

2024 COMMUNITY CONTEXT ASSESSMENT

Updated January 2025



Introduction

At least every five years, local health departments are tasked with conducting a health assessment of their residents. When conducted, our community health assessment (CHA) tells the story, at a point in time, of the different factors impacting the health of residents in Washington County.

This community context assessment (CCA) is one component of our CHA, building on the [2024 Community Status Report](#) to provide a summary of health and community concerns through select data collected between 2022 and 2024.

Washington County generally ranks high among Minnesota counties for health outcomes, quality of life, and social determinants of health* like home ownership and income. Supporting data can be found in our 2024 Community Status Report and [health data profiles](#). However, this data also shows that health differs significantly across different racial, cultural, and ethnic groups in Washington County and throughout Minnesota.

Countywide data sources, like our residential survey, adult health survey, and COVID-19 impact survey, provide a countywide snapshot of social, health, and environmental concerns of residents. However, these surveys can often mask the thoughts and experiences of residents who face greater disparities and are less likely to respond to a general survey.

The goal of this assessment cycle was to focus on the views, insights, values, cultures, and priorities of those experiencing inequities firsthand. This CCA seeks to further understand the strengths and assets of our community, current and historical forces of change, physical and cultural assets, and community-driven solutions to help improve overall health.

**Social determinants of health: The conditions in the environments where people are born, live, learn, work, play, worship, and age that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.*



Summary of Community Conversations

During the summer and fall of 2024, Washington County Public Health and Environment staff and contracted trusted messengers* collected feedback from various communities in the county to help assess overall community health and well-being. The county sought to reach communities that are typically underrepresented in other data collection methods, like the county residential survey and adult health survey, as well as those that experience greater disparities.

Staff used qualitative methods to collect data, including interviews, focus groups, and mapping. This data can a) fill gaps in the quantitative data, b) add nuance and depth to existing knowledge, c) lift community voices, and d) strengthen county-community relationships. These methods and the resulting data ultimately help us understand **why** conditions exist and **how** different populations experience those conditions.

The teams facilitated community conversations with different groups in multiple languages, including Hmong, Somali, Spanish, and English. While some groups were geographically based, others drew in individuals who lived in various parts of Washington County. Sessions were recorded via audio and/or through facilitator notes. The participants were asked to rank issues (focused on various social determinants) from the following categories: healthcare access and quality, transportation, housing, food access, community safety, mental health, economic stability, education, and built environment.

By hosting multiple, smaller conversations with groups who share similar identities, we are better able to understand these communities' unique needs and develop tailored solutions based on community input.

Conversation Groups

- Hmong elders
- Hmong adults
- Somali youth
- Somali adults
- West and Central Africans (Togolese, Congolese, Cameroonians, Nigerians)
- Kenyan and Ugandan adults
- Latino Cimarron mobile home community
- Latino residents in Forest Lake
- Townhome/apartment renters in Cottage Grove
- Oak Terrace Senior Living residents
- Veterans

As our work progresses, we will continue to seek connection and feedback with additional cultural and geographic communities.

An external evaluator from *arcadia research & evaluation* completed a thematic analysis of the qualitative data from these community conversations and summarized the findings in this report. The evaluator also examined data from secondary sources and incorporated relevant findings.

The additional data sources referenced include: the October 2024 Landfall Leader Survey findings report, monthly feedback from leaders in the Landfall community, resident feedback gathered at multiple Washington County community events during August and September 2024, the [FamilyMeans](#) Cimarron and Landfall Healthy Aging Community Surveys, and the 2022 Washington County Resident Survey. The resident survey is a countywide data source that intentionally samples in all five commissioner districts to ensure wide geographic reach. (See *appendix for more details*)

This report summarizes **challenges** raised by community participants and the **solutions** they suggested.

*Trusted messenger: Contracted organization helping to build relationships with cultural communities.

Top Themes (2024 Conversations)

This table lists nine pressing health issues identified by participants. Community groups are listed under the topics they ranked as a top three concern in their community.

