



Romkey Park Building Development: Community Input



Introduction

A \$5,000 grant from Resilient Moorhead was allocated by the Cass Clay Community Land Trust (CCCLT) to support completion of a neighborhood canvassing project to engage residents of the Romkey Park area to inform development of the two empty lots adjacent to the park.

Jasmin Child Care and CCCLT are partnering with the preliminary intent to build and manage a multi-use building that would be home to a child care center, affordable housing, service center, and community space building. In order to understand what services, activities, and spaces should be created, the community canvassing project engaged residents to understand what they want and need in their neighborhood.

This project will enhance resiliency and equity by intentionally engaging residents of the neighborhood, many of which are renters, identify as people from historically underrepresented

groups, and have not been included in community or place-based decision making. This project will demonstrate how residents and stakeholders can come together to create meaningful change and development, and will support the groundwork for community-based services in this area.

The process used for this canvassing work will be documented in a way that it can be used as a toolkit by other groups looking for a how-to guide to thoughtfully gather community input by people most impacted in project development. Creating Community Consulting (CCC) was contracted by CCCLT to conduct the neighborhood canvassing project.

Please note, this project and report are not a substitute for a financial feasibility study or community health needs assessment. This report is to gather community input on if this type of project is aligned with neighborhood values and needs.



The Process

1. Community input
2. Data analysis
3. Identifying barriers
4. Identifying resources
5. Community input
6. Final report



This report outlines the process and findings.

Analyzing Community Data

The overall project was initiated as a response to local needs based on both qualitative and quantitative data. Within the data, disparities were identified that showed that people of color experience more barriers to resources and experience poorer health conditions (including social determinants of health) compared to white people in the community.

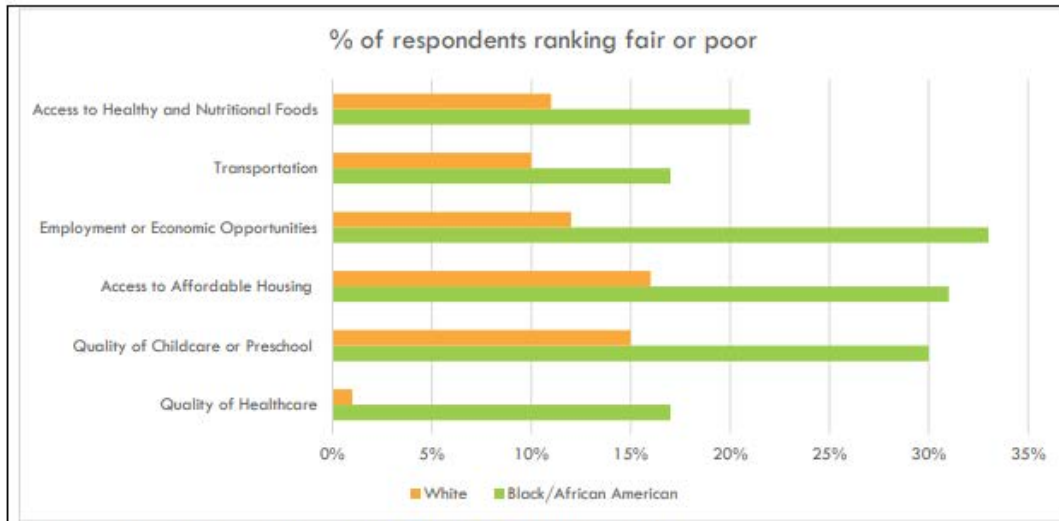
Local data shows:

- Approximately 15% of the population of Moorhead identify as people of color (US Census) and the Romkey Park area is primarily made up of a diverse racial/ethnic population and people of color
- Moorhead currently has a shortage of over 1,000 childcare slots. (First Children's Finance 2021)
- Moorhead has an overall poverty rate of 16.2%, with 19.2% of children under 18 living in poverty (US Census)
- Clay County has a food insecurity rate of 7.7% with 10.6% of children experiencing food insecurity, meaning they do not have enough food for an activity life (Feeding America)
- In Moorhead, 57.9% of renters are considered cost burdened, meaning they spend more than 30% of their income on rent each month (US Census)
- A Social and Racial Equity Study found that people of color in the community overall identify feeling a lack of being welcome, included or having sufficient access to resources (Resilient Moorhead, 2022)



- Additionally, people who identify as Black/African American in the Fargo/Moorhead community identify disparities 2x greater than those who are white (see chart below) (Essentia Community Health Needs Assessment)

The data shows a clear opportunity to work within the community to support reducing the disparities by engaging those most impacted.



Source: 2021 Essentia Health West Community Health Survey

Asset Mapping

Through building on community strengths CCC partnered with trusted community leaders and community organizations who live in and/or serve the Romkey Park neighborhood residents. Leaders include those who identify as, and engage with, low-income, BIPOC, and underrepresented populations as this is a primary population in the area neighborhood. Organizations created incentives for participation. Incentives included food and activities to support children.

in person events to engage and support people in completing. Two students from MSUM participated in supporting outreach efforts to engage residents during the events in addition to CCC staff partnering agencies.

