Waterloo Community Needs Assessment

Final Report
January 7, 2021 Presentation

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Agenda

1 Background

2 Main Findings

3 Recommendations

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Background

1 Study Objectives

2 Approaches

3 Research Questions and Methodologies

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Needs Assessment Objective

Develop an in-depth understanding of the assets, opportunities, and gaps existing in the Waterloo community to inform and strengthen the community projects led by John Deere and other stakeholder organizations to lead to greater impact.

Global Communities' Approach

Phased Approach: Iterative based approach that allows for stakeholder feedback and incorporates adaptive management.

- Rapid Appraisal
- Second Phase

Participatory: community voices guide the process.

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Rapid Appraisal

Research Questions:

1. What are the highest needs and priorities for the community of Waterloo?

2. In what ways are those needs and priorities different for the African American community?

3. What services are available to address those needs? Where are the gaps that need to be addressed?

4. What are the biggest challenges or barriers faced by families as they try to access services?

5. What are the neighborhoods with the most vulnerable populations in Waterloo?

Methodologies:

➢ Desk research

➢ Survey

➢ Key informant interviews

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Second Phase Methodologies

Research Questions:

1. What do East Side residents (both youth and adults) view as priority issues in their neighborhoods and in the larger Waterloo community?

2. How do these issues impact youth differently?

3. What are ways to address these issues?

Methodologies:

➢ Emphasis on youth voices

➢ Community Meeting and Dialogue Sessions: Focus groups with neighborhood residents utilizing participatory tools such as priority mapping to explore issues and identify solutions.

➢ Validation Sessions: Presentation of findings and recommendations to seek participant feedback.

➢ Limited Data Review: Analyzed datasets on high school demographics and behavior of youth.

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Community Meeting and Dialogue Sessions

Waterloo Community Needs Assessment

John Deere and Global Communities are **seeking participants** to discuss issues, identify common priorities and explore solutions, particularly as they relate to **youth**, in neighborhoods in the **East Side** and in **Church Row**.

When are the dialogue sessions being held?

Global Communities will conduct four sessions over Zoom – two for youth (ages 14-22) and two for adults with a maximum of 12 participants per session. The sessions are scheduled for the following days and time:

Wednesday, October 21st at 4pm-6pm (youth session)
Thursday, October 22nd at 5pm-7pm (adult session)
Monday, October 26th at 4pm-6pm (youth session)
Tuesday, October 27th at 5pm-7pm (adult session)

Why are you doing the needs assessment?

The objective is to gain an in-depth understanding of priority issues in these neighborhoods, the **root causes** of issues and barriers to overcoming them, and of **how issues differ by race** and **impact youth**.

What are you doing with the information?

Global Communities will analyze conversations from the sessions and synthesize findings in a report to share with John Deere, other local organizations, and community members. The findings can be used to strengthen opportunities and programming collectively for the community.

What do I get out of it?

This process gives you a voice and enables you to become an **active participant** in community development. In addition, Global Communities and John Deere recognize your time is important to you and value both your time and your participation. Individuals who participate in a dialogue session will be compensated $50 for their time.

How do I sign up?

If you would like to participate please contact globalcommunitieswaterloostudy@gmail.com indicating which session you would like to attend. Once you are confirmed Global Communities will follow up with additional information.

30
Youth CMDS participants

36
Adult CMDS participants

8
Youth Feedback Session participants

17
Adult Feedback Session participants

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Community Meeting and Dialogue Sessions

	LIKE MOST	LIKE LEAST	CHANGES I WANT

COMMUNITY

LIKE MOST
- All about family & community (tied to ancestry)
- Awesome place to raise a family
- community seems to be moving in a positive direction and is growing in community
- A lot of support (social programs)0 to help families - don't have to always seek out on your own
- educational - a lot of museums; kids, JD, wrestling museums
- Waterloo is more accessible than other places. (geographically close to big hubs)
- Community comes together when there is a need (community & church support)
- community activism - people committed to making change happen
- Opportunities for change - sit on city boards
- the opportunity to obtain a good education
- Only takes 10 min to get anywhere (x2)
- Used to have program called "Future Leadership" to bring city & community together

LIKE LEAST
- Need more involvement from church leaders helping issues outside their doors
- wish there were more to do. I'm not always aware of activities going on. I guess before the pandemic.
- But also don't like when you help & people don't appreciate it/take advantage (x3)
- Difficult to get mental health resources geared to African Americans (no Black doctors) - would be nice to get incentives to bring Black docs here
- Same certain orgs funded repeatedly -
- Can be a lot of pettiness b/c everyone knows each other ("clique city")
- Abandoned houses/lots; many owned by nursing homes (assets signed over)
- System doesn't move fast enough to provide help for youth (x2)
- Systems - like DHS - workers are harder on Black people in the systems
- Being on boards is difficult - it's often corporations reaching out (ties to relationships/networks)

CHANGES I WANT
- Need to expand the circle - serve more people; and hold people accountable to solving the problems
- Bring back summer youth programming, and other places they can go (youth rates at gym, etc.)
- Early support for families/youth (vs. support once they're in system)
- More Black docs. - in primary care, mental health, etc.
- better lending practices by our financial institution
- And want to see sore opportunities for adult employment in general, and better information about opps.

EMPLOYMENT

LIKE MOST
- Good diversity of employment options - can make good amount w/ out college degree
- A lot of employment opps - ex. JD, UNI, DHS (x3)
- 'Transplants' come to Waterloo and stay
- Good place to start small biz.

LIKE LEAST
- Lost some major employers
- Used to have summer job programs for youth
- Not many places to work in east side for youth that they can commute to on their own
- UNICUE used to have programs for students to tutor younger youth
- Barriers to employment - stigma (young people afraid of applying for police/fire jobs - fear of railroads. Skilled professionals come in for a couple of years & then leave.