Healthcare Access and Quality

- Hmong elders
- Somali young adults
- Somali adults
- Oak Terrace seniors
- Cottage Grove community
- Veterans

Transportation

- West and Central Africans
- Kenyan and Ugandan adults
- Oak Terrace seniors
- Cottage Grove community

Housing

- Kenyan and Ugandan adults
- Forest Lake Latino residents
- Oak Terrace seniors
- Cottage Grove community

Food Access

- Hmong elders
- West and Central Africans
- Cimarron Latino residents

Community Safety

- Hmong elders
- Somali adults
- Cimarron Latino residents
- Veterans

Mental Health

- West and Central Africans
- Kenyan and Ugandan adults
- Cimarron Latino residents

Economic Stability

- Somali young adults
- Forest Lake Latino residents
- Veterans

Education

- Somali young adults
- Somali adults
- Forest Lake Latino residents

Built Environment

While not identified as a top three concern by participants, **built environment appeared in conversations as a consistent pressing health issue.*

Healthcare Access and Quality

Social Determinant of Health

Access to high-quality healthcare significantly influences individual and community well-being. This access helps ensure individuals receive timely preventive services, prompt diagnoses, and effective treatments, ultimately reducing morbidity and mortality rates.

Quality healthcare services also promote better management of chronic diseases, enhance patient safety, and improve overall health outcomes. Barriers to healthcare access, like financial constraints, lack of insurance, and geographic limitations, disproportionately affect marginalized populations, exacerbating existing health disparities.

Another key factor in healthcare delivery is ensuring that services are respectful of and responsive to the cultural and linguistic needs of patients. This approach builds trust, improves patient engagement, and leads to better health outcomes, especially in diverse communities. Addressing these access, quality, and cultural issues is essential for achieving health equity and fostering healthier communities.

Access to healthcare was raised by many participant groups as a major challenge. Proposed solutions include increasing culturally competent care and resources, reducing healthcare costs, and increasing medical personnel availability and transportation options.



Healthcare Access and Quality



Challenges

- **Hmong elders** emphasized the unaffordability of healthcare, citing high premiums, co-pays, and out-of-pocket expenses that make it difficult to access necessary services.
- **Somali adults and young adults** highlighted challenges in obtaining and maintaining insurance due to income thresholds and a lack of understanding about private insurance systems.
- **Oak Terrace Senior Living residents** noted long wait times for appointments and a shortage of medical personnel, particularly specialists.
- **Latino residents in Cimarron and the West and Central African community** pointed to significant language and cultural barriers, including insufficient translation services and a lack of culturally competent providers, which hinder effective care.
- Geographic access issues, highlighted by **Hmong elders and Somali adults**, include transportation challenges and the need for more local service centers to reduce travel burdens.
- **West and Central Africans and Latino residents** also noted inequities in healthcare outreach and resources for minority groups, while **Somali young adults and Latino families** identified insufficient access to nutritious food and preventative care as major barriers, forcing reliance on emergency services.

Solutions

- **Hmong elders** emphasized the importance of assigning caseworkers at elder centers to help with care coordination, insurance applications, and appointment management, along with creating centrally located service centers and improving access through light rail connectivity.
- **Somali young adults and adults** advocated for culturally competent care, expanded translation services, and better education on insurance options, as well as partnerships with hospital charities to assist with medical bills.
- The **West and Central African community** highlighted the need for culturally responsive resources, combining traditional and alternative medicine.
- **Cottage Grove residents** called for healthcare reforms to make care more affordable, addressing systemic barriers penalizing low-income families for minor financial gain.
- **Oak Terrace Senior Living residents** proposed reducing healthcare costs, increasing medical personnel availability, and improving services to better support seniors.

Transportation



Challenges

- **Residents in Cottage Grove** noted the frustration of bus stops without active service and unreliable transit schedules.
- **Latino residents in Forest Lake** criticized limited public transportation, including the three daily bus trips to Minneapolis, which fail to meet their needs for work or healthcare appointments.
- **Seniors at Oak Terrace Senior Living and Hmong elders** expressed reliance on inconsistent services like shared ride public transportation services, causing long wait times and inadequate access to medical and social activities.
- **Hmong elders** also highlighted the need for community-run shuttles operated by trusted individuals who speak their language, emphasizing the importance of culturally appropriate solutions.
- **Kenyan and Ugandan participants** emphasized the long commutes caused by insufficient bus routes in suburban areas, while **West and Central Africans** highlighted the inflexibility of minibus services and the lack of on-demand options.
 - These transportation gaps disproportionately affect seniors, immigrant communities, low-income families, and non-drivers, underscoring the need for expanded routes, reliable service, and better communication about available options.

