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

- 61% Female (n=672)
- 39% Male (n=422)

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

- 85% Home Owners (n=932)
- 15% Renters (n=170)

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

- 95% Battle Creek Residents (n=1068)
- 5% Non-Residents (n=52)

- 85% Filled Out Paper Survey (n=1030)
- 15% Filled Out Online (n=148)

Employment Status of Survey Respondents (n=1049)

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

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.

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?

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

**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”.

**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.
**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?

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

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:

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Group</th>
<th>% of Needs Rated High</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disabled</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African American</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renter</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC1 Post/Franklin</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NPC2 North Central</td>
<td>54%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Group</th>
<th>% of Needs Rated High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Respondents</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low/Moderate Income Areas</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low/Moderate Income Individuals</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demographic Group</th>
<th>% of Needs Rated High</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All Respondents</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low/Moderate Income Areas</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low/Moderate Income Individuals</td>
<td>55%</td>
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Help with Home Maintenance similarly ranked significantly higher for both targeted populations.

<table>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Low/Moderate Income Individuals</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
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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.

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.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priorities that Decrease with Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sidewalk Improvements</td>
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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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priorities that Increase with Age</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Veterans Services</td>
</tr>
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</table>

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

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.

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.
**System Elements**

- **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

Lack of property maintenance negatively impacts the perception of Battle Creek and its neighborhoods
- Lack of infrastructure maintenance
- Parking in neighborhoods is a problem for some residents
- Utility lines are unattractive and prone to power outages
- Lack of landscape maintenance negatively impacts the perception of Battle Creek

Residents lack relationships with each other
- Lack of relationships between neighbors.
- Neighborhood Planning Councils are not strong enough. (13)

Vacant Properties negatively impact Battle Creek’s neighborhoods
- Too many vacant commercial & residential buildings
- Too many vacant properties have overgrown grass and trees
- Residents are concerned about the impact of vacant and foreclosed homes on their neighborhoods

Lack of personal responsibility for neighborhood conditions
- Lack of consideration/mutual accountability of neighbors & lack of compliance with existing housing code
- Lack of knowledge of rental regulations

Some residents have barriers to housing & employment
- Lack of safe & affordable housing
- Homeless people experience barriers to accessing housing & services
- There are barriers to employment
- Lack of services & support to enable seniors to age in place
- Need for more public services/infrastructure

Some City services are not meeting the needs of residents
- Some residents feel code is not enforced effectively or consistently
- Some residents are dissatisfied with code compliance customer service
- Lack of adequate code regulations in place
- Lack of communication between the city and residents

There is a lack of community vibrancy

Some residents have the mindset that rental properties negatively impact their neighborhoods

Some residents feel unsafe in their neighborhoods

Residents are concerned about segregation
Survey/Public Input: Property Maintenance Concerns

Lack of property maintenance negatively impacts the perception of Battle Creek and its neighborhoods

- Lack of infrastructure maintenance
  - Many people are concerned about street lighting in neighborhoods and would like to see street lights repaired/increased. (27) Survey/resources
  - Many people prioritize road maintenance highly. (21) Survey/resources
  - Getting snow cleared from sidewalks in winter is a safety issue but is difficult for people to do. (4) Survey/resources

- Parking in neighborhoods is a problem for some residents
  - Parking issues impact the appearance and safety of neighborhoods. (10) Survey/regulations

- Utility lines are unattractive and prone to power outages
  - Above ground utility lines are unattractive and at risk for power outages. (3) Survey/resources

- Lack of landscape maintenance negatively impacts the perception of Battle Creek
  - Some residents would like to improve the overall appearance of their neighborhood. Poor maintenance, long term parked cars and un-mowed grass is unattractive. (30) Survey/regulations
  - Concern about trash along major corridors and the impression it gives others of the city. (3) Survey/resources
  - Weeds growing in the median and along the roadsides make a poor impression of the area. (8) Survey/resources
  - People are concerned about weeds growing along sidewalks, and shrubs and trees that crowd/block sidewalks. (3) Survey/regulations
  - Some residents are concerned about dead tree removal and tree trimming of limbs & branches. (35) Survey/resources
Survey/Public Input: Lack of Neighborhood Relationships

