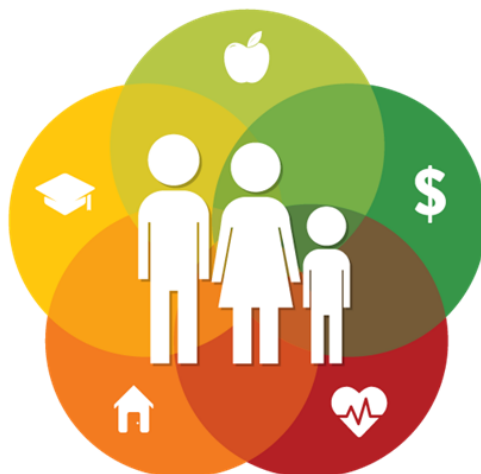
Through these collective efforts, we strive to ensure all South Side residents have stable housing, economic mobility, good health and community connection.

To achieve this vision, we recognize the importance of regularly engaging community members to lift up and listen to their insights, ideas, and input. In the Spring of 2021, SS Thrive organized and facilitated (31) individual interviews, (2) focus groups, and attended (1) community event with South Side residents. Over (60) South Side residents were engaged. Interviews and focus groups took place at the All People's Fresh Market, Community Development for All People, Nationwide Children's Hospital, the Reeb Avenue Center, and virtually.

While the South Side has many assets and strengths to make improvements from, majority of the feedback summarized in this pulse report focuses on what needs to change in order for every resident to thrive. Residents were asked to provide their feedback on the areas of housing, financial security, health, and community resources to identify these areas for improvement.

This report is a resource for SS Thrive, and its network of stakeholders, to hear directly from community members, and find ways to individually and collectively calibrate to best meet the needs, hopes, and aspirations of residents.

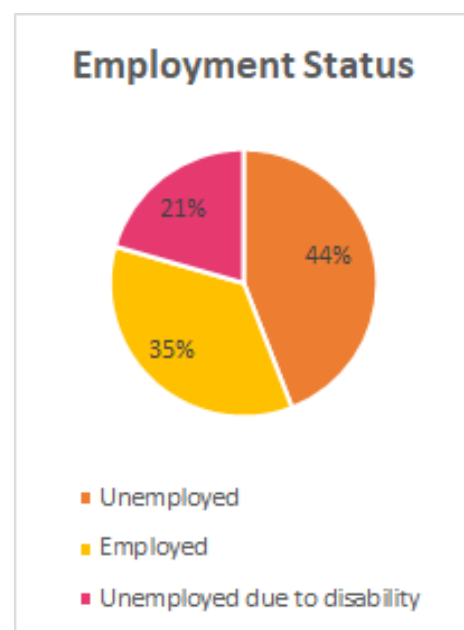
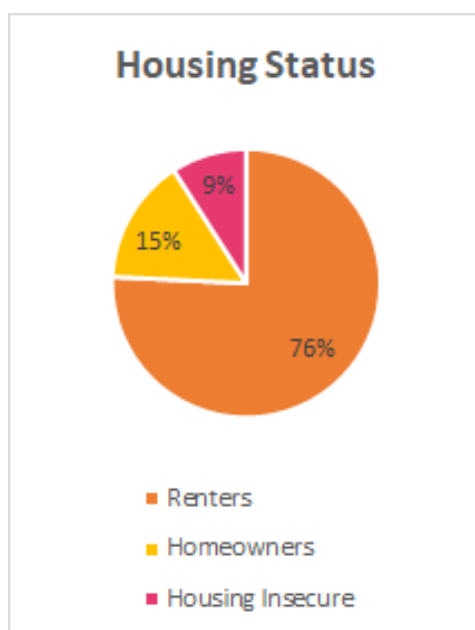
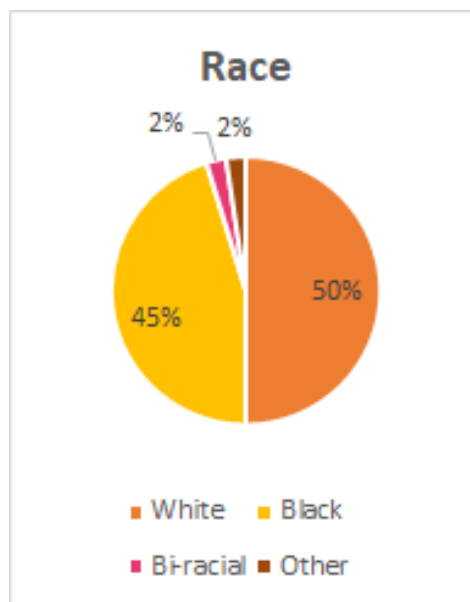
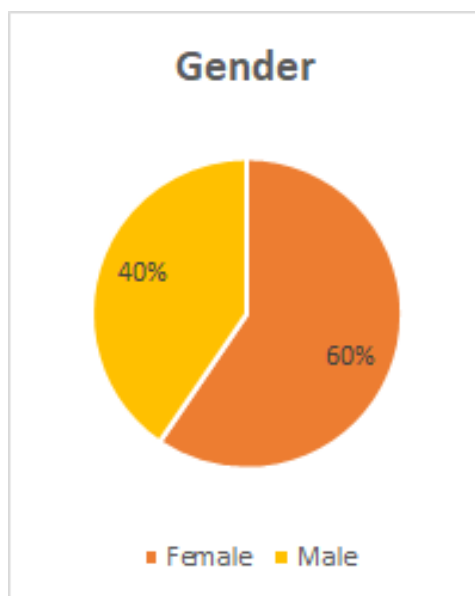
SS Thrive is grateful for the support of Franklin County Department of Jobs & Family Services and Nationwide Children's Hospital in making this report.