Solutions

- **Hmong elders** proposed a trusted community-run shuttle service operated by individuals who speak their language, ensuring culturally appropriate and reliable access to destinations beyond healthcare.
- The **West and Central African community** suggested leveraging shared resources like carpooling, volunteers, e-cars, and e-bikes to enhance affordability and availability.
- The **Kenyan and Ugandan community** highlighted the need to improve transit scheduling and communication while expanding service frequency and coverage.
- **Latino residents in Forest Lake** called for increased bus frequency, extended operating hours to include early mornings, late evenings, and weekends, as well as local shuttles to improve connectivity.
- **Residents of Oak Terrace Senior Living** recommended expanding public transit coverage, introducing medical taxis, and creating more flexible scheduling to accommodate seniors' healthcare and social needs.

Housing

Social Determinant of Health

Housing directly impacts physical and mental well-being. Stable, affordable, and safe housing conditions are essential for maintaining good health, while inadequate housing can lead to chronic stress, exposure to environmental hazards, and limited access to necessary community resources.

Issues such as high rental costs, housing discrimination, and insufficient affordable housing options disproportionately affect marginalized populations, exacerbating health disparities.

Addressing these housing challenges is crucial for fostering healthier communities and achieving health equity. Housing concerns highlighted by participants reflect widespread challenges with affordability, accessibility, and discrimination, leaving many residents unable to secure safe and stable housing. Proposed solutions to housing challenges from participants focus on increasing affordability, accessibility, and education to address systemic barriers and create more equitable housing opportunities.



Housing



Challenges

- **Hmong elders** referenced facing limited access to affordable housing and long Section 8 waitlists, relying heavily on elder centers for support.
- **Somali adults** reported high rent, scarce subsidies, and barriers to transitioning from renting to homeownership.
- **Kenyan and Ugandan residents** struggle with insufficient education on homeownership, credit, and financial literacy, making it difficult to secure housing, especially for newcomers.
- **East African residents** attending a community wellness event cited affordable, safe housing as the largest concern for their community.
- **Cottage Grove residents** expressed frustration over inflated housing costs, barriers for individuals with criminal records, and a lack of low-income housing.
- **Latino residents in Forest Lake** highlighted high rental costs, discrimination against undocumented individuals, and limited knowledge of tenant rights and resources.
- **Oak Terrace Senior Living residents** emphasize that even “affordable” housing options are unaffordable for many, with income limits that do not reflect actual community needs.
- **Veterans** shared that affordable housing and homelessness are large concerns in the community.
- Adult and youth residents attending **Oakdale’s** summer back-to-school event selected affordable, safe housing as a top concern for their community.

Solutions

- **Hmong elders** suggested expanded affordable housing options and assistance for securing housing and rent or mortgage support.
- **Somali adults** called for more county-built affordable housing units, additional subsidies, and programs to support homeownership.
- **Kenyan and Ugandan residents** emphasized the need for financial literacy education on homeownership, credit, and loans, with a focus on preparing young people for future housing opportunities.
- **Cottage Grove residents** advocated for building more subsidized housing, improving housing quality in low-income areas, and raising awareness of affordable housing programs.
- **Latino residents in Forest Lake** proposed workshops to educate tenants on their rights and housing resources, as well as emergency funds for critical repairs and increased availability of low-income housing.
- **Oak Terrace Senior Living residents** recommended implementing sliding scale fees for housing and adjusting income limits to better reflect community needs.
- **Veterans** suggested offering more affordable housing options for seniors.

Food Access

Social Determinant of Health

Food access influences both physical and mental well-being. Limited access to nutritious food can lead to poor diet quality, exacerbating chronic health conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.

Marginalized communities often face higher rates of food insecurity due to economic barriers, geographic location, and lack of resources. Addressing food access disparities is essential for promoting health equity and ensuring all individuals can achieve optimal health.

Food access challenges described by participants reflect a range of issues, including availability, affordability, and cultural relevance. Solutions to address food access offered by participants focus on expanding availability, improving cultural relevance, and increasing awareness.



Food Access



Challenges

- **Hmong elders** reported limited access to food shelves within the county, emphasizing the scarcity of these critical resources.
- **Somali young adults** noted a lack of nearby food shelves and insufficient promotion of existing resources, leaving many unaware of available support.
- **West and Central Africans** highlighted the absence of culturally relevant food options in local stores, requiring long trips to specialized African markets.
- Economic barriers also exacerbate food insecurity, as **Latino residents in Cimarron** pointed to the rising cost of food, which limits access for low-income families, and noted the lack of affordable wellness programs to support healthier lifestyles.
- These challenges are particularly acute in rural and northern areas, where residents face geographic isolation and limited access to grocery stores and food shelves, as identified in the **2023 Washington County Community Services Community Needs Assessment**.