- Residents lack relationships with each other
  - Lack of relationships between neighbors.
  - Neighborhood Planning Councils are not strong enough. (13) Survey/power

Survey/Public Input: Impact of Vacant Buildings on Neighborhoods

- Vacant Properties negatively impact Battle Creek’s neighborhoods
  - Too many vacant commercial & residential buildings
    - Too many vacant properties have overgrown grass and trees
    - Residents are concerned about the impact vacant and foreclosed homes on their neighborhoods
  - Vacant housing needs to be demolished at a faster rate. (31) Survey/resources
  - Rehabilitate some vacant houses instead of demolishing them. (7) Survey/resources
  - Vacant commercial buildings need to be demolished or fixed up. (3) Survey/resources
  - People are concerned about overgrown grass, shrubs and trees on properties with vacant houses on them. (13) Survey/service components
  - Sidewalks and empty lots need trimming of shrubs and removal of dead/overgrown trees. (2) Survey/service components
  - Vacant properties lower housing values and create instability in neighborhoods. (8) Survey/mindset
  - Foreclosed homes need rehabilitation and maintenance to appeal to new buyers. Banks dispose of foreclosed property too slowly. (7) Survey/service components
Survey/Public Input: Lack of Personal Responsibility For Neighborhood Conditions

Lack of personal responsibility for neighborhood conditions

- Lack of consideration/mutual accountability of neighbors & lack of compliance with existing housing code
  - The level of noise in some neighborhoods is a problem. (15) Survey/regulations
  - The neighborhood is neglected by landlords and renters. Rental properties are often not maintained well and allow junk to accumulate in yards. (12) Survey/mindset & regulations
  - Some residents feel their neighbors are not maintaining their property and that the City is not enforcing code appropriately. (7) Survey/resources
- Rental tenants cause trouble on a regular basis and landlords are not held accountable. (6) Survey/regulations
- Lack of lawn maintenance on vacant property. (5) Survey/service components
  - Maintenance is needed on lanterns in the front yards of north side homes. (1) Survey/resources.
- Lack of knowledge of rental regulations
  - Landlords do not take responsibility for maintenance of properties they rent. Educate landlords about their responsibilities to maintain property. (2) Survey/mindset
  - People do not understand the rental permit process and how to use the City's Code Enforcement/Inspections process to hold landlords accountable for their tenants and property maintenance. (1) Survey/regulations.
Survey/Public Input: Barriers to Housing & Employment

Lack of safe & affordable housing
- Many people cannot afford to make needed repairs to their homes, including seniors 60 and over. (21) Survey/resources
- Rental housing in safe neighborhoods at an affordable amount is not available. (18) Survey/service components
- Too many neighbors do not keep up their homes. (3) Survey/resources
- Utilities in many rentals are too high, making housing unaffordable. (3) Survey/service components
- Waiting lists for assisted housing are too long. (1) Survey/service components

Homeless people experience barriers to accessing housing & services
- Homeless people cannot afford housing, and have barriers to housing such as poor credit histories and/or felony convictions. (22) Survey/service components
- Homeless people cannot afford needed transportation to find jobs, housing, and to go to appointments. (8) Survey/service components
- There are not enough case managers working at the shelters to help everyone in need of services. (2) Survey/service components

There are barriers to employment
- There is a need for greater employment opportunities. (12) Survey/resources
- Felony convictions prevent people from obtaining employment. (5) Survey/regulations
- Lack of high quality, affordable day care. (2) Survey/resources
- Lack of job training and employment for youth. (2) Survey/resources
- There is a lack of job training programs to rehabilitate vacant homes. (2) Survey/service components

Lack of services & support to enable seniors to age in place
- Seniors need services for home maintenance and to reduce isolation. (5) Survey/service components
Survey/Public Input: Impact of City Services

Some City services are not meeting the needs of residents.

