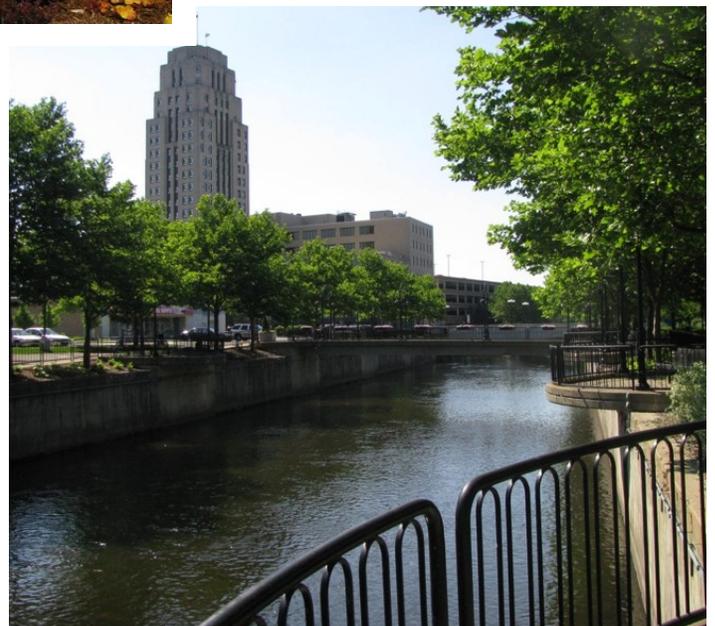


City of Battle Creek, Michigan
Community Development Department

2014 Public Engagement Report

A Review of Public Participation in the Creation of the 2015-19 Consolidated Plan



Citizen Engagement Overview

Every five years, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires the City of Battle Creek to conduct a community-wide needs assessment as part of the Consolidated Plan. This planning requirement serves as the application for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and HOME Investment Partnership entitlement funding.

In the fall 2014, as part of the 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan planning process, the City of Battle Creek Community Development Department conducted 50 consultations with community leaders, distributed a survey to the community (1,179 responses), and held 10 public meetings to gather public input.

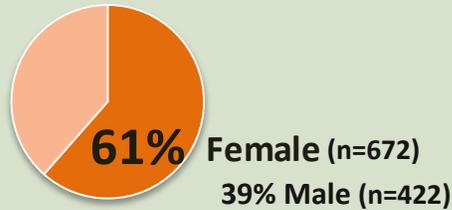
Consultations (50 total) were conducted with service providers, agency leaders, community leaders, and local funders—groups that play providing, supporting, or deciding roles when it comes to addressing community needs.

Public Meetings (10 total) were held during regular meetings of the City's eight Neighborhood Planning Council meetings; a participant's meeting at the SHARE Center, a drop in day center for homeless people; and a community-wide evening forum co-hosted by Project 20/20. Over 235 people participated in the 10 public meetings and 310 comments were recorded. The majority of the data collected is from the perspective of people experiencing the needs first hand.

Survey Respondents (1,179 total) shared their perspective of the needs in their community. The survey was offered online and distributed via water bills and asked respondents to prioritize program activities and answer an open-ended question about improving their neighborhood—590 open ended responses were received. The demographics and priorities expressed in the surveys are presented in the first half of this report.

City staff and community partners from the Beacon Community Initiative, BC Pulse and Project 20/20 analyzed the open-ended responses from both the surveys and the public meetings resulting in the analysis that begins on page 8 of this report.

Survey Respondents



52% of Battle Creek's population is Female and 48% is Male.



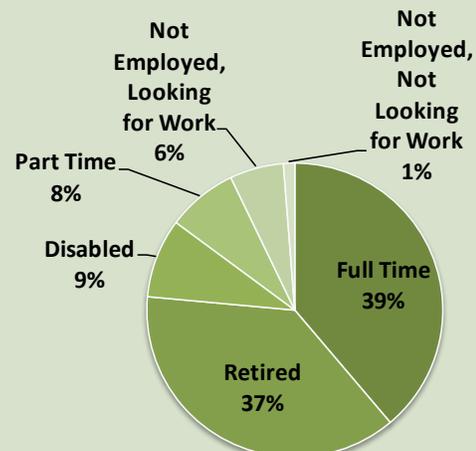
61% of Battle Creek's population lives in owner-occupied housing and 39% rents.



Employment Status of Survey Respondents (n=1049)

Answers the question: Which of the following best describes your employment status?

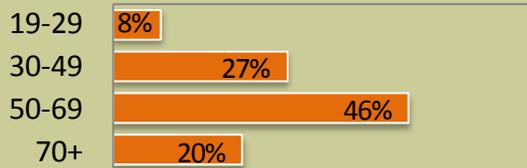
Answers the question: Which of the following best describes your employment status?



Income of Survey Respondents (n=935)

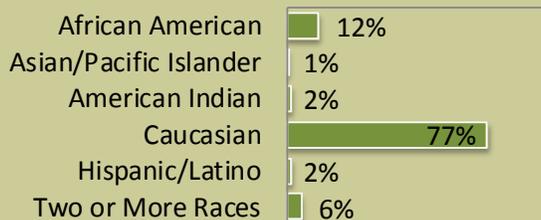


Age of Survey Respondents (n=1087)



Residents over 50 years of age were over-represented in the survey, making up 66% of the survey compared to 45% of the Battle Creek population.

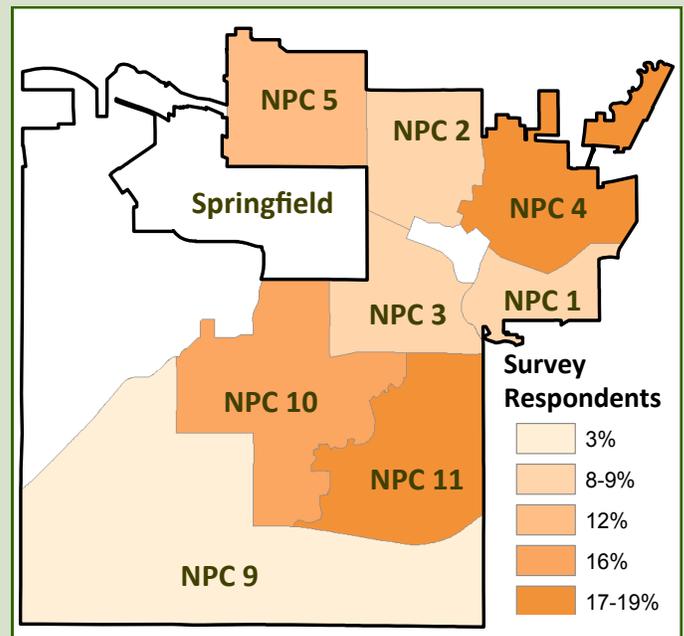
Race/Ethnicity of Survey Respondents (n=981)



African Americans make up 18% of the Battle Creek population and Hispanics 7%. Therefore both were under-represented in the survey. Caucasians (72%) were over-represented. American Indians (0.7%) and those reporting Two or More Races (4%) were slightly over-represented.

Residency of Survey Respondents

Answers the question: What Neighborhood Planning Council (NPC) do you currently live in?



NPC's 4, 5, 10, and 11 contributed the most respondents to the survey sample (12-19% each).

Types of Data Collected

The survey presented the question "what housing and community development services are needed in your neighborhood". Respondents were asked to consider 38 community development services and rank them as "high", "medium", or "low" need, or indicate "no opinion".

This data aligned with activities eligible for federal programs and focused on needed services as opposed to problems that needed fixing.

The open-ended portion of the survey, as well as the discussion portions of the public meetings resulted in answers to the question "If you could change one thing in your neighborhood, what would it be and how would you do it?"

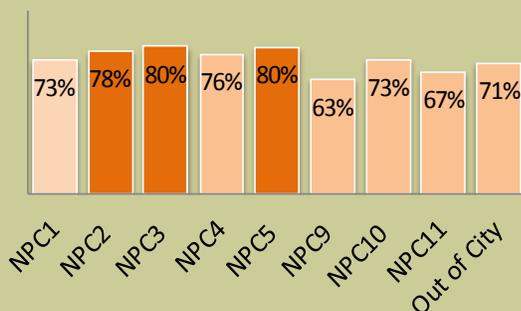
Respondents could mention items not on the list and often identified problems that they considered urgent and/or most important.

Highest Service Need (n=1179)

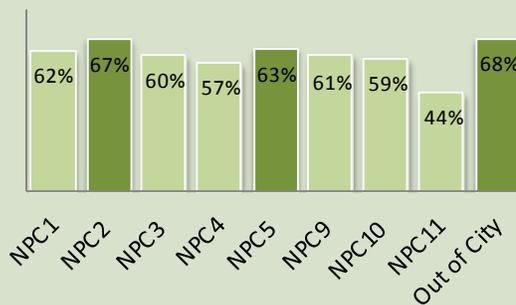
Answers the question: Of the 38 service needs listed on the survey, which were ranked as “High Need” by the most respondents?

Rank	Need Category	Percent
1	Job Opportunities	60%
2	Street Improvements	51%
3	Crime Prevention Education & Victim Services	45%
4	Health Care	45%
5	Youth Services	44%
6	Veterans Services	43%
7	Mental Health Services	42%
8	Demolition of Abandoned Buildings	42%
9	Employment Training	42%
10	Weatherization/Energy Improvements	42%
11	Clean Up of Vacant Lots	40%
12	Homeowner Rehab/Repair	39%
13	Help with Home Maintenance	39%
14	Substance Abuse Services	39%
15	Senior Services	38%

Job Opportunities ranked as the highest need regardless of respondents income, race, age, employment status, tenure, or residence—making it by far the most broadly felt need. However this did not translate into a high ranking when respondents discussed change in their neighborhood. Responses related to job opportunities were included as part of the “Economic Development” category which ranked 15th in ways to improve your neighborhood. NPC’s 2, 3, and 5 were most likely to rate it a high priority.



Street Improvements was the second highest need overall, and ranked as a top five service need among almost all demographic groups including both Low/Moderate Income individuals (57%) and respondents living in Low/Moderate Income Areas (56%). NPC’s 2 and 5, as well as respondents that live outside the city, rated it a high priority most often.



Open-ended question responses regarding street improvements were included as part of the “Public Infrastructure” category which ranked 7th as a neighborhood concern and made up 7% of all responses.