Solutions

- Expanding food shelves, community gardens, and mobile food delivery services to address geographic and economic barriers was proposed by multiple groups, including **Hmong elders and Somali young adults**.
- **West and Central Africans** emphasized the need to partner with grocery stores to create culturally relevant food sections and provide funding to support such initiatives.
- To improve awareness, both **Hmong elders and Somali young adults** suggested targeted outreach and newsletters to ensure communities are informed about available food resources.
- Expanding programs like farmers' market vouchers and Medicaid-related food assistance was proposed to make nutritious food more accessible to low-income families.
- **Latino residents in Cimarron** further advocated for affordable wellness programs, such as yoga and Zumba, to promote overall health and well-being.

Community Safety

Social Determinant of Health

Community safety significantly impacts physical, mental, and emotional well-being. A safe community environment fosters trust and social cohesion among residents, reducing stress and anxiety while promoting healthier lifestyles.

Conversely, communities with violence, crime, and lack of security face numerous health challenges. Increased exposure to crime and violence can lead to chronic stress, trauma, and mental health disorders like anxiety and depression. These adverse conditions often result in reduced physical activity, poorer diet, and limited outdoor activities, all of which contribute to negative health outcomes.

Efforts to enhance community safety, like improving policing practices, increasing access to safe public spaces, and fostering community engagement, are essential for creating environments where people can thrive. Ensuring safe neighborhoods not only benefits the physical health of residents but also strengthens community bonds, ultimately contributing to the overall health and well-being of all members within the community.

Community safety concerns raised by participants reflect systemic issues and localized challenges. Participants offered solutions to address community safety concerns that emphasize fostering inclusion, improving infrastructure, and strengthening community-police relations.





Challenges

- **Hmong elders** expressed fears about their proximity to a prison, ongoing construction impacting safety, and inadequate street lighting, alongside concerns that the introduction of light rail might increase crime and poverty.
- **Somali young adults** reported experiencing racism, feeling unwelcome in public facilities like gyms, and a lack of inclusive spaces fostering belonging for minority groups. **Somali adults'** primary safety concern was within schools where Somali children feel neglected compared to their peers.
- **Latino residents in Cimarron** raised serious concerns about theft, violence, and gang activity in their neighborhood, along with perceptions of discrimination by property management and insufficient police action. They also reported incidents of drug-related violence and racial discrimination in local schools.
- **Veterans** shared a need for safe residential areas, for additional supports for law enforcement officers, and/or the additional presence of law enforcement downtown during weekends.
- The **Washington County 2022 Resident Survey** revealed broader concerns about property and violent crimes, with systemic inequities in law enforcement leading to a lower sense of safety among people of color compared to white residents.

Solutions

- **Hmong elders** suggested increasing street lighting, implementing better construction management, and enhancing safety measures around light rail systems to address potential crime and poverty concerns.
- **Somali young adults and adults** proposed creating inclusive community spaces, hiring diverse representatives in local government and police forces, and providing cultural competency training for law enforcement to improve relations and ensure fair treatment.
- **Latino residents in Cimarron** advocated for stronger communication and collaboration between police, property management, and the community, including better crime reporting mechanisms, more visible police presence, and the installation of security cameras to deter crime and violence.
- The **Washington County 2022 Resident Survey** highlighted the importance of addressing systemic inequities in law enforcement practices, including improving outreach to communities of color and fostering trust through transparency and accountability.

Mental Health

Social Determinant of Health

Mental health is a critical community health condition that disproportionately affects communities of color, exacerbated by systemic inequities and socio-economic challenges. These communities often face higher levels of stress, trauma, and mental health disorders, such as anxiety and depression, due to factors like discrimination, poverty, and limited access to mental health services.

The stigma surrounding mental health, coupled with inadequate culturally competent care, further hinders the ability to seek and receive appropriate treatment, leading to a cycle of poor mental health outcomes. Addressing these disparities is essential for promoting overall health and well-being within these vulnerable populations.

Mental health challenges described by participants reveal a complex intersection of stigma, resource shortages, and cultural barriers. Participants suggest addressing mental health challenges by expanding access, reducing stigma, and fostering culturally tailored care.