- Need for more public services/infrastructure
  - Sidewalks and bike paths are needed to make many areas more walkable and safer especially, on the south side of Battle Creek. (47) Survey/service components
  - Many people are concerned about street lighting in neighborhoods and would like to see increased lighting. (27) Survey/service components
  - There is a need for expanded hours and routes for public transit. (20) Survey/resources
  - There is a need for creating or strengthening neighborhood watch programs. (12) Survey/service components
  - Drainage fields and storm drains are not being cleared. (9) Survey/service components
  - Need for better snow removal. (6) Survey/service components

- Some residents feel code is not enforced effectively or consistently
  - Code compliance enforcement is too lenient – violators have too much time to fix required repairs and fines are too light. (14) Survey/mindset
  - Code compliance does not enforce rental housing inspection/registration strictly enough. (21) Survey/regulations
  - Some residents with Code violations feel they do not have adequate time or support to comply with Code Enforcement orders. (4) Survey/regulations

- Lack of adequate code regulations in place
  - Commercial properties are not held to the same code compliance standards as private/residential properties. (3) Survey/regulations
  - Housing code does not address aesthetic issues to the degree that some residents desire. (2) Survey/regulations

- Some residents are dissatisfied with code compliance customer service
  - Code compliance does not have adequate customer service. (14) Survey/mindset

- Lack of communication between the city and residents
  - City departments need to communicate with each other more & have more communications with residents. (16) Survey/connections
Survey/Public Input: Lack of Vibrancy, Impact of Rental Housing, Perceptions of Neighborhood Safety & Housing Segregation

**Lack of Vibrancy**
- There is a lack of community vibrancy
- Lack of activities for children & families: People want family entertainment opportunities and things for children to do. (20) Survey/resources
- Some residents feel a "lack of a sense of place" in downtown and business corridors. (20) Survey/mindset

**Impact of Rental Housing**
- Some residents have the mindset that rental properties negatively impact their neighborhoods
- Rental properties are contributing to blight in neighborhoods. (3) Survey/mindset
- Too many rentals in an area lead to a lack of pride in ownership which leads to stagnation of property values and an increase in code violations. (19) Survey/mindset

**Perception of Neighborhood Safety**
- Some residents feel unsafe in their neighborhoods
- The lack of street lighting makes people feel unsafe. (27) Survey/resources
- People feel unsafe with speeding on residential streets. (52) Survey/mindset
- In some neighborhoods, there are not enough areas for play. (5) Survey/mindset
- Crime and drugs are problems in some neighborhoods, making people feel unsafe. (20) Survey/mindset
- Some people distrust the police department. (6) Survey/mindset
- There is a perceived need for more police presence in some neighborhoods. (26) Survey/mindset
- Prostitution along Capital Ave. makes people feel unsafe and creates a bad impression of the area. (6) Survey/mindset

**Housing Segregation**
- Residents are concerned about segregation
- Housing is very segregated in terms of both race and class. (2) Survey/power
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Summary of Consultation Root Cause Analysis</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lack of Vibrancy</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lack of vibrancy in our neighborhoods and commercial areas</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Need to increase funding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Strategies to increase vibrancy especially conditions and amenities in downtown</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Need for information and support for development opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Regulatory barriers to economic development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Affordable Housing</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is a lack of safe, affordable and accessible housing in the city to accommodate a variety of housing needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Need education and accountability for land owners, and training for property owners/landlords</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Lack of financial resources that support safe, affordable &amp; fair housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Lack of a particular type of housing for specific demographics</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Regulatory barriers to housing</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Workforce Development</strong></td>
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A similar vibrancy headline was found in the survey/public input root cause analysis.

There is a lack of community vibrancy

Consultations: Lack of Vibrancy

There is a lack of vibrancy in our neighborhoods and commercial areas
Consultations: Safe & Affordable Housing

There is a lack of safe, affordable and accessible housing for a variety of housing needs.

