

HEALTHY CHICAGO 2025



Community Themes and Strengths

Overarching Issues and Priorities to
Achieve Equity and Improve Health
and Wellbeing



Purpose: Community member priorities are an essential component of the Community Health Assessment process as they document the perceptions and convictions of people with lived experience. It also directs the assessment to identify quantitative data and develop measurable indicators based on these priorities.

Process: This assessment benefited by all the efforts occurring within Chicago communities, including community planning and advocates working to promote equity. We partnered with the Alliance for Health Equity (allhealthequity.org) as they held 42 focus groups in Chicago and collected 3,935 surveys, as part of the development of the overarching priorities for local hospitals' community health needs assessments. We included findings from the many neighborhood plans and the regional plan to identify both hyper-local and multi-community themes. In addition, when we were conducting this assessment, Chicago was in the midst of a mayoral campaign. Many advocacy and policy organizations gathered community voices on how to make Chicago a more equitable city, which we integrated with the other data sources. The variety of community-level feedback on priorities provided a comprehensive description of strengths, challenges and opportunities within Chicago to address race and health equity.

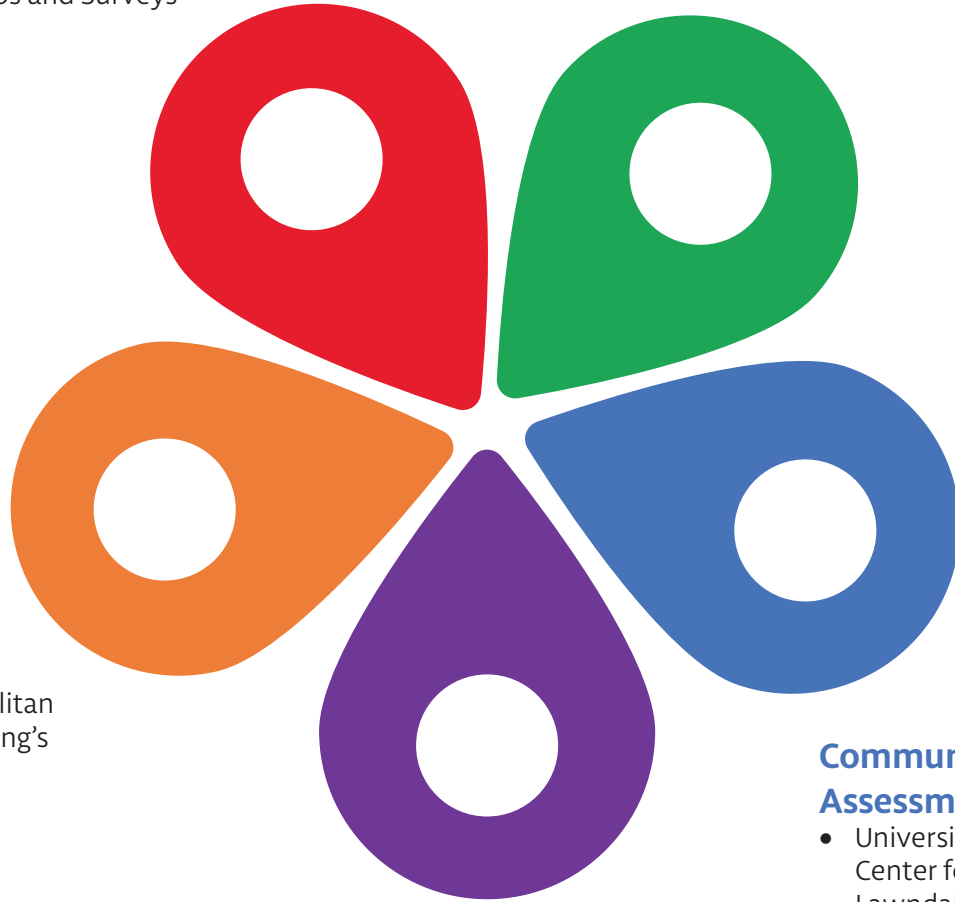
DATA SOURCES INCLUDED IN THE COMMUNITY THEMES & STRENGTHS ASSESSMENT

Community Themes & Strengths Outreach

- Alliance for Health Equity's Focus Groups and Surveys

Community Plans

- LISC Quality of Life Plans
- United Way of Metropolitan Chicago's Neighborhood Networks
- Elevated Chicago



Regional Plan:

- Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning's ON TO 2050

Community Health Assessment

- University of Illinois at Chicago Center for Healthy Work Greater Lawndale Healthy Work Project

Equity Agenda Proposals for 2019 Mayoral Election:

- Chicago United for Equity's (CUE) Vote Equity Project
- Health & Medicine Policy Research Group's Creating a Health Equity Agenda
- One Chicago For All

Themes:

Below are the overarching themes that emerged from all these data collection efforts, listed in order of the frequency of their mentions. This represents an overview and is not inclusive of all issues.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, WORKFORCE AND INVESTMENT

- Prioritize hiring from high-hardship communities and those impacted by racial injustice, including people returning from the