Challenges

- The **Kenyan and Ugandan community** reported rising youth suicide rates and long therapy waitlists, compounded by a lack of culturally relevant services and pervasive stigma among immigrant parents.
- **West and Central African residents** shared that stigma in the community can be a significant barrier to accessing mental health care.
- **Latino residents in Cimarron** shared experiences of grief and disconnection, further exacerbated by limited access to therapy and deeply ingrained stigma.
- **Latino Landfall residents** rated mental health as one of the top concerns for their community in 2024, citing community stigma and a lack of culturally relevant mental health services.
- The **HealthPartners Teen Leadership Council** emphasized that schools often fail to address stress and trauma adequately, with financial and cultural barriers restricting access to care for many students.
- The **Washington County 2022 Resident Survey** highlighted significant rates of depression, anxiety, and loneliness, particularly among seniors and individuals with disabilities, who often encounter significant gaps in mental health services.
- Across communities, stigma – especially within immigrant groups like **Somali adults and Latino residents** – combined with long wait times and a lack of culturally responsive providers, creates substantial barriers to accessing essential mental health care.

Solutions

- The **Kenyan and Ugandan community** suggested creating culturally relevant mental health resources, increasing the availability of counselors who reflect the community's backgrounds, and offering educational events to destigmatize mental health.
- **Latino residents in Cimarron** proposed improving access to affordable therapy and mental health services in Spanish, as well as organizing community conversations to normalize seeking help.
- The **HealthPartners Teen Leadership Council** recommended integrating mental health education into schools and addressing financial barriers to care, particularly for youth.
- The **Washington County 2022 Resident Survey** emphasized the need for shorter wait times, expanded group therapy programs, and targeted outreach to vulnerable populations including seniors and individuals with disabilities.

Economic Stability

Social Determinant of Health

Economic stability significantly influences health outcomes, as financial resources determine access to necessities like nutritious food, safe housing, and healthcare. Communities facing economic instability often experience higher rates of chronic diseases, mental health issues, and reduced life expectancy.

By ensuring equitable job opportunities, fair wages, and affordable living conditions, economic stability can mitigate health disparities, improve overall well-being, and empower individuals to lead healthier lives.

Financial and employment challenges highlighted by participants underscore systemic inequities and barriers to economic mobility. Solutions offered to financial and employment challenges in Washington County focus on increasing equity and accessibility.





Challenges

- **Somali young adults** reported limited job opportunities for individuals without educational backgrounds and labor jobs that lack benefits, restricting financial stability.
- **Latino residents in Forest Lake** pointed to challenges in finding stable employment due to long commutes, discrimination in the workplace, and a lack of support for entrepreneurial endeavors.
- The **Washington County 2022 Resident Survey** identified economic disparities, with households earning less than \$50,000 annually struggling to cover basic needs, compounded by barriers like limited access to transportation and job opportunities.

Solutions

- **Somali young adults** suggested creating job training programs to support individuals without educational backgrounds and establishing businesses that prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion to foster supportive work environments.
- **Latino residents in Forest Lake** advocated for flexible employability and entrepreneurship courses, along with resources for starting small businesses and job fairs tailored to Spanish-speaking families.
- The **Washington County 2022 Resident Survey** emphasized addressing economic inequities by improving access to livable-wage jobs, particularly for low-income households, and reducing barriers like transportation limitations, which disproportionately impact minority communities.

Education

Social Determinant of Health

Education access plays a crucial role in shaping individuals' life trajectories and overall health outcomes. Adequate and inclusive education provides the foundational skills and knowledge necessary for economic stability, which in turn influences access to healthcare, nutritious food, and safe living environments.

When communities, particularly minority and non-English-speaking families, face systemic barriers such as language obstacles, lack of culturally inclusive curricula, and insufficient support for special needs, their opportunities for academic and economic success are significantly hindered. Addressing these educational disparities by fostering inclusive environments, providing language support, and ensuring access to advanced courses and after-school programs can mitigate these health inequities and promote well-being across all demographics.

Educational challenges in Washington County reveal systemic barriers that disproportionately affect minority and non-English-speaking families. Solutions to address educational challenges described by participants include focusing on increasing inclusivity, accessibility, and cultural competency.