Utilization of current networks including both the Resilient Moorhead email list serve and Inclusive Moorhead list serve were conduits for sharing the survey.

In order to reduce barriers and ensure inclusive participation a simple online survey was created using plain language, included a QR code and also



Survey Tool Design

Based on input from those most impacted and closely connected to the neighborhood CCC worked to ensure this tool was:

- User-friendly
- Accessible
- Included strengths-based language
- Included data to promote data-driven conversations
- Short in length and quick to complete
- Questions focused on strengths of the neighborhood and also on needs and opportunities

Engagement of Those Most Impacted

Results were collected through in person interviews at events and spaces in the neighborhood where people were already attending and through an online survey.

In person events were hosted in partnership with:

- City of Moorhead Romkey Park Outdoor Re-development Event
- Latter Rain Ministries and Grace United Methodist Church (predominately BIPOC congregation located a few blocks from Romkey Park)
- Afro-American Development Association and CAPLP (located in South Moorhead serving predominately low-income New American families and individuals)

Outreach via surveys included distribution of fliers with both event details to attend in person and QR codes to complete the survey. Flyers were shared digitally, via email and posted on social media by nonprofit agencies, schools, and Clay County.

Flyers were posted at:

- Hala and ethnic grocers
- Moorhead Public Library
- Twenty Below Coffee
- Nonprofit agencies

Thank you to all of the partners who helped support this effort:

- Afro-American Development Association
- CAPLP
- Cass Clay Community Land Trust
- Churches United and Dorothy Day Food Pantry
- City of Moorhead

- Clay County
- Cultural Development Resources
- ESHARA
- Inclusive Moorhead
- Jasmin Child Care
- Latter Rain Ministries
- Moorhead Area Public Schools
- Resilient Moorhead
- University of Minnesota Extension
- WE Center

Data Analysis

In total 54 individuals responded to the survey. Roughly 80 residents live in Romkey Park, with hundreds more who would potentially seek services if available in this neighborhood. The average response rate for a survey is between 10%-30% for community based projects and so the rate of response is within the average range.

While demographic data was not collected as part of this survey, CCC and their community partners are confident that:

- Most participants lived in or around Romkey Park OR participated in activities or services near this neighborhood
- Majority of participants identify as BIPOC, predominately Black or African American

Limitations of participation include (as advised by community leaders from the target population):

- Door knocking was not advised so input relied solely on in person events, email, and social media



- Weather, time, and funding limitations prohibited having an outdoor event option
- Language barriers

To overcome these barriers, CCC worked closely with partners listed above to be creative in outreach and hosting events when and where individuals in the target audience were already gathering and by having agencies support people in completing the survey.





Neighborhood Strengths

When respondents were asked about "what they loved about the Romkey Park neighborhood," the following were identified as the community strengths:

- The people and neighbors who live there; responses highlighted the diversity and the strengthens of the neighbors; additionally, many enjoy being so close to Minnesota State University Moorhead and having the college students in the neighborhood
- The feeling of the neighborhood; many talked about the energy and welcoming feel (especially amongst diverse community members)
- Convenience of location with access to public transportation and ability to walk to schools, employment, grocery store, and other basic needs

Neighborhood Opportunities

When asked about "what activities or services would you like to lead, participate in, or see offered in your neighborhood?" the following were commonly expressed themes (listed in order of most expressed items to least):

- Community Unity and Gathering Space: 16 responses
 - A community center, community gathering, space for community events, space to get to know one another
- Youth Programming: 15 responses
 - Includes activities for kids, safe space for youth to interact with peers, homework support, mentoring
 - Additionally, there were responses related to Library and Literacy Support (4 responses) and Art and Maker Spaces (4 responses)
- Adult Education: 14 responses
 - Includes adult basic education, parenting skills/ classes, budgeting classes, empowerment classes, resume building and job interviewing classes, and English language classes



- Access to Food and Cooking Classes: 14 responses
 - Includes access to food pantry, hot meals, a community kitchen, community gardens and support, and cooking classes
- Access to Child Care: 13 responses
- Supportive Services: 12 responses
 - Includes assistance with housing, job opportunities, accessing benefits and social services, interpretation and translation services, and self-sufficiency assistance
- Cultural Events/Programming: 12 responses
 - Includes cultural events, peace activities, and cultural exchange events/programs,
- Mental Health/Wellness: 6 responses
 - Includes counseling, self-care classes, and addiction services/support
- Includes desire for it to be a community center, providing community education, addressing historical disconnect from decision making by neighbors, being responsive to community needs, and ongoing communication
- Project should be culturally informed: 12 responses
 - Includes recognition of Native American land rights/land acknowledgment, welcoming space, and respects and reflects diversity of neighborhood
- Addressing Access Issues: 8 responses
 - Includes hours of operations to support working families/adults, addressing language barriers, transportation, parking limitations, unsupervised kids/ youth and their ability to participate in services/ programming, and inclusive of all abilities/ adaptive
- Safety and Security Concerns: 6 responses
 - Includes need to address safety of facility, people who use the facility, and the neighborhood