Crime Prevention Education & Victim Services ranked the third highest need and was the only public safety related service need included in the survey. “Public Safety” was the third most frequent response to the open ended question about how to improve your neighborhood and Reduce Speeding in Residential Neighborhoods was ranked eighth.

Health Care was the fourth highest rated need. Again, this need was broadly felt, cutting across most demographic groups. NPC’s 5, 9, 10, and 11 ranked Health Care as a top 5 issue.

Youth Services was the fifth highest service need, largely as the result of four demographic groups: African Americans (74%), residents of the Post/Franklin NPC (73%), lower income households (66% for households with income below \$30,000), and renters (66%). Like many service categories (Veterans Services, Mental Health Services, Senior Services, etc.) Youth Services were rarely mentioned by respondents of the open ended question and were included in the category “More Public Services”.

Most Important Issue (n=900)

Answers the question: Which issues were mentioned most often by respondents when asked what one thing they would change about their neighborhood?

Rank	Issue Category	Percent
1	Code Compliance	13%
2	Neighborhood Organizing, Associations, or Interaction	12%
3	Public Safety	10%
4	Vacant Buildings	9%
5	Rental Housing Concerns	7%
6	Improve Neighborhood Appearance	7%
7	Public Infrastructure	7%
8	Reduce Speeding in Residential Neighborhoods	6%
9	More Housing Rehabilitation	6%
10	Build/Improve Sidewalks	6%
11	Trash/Neighborhood Clean-up	5%
12	Trim Shrubs and/or Removal of Trees or Overgrowth	4%
13	Street Lighting	4%
14	More Public Services	3%
15	Economic Development	3%

Please note that the percentages above are much lower than the service need ratings. Respondents to this question were asked to pick one issue and were not limited in their response choices.

Statements related to **Code Compliance** made up 13% of all open-ended responses, encompassing a range of sentiments: leniency for certain types of property owners (poor, elderly, homeowners), stricter enforcement, improved customer service, attention to specific types of code issues, etc.

This contrasts sharply with the service need priorities chart which ranks “Code Enforcement” 19th in importance. The neighborhood context of the question and respondent’s perceptions of what constitutes a service are both likely factors in explaining this discrepancy.

Whether respondents consider Code Enforcement a service or not, it is clear that doing it well is an important part of bringing about neighborhood change for many of them. When issues are added that code enforcement directly impacts—like addressing vacant buildings or rental housing concerns—48% of all comments received are code related.

Code Enforcement rated highest in NPC’s 1,3, and 4.

Neighborhood Organizing, Associations, or Interaction ranked second amongst neighborhood issues, but likewise did not make the top 15 service needs. This issue category encompasses a range of statements that had one thing in common: the importance of neighborhood residents in shaping their neighborhoods.

Some of the statements reflected the need for formal resident groups:

“We need to have a more active neighborhood association with a newsletter, meetings, clean up projects, and events.”

“Need to build up Neighborhood Planning Councils.”

Others were about residents knowing each other :

“I’d love to get to know more people in my area.”

“Need better relationships with neighbors”

Lastly, a number of comments focused on the interaction between residents and city government:

“Its about building relationships with community leaders and city staff. We need to lift up people that are committed citizens and honor them—show that people leading is valued.”

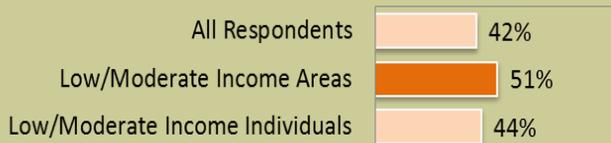
Contrasting with the numerous public services ranked highly in the service needs chart, **More Public Services** made up just 3% of all responses when provided with the neighborhood context.

Highest Service Needs Among Target Demographic Groups

Community Development programs must be targeted to benefit a Low/Moderate Income (LMI) Household (defined as \$29,500 or less for an individual or \$42,250 or less for a family of four) or produce a benefit for all people in an area where at least 51% of households are low/moderate income.

In some instances there were significant differences between the priorities of “all respondents” and those of these targeted populations.

Demolition of Abandoned Buildings ranked as a top five need for respondents living in LMI Areas with 51% rating it as high.



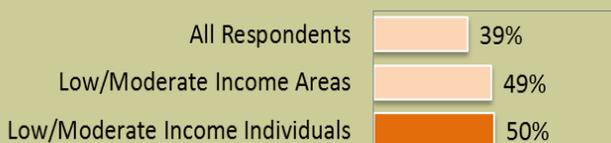
Clean Up of Vacant Lots was similarly ranked higher by LMI Area residents.



Weatherization/Energy Improvements ranked significantly higher for both targeted populations—third highest need for LMI households at 55%.



Help with Home Maintenance similarly ranked significantly higher for both targeted populations.



High Service Needs Among Some Demographic Groups

Some demographic groups rated service needs higher on average than others. As part of the planning process for community development programs, demographic groups that have a special or disproportionate need must be considered. A comparison of the priorities of these demographic groups to those of “all respondents” suggest some potentially significant differences, and may indicate a special need.

Demographic Group	% of Needs Rated High
Disabled	60%
African American	58%
Renter	55%
NPC1 Post/Franklin	54%
NPC2 North Central	54%
Not Employed, Looking for Work	51%
NPC3 Wilson/Coburn/Territorial	49%
Part Time	47%
Female	46%
Age: 19-29	44%
Outside of City	44%
Age: 50-69	43%
Age: 30-49	42%
NPC4 Fremont/McKinley/Verona	42%
NPC5 Urbandale	42%
Age: 70+	42%
Retired	41%
Homeowner	40%
Caucasian	39%
Male	38%
Not Employed, Not Looking for Work	38%
NPC10 Westlake/Prairieview	37%
Full Time	37%
NPC9 Rural Southwest	34%
NPC11 Riverside/Minges	31%

On average respondents that were disabled, African American, or renters rated service needs as high more often than all other demographic groups.

Rank	Disabled	%
1	Job Opportunities	84.0%
2	Health Care	76.3%
3	Weatherization	76.0%
4	Rental Housing for Disabled	72.0%
5	Employment Training	72.0%

Job Opportunities ranked highest amongst all groups, but disabled, African American, and renter respondents were 20-25% more likely to rate it as a high priority than “all respondents”. **Employment Training** was a top 5 issue for both disabled and African American respondents—up 30 and 40% respectively. Outside of this increased emphasis on Employment Training, the order of priorities for African American respondents is very similar to survey sample.

Rank	African American	%
1	Job Opportunities	85.3%
2	Employment Training	82.5%
3	Youth Services	74.3%
4	Street Improvements	73.9%
5	Crime Prevention Education	69.1%

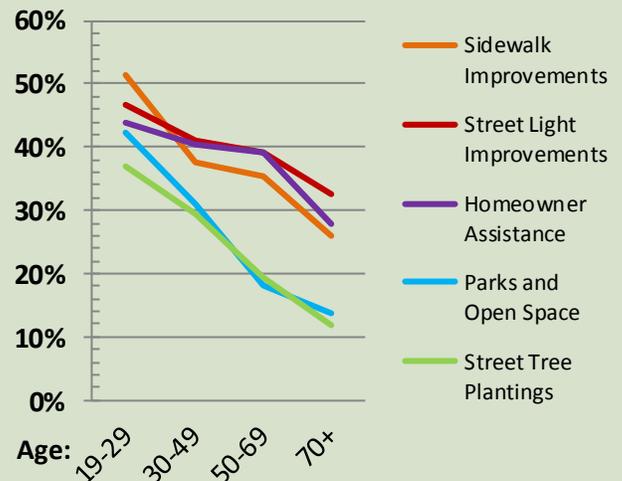
Rental Housing for Disabled was a top 5 priority for disabled respondents and **Rental Housing for the Homeless** likewise for renters—both significant differences in priority from the survey sample which ranked them 23rd and 17th respectively.

Rank	Renter	%
1	Job Opportunities	79.3%
2	Rental Housing for Homeless	66.4%
3	Youth Services	66.0%
4	Street Improvements	65.2%
5	Health Care	64.6%

High Service Needs Related to Respondent Age

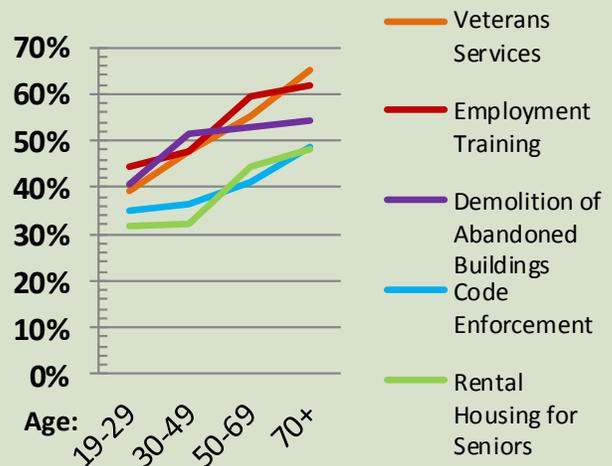
The priority level of a number of service needs decreased with age. For example Sidewalk Improvements were rated as a high priority by 51% of 19 to 29 year olds, with each subsequent age bracket resulting in lower percentages. Only 26% of respondents 70+ years old rated Sidewalk Improvements a high priority.