Challenges

- **Somali young adults** reported feeling excluded due to a lack of culturally inclusive curricula, limited access to advanced courses, and insufficient accommodations for Islamic practices such as designated prayer spaces. They also highlighted experiences of bullying and racism, creating an unsupportive school environment.
- **Latino residents in Forest Lake** cited language barriers that prevent parents from engaging with their children's education, as school communications are often only in English. Additionally, they faced a lack of affordable after-school programs, insufficient support for children with special needs, negative experiences with school staff, and a lack of culturally competent resources.
- **Landfall residents** cited education as a top priority, including education for their children and ongoing educational opportunities for adults. Through ongoing engagement with Washington County staff, Landfall resident leaders reported a need for accessible English as a Second Language (ESL) classes in their community for adults, and a need to adequately address bullying in K-12 education settings.

Solutions

- **Somali young adults** suggested implementing designated prayer spaces in schools, enforcing strong anti-discrimination policies to address bullying and racism, and diversifying school staff to reflect and support students from minority backgrounds. They also recommended expanding access to advanced courses and extracurricular activities to ensure equal opportunities for all students.
- **Latino residents in Forest Lake** proposed increasing translation services and hiring bilingual staff to facilitate better communication between schools and non-English-speaking parents. They also advocated for affordable or free extracurricular programs and more culturally competent training for school staff to address the unique needs of Latino families and children with special needs.

Built Environment

Social Determinant of Health

The built environment, including housing quality, neighborhood safety, and access to recreational facilities, significantly influences individuals' health outcomes and overall well-being. It encompasses all physical parts of where people live and work, including homes, buildings, streets, open spaces, and other infrastructure.

High-quality housing can reduce exposure to environmental hazards and chronic stress, enhancing physical and mental health. Safe neighborhoods encourage physical activity and social interactions, improving community cohesion and psychological health. Access to parks and recreational facilities provides opportunities for exercise and relaxation, contributing to better physical health.

A well-planned built environment can facilitate access to essential services such as healthcare, education, and employment, further supporting overall health and quality of life.

Concerns raised by participants highlight safety, accessibility, and environmental issues. Recommended solutions to address built environment described by participants emphasize improving infrastructure, enhancing safety, and fostering environmental sustainability.





Challenges

- **Hmong elders** expressed concerns about busy roads where drivers fail to adhere to speed limits, creating risks for children walking to school and parks, especially in areas lacking sidewalks like Woodbury and Cottage Grove. They also noted inadequate street lighting and the impact of ongoing construction on commutes.
- The **FamilyMeans Cimarron Healthy Aging Survey** reported that only 16% of respondents viewed their neighborhood as pedestrian-friendly, emphasizing the need for more walkable spaces and community activities for aging residents.
- The **Washington County 2022 Resident Survey** identified environmental issues such as concerns over drinking water quality, water safety in lakes and streams, exposure to radon, and the lack of recycling facilities.

Solutions

- **Hmong elders** suggested adding sidewalks, especially in areas like Woodbury and Cottage Grove, to ensure safer routes for children walking to schools and parks. They also advocated for increased street lighting and better management of construction projects to reduce disruptions.
- Recommendations from the **FamilyMeans Cimarron Healthy Aging Survey** include creating more walkable spaces and establishing community activities tailored to aging residents to promote activity and mobility.

Conclusion

The 2024 community conversations held by Washington County Public Health and Environment teams reveal the deep connection between social determinants of health and community well-being. Through extensive conversations with diverse groups, the outreach revealed both shared challenges and unique barriers faced by residents, including insufficient transportation, limited affordable housing, inequities in healthcare access, and systemic gaps in education and community safety. These systemic barriers disproportionately affect marginalized populations, exacerbating health disparities across the county.

Equally important are the community-driven solutions proposed by participants. Ideas such as culturally tailored mental health programs, expanded affordable housing initiatives, community-run shuttles, and improved translation services highlight the creativity and resilience within these communities. These solutions reflect the need for a multifaceted approach that considers the distinct needs of different groups while promoting equity and inclusion.

Information from this report will be shared with partners and inform development of an updated 2025 Community Health Improvement Plan. By prioritizing these insights and connecting partners to support future solutions, Washington County can create sustainable, equitable changes that help empower all residents to thrive in healthier, safer, and more connected communities.



Appendix: Community Groups

Table A1: Primary Data Sources

Community groups engaged in the community health assessment process.