CHANGES I WANT
- Opportunities for young Black men & women start businesses (a lot of youth want to - don't know how). Needs to be accessible - outside of schools.

FAMILY

LIKE MOST
- neighbors on east side esp. become your family
- "it takes a family" - church, networks/connections
- there has been more inclusiveness with different churches, backgrounds, races, etc. that other wise haven't been due to current climate.

FUTURE

LIKE MOST
- A lot of emerging leaders & strategic planning that will shape future of Waterloo - a chance to build upon things that have been talked about over the years (x2)
- A lot of positive policy change - city council, school board
- Excited to see future youth lead community - see during protests
- Youth activism due to current mentorship programs
- we have an opportunity to change, so that those coming up (youth) will have an opportunity

Main Findings

1 Social Themes

2 Community Services

3 Economic Themes

4 Youth Voices

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Sense of Community

- Love for the community

- Deep connection through family history

- Close-knit and welcoming neighborhoods

- Great place to raise a family; good location

- Community events create connection

- Growing community

- Diverse community; increasingly inclusive

Diversity in schools

East and West High Schools have grown **increasingly diverse** over the last 10 years
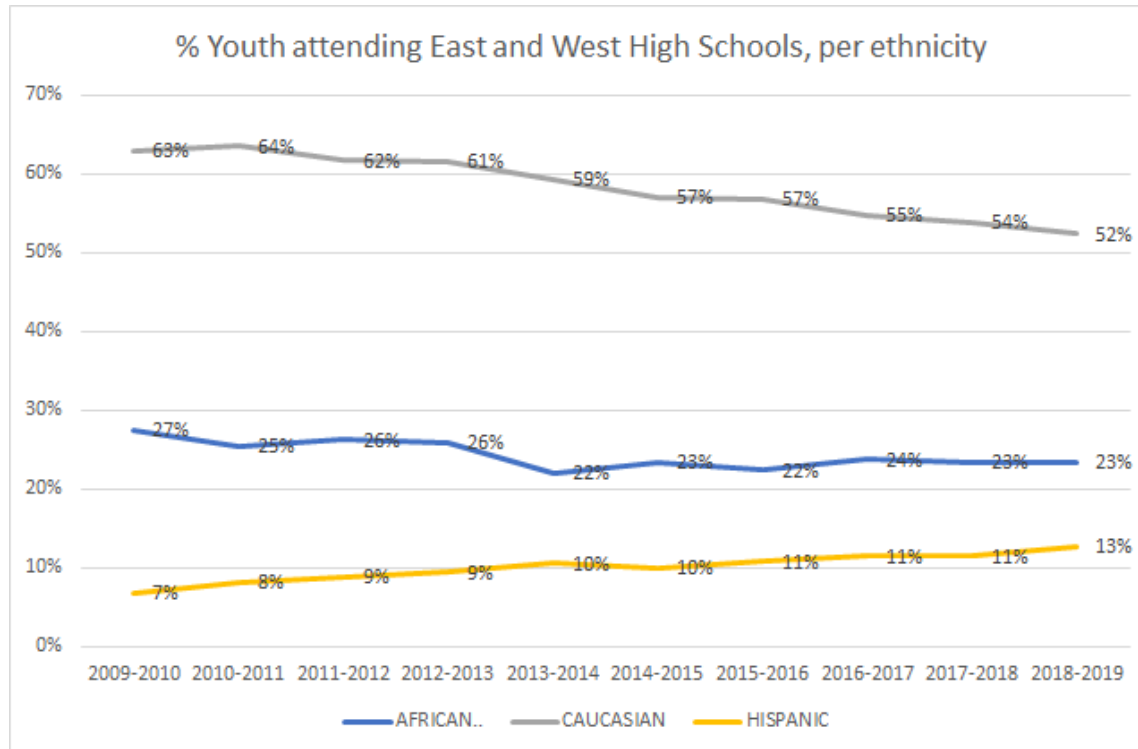
Social Issues
Growing Sense of Disconnect

- Growing divide and sense of disconnectedness, even among teenagers

    "Our community is divided in many ways; there's always been that presence but lately it's more present." –Adult participant

- Generally less concern for one another

- Cliquish, petty behavior

- Many feel disenfranchised and underrepresented in the public sector

- Feelings of isolation and hopelessness

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Social Issues
Family Structures

- **Youth** mentioned feeling safe & supported

- However, **adults** shared concerns over family dynamics:
  - ➢ Deterioration of family structure and communication between parents and children
  - ➢ Parents' absence from home
  - ➢ Perceived generational divisions around parenting and teaching respect

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Social Issues
Gender Relations

- Youth referenced sexism as a problem

- Disconnect between men and women

> *"Including more men in this type of session - we need their input and help. They are the most vulnerable population, and we need to work with them to address the challenges." – Adult participant*

- Challenges for young men without male role models (at home or in community)

> *"It's hard to be a man or know what a man is supposed to be if you haven't had a man in your life." –Adult participant*

- Single parent households; women on the frontline

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Gender

Number of students by gender and grade:

In Waterloo high schools, while there are more young men than women in 9th grade, the opposite is true in 12th grade