WHO WE ENGAGED

A total of 63 South Side residents were engaged. Of those who disclosed their demographics:

- Average Age: 44 years old



KEY THEMES & RECOMMENDATIONS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

- Prioritize assisting residents in mitigating displacement and being able to maintain current housing.
- Provide programs and services to current and aspiring homeowners that build credit scores, provide financial counseling, make home repairs, ensure estate planning, and education on predatory home buying solicitations.
- Develop solutions that help retain housing affordability, and support low-income renters, especially those without housing vouchers, in finding safe, quality, and affordable housing in the South Side.
- Develop strategies to eliminate housing discrimination and advance racial equity in housing.

QUALITY EMPLOYMENT

- Increase the availability of programs and services that support a persons ability to obtain and maintain employment.
- Enhance awareness amongst residents of local job training and development programming, and reduce barriers to access and participation in job services, training, and education through innovative practices.
- Build awareness amongst residents of local employers and job opportunities available.
- Partner with employers to explore and implement new solutions and innovative approaches to enhancing job quality, including pay, benefits, working conditions, and advancement.

KEY THEMES & RECOMMENDATIONS

HEALTHY LIVING

- Increase use and awareness of local healthy living resources, including programs, services, and physical assets.
- Develop more mental health and emotional wellness programs and services for South Side residents.
- Improve access and use of substance use disorder treatment programs and supportive services.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

- Enhance outreach efforts about community resources by using multiple modalities, including neighborhood canvassing, events, facility signage along key corridors, social media, mailings, and print materials.
- Improve communications on available community resources, eligibility, and program requirements.
- Improve the overall customer experience at community based organizations via trainings for staff and volunteers on topics like customer service, cultural competency, empathy, and burn-out prevention.
- Build capacity within churches, community groups, and social service organizations to make more linkages to local resources.

CONTEXT: SOUTH SIDE AS A CHANGING COMMUNITY

South Side residents exuded a strong sense of community and vision for their neighborhood. Many shared that they have family members and friends that live in the South Side as well, who enhance the sense of community in the South Side. Several local organizations and places in the South Side were noted as contributing to the community's fabric as well.

While the engagement conducted didn't capture the full scope of residents' life in the South Side, a re-occurring theme was identified: *many residents are grappling with changes, both positive and negative, in the neighborhood.*

Residents voiced feeling forgotten or pushed out as a result of development in the South Side and the changing demographics. Despite the challenges South Side residents face due to changes in the community, residents also note positive aspects of changes.