Community Group	Date	Attendees
Hmong elders	Sept. 18, 2024	11
Hmong adults	Sept. 29, 2024	5
Somali youth	Sept. 19, 2024	17
Somali adults	Oct. 19, 2024	17
West and Central Africans (Togolese, Congolese, Cameroonians, Nigerians)	Sept. 21, 2024	25
Kenyan and Ugandan adults	Sept. 26, 2024	11
Latino Cimarron mobile home community	Sept. 23, 2024	12
Latino residents in Forest Lake	Oct. 14, 2024	15
Townhome/apartment renters in Cottage Grove	Sept. 25, 2024	7
Oak Terrace Senior Living residents	Oct. 21, 2024	18
Veterans	Surveys completed between Oct. 3, 2024, and Nov. 1, 2024	19

Appendix: Secondary Data Sources

Secondary Data Sources

Additional community feedback included (as relevant) in this report.

Landfall Leaders Survey

Through a data-driven and collaborative process that engaged county staff and community organizations with knowledge about Washington County, Landfall was identified as an area where residents experience disparities in income, healthcare coverage, and economic opportunities. The county leads place-based work in collaboration with Landfall residents to better understand resident needs and coordinate the delivery of resources. A group of residents referred to as the Landfall Leaders meet regularly with county staff to co-create solutions for their annual top priorities. The Landfall Leaders were surveyed and asked to reflect on their civic engagement, leadership skills and confidence, and trust in county and city government services and leadership. They also share feedback regularly at monthly meetings with county staff.

FamilyMeans Cimarron Healthy Aging Survey / FamilyMeans Landfall Healthy Aging Survey

The Healthy Aging Community Learning Project aims to hear community voices about experiences with/as an older adult, as well as any barriers or needs to improve the aging experience in the local community. Youth researchers collected community surveys to inform FamilyMeans about the needs of residents in Cimarron and Landfall.

- In Cimarron, 84 people provided survey responses related to aging in the community. 64 responses were available for analysis. 25% of these respondents identified as an older adult or elder, 77% of people responded to the survey in English, and 20% responded in Spanish.
- In Landfall, 61 people provided survey responses related to aging in the community. 28 responses were available for analysis. Half of these respondents identified as an older adult or elder, 64% of people responded to the survey in English, and 36% responded in Spanish.

2022 Washington County Resident Survey

Washington County has conducted regular, periodic surveys to gather resident opinions. The most recent [survey](#) was conducted in 2022 and asks about county services and resident opinions on health and community issues. The survey was mailed to 3,000 households, or 500 in each of Washington County's five commissioner districts. Washington County received 22%, or 648, of the surveys with a relatively equal number from each commissioner district.

2023 Washington County Community Services Community Needs Assessment

In 2023, Washington County Community Services conducted a [Community Needs Assessment \(PDF\)](#) to assess the feasibility of the Family Resource Center (FRC) model and evaluate its potential to meet the needs of families in Washington County. The study gathered feedback from Washington County residents, county staff, and community-based service providers. The study explored community strengths, needs, and resources available to area families as well as gaps in services.

HealthPartners Teen Leadership Council

In an effort to streamline health assessment efforts between Washington County and local health systems, data was shared between Washington County and HealthPartners Lakeview. HealthPartners led a community conversation with its Teen Leadership Council, a group of active high school students across the Twin Cities and western Wisconsin who are interested in health and well-being. Participants discuss topics including access to care and mental health.

Appendix: Secondary Data Sources

Table A2: Secondary Data Sources

Additional community feedback included (as relevant) in this report.

Survey	Respondents
Washington County community event engagement efforts, August and September 2024	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 48 Landfall residents attending the Landfall back-to-school event held on Aug. 8, 2024. • 89 adults and 13 youth attending the Oakdale back-to-school event held Aug. 22, 2024. • 10 residents attending a Hmong community event held over Labor Day weekend (2024) in Cottage Grove. • 29 residents attending the East African wellness event held on Sept. 28, 2024 in Woodbury.
Landfall Leader Survey findings report, October 2024	11
Documentation of Landfall Leaders engagement	Monthly meetings and ongoing engagement with identified leaders of the Landfall community, November 2022 to January 2025 (with plans to continue engagement).
FamilyMeans Cimarron Healthy Aging Community Survey	64
FamilyMeans Landfall Healthy Aging Community Survey	28
2022 Washington County Resident Survey	648
2023 Washington County Community Services Community Needs Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 45 individuals from 37 organizations in a community entity survey. • 75 participants across two workshops. • 161 community survey respondents and participants in multiple listening sessions (7-41 per session). • 397 families receiving Children’s Division services.
HealthPartners Teen Leadership Council	24