2018-2019 School year, number of male and female students by grade
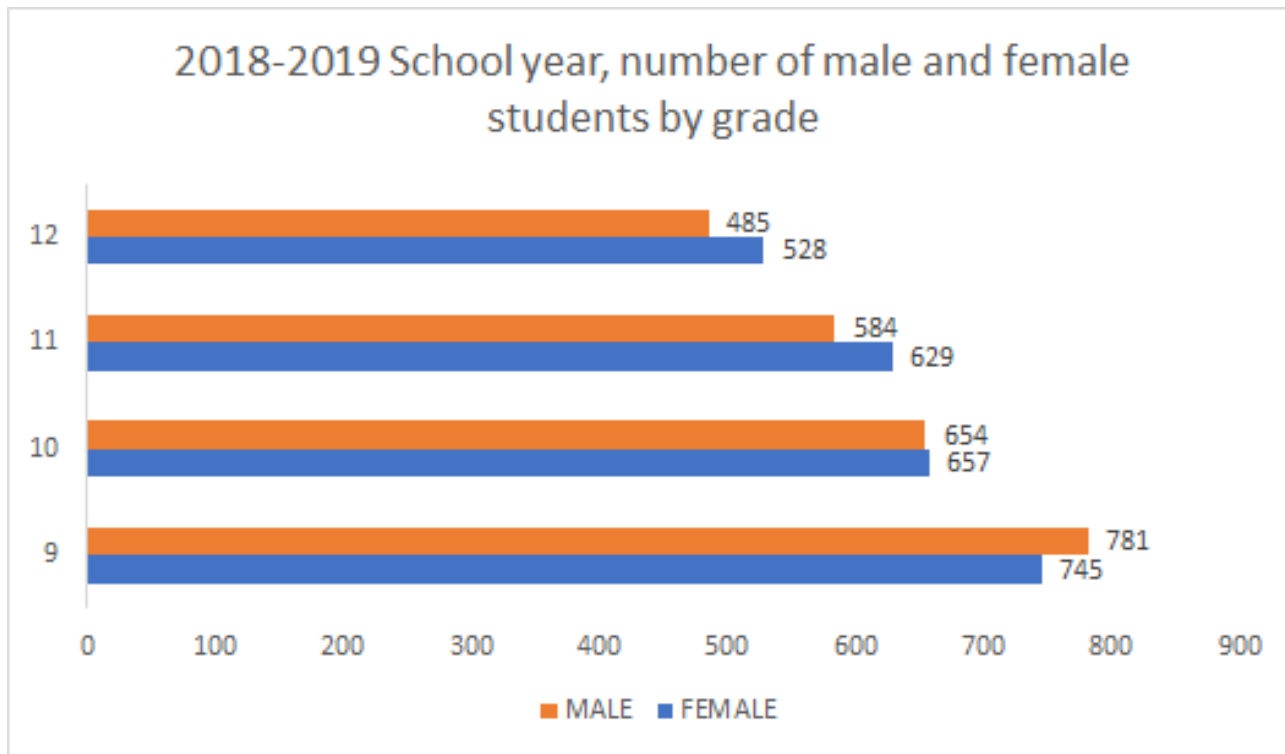
Gender

Student Grades by Gender:
Young women in Waterloo outperform young males academically, across every race and ethnicity

Overall GPA by Gender and Race
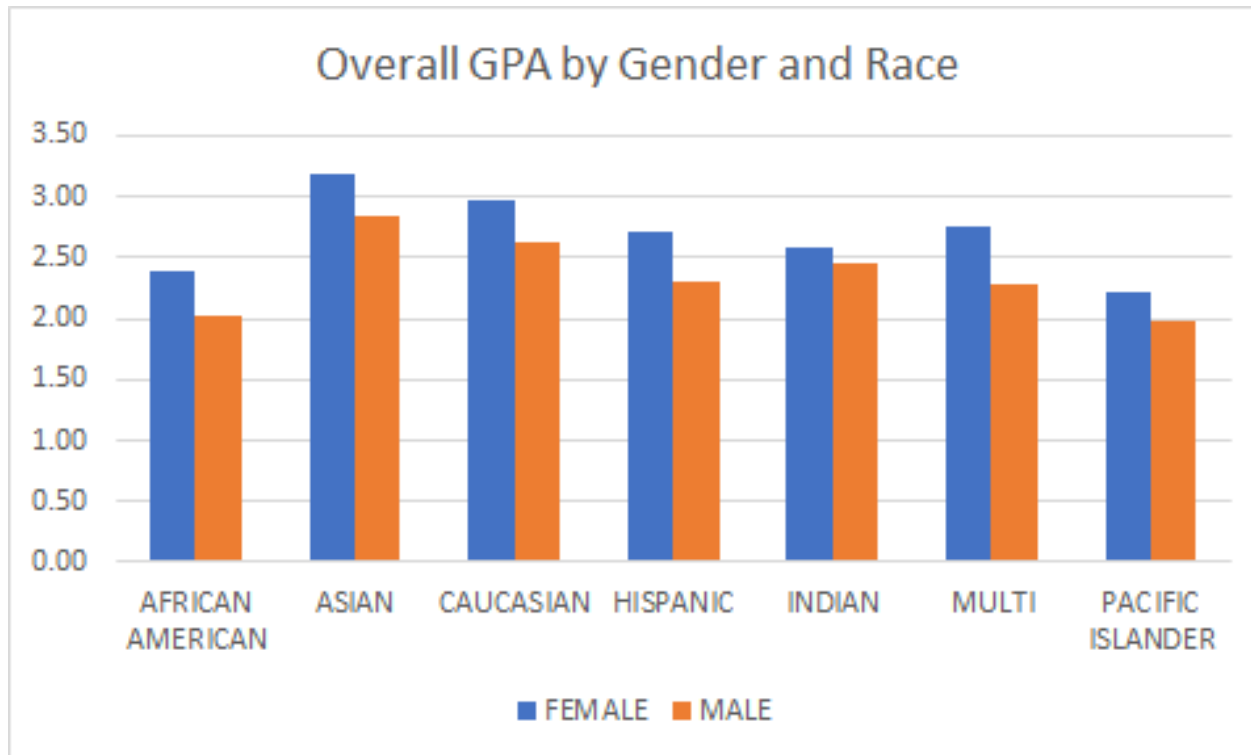
Role of Church