Neighborhood Service Needs

When asked about "if you were to create a service center or community space in your neighborhood, what do you think would be important information to think about/ consider?" the following were commonly expressed themes (listed in order of most expressed items to least):

- Project should be community driven: 15 responses

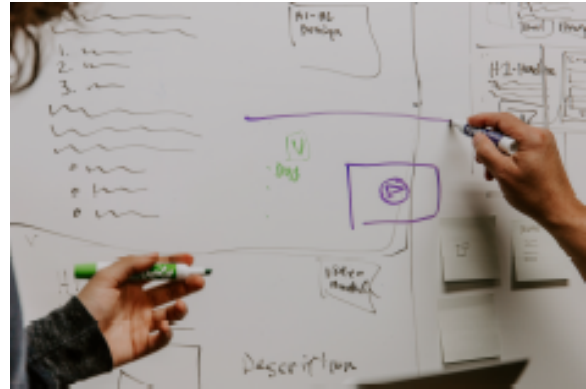


- Project should be family oriented:
3 responses
 - Connected to community driven and identifying needs
- Other responses included:
 - Diversity of staff
 - Training and knowledge of staff (empathetic and working with community)
 - Environmental conscious/ Good Land-stewards
 - Sustainability of programming

Communication/Engagement

When asked about "how can we best communicate any updates with you and the neighborhood about this project?" the following were commonly expressed themes (listed in order of most expressed items to least):

- Community Leaders and Organizations: 24 responses
 - Includes flyers or posters (with translation available) displayed at Halal stores, ethnic grocers and restaurants, nonprofit community organizations, library, and schools
- Email: 17 responses
 - It was noted it is important to think about translation opportunities
- Neighborhood Targeted Outreach: 7 responses
 - Includes door knocking, neighborhood focus group interviews, kiosk or signage at building site, outdoor events at Romkey Park



- Social Media: 7 responses
 - Facebook was the specific platform shared if one was provided
- Text: 4 responses
- Mailing residents: 3 responses
- Phone Calls: 3 responses
- Other media: 4 responses
 - Including The Extra Newspaper, News Channels, Radio ads, Neighborhood apps, Posting information on Government or Social Services Websites

Additionally, a few respondents provided other feedback including:

- Thank you all for using empty space to make a difference and add support
- Keep the neighborhood busy with stuff to do.
- Appreciate the fact that the community has been engaged first in process; allows project to be more effective with the community's priorities
- Please move forward progressively with community change for all not one group of people

Recommendations

The following are recommendations based on feedback provided in this survey by community members to inform this project as it moves forward.

- The community wants and needs to be involved in this project. It was clear from most respondents that this is very important and was the top response in how best to design the proposed building. Community engagement will lead to better neighborhood buy-in of project, ensuring the project is culturally informed, and that final design does meet the needs of the community members intended to benefit from this space.
 - A list of contact information was gathered from people interested and will be provided to continue to engage/inform them as the project moves forward.
- According to the responses, community engagement should be driven through:
 - Direct communication via email and social media (note, phone numbers were not collected to provide text or call options)
 - Updates and further outreach to participate in future engagement opportunities should be done in partnership with trusted organizations that serve this neighbor; including posting flyers at organizations listed in the above section
 - Hosting outdoor gatherings and door to door outreach should be incorporated into this project as the weather allows to continue to drive neighborhood-based engagement





- Based on responses, the building and lot should be:
 - Open to the community
 - Accommodating and inclusive in design (examples): inclusive signage, artwork/design that is reflective of multiple cultures/ethnicities, traditional Native American grasses and plantings, culturally relevant gardens, tea time etc.
 - A celebration of diversity and culture visually and in use
 - Welcoming to all ages, cultures, and demographics
 - Safe
 - Sustainable with affordable programming and services
- Based on responses, this project should consider including the following spaces and uses:
 - Gathering space that is available for daily community gathering/use
 - Child care facility
 - Multi-use space for events and education
 - Community kitchen and gardens
 - Food pantry
 - Supportive services

Closing

The study has been developed to inform the multi-use building project through inclusive planning with those most impacted. For those considering inclusive planning we recommend consideration of using a Result Based Accountability (RBA) Framework, identifying disparities to “turn the curve”, focusing on assets and working with leaders from the populations that are most impacted to inform design.

More information on RBA can be found at:
<https://clearimpact.com/>





**For more
information contact:
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