Priorities that Decrease with Age

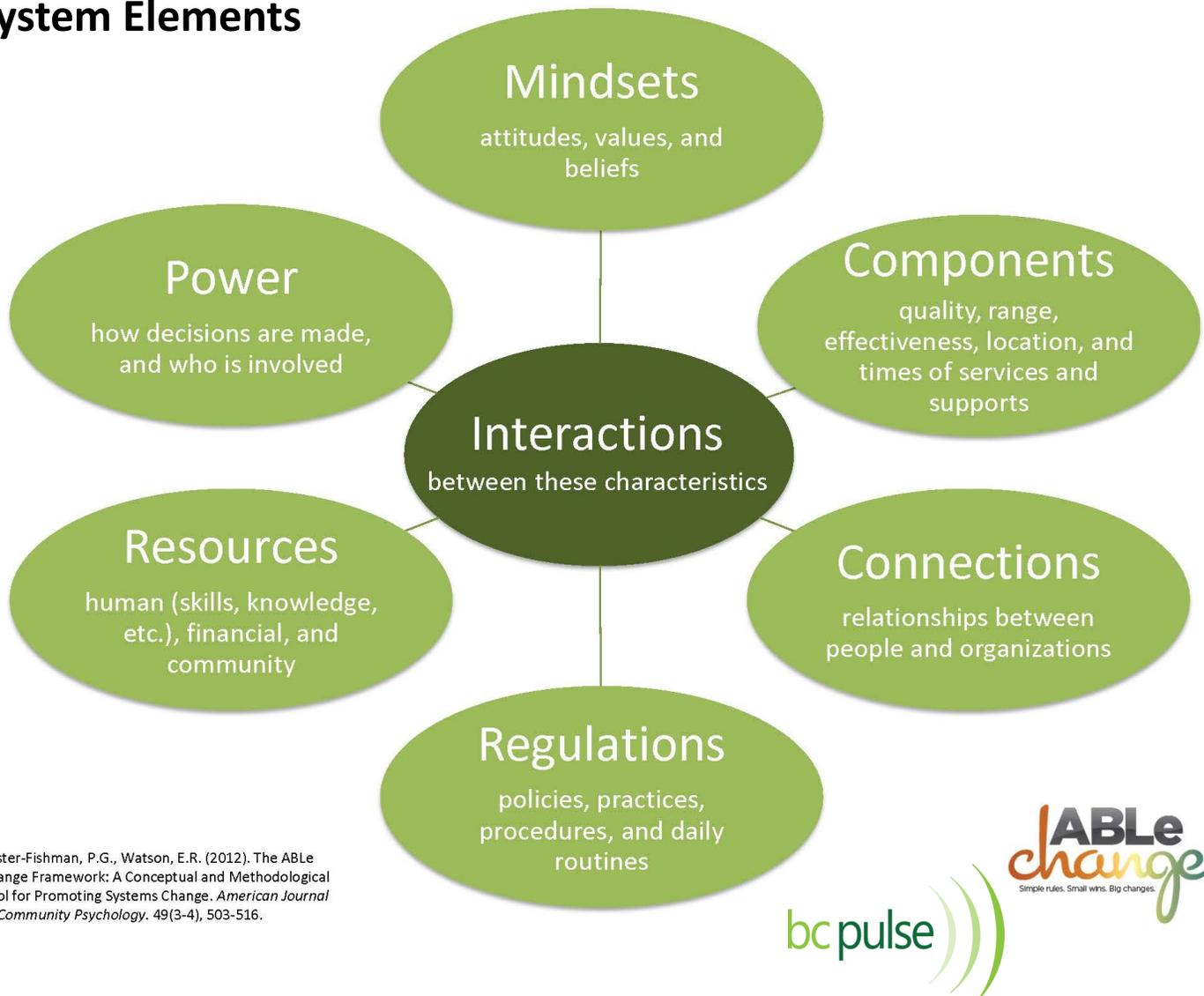


A number of service needs increased in priority with age, the most significant of which was Veteran Services which was rated as high by just 39% of 19 to 29 year olds, but by 65% of respondents over the age

Priorities that Increase with Age



System Elements



Foster-Fishman, P.G., Watson, E.R. (2012). The ABLe Change Framework: A Conceptual and Methodological Tool for Promoting Systems Change. *American Journal of Community Psychology*. 49(3-4), 503-516.

Mindsets: Attitudes, values and beliefs that shape behavior. Systems change shifts mindsets to believe in the value of coordination and family voice.

Components: Systems change enhances service components to increase the use of evidence based programs and more effective services.

Connections: Systems change improves connections with referrals and information sharing, improved inter-organizational trust and more real time learning across organizations.

Regulations: Policies, practices, procedures and daily routines that shape behavior patterns of individuals, groups and organizations. Systems change aligns regulations so policies and procedures are adjusted to support improved outcomes.

Resources: Expanded resources create greater opportunities to solve problems, successful collaborative grant applications and enhanced staff knowledge of local systems.

Power: How decisions are made, who participates in decision-making, and the structures available to support an inclusive voice. Systems change alters dynamics to enhance family voice in the system and empowers direct providers.

Qualitative Data Analysis

of Open Ended Responses from the Community Development Survey, Public Meetings and Consultations

Root Cause Chains:

Qualitative Data Analysis

Problems facing neighborhoods are complex and multifaceted, the survey and public meetings gauged people's thoughts and priorities on problems facing Battle Creek's neighborhoods. The consultations gathered organizational leaders thoughts and opinions. Getting beyond simple answers is the purpose of analyzing qualitative data using the Theming or Root Cause Analysis. This method is part of the ABLe Change Framework, developed by Pennie Foster-Fishman and Erin Watson from Michigan State University. BC Pulse facilitated and coached the theming of this information.

The following analysis summarizes and groups the 900 open ended responses gathered from the ten public meetings and the open ended survey responses. Statements were grouped together and categorized to develop the attached root cause chains. The number in parentheses () behind each statement is the number of open ended responses that were grouped together because they stated the same or similar thought. Each statement was analyzed to identify the systems element it represented. The system element is labeled at the end of each statement.

The root cause chains will be used to create strategies for solving problems in neighborhoods.

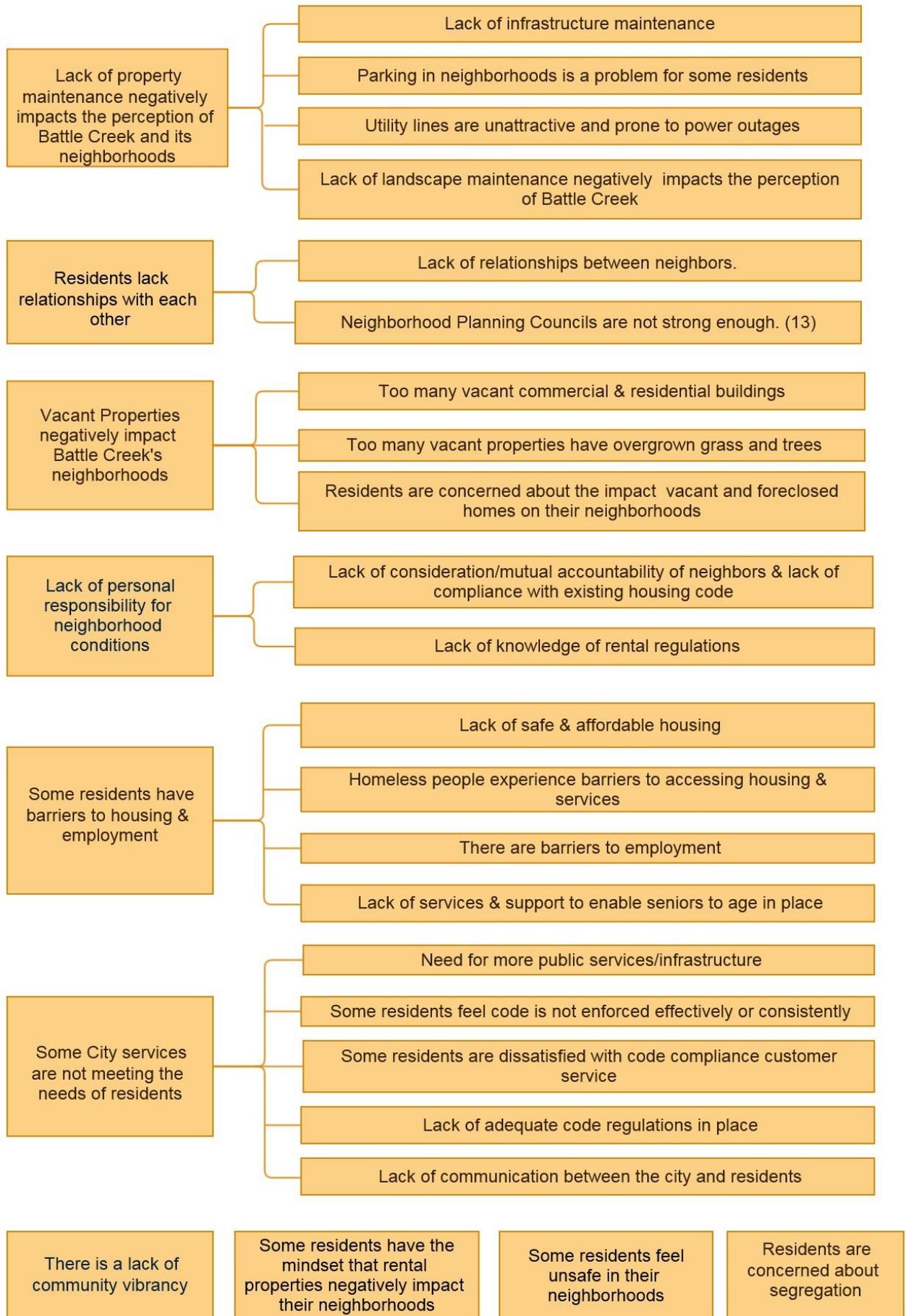
Survey/Public Input Root Cause Chains

- ◆ Property Maintenance Concerns
- ◆ Lack of Neighborhood Relationships
- ◆ Impact of Vacant Buildings on Neighborhoods
- ◆ Lack of Personal Responsibility for Neighborhood Conditions
- ◆ Barriers to Housing & Employment
- ◆ Impact of City Services
- ◆ Lack of Vibrancy
- ◆ Impact of Rental Housing
- ◆ Perceptions of Neighborhood Safety
- ◆ Housing Segregation