- **Youth** reflected positively on church

- However, **adults** lamented its changing and shrinking role:
  - ➤ Social circles no longer center around church
  - ➤ Church voices not as active in the community
  - ➤ Less influence on community dynamics

"When I was growing up our social circle was in the church. It was active in the community. Change in the role of the church has contributed to how things are." –Adult participant

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Violence and Safety

- Increasing sense of fear

  "More recent element of feeling unsafe or fear. There are many transplants, so you don't know everyone anymore. Therefore, you don't know about going out late - big city fear." –Adult participant

- Concern over high crime rates

- Gun violence and gang violence

- Police brutality

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Discrimination

- Racial discrimination is visible throughout the community for youth and adults
  - ➤ Employment and hiring practices
  - ➤ Incarceration rates
  - ➤ Access to services
  - ➤ Housing

  "I want people to be able to walk around in the neighborhoods without getting picked on, bullied, or being worried about getting shot or messed with by the police because of the color of their skin."
  –Youth participant

- LGBTQIA+ inclusion and visibility

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Community Solutions
Addressing Disconnect

- Rebuild the community and plan a collective future by:
  - ➢ Improving communication
  - ➢ Encouraging one another
  - ➢ Coming together at the same table
  - ➢ Moving discussions into actions

"Need to have community, businesses and non-profits come together. Lip service has been given for a long time; need action."
–Adult participant

  - ➢ Need to unite to invest in 'ourselves' so that outsiders see the value in investing in 'us'

Social Issues

Creating unity through activities

- Need for more activities that unify community, generate positivity
  - ➢ Online tournaments
  - ➢ Cooking competitions and potlucks
  - ➢ Fundraisers
  - ➢ Trash pickups

- Need social outlets for networking and relationship building

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Community Activism

- Activism is a point of pride in the community

- Observe growing youth leadership/activism

- Opportunities to 'sit at the table' and be the voice of the community

- Representation matters in all sectors of the community – schools, businesses, healthcare

- Need to diversify city council

- Need to include elected officials in conversations and hold them accountable

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Community Services and Assets

Many support programs for families exist.

Education 8
Community Development Services 31
Governance & Civil Rights 9
Economic Development 15
Children & Youth Services 15
Health & Social Services 20

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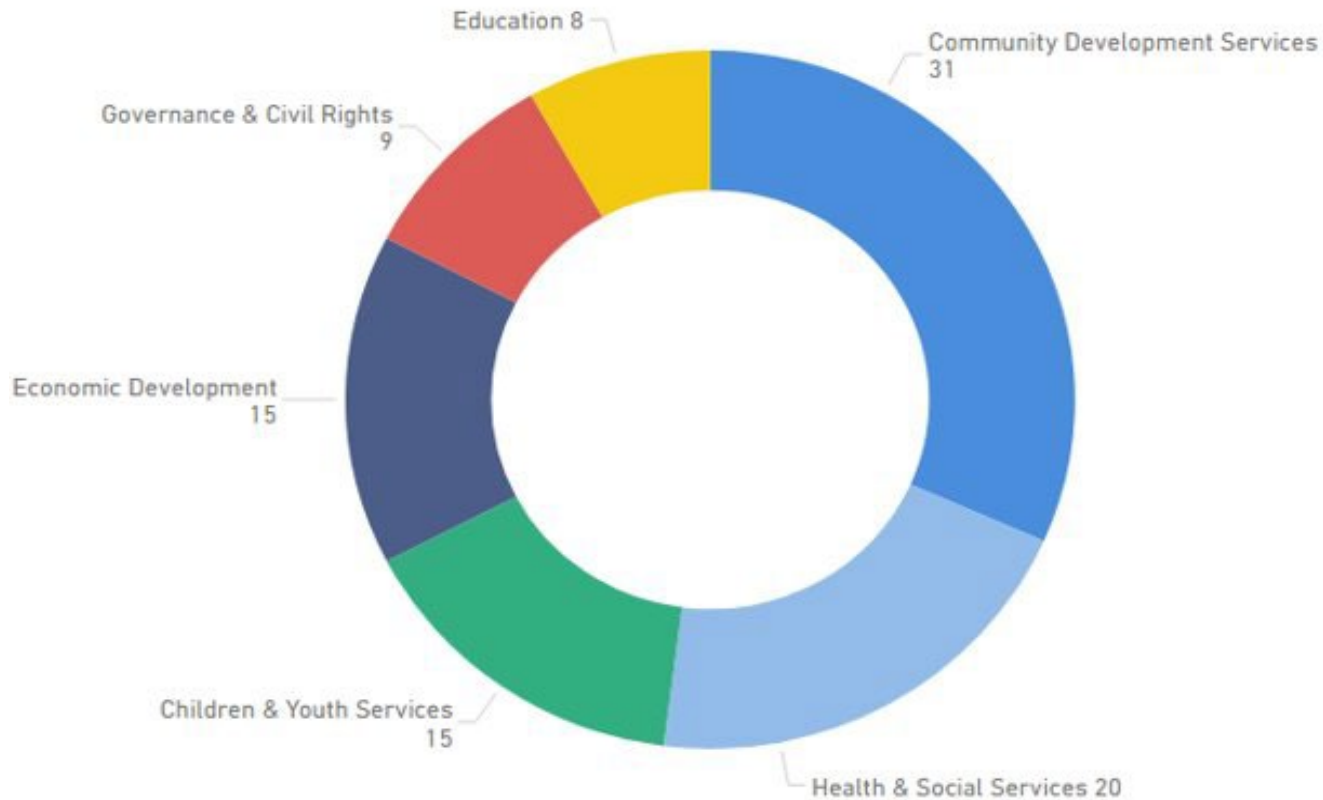
Service Gaps