Need education and accountability for land owners, and training for property owners/landlords

Lack of financial resources that support safe, affordable & fair housing

Lack of a special needs housing for specific demographics

Regulatory barriers to housing

- Mid-range landlords (2-6 units) need fair housing education so they don’t discriminate. Consultations/resources
- When programs are giving utility or rental assistance, they need to educate landlords and tenants about rights and responsibilities, stressing the importance of lease agreements, budgeting, and fair housing. Consultations/service components & resources
- Some mechanism beyond code enforcement to work with orders to repair and landlords so people have a way to get repairs done and conditions improved. Consultations/resources
- Seniors citizens sometimes stay in housing too long, letting it fall into disrepair. Cultural barriers to seeking assisted living. "I don’t want help. No handouts for me," I’m going to stay until I die. "I’m saving my money" and other reluctance to move. Consultations/mindset
- Lack of emergency help. Need flexible resources that can meet people where their needs are. Consultations/resources
- Because of low incomes, many people with disabilities are high rent cost burdened (paying 50% or more of income in rent), and are deep in poverty. Consultations/resources
- The Fair Housing Center (FHC) would like to staff a full time housing center in Battle Creek. Preliminary data not having a center in Battle Creek has meant less service for Battle Creek. Local foundations have funded a Battle Creek office in the past, a local office will not happen without local support. Consultations/service component & resources
- Rental assistance is needed for low income people to afford housing. Public housing has too long of a waiting list and is not a resource. Consultations/resources
- Weatherization and energy efficiency education are priorities but are not currently funded. On average, it costs $5,000 to weatherize a house in Battle Creek. Consultations/resources
- Habitat for Humanity has volunteer capacity but needs funding for materials. Consultations/resources
- Utility assistance funds are requested in high volume and get used fast. Combining assistance with weatherization to reduce the cost of heating older homes may make more sense. Consultations/resources
- Lack of stable, affordable housing is a barrier to employment for homeless people who do not have a safe place to sleep if they are working 2nd or 3rd shift as the shelter is only open at night. Consultations/service component & resources
- Affordable housing is often an important issue for women leaving abusive partners. Victims have a special need to live in a safe neighborhood. Consultations/resources
- Battle Creek does not have enough appropriate housing for elderly and disabled people, not enough affordable assisted living. No south side housing, many times people do not want to live on the north side. Consultations/resources & mindset
- Number one need of many poor families and individuals is affordable housing. People are stuck in junk housing because it is all they can afford. Poor credit and rental history it is all they can afford. Consultations/resources
- Homeless people need more permanent supportive housing units and more case management. Consultations/resources
- People’s poor credit and rental history are barriers to obtaining housing. People with felony convictions also have difficulty finding housing. Consultations/regulations
- Too many people are purchasing low quality housing on land contracts which can have less buyer protections. Consultations/regulations
- Do not know the inventory of all the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) properties in Battle Creek. Some LIHTC agreements call for set-aside units with supportive services but these are not being monitored by MSHEA and are not being honored. This means that special needs housing or set-aside units may exist but are not being utilized. Consultations/regulations
- Some landlords do not take Section 8. Some sources of income are not garnishable, and some landlords will not accept them. Consultations/regulations
- Opportunity to merge/combine rental registration and fair housing. Could include fair housing brochure with rental registration and water bill turn off. Don’t allow landlords to rent properties if they are not educated and in compliance with fair housing. Consultations/regulations
- In most housing discrimination cases, there is little to no relief for the victims. Few people choose to report discrimination and even fewer press the case that something be done. Consultations/regulations

- Consultations/services
Consultations:

Work Force Development/Barriers to Employment

There are barriers to long term, sustainable employment

Need to increase access to transportation for workforce

Manufacturing jobs at Fort Custer are going unfilled because of a lack of transportation, stable housing and people unable to pass a drug screen. Consultations/resources

Most new jobs are for 2nd and 3rd shift when transportation is unavailable. Bus service stops at 8pm. Dial-a-Ride is too expensive and not timely. Taxis are expensive. Consultations/resources