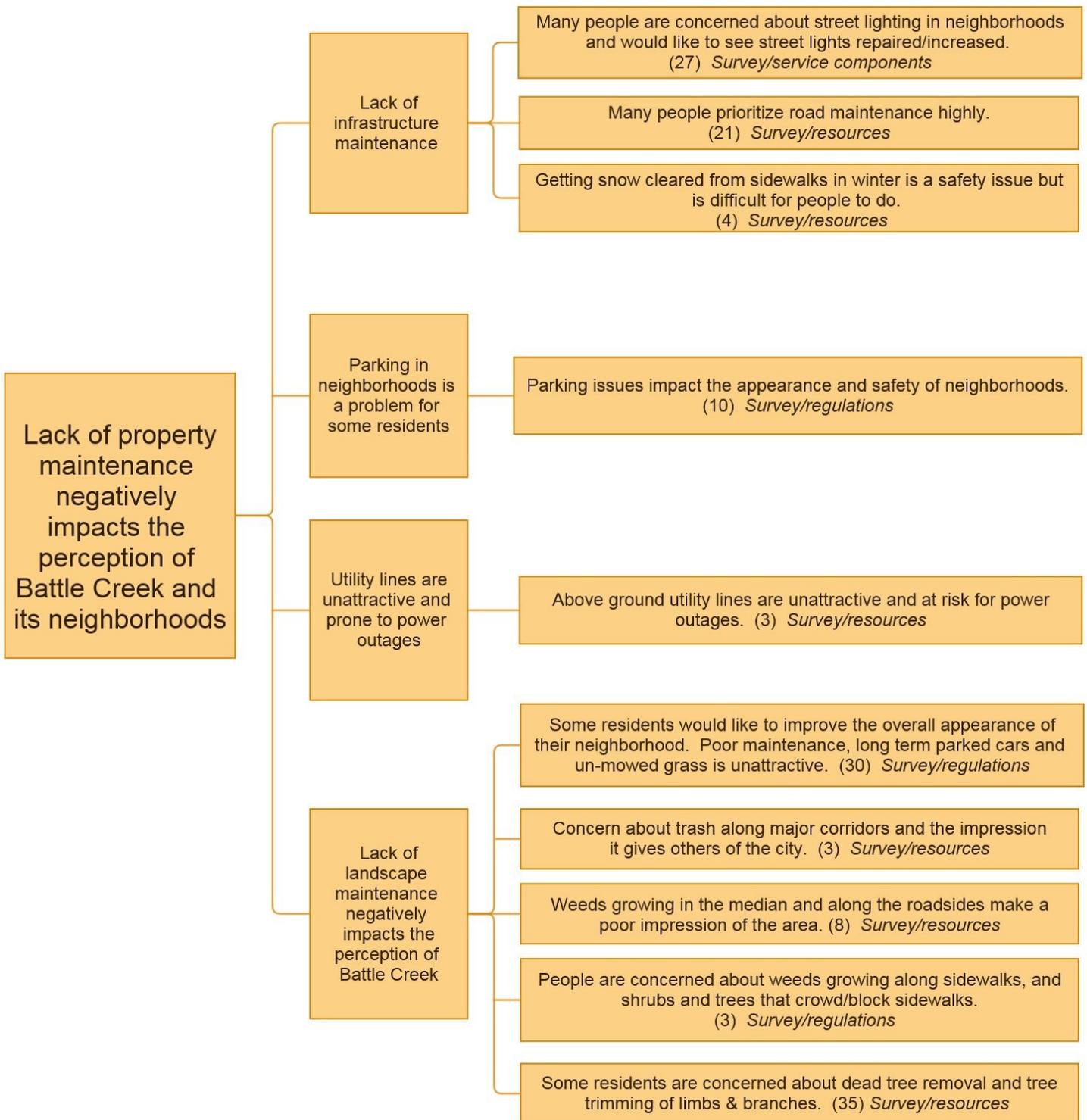
Consultations Root Cause Chains

- ◆ Lack of Vibrancy
- ◆ Lack of Safe & Affordable Housing
- ◆ Workforce Development: Barriers to Employment
- ◆ Supportive Services
- ◆ Disconnect with Decision Makers

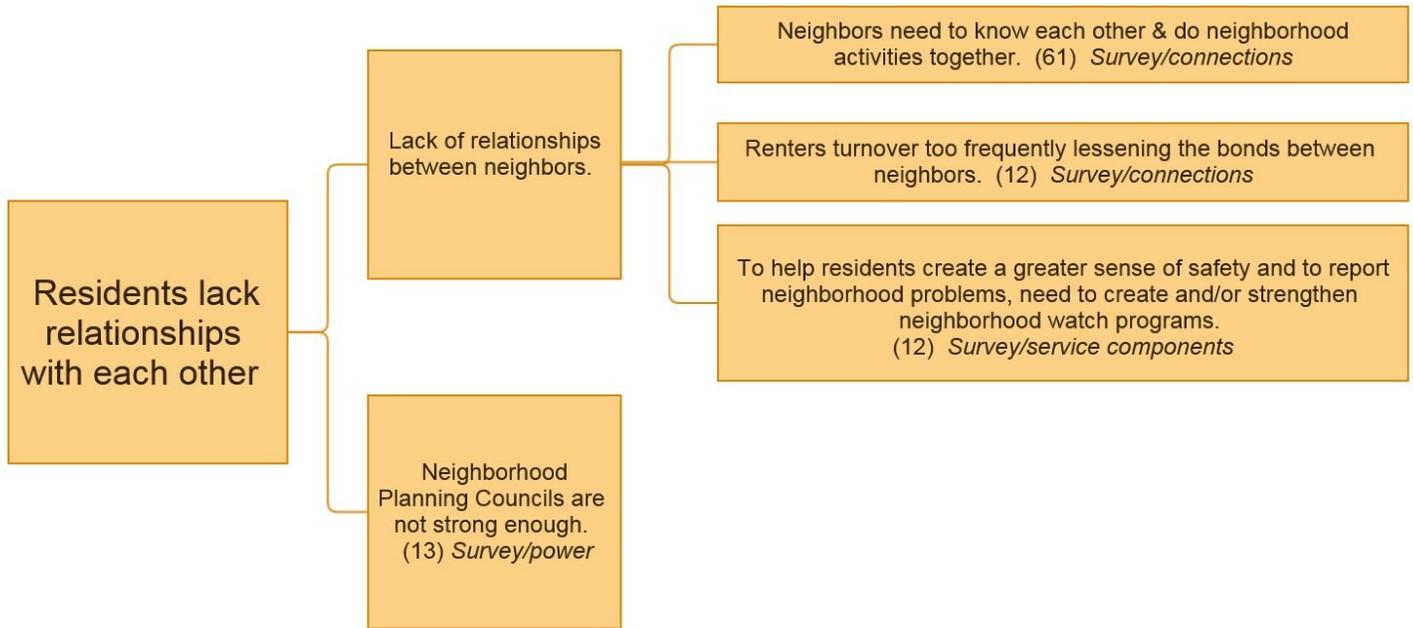
Summary of Survey/Public Input Root Cause Analysis