- Lack of early intervention and time-sensitive services

- Lack of preventative services for youth

- Perceived disconnect and competition among service providers
  - ➢ Need to shift from 'I' to 'we' mindset

  "Many groups are looking for self-buildup versus coming together as a community ." – Adult participant

- Communication issues and social disconnect limit ability to utilize services
  - ➢ Lack of information
  - ➢ Stigma

- Lack of transportation

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Community Solutions
Service Gaps

- Early support services for youth / families

- Mental health services tailored to the Black community

- Link services with existing infrastructure

- Policy change with activists / local officials

- Centralized hub for service providers

- DE&I and cultural competency trainings

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Vulnerable Neighborhood Characteristics
(Rapid Appraisal)

crime/violence
disinvestment
language barriers
food desert
powerless
affordable housing
blight refugees
African American rentals
marginalized lack good jobs
over-policing poverty slumlords
safety drugs/alcohol
illiteracy no youth activities
dilapidated housing
lack resources
transportation

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Development in East Side

- Frustrated by lack of development
  - ➤ A lot of talk but little action

- Neighborhoods characterized by blight

  "Housing so run down I wouldn't put a dog in it." – Adult participant

- Lack decent grocery, retail, recreation

- Feeling there's nothing to take pride in that enhances the community or quality of life

- Homelessness a concern

- COVID-19 has set back the community

Youth receiving free or reduced lunch

The proportion of youth receiving free or reduced lunch at school shows an upward trend in Waterloo
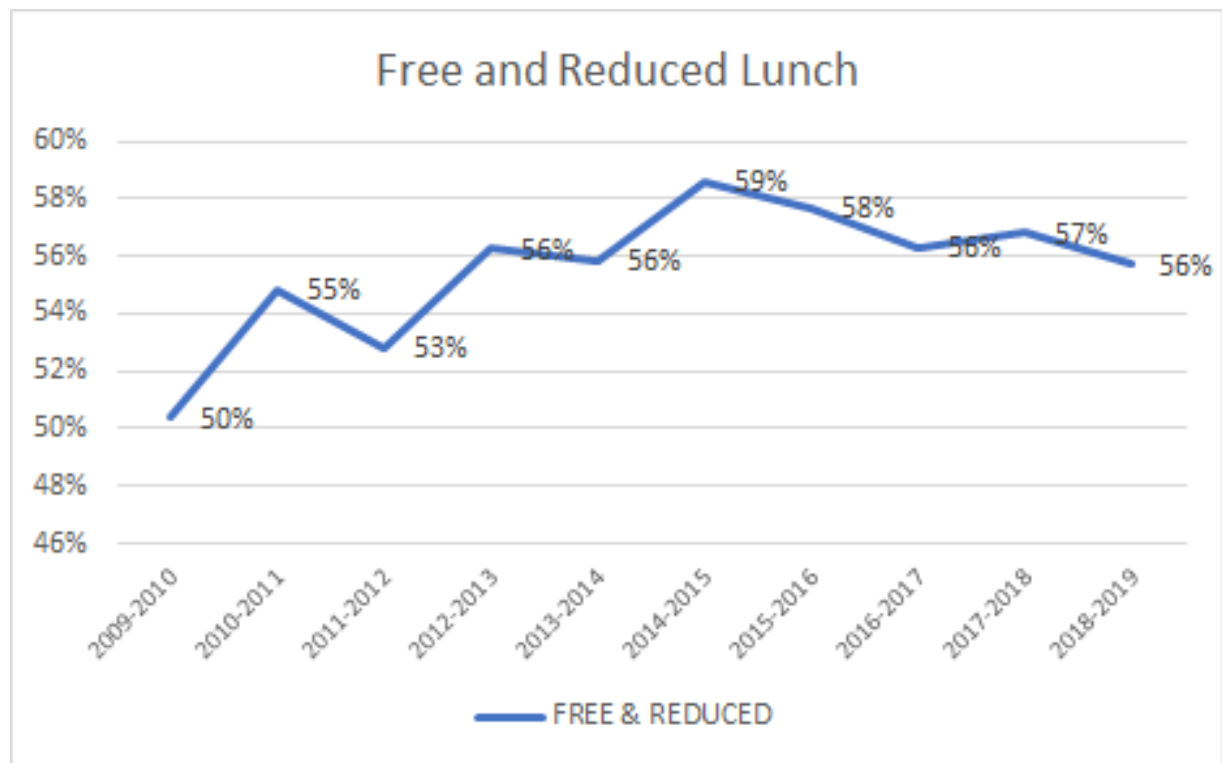
Free lunch by ethnicity