Federal rules protecting civil rights restricts transit from running special routes to Fort Custer, routes have to be equitable and area wide. This limits flexibility and increases costs. Transit suggests a van share program. Consultations/regulations

Lack of knowledge of resources and training opportunities

People in Battle Creek are missing opportunities for further education at Miller College and with Pell grants and the Legacy Scholars Program. Education is available and accessible, but people have to know about the opportunities. Students do not realize that the Legacy Scholarship program will pay for technical training. Consultations/connections

Poverty reduction needs to be about more than just getting people jobs, it needs to get people jobs with advancement potential. Consultations/resources

Jobs need to pay a living wage. Consultations/resources

Cultural and lifestyle attitudes affect ability to get a job

Drug use is a barrier to employment. Consultations/mindset

One of the biggest barriers to get more training is a culture of "I don't need to go to college" or "I can't afford college." Connect youth without college plans to training and jobs. Consultations/mindset

Large problem of prescription drug abuse in Battle Creek. Consultations/mindset

Employers indicate too many potential hires lack respect for authority and can't pass a drug test. Employers say they need more skilled manufacturing and increased workforce quality. Consultations/mindset

Regulatory barriers to employment

Low income people have difficulty paying driver responsibility fines. Need a forgiveness program for people with driver responsibility fines, it is hard for low-income people to get their licenses back. Consultations/regulations

Prospective employees have trouble passing the drug screen. New manufacturing employees have to pass a drug screen while employers say that maybe 60% of current employees are using drugs and would test positive if tested. Consultations/regulations

More jobs need to make allowances for adults who have felony convictions on their record but have paid their debt to society and need a second chance to succeed. Consultations/regulations
Consultations: Supportive Services

Lack of access to programs that assist persons and families with their needs

- Lack of tracking service distribution to ensure efficient services
  - Programs are not tracking where participants live to look at neighborhood impact, i.e., the Edge Program or use of Pell grants by community college students. Consultations/service components
  - Need more caseworkers to help people solve problems. Building trusting relationships is important as it taking the time to educate, explain, hand hold and be patient with behaviors when working with people in need. Consultations/service components
  - Need greater resources for substance abuse treatment. Women with or without children need help with substance abuse issues. Emily Andrus House is cutting back its programming. Battle Creek needs more 12 step programs. No detox center in Battle Creek. Consultations/resources
  - Immigrant services are still needed even with VOICES and the Burns Center providing services. Need for transformational strategies for education, job training and leadership development. Consultations/service components
  - For many elderly living alone, intervention and home safety assessments need to be made earlier before the property becomes too badly deteriorated. Consultations/service components
  - Need for more utility assistance. No prevention services to help people with eviction or shut off notices. thru the Michigan Department of Human Services by statute utility assistance is only available during the energy crisis season. Nov - May. Consultations/resources & service components
  - Legal Services can help a fraction of those who seek legal help. Consultations/resources
  - Women's co-op is growing. 15-20 women contact them a week, but only 6-7 stick, many are looking for a solution to a crisis, and not transformative change. Consultations/service component
  - The Police Department wants to increase its training around mental health issues and officer bias. Need to hire bilingual police officers. Consultations/service components & resources
  - Police Department is missing connecting with youth. Schools have not had an officer assigned to them in a long time. Consultations/service component
  - Staffing and lack of funding are the biggest barriers to the Police Department achieving its mission of safe-guarding the quality of life for residents. Consultations/resources

- Need for more and improved services
  - There is a lack of childcare available and it is too costly for workers of all income levels. Consultations/resources
  - There are lots of preschool opportunities, we need to find the kids and families to use the spots in existing programs. Consultations/connections
  - Need for more quality childcare programs. The biggest challenge for students attending Kellogg Community College programs is childcare. Early Childhood Connections is offering Hi-Scope training to improve quality in all settings, family members, preschools and daycare. Consultations/resources