Survey/Public Input: Property Maintenance Concerns

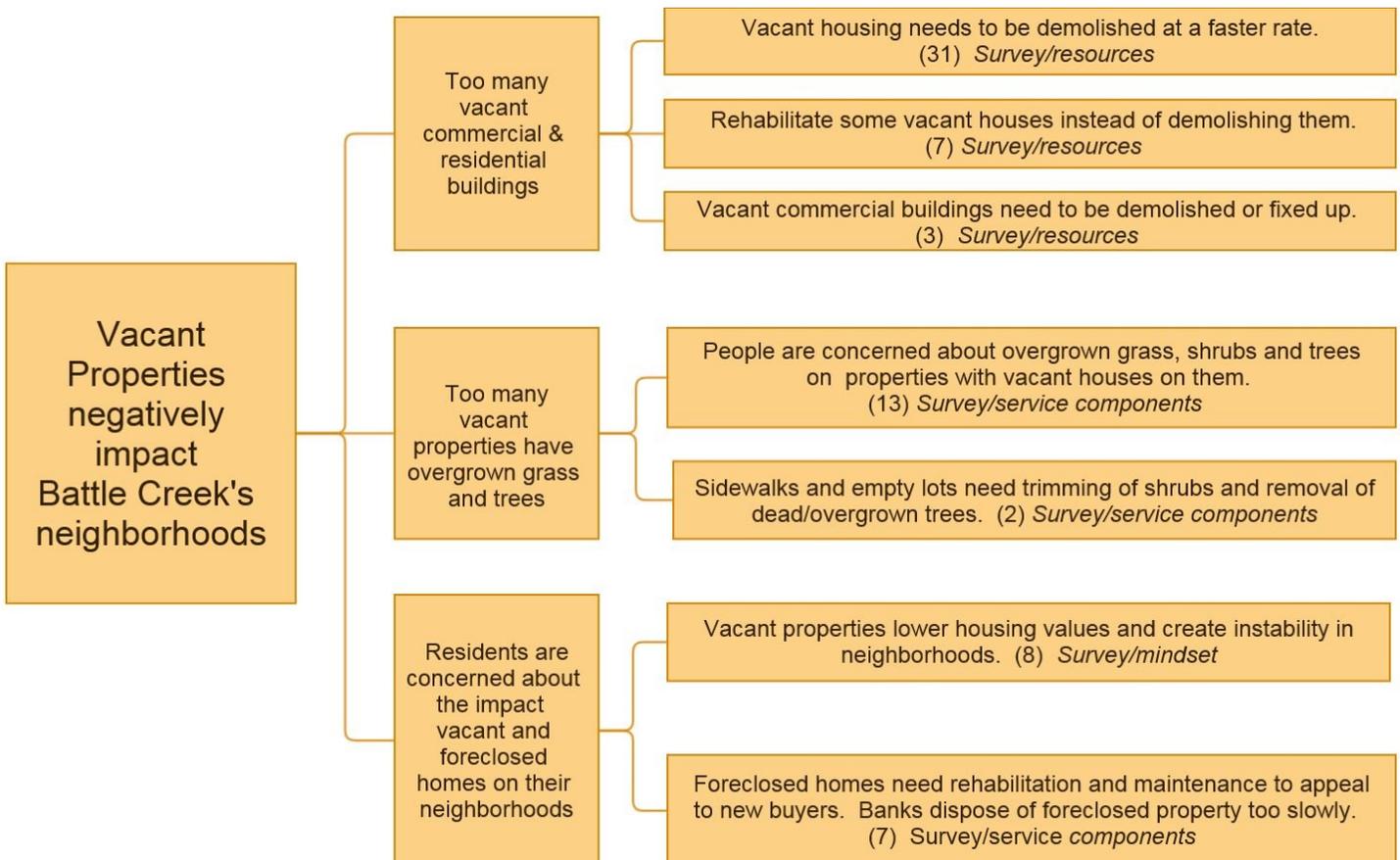


Survey/Public Input: Lack of Neighborhood Relationships



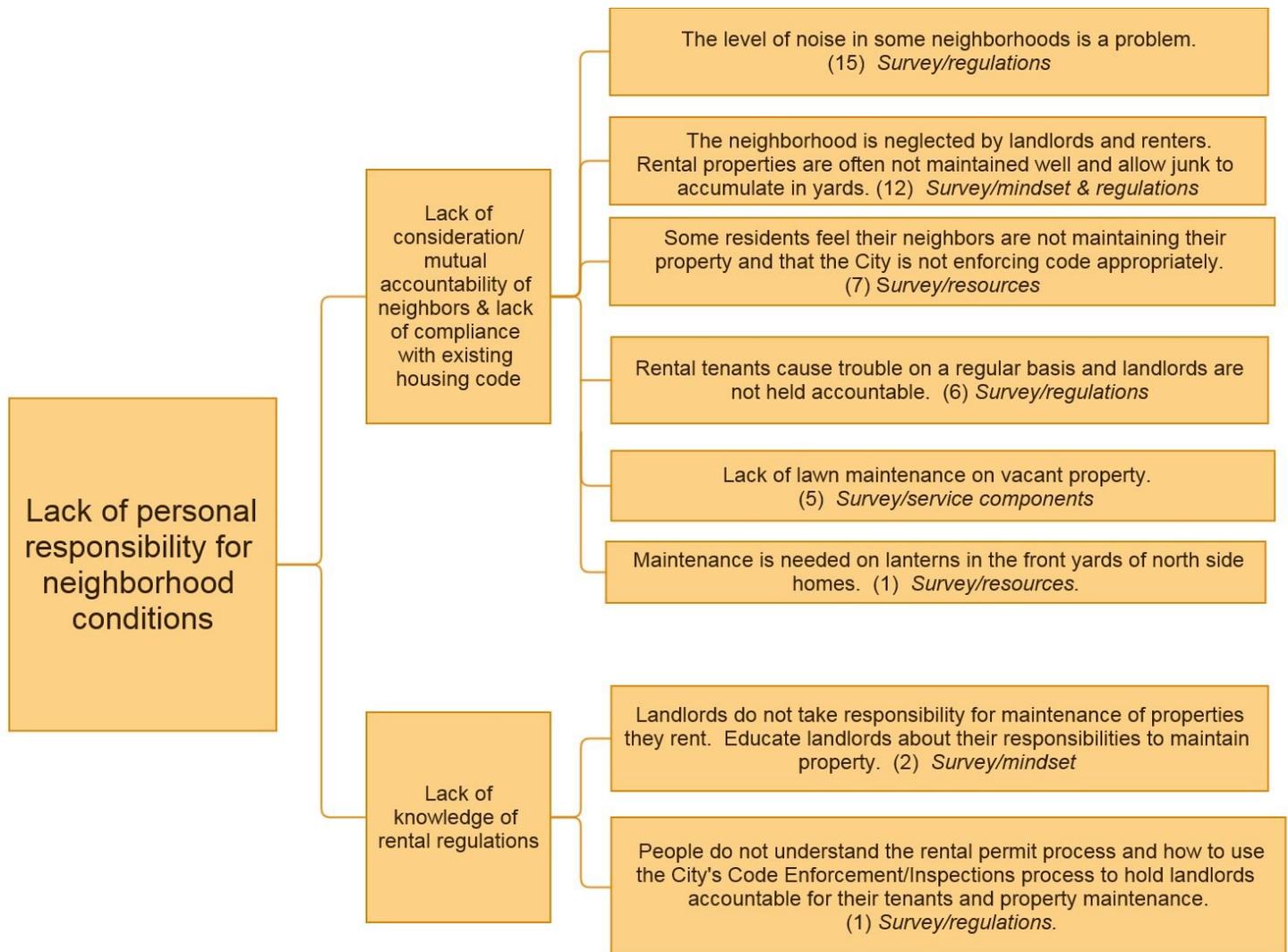
Survey/Public Input:

Impact of Vacant Buildings on Neighborhoods

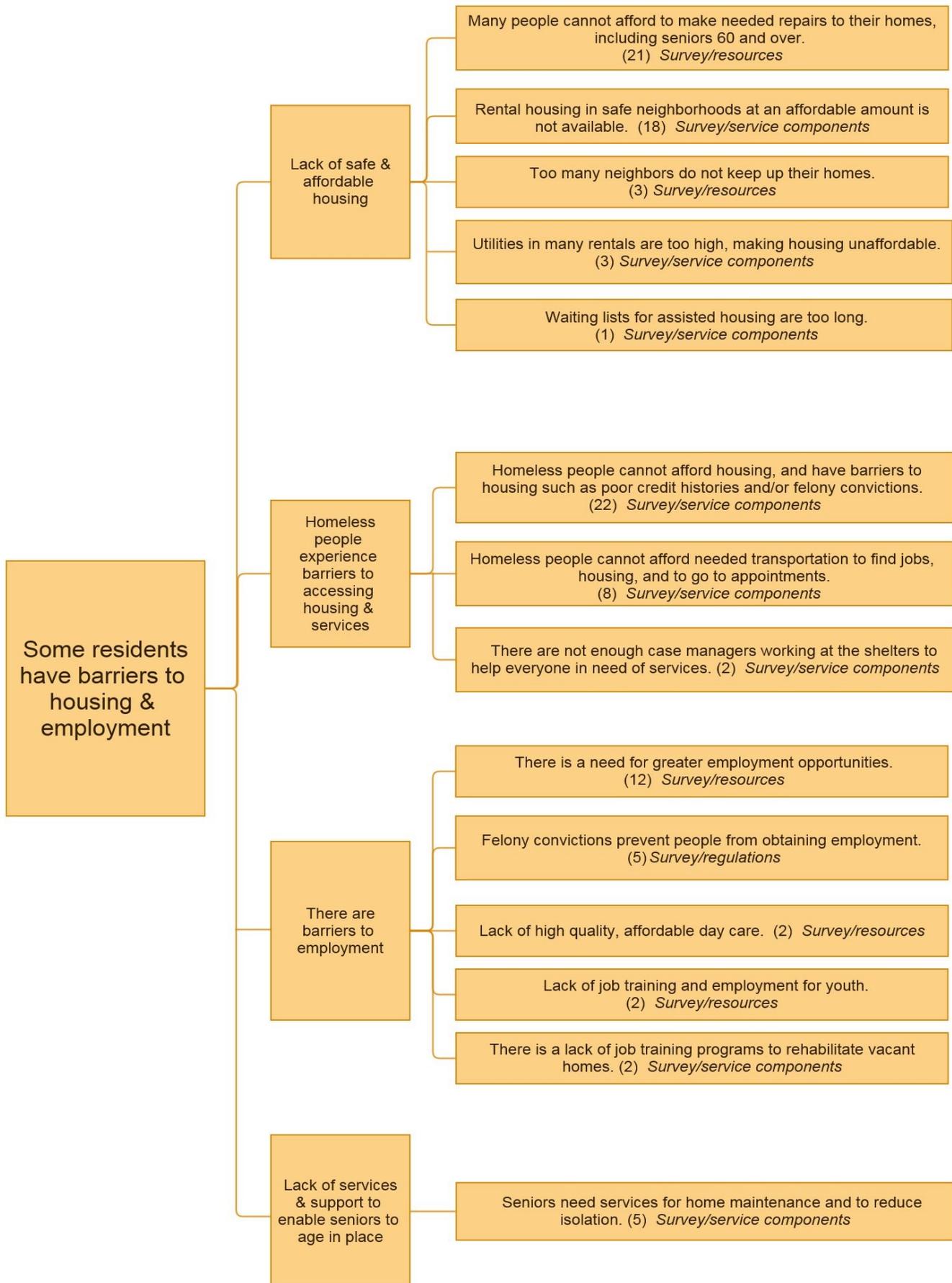


Survey/Public Input: Lack of Personal Responsibility

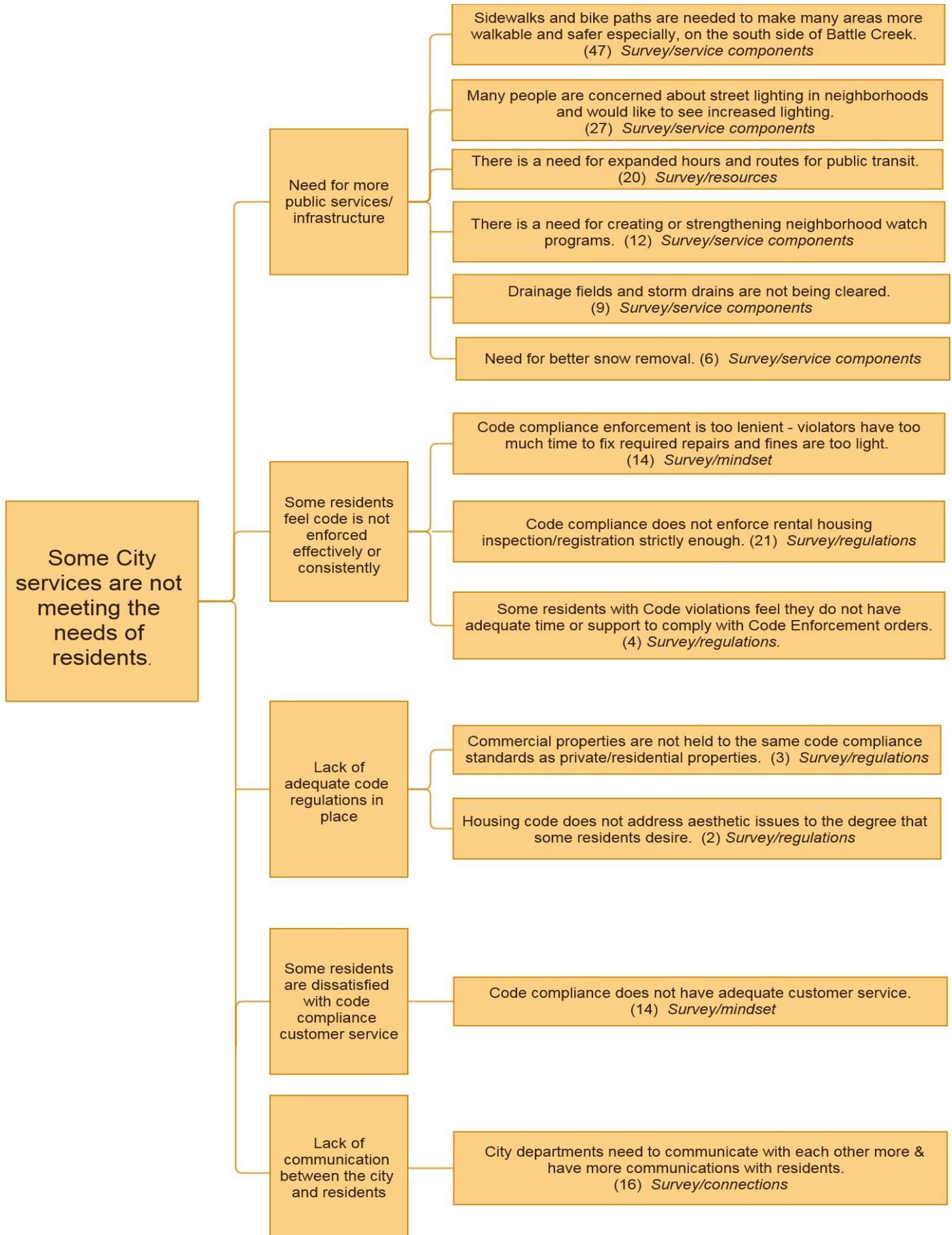
For Neighborhood Conditions



Survey/Public Input: Barriers to Housing & Employment



Survey/Public Input: Impact of City Services

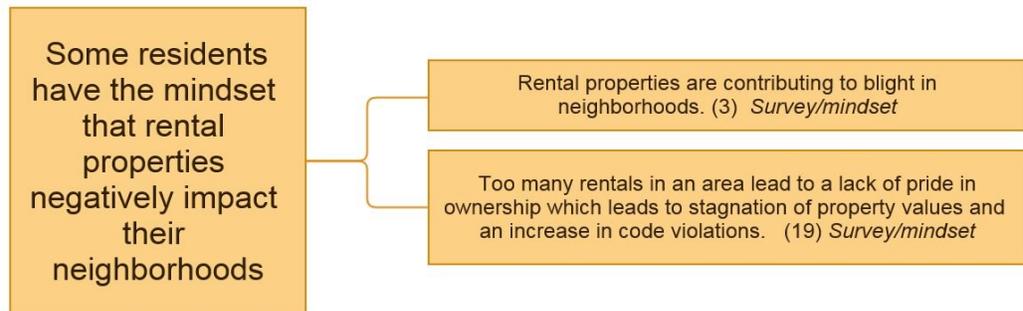


Survey/Public Input: Lack of Vibrancy, Impact of Rental Housing, Perceptions of Neighborhood Safety & Housing Segregation