7 out of 10 African American students in East and West High Schools receive free lunch

school year 2018-19: % receiving free lunch, by ethnicity
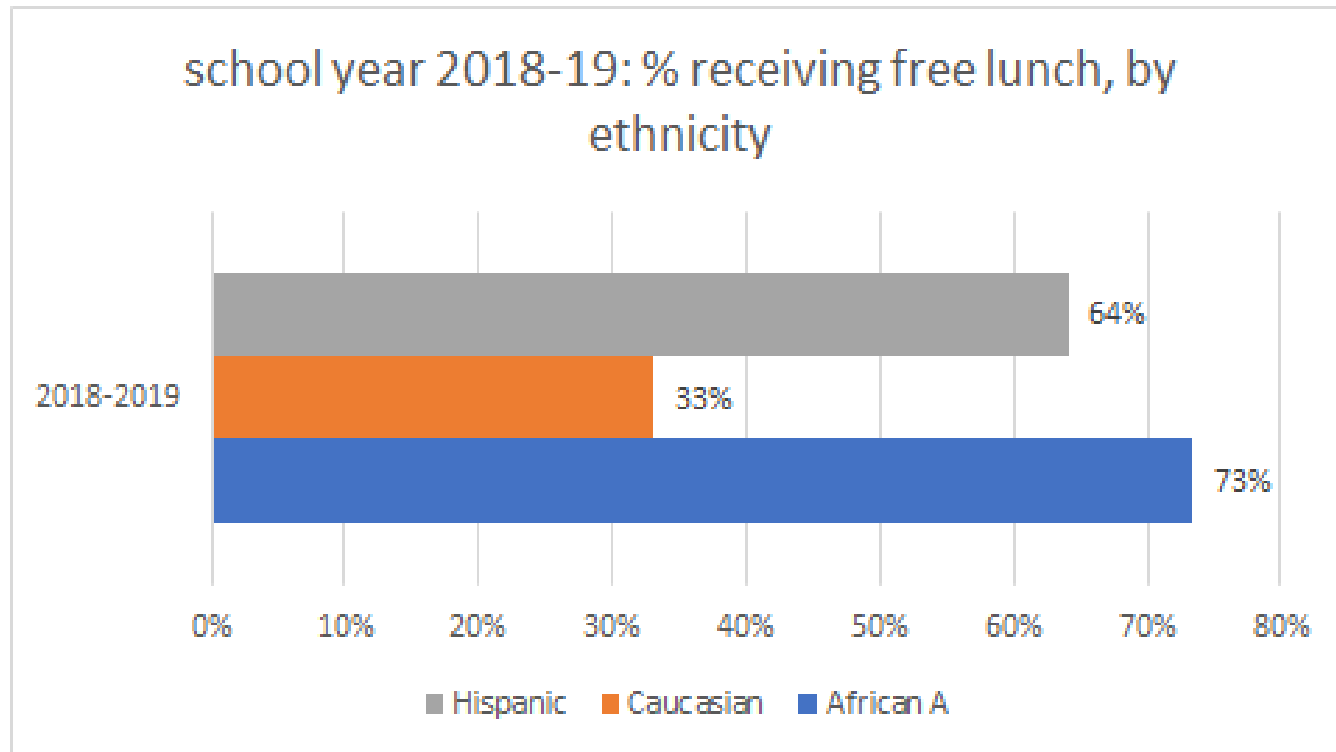
Economic Issues

- More retail to complement small businesses

- Opportunities exist to start a business

- Uptick in creative businesses with pandemic
  - ➢ Potential to leverage momentum around this

"When we have more local businesses – we hire locally, we use local resources. If we're talking about inspiring youth – there's a great model for showing work ethic, running a business. Then they'll want to stay and start their own business. A lot of intersectional benefits from it. "
– Adult participant

- More support for small, local businesses
  - ➢ Larger companies could mentor smaller ones
  - ➢ Better lending practices by financial institutions

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Economic Issues

- Promote relationship building
  - ➤ Need for greater collaboration
  - ➤ Access to financial resources

- Need to be at the table
  - ➤ Representation in the room is important
  - ➤ Need more information to make changes

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Employment Opportunities

- Good job opportunities, but not enough

- Barriers to employment
  - ➢ Stigma preventing them from being hired
  - ➢ Lack of information on opportunities

- Lack of diverse hiring practices and policies
  - ➢ Racial gap in local employment rates
  - ➢ Passive recruitment strategies

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Community Solutions
Employment Opportunities:

- Improve communications for opportunities

- Active recruitment strategies - collaborate with private sector, nonprofits, churches

- Companies need better hiring practices
  - Diverse hiring committees are important

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School/education

- Youth shared positive school experiences
  - ➢ Learning, friendship, sports / clubs
  - ➢ Support from teachers and peers

However, they also shared negative experiences…
  - ➢ Bullying exists and is hurtful
  - ➢ Negative mindsets and attitudes
  - ➢ Challenges from COVID-19

- In terms of schooling, **adults** see youth deterred by education

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After-school activities

High School students in Waterloo are likely to be involved in after-school activities

81%

Practice at least one sport

12%

Participate in academic clubs

Less than 7%

Participate in civil rights, language, arts, music, business and leadership clubs