- Limited access to childcare is a barrier to personal advancement
  - No public transportation for 2nd and 3rd shift jobs at Fort Custer. Consultations/Resources
  - Transportation for the elderly and disabled needs to be door to door. Bus routes for the elderly and disabled are not well thought out, most require step downs that are prohibitive, navigating busy streets or walking long distances. Consultations/resources
  - Transportation is the number one need of the disabled CIR serves. CIR operates five mini-buses to provide transportation to disabled adults isolated in group homes, or living with family. Consultations/resources
  - Public transportation and affordable transportation options are important to families SAFE Place assists. Consultations/resources
  - Transportation is a barrier for low income families to participate in Head Start, playgroups, and other child centered programs. The Blind Foundation has funded taxi cabs for families to attend programs. Consultations/service components & resources

- Lack of transportation
  - Many nonprofit agencies feel disconnected from local and county government. Consultations/connections
  - Better communication and relationship between Code Compliance and the Police Department. Need for translation services and training for cultural competency. Consultations/service components
  - Need better coordination among agencies and the City for funding home improvements and modifications such as handicapped ramps. Consultations/connections & service components
  - Legal services finds cases have better outcomes when a nonprofit agency is also working with an individual. Legal Services see a dichotomy between helping agencies with different priorities and difficulties communicating. Consultations/connections
  - There is an opportunity for more cooperation between the City and local foundations to understand available resources, share data and leverage impact. Consultations/connections
  - Early Child Connections has been a successful model. More Battle Creek children attend preschool, there is more sharing of information and better coordination of resources. The Department of Human Services and the Intermediate School District are working together, and there is increased resident engagement. Consultations/service components

- Lack of collaboration in the delivery of services
  - Organizations largely do not have domestic violence policies that protect and support victims. Consultations/resources
  - Service systems are not working for families - over used and under resourced. Service delivery providers face external and internal pressures to cause them to limit the scope of their responsibilities thereby limiting the help they give to individuals and families. Consultations/service components & resources
Consultations: Disconnect with Decision Makers

Concerns about how decisions are made & how performance is measured

Many feel that grant funded efforts have been successful but have had minimal impact on community indicators like poverty, graduation rates and low birth weight babies. Consultations/mindset

Community reluctant to use data for decision-making. Consultations/mindset

Funders often say they want to see outcomes but really only count outputs. Consultations/mindset

Under reported crime is huge issue because people distrust the police department, fear retribution from perpetrators, and/or have shame over what happened. Consultations/mindset

Correspondence from City Code Compliance and Inspections is slow and/or unclear. Letters can be vague and confusing. Sometimes unable to get simple answers in a timely fashion. Lack of a consumer service focus. (3) Consultations/mindset

Poor customer service in the City Clerk’s office when applying for business licenses. Consultations/mindset

Housing discrimination is most likely to occur with mid-range landlords with 4-8 units. Consultations/mindset

Institutional racism. Consultations/mindset

Immigrants are wary of government and the police. Lots of fear and mistrust of institutions because of immigrant status and experience in countries of origin. Consultations/mindset

Most institutions are federally mandated to provide language translation but most do so begrudgingly or simply to not have the capacity. Consultations/mindset

Lack of knowledge and awareness of public safety issues

Domestic violence is underreported and not well understood. Greater awareness and understanding is needed. Consultations/resources

The Police Department sees a big need for the community to be educated about the role it can play in solving safety problems. Consultations/resources

Need for new and existing leadership to connect to the community

Great need for new leadership and more people to be involved in Neighborhood Planning Councils (NPCs). Consultations/connections

You can make the assumption that leaders want to know what residents think, yet leaders too often don’t come to evening meetings with community residents. Consultations/power

Need more highly skilled Latino leaders and advocates. To get certain skill sets, organizations often have to hire out of the community. Consultations/resources

Need to engage all members of the community

Persons with disabilities often do not have a voice at the table often because of age, isolation or spectrum of disability. Consultations/power

How do we reduce the stigma of homeless people and create greater public understanding? Consultations/mindset

There is a disconnect between people who make decisions and those affected by decisions
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 people’s 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.

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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.