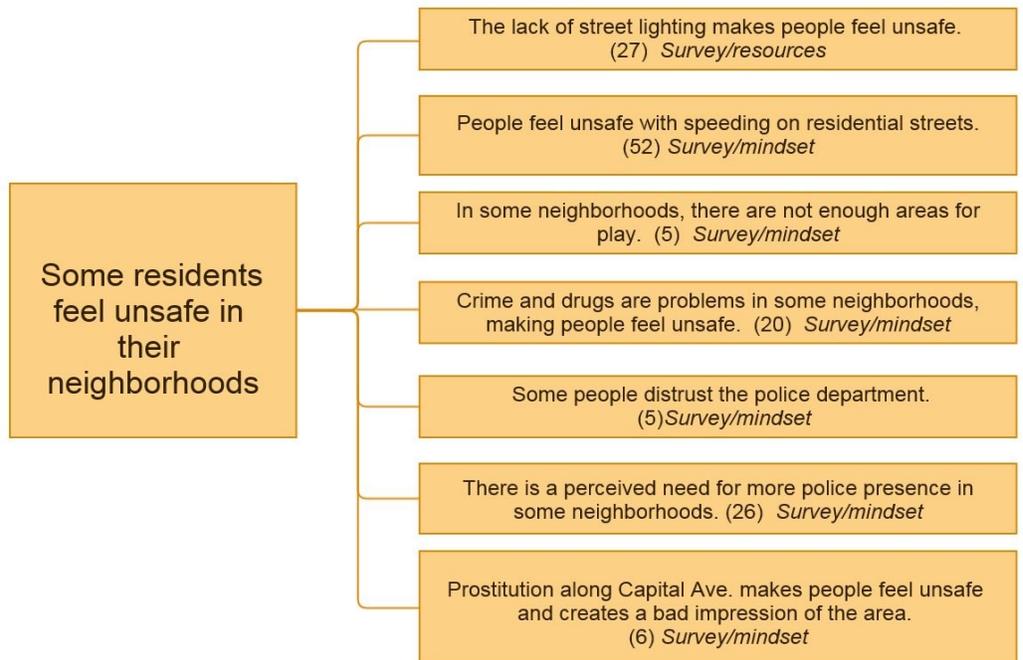
Lack of Vibrancy



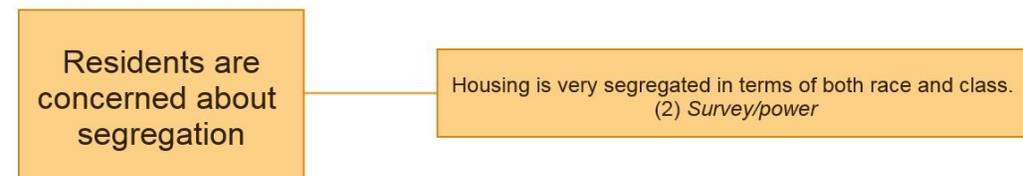
Impact of Rental Housing



Perception of Neighborhood Safety

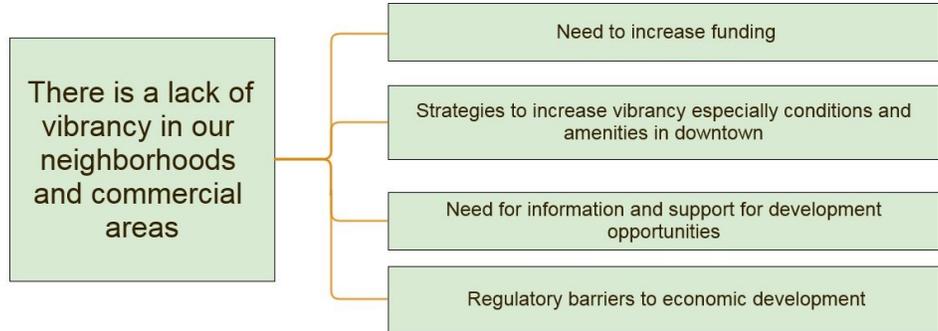


Housing Segregation

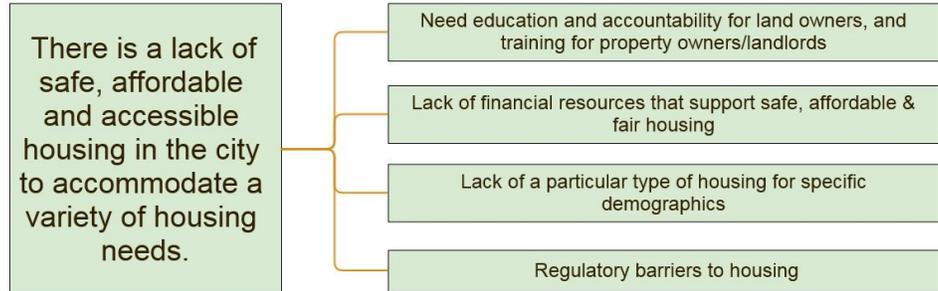


Summary of Consultation Root Cause Analysis

Lack of Vibrancy



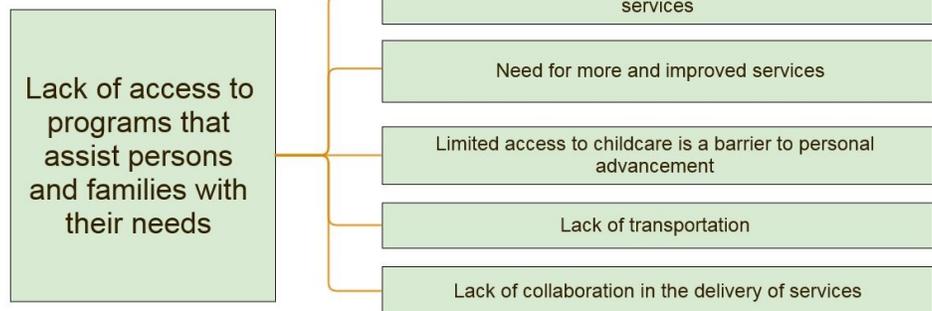
Affordable Housing



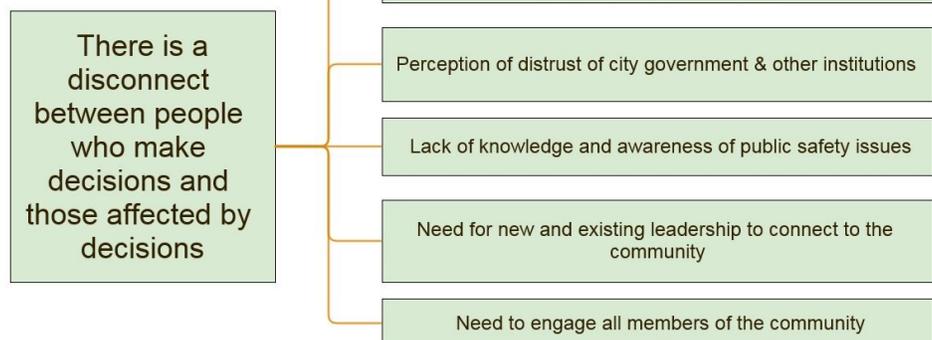
Workforce Development



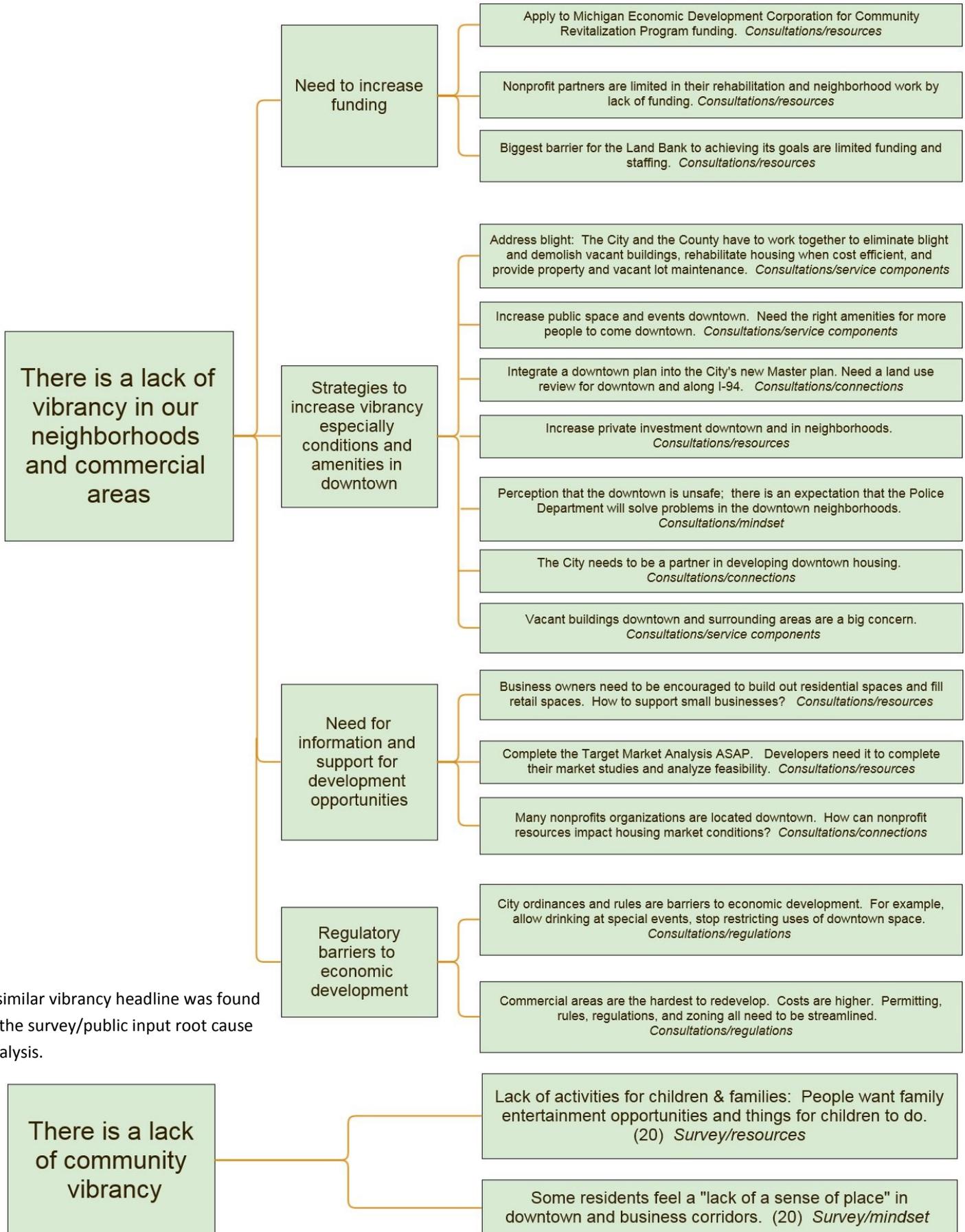
Supportive Services



Disconnect with Decision Makers

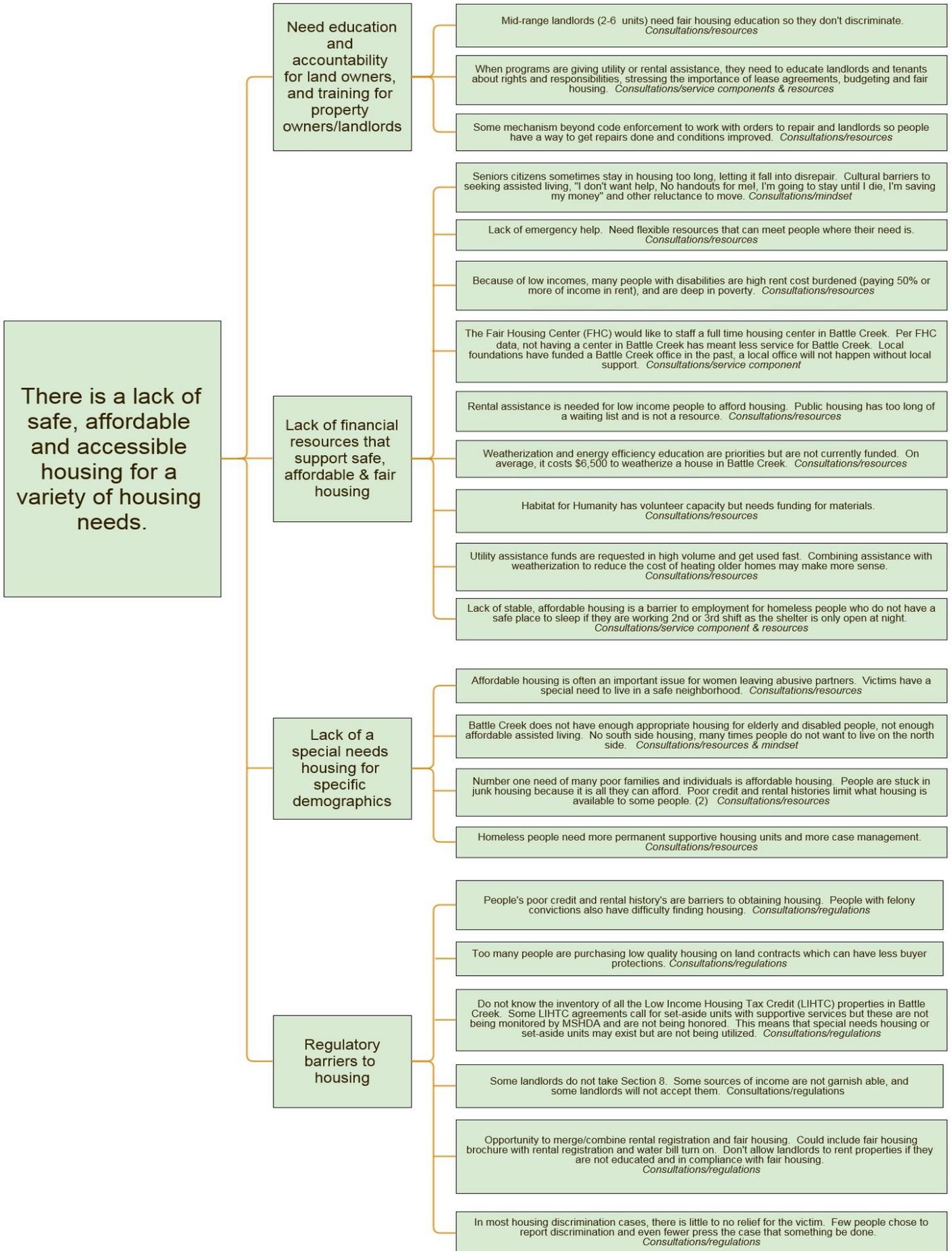


Consultations: Lack of Vibrancy



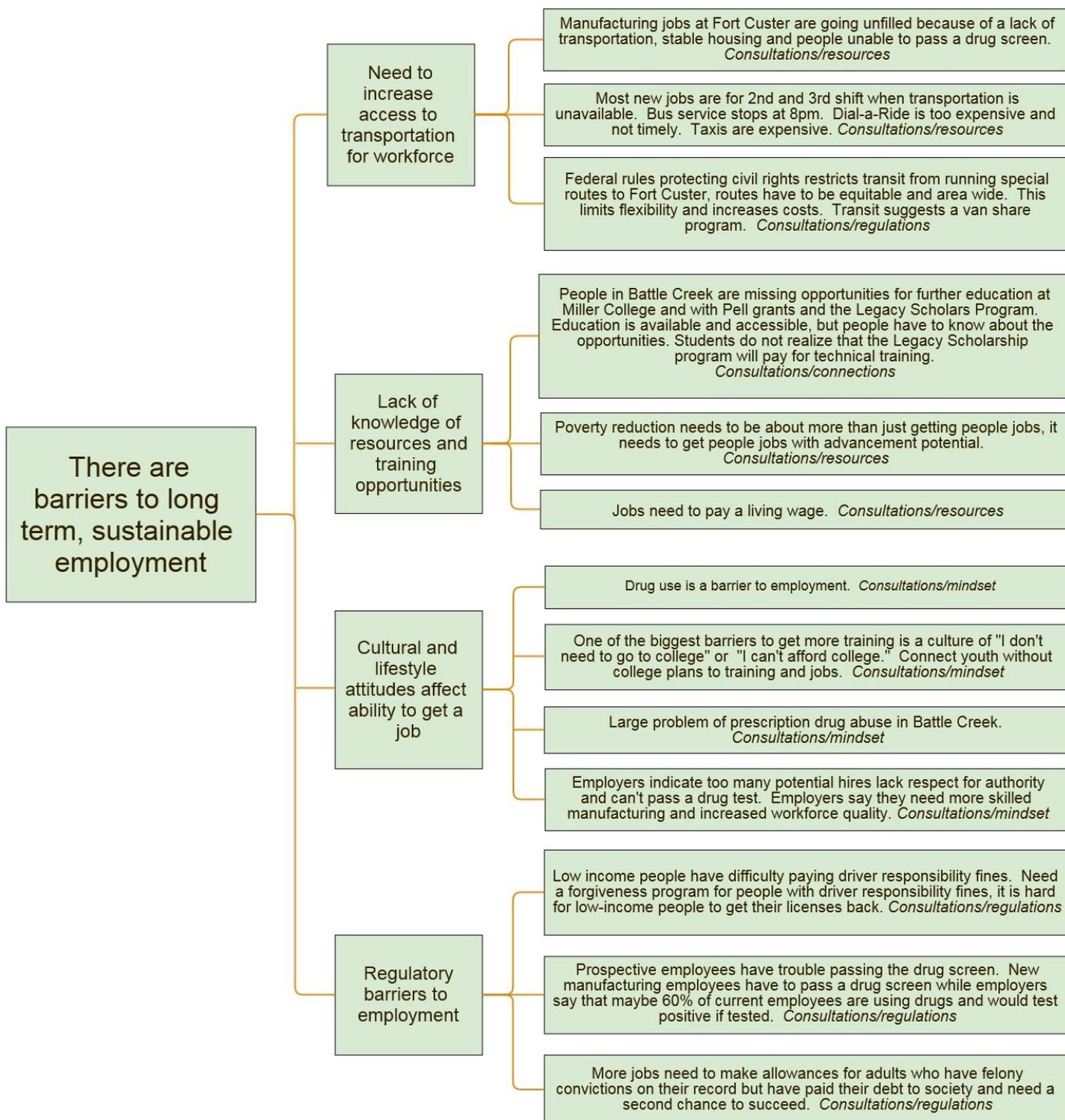
A similar vibrancy headline was found in the survey/public input root cause analysis.