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Youth behavior reports

School behavior of high school students in Waterloo

2018-19, Percent of students with a report on behavior

Behavior	Percent
Tardiness	71%
Defiance	24%
Abusive behavior	9%
Fight	6%

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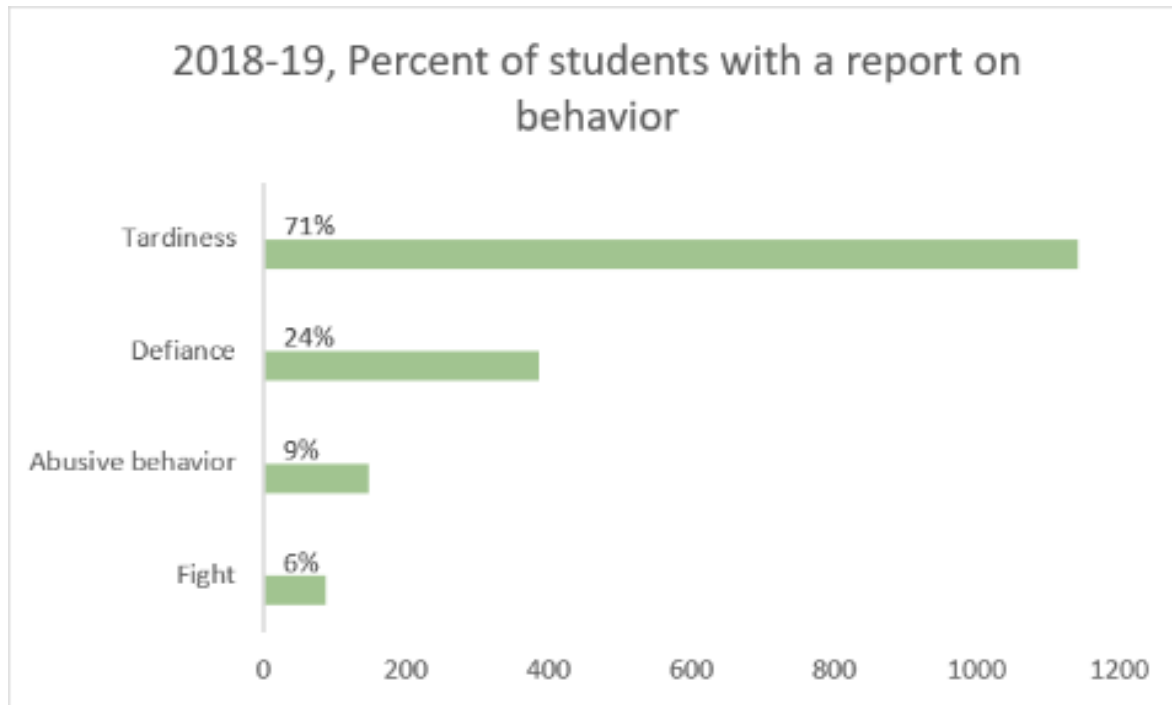
Youth Voices
Employment Opportunities

- Limited employment / mentorship opportunities
  - ➢ Most jobs at fast food or grocery stores
  - ➢ Few internships to help prepare for college

- Barriers to youth employment:
  - ➢ Transportation
  - ➢ Lack of awareness of opportunities
  - ➢ Stigma around Black youth in certain careers

- Desire to start businesses; need support

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Youth interests after graduation

*The proportion of students **only interested in employment** after graduation is increasing*
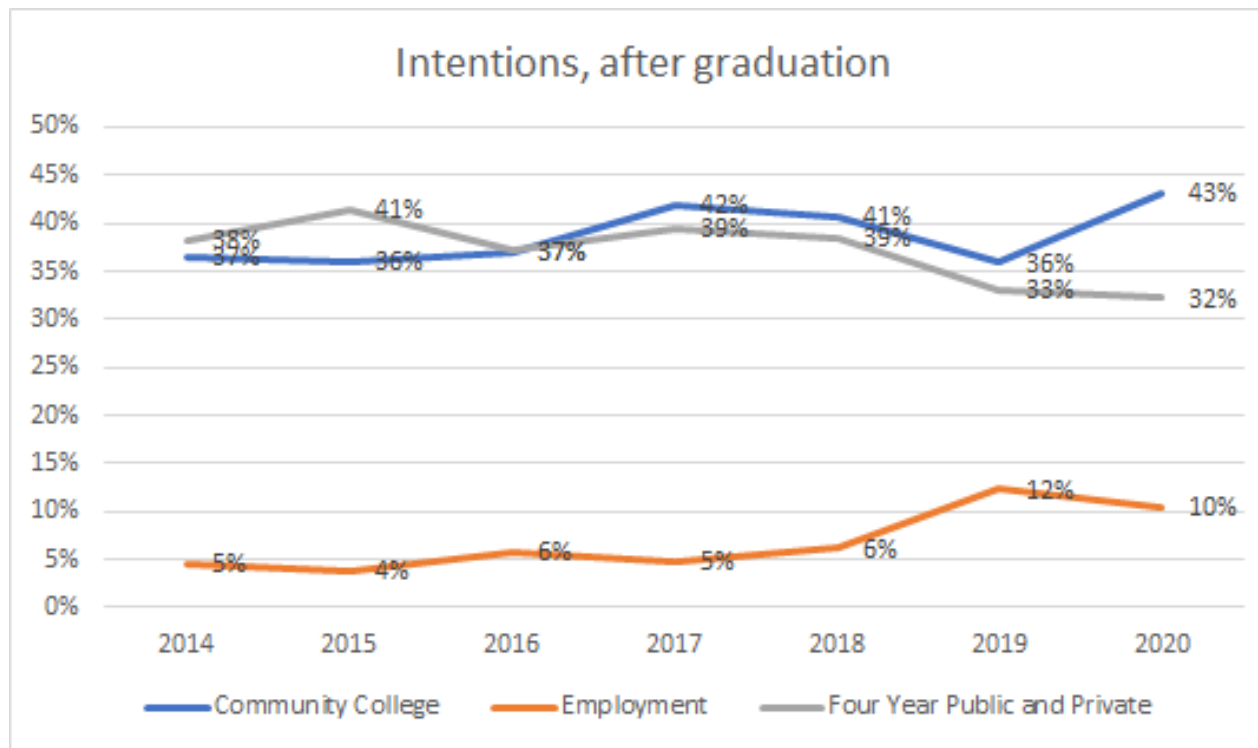
Community Solutions
Youth Employment Opportunities

- More diverse employment opportunities
  - Afterschool and summer positions
  - Increase internship opportunities

- Reboot summer job program

- Business startup support for youth
  - Needs to be accessible to out-of-school youth
  - Resources: Try Pie, Central Career Center

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Youth Employment Opportunities

- Experience prepares youth for the future

- Improves independence and responsibility
  - ➤ Make their own purchases; establish savings
  - ➤ Contribute to family's household expenses