To help mitigate some feelings of displacement among longtime residents, SS Thrive and its network should explore opportunities to highlight and promote resident voices in program planning and implementation, lift up the history of the community, and develop more opportunities to create bridges between new and old residents.

"Things are changing around here and it leads me to wonder what is going to happen to me." - In-Person Focus Group

"The neighborhood has been taken over so it seems like we are going to be getting the help because of the new demographic of the neighborhood....we haven't had streetlights in over 15 years and now that we have all these gentrifiers there are street lights now." – Zoom Focus Group

"They only care about building this neighborhood up, but who are you building it up for?" – Zoom Focus Group

"I'm noticing how the police are a little more routine now....the neighborhood is about to be safe." – Zoom Focus Group

"We might get more help now because there's a new demographic." – Zoom Focus group

"People who are still there, the renters, now look like the outsiders." – Zoom Focus Group

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

South Side residents consistently cited a need for more affordable housing, and expressed a desire to continue living in South Side because of the sense of community and connection with neighbors. However, many feared that the sense of connection and being rooted in the South Side community may erode due to rising home prices and redevelopment of the neighborhood.

Prioritize assisting residents in mitigating displacement and being able to maintain current housing.

South Side residents reported that current housing costs are increasing while their wages remain stationary, and if they had to find a new place in the South Side to live, it'd be very unlikely that they could find something affordable.

Provide programs and services to current and aspiring homeowners that build credit scores, provide financial counseling, make home repairs, ensure estate planning, and education on predatory home buying solicitations.

Purchasing a home on the South Side was often reported as unrealistic or unattainable due to affordability, qualifications, and lack of resources and knowledge. Residents also reported homeowners regularly receiving calls or notices from interested buyers for homes.

"Housing out here is becoming harder to afford to live in. The pay is barely enough to make it." – Zoom Focus Group

"1100, 1300, 1400, 1500 a month. We can't afford that on \$15 an hour." – Zoom Focus Group

"I feel like its forcing us out that have been here for years because we can't afford 1200" – In-Person focus group

"We are getting tricked and cheated. They are turning around and making baby mansions out of our homes." – Zoom Focus Group

"Buying a home is impossible." – Zoom Focus Group

"I didn't qualify for a mortgage." – Zoom focus group

"We were taught cash was more important. They don't teach credit in school." – Zoom focus group

Develop solutions that help retain housing affordability, and support low-income renters, especially those without housing vouchers, in finding safe, quality, and affordable housing in the South Side.

South Side residents overwhelmingly reported a lack of affordable housing and noted that finding a new rental that was affordable to be very difficult.

Develop strategies to eliminate housing discrimination and advance racial equity in housing.

South Side residents reported experiences of prejudice and racial discrimination when it comes to finding housing. This perpetuates the feelings of ostracism from the housing market and that rehabilitated homes are “not for” South Side residents, but rather those interested in moving into the neighborhood.



“If you are low-income without a voucher, it can be very hard to find affordable housing.” – All People’s Fresh Market Interview

“South Side used to have the cheapest rent for the size of the home, now it’s not realistic.” – Zoom Focus Group

“It’s a struggle....the rent is too high.” – Reeb Avenue Center Interview

“Housing out here is becoming harder to afford to live in.” – In-Person Focus Group

“Even if you have the money, they are not going to rent to you.” – Zoom Focus Group

“It is very clear that based on the color of their skin, we are treated totally different by landlords and realtors.” – Zoom Focus Group

“When I first moved in there were 4 abandoned houses across the street. Now they are being redone and sold for over 200k to middle aged white business men. They aren’t gonna rent that house to a family here that needs it. It won’t be affordable to them. Homes aren’t marketed to us at all.” – Zoom Focus Group

“It’s not marketable to the demographics of the South Side people, for the people who have lived here for more than 10 years.” – Zoom Focus Group

QUALITY EMPLOYMENT

South Side residents often cited barriers to obtaining sustainable employment or challenges in being financially secure even when employed. Residents perceive that there are very limited opportunities for employment within the South Side, and that their current jobs often lack a livable wage or opportunity for growth and upward mobility. Residents also expressed a desire for better access to training and development in order to obtain better employment options.

Increase the availability of programs and services that support's a persons ability to obtain and maintain employment.

South Side Residents reported a range of barriers that prevent them from obtaining or maintaining employment, including literacy, health, transportation, and childcare.

Enhance awareness amongst residents of local job training and development programming, and reduce barriers to access and participation in job services, training, and education through innovative practices.

Residents recognize the need for job development in order to obtain better employment, but struggle with barriers to accessing and completing such programs. In response to barriers, residents suggested services be offered at places of employment, available outside of traditional workday hours, assistance with childcare be provided, and compensation be provided to participants.

"I can't read or write." – Reeb Avenue Center Interview

"I have to give up my livelihood to take care of my kids and make sure they are safe." – In-Person Focus Group

"Need help addressing health issues. Been unemployed for 3 years due to disability." – Reeb Avenue Center Interview

"It's hard to juggle programs as a single parent." – In-Person Focus Group

"I did a job training program, but didn't finish because I can't do that without making money at the same time." – All People's Fresh Market Interview

"I am not aware of any local programs (for workforce training). Any program should be free or have minimal cost." – All People's Fresh Market Interview

"We need programs available at work or on the job." – In-Person Focus Group

Build awareness amongst residents of local employers and job opportunities available.

South Side Residents reported limited options when it comes to job opportunities in the South Side. Residents cited local retail businesses as places for jobs but felt the options were very limited otherwise.

Partner with employers to explore and implement new solutions and innovative approaches to enhancing job quality, including pay, benefits, working conditions, and advancement.

Many residents report that available employment does not generate enough income to cover living expenses. Residents also cited safety and flexibility as challenges with current employment, and having to use community resources to make ends meet.

“You have to go out of the South Side to get a job because there’s not many options.” – Zoom Interview

“This side of town there’s not a lot of options for seniors to supplement social security.” – In-Person Focus Group

“Too old to work in service industry or warehouses that are physically demanding.” – All People’s Fresh Market Interview

“There’s no jobs around here.” – Reeb Avenue Center Interview

“I’ve never made \$15 an hour before, but it’s barely enough to make it.” – In-Person Focus Group

“Jobs that are available don’t pay enough for the bills I have to pay and kids to take care of. If you are gainfully employed but not earning enough, where do you turn to?” – All People’s Fresh Market Interview

“I have to supplement with community resources like the free food market to cover the gap between job income and bills.” – All People’s Fresh Market Interview

“The application process is so long in between application, interview, and getting the job.” – In-Person Focus Group



HEALTHY LIVING

South Side residents emphasized the importance of overall wellness and recognized that health is multi-dimensional and includes mental and emotional health. Residents cited several community resources that are available to support their health.

Increase use and awareness of local healthy living resources, including programs, services, and physical assets.

Residents reported using local recreation centers, parks, clinics, and programs as key tools to supporting their physical health.

Develop more mental health and emotional wellness programs and services for South Side residents.

Several South Side residents recognized that health is multi-dimensional and includes physical, mental, and emotional health. That said, residents noted the need for more resources to support health outside of just physical well-being.

Improve access and use of substance use disorder treatment programs and supportive services.

Residents recognized the need for holistic supportive services for individuals who are grappling with substance use disorder or in recovery.

"I walk at the Recreation Center path and am part of a walking group with friends. We meet every Saturday to walk." – All People's Market Interview

"I get help with my prescriptions and get heart healthy recipes and exercises. I really like it." – All People's Market Interview

"My blood pressure spiked and I panicked. Someone told me about John Maloney Health Center. Instead of having to pay \$100, I paid \$55." – All People's Market Interview

"Being healthy means places to be in nature, and its also spiritual, mental, and physical" – All People's Market Interview

"I have PTSD so am struggling lately with emotional eating. I want to change but its hard to find the help." – All People's Market Interview

"I struggle with depression and drinking. I'm in a job program that helps me. Instead of getting fired because I was too drunk to show up one day, they find ways to support me in my recovery." – All People's Market Interview

"My son got sober and then had a really hard time finding meetings to support him in his sobriety." – All People's Market Interview

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

South Side residents shared how they rely on supplemental support from community resources and acknowledged that the South Side has many supportive services and programs available. That said, several barriers to successful use of community resources were reported, including lack of knowledge about them, ineffective communication about them, and/or poor customer service.

Enhance outreach efforts about community resources by using multiple modalities, including neighborhood canvassing, events, facility signage along key corridors, social media, mailings, and print materials.

South Side residents have a strong desire to know and understand the resources available to them, and made several suggestions on how to share information. There was a consensus that residents see community outreach as the best way to share information.

Improve communications on available community resources, eligibility, and program requirements.

Many residents reported experiencing barriers in attempting to access various resources from community agencies. Several suggested using plain language to convey information and clearly state eligibility and information required to minimize incomplete applications or unproductive appointments.

"I have to have my ID, birth certificate, Social. I have to have all my kids birth certificates and socials. If I am a person in poverty I am unorganized." – Zoom Focus Group

"I would like more resources to be plain and simple." – Zoom Focus Group

"..I still don't have everything I need to qualify so I have to reschedule my appointment just to get the information." - Zoom Focus Group

"Agencies could canvass to distribute information about their resources and advertise." – Zoom Interview

"Not everyone is on social media. Libraries have good resources." – In-Person Focus Group

"Wouldn't know where to find resources." – Reeb Avenue Center Interview

"It would be nice to have a readily available and updated list (of resources)." – In-Person Focus Group

Improve the overall customer experience at community based organizations via trainings for staff and volunteers on topics like customer service, cultural competency, empathy, and burn-out prevention.

South Side residents reported that with some agencies, they have felt judged or degraded when interacting with staff or volunteers.

Build capacity within churches, community groups, and social service organizations to make more linkages to local resources.

South Side residents reported being referred to other community resources by the staff or volunteers of another organization, and this being helpful in addressing their needs.



"....now I don't want to come in there and get information because someone has not been trained in customer service." – Zoom Focus Group

"The people that have the resources aren't relatable because they have never lived in our circumstances." – Zoom Focus Group

"We need the help so bad so we will sit there with our tail between our legs and fill out your paperwork so we can get the little help that's there. I gotta feel like crap in the process, but I guess thanks for the help." – Zoom Focus Group

"The resources are there but it's about putting the right people in the forefront." – Zoom Focus Group

"First went to Stowe to get help and they told him about the market at CD4AP. People should talk to other people, especially the staff at social service agencies" – All People's Fresh Market Interview

"People turn to foodbanks and churches' they're helpful." – All People's Fresh Market Interview

"They help you find resources. They check on you." – Zoom Interview

COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

In addition to obtaining resident feedback, SS Thrive hosted a community conversation with several stakeholders from social service organizations. Stakeholders provided feedback on community member's experiences in having stable housing, economic mobility, good health and community connection.

Overall, feedback from stakeholders aligned with South Side residents lived experiences, and can be used to promote further alignment and collaboration on improvement areas.

Aligned feedback included acknowledging:

1. Importance of resident voices being heard
2. Rising cost of housing and driving factors
3. Barriers to employment and financial security
4. Lack of information and education of community resources
5. Lack of trust between community residents and agencies
6. The need to take resources to the community

Feedback that was unique to stakeholders from residents included the desire to prioritize the following issue areas:

1. Adult literacy/lack of education
2. Mental health issues
3. Substance use issues
4. Health literacy and access

"So many barriers people wake up with that we don't see."

"Neighbors have not been heard."

"They need (housing) services but keep getting pushed from one location to the next."

"When we can get neighbors to come in, they do not have even up to the 8th grade level of education."

"We differentiate mental health from physical health....but it should just be the language of health."

"For people in poverty, there's that trust factor as well. Might not want to expose their vulnerabilities."

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was made possible with support from the following members of South Side Thrive Collaborative's Leadership Table:



A special Thank You to Franklin County Department of Jobs & Family Services for supporting this report!