Consultations: Safe & Affordable Housing

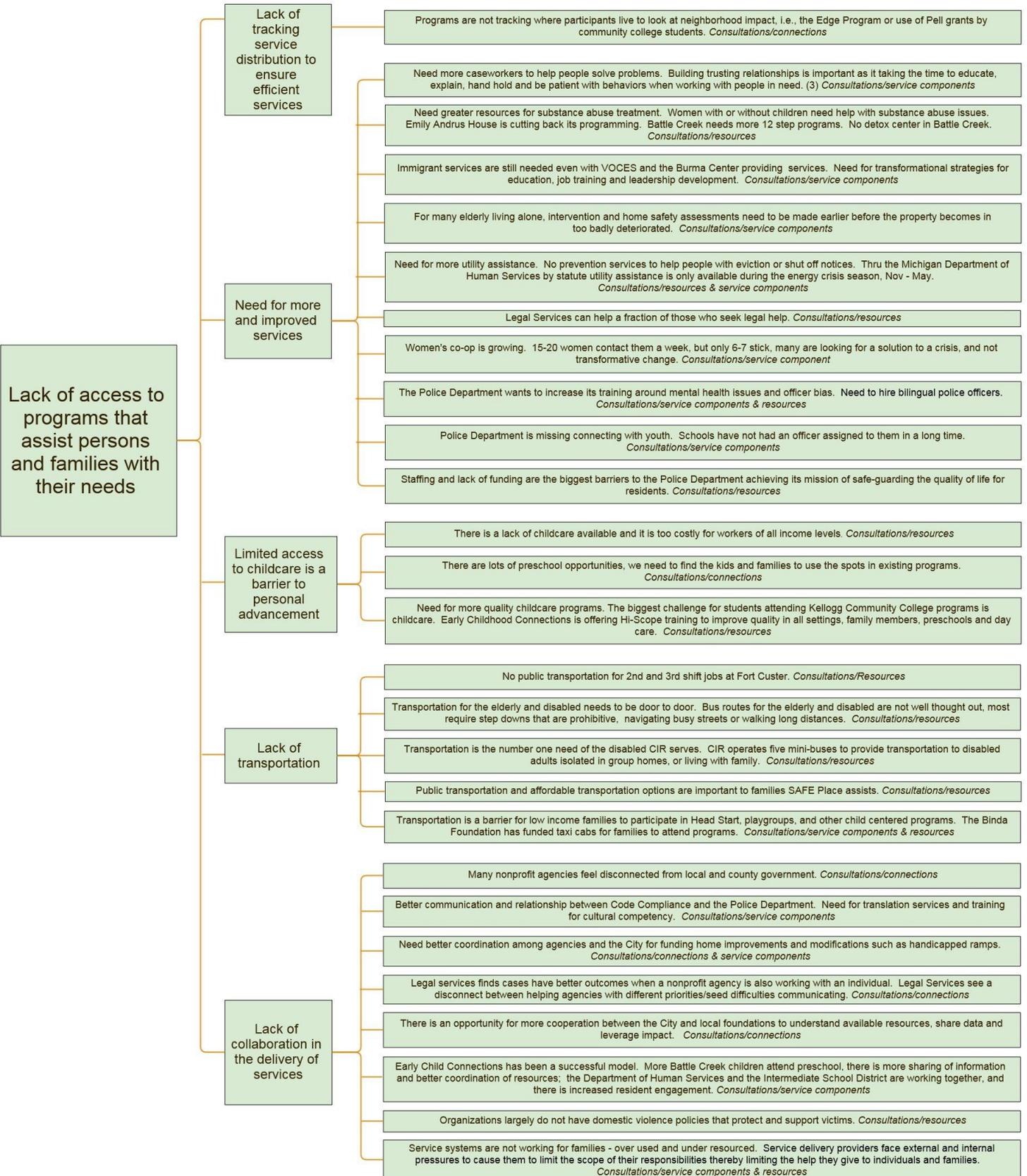


Consultations:

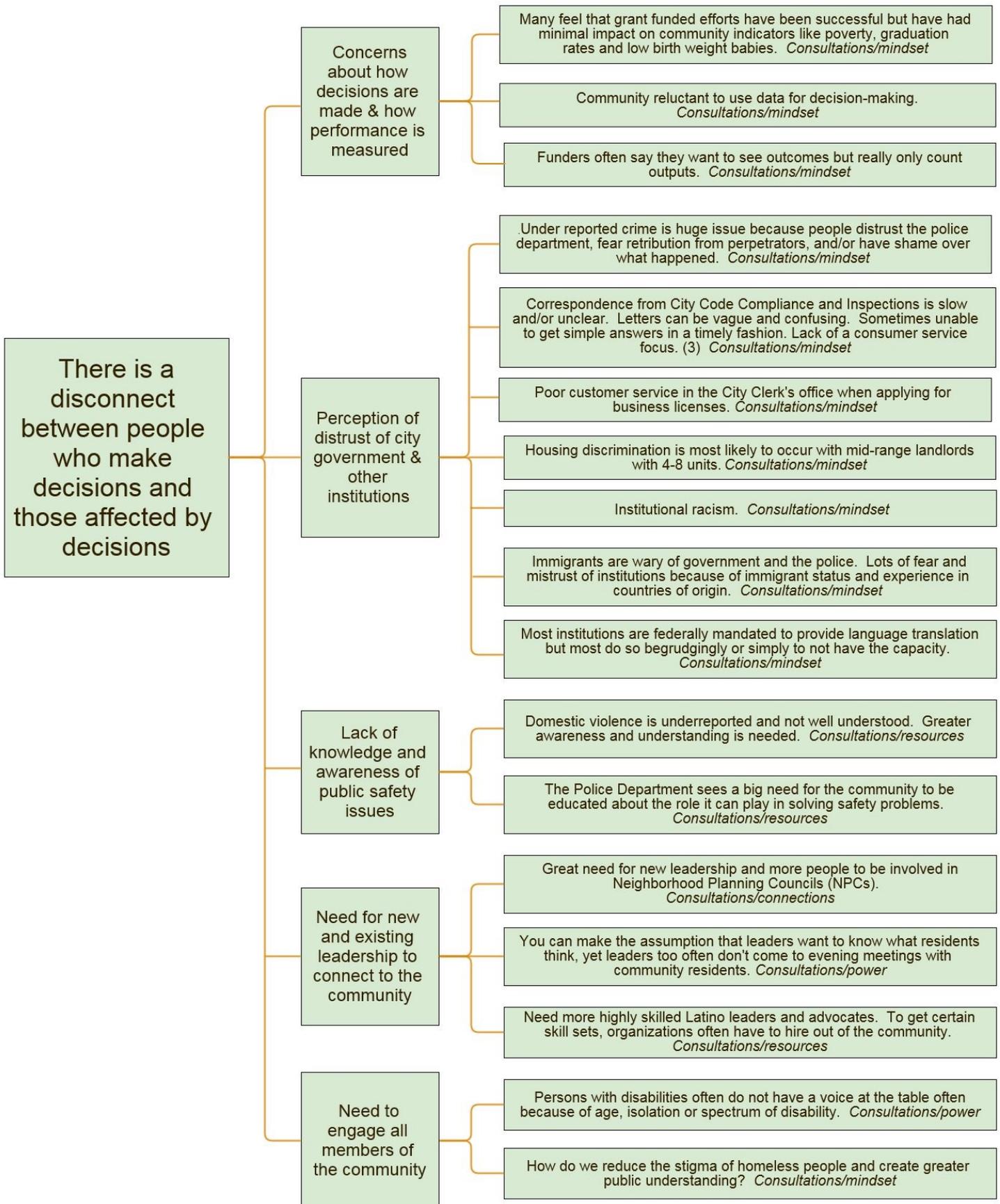
Work Force Development/Barriers to Employment



Consultations: Supportive Services



Consultations: Disconnect with Decision Makers



The City of Battle Creek’s **Community Development Department** supports neighborhoods by administering federal programs and coordinating planning efforts. It administers the federal **Community Development Block Grant (CDBG)** and **HOME Investment Partnership** formula grant programs. It has also successfully applied for federal **Neighborhood Stabilization Program (NSP)** competitive grant funds.

CDBG funds are awarded to entitlement cities of over 50,000 population, counties and states. Communities develop their own programs and funding priorities based on national objectives for neighborhood revitalization, economic development, and provision of public infrastructure and services. Priority must be given to activities which benefit low- and moderate-income people, or aid in the prevention and elimination of slums and blight. The City of Battle Creek spends 100% of its CDBG funds to benefit low- and moderate-income people and areas.

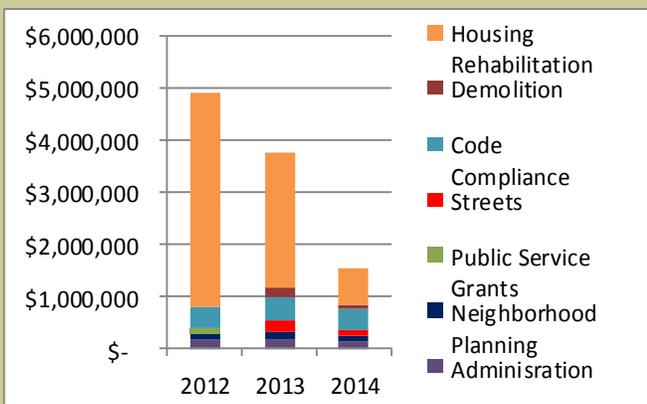
HOME is limited to assisting affordable housing, and **NSP** to rehabilitating or demolishing abandoned properties. **CDBG** funds the widest variety of activities and has been used to inspect and register thousands of rentals in low-income areas, rehabilitate hundreds of low-income peoples’ homes, and fund a variety of nonprofit programs through public service grants.

The descriptive analysis contained in this public engagement report, which is the product of a broadly distributed survey, ten public meetings and fifty consultations, will be used to determine and support the priorities for the City of Battle Creek’s 2015-2019 Consolidated Plan. This plan will also incorporate market analysis done by the City’s Community Development Department in its 2014 Community Development Snapshot and community needs data from the U.S. Census. It will lay out strategies and funded priorities for addressing the Battle Creek’s community development needs and will serve as the City’s plan and application for federal formula funding.

Prepared by:

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 City of Battle Creek
 Community Development Department
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 Battle Creek, MI 49014

Federal Funding (CDBG, HOME, NSP) by Activity



For additional community development resources or more information about the five year consolidated planning process visit the Community Development Department’s webpage at: www.battlecreekmi.gov

The survey instrument and the data collected during the public engagement process is available upon request. For more information contact Chris Lussier at cplussier@battlecreekmi.gov or (269) 966-3267.