- Allows youth to feel like young adults

- Recognition may lead to other opportunities

- Keeps teens out of gangs and off streets

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Engagement and Motivation

- **Youth** mentioned spending time with friends, sports, & volunteering as interests
- Excited to discuss ideas to create unity

*However, **adults** are concerned about…*

- Negative youth behaviors, disrespect for themselves & others
- Impact of generational hopelessness
- Racial disparities in employment & incarceration rates among youth

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Adult Perspectives on Youth Engagement and Motivation

- Perceptions of a generational divide and differences in parenting impact youth:
  - ➢ Parents' absence from home
  - ➢ Lack of role models
  - ➢ Family and church circles used to be the source of motivation and accountability for youth

- Recognition that young parents may need motivation and support

- Positive youth development ideally starts at home, but a village mentality is needed

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Adult Perspectives on Youth Engagement and Motivation

- Recognized that youth are living in a time of unprecedented challenges:
  - ➢ Different world politically, economically, socially
  - ➢ Focus on successes too, not just youth issues

- Desire to move the conversation from what youth do wrong to what adults can do to help

- "How do we allow people to define success for themselves?"

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Community Solutions
Youth Engagement and Motivation

*Engagement and motivation through **mentorship** and **employment***

- Mentorship opportunities that teach life skills

- More safe spaces for youth to spend time

"For children who don't have that safe place, we as a community need to come together for them…We have to role model what that looks like to be motivated." –Adult participant

- More afterschool and summer programs:
  - ➤ Boys and Girls Club STEM program
  - ➤ Raising Smart Girls STEM camp for girls
  - ➤ Passport to Manhood motivational program
  - ➤ Teen Talk civic participation program

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Community Solutions
Youth access to community programs

Address barriers to make community programs more accessible to youth

- Understand unique experience of youth to find new ways to motivate them

- Improve communications
  - ➤ Send information through schools so parents understand programs and benefits

- Transportation for those without it
  - ➤ Teen Center works with UNICUE to bus youth from schools for tutoring

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Conclusions

✓ Residents expressed a genuine love for the community, characterized by deep roots and welcoming and close-knit neighborhoods. They positively reflected that Waterloo is a great place to raise a family and has a lot of opportunities.

✓ However, many residents shared increasing concerns over a growing sense of dividedness and disconnect, indicating a deterioration of social fabric at various levels – family, neighborhood and the larger community. Lack of communication and coordination persist and contribute to feelings of isolation and hopelessness.

✓ Violence and crime generate feelings of insecurity in neighborhoods and are of particular concern among youth.

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Conclusions

✓ Racial discrimination continues to permeate throughout the community, hindering advancement opportunities and compounding feelings of disillusion both socially and economically.

✓ Residents, both young and old, are frustrated over the lack of development in the East Side, describing neighborhoods suffering from blight and lacking decent grocery, retail and recreation.

✓ While job opportunities exist, many feel there are not enough and that there are still many barriers to employment.

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Conclusions

✓ Youth's love for school and community activities indicate potential for their engagement, yet their sentiments around their future highlight the uncertainties they feel.

✓ Of particular concern among **adults** is negative behaviors exhibited by youth, accompanied by disrespect for themselves and others. They believe a sense of hopelessness compounds a lack of motivation and engagement among many youth.

✓ Perceived generational differences, particularly in child rearing, further highlight disconnect and concerns over lack of role models, reinforcing the need to actively support one another and ensure safe, constructive spaces for youth to flourish.

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Conclusions
Solutions around Community Cohesion

✓ Residents highlighted the need to address the growing discord in their community, suggesting whole of community, inclusive efforts that bring everyone together to build unity and plan a collective future.

✓ Better communication is critical to address deteriorating social fabric within families and among neighbors so they support one another.

✓ The extent to which community members become engaged and active participants 'at the table' ensures their voices in the direction the community takes.

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Conclusions – Solutions around Service Provisions and Economic Development

✓ Better coordination between stakeholders is critical to advancing development in the community.

  ✓ Among service providers to ensure services meet the community's needs and that intended beneficiaries have access

  ✓ Among public and private sector to build relationships to further economic growth and improve communications about opportunities

✓ Efforts to improve information sharing are necessary to increase communication and coordination.

✓ Economic growth in the East Side should compliment existing businesses. The community should leverage momentum around small, local business start-ups, which revitalize the community both socially and economically.

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Conclusions
Solutions around Youth Issues

✓ Create more opportunities for positive youth development so they (re)gain a sense of purpose.

    ✓ Expand mentorship programs

    ✓ Offer more internship opportunities

✓ Ensure youth are active participants in community rebuilding efforts and part of the solutions.

✓ Bridge the divide between youth and adults by working to understand youth motivation and experiences.

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Recommendations

Recommendations

1. Continue to support community-based organizations and programming that serve under-privileged youth and communities in areas of positive youth development, workforce development and community service.

2. Promote community-centric social and economic revitalization efforts.

3. Develop mobilization and civic engagement initiatives with both youth and adults that rebuild social fabric and elevate their voices.

4. Convene service providers and public sector to develop a platform to improve coordination and better align resources, ensuring open communication with target communities and accessibility to services.

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Recommendations

5. Strengthen coordination among the private sector to advocate for and support initiatives that reduce employment barriers for low-income and historically marginalized groups by:

    - Expanding positive youth development programming, including mentoring and coaching, summer work programs/internships
    - Developing more inclusive workforce development and recruitment strategies for minority groups
    - Fostering growth of minority-owned small businesses in East Side

6. Continue and strengthen diversity, equity and inclusion initiatives that foster dialogue and social cohesion city-wide.

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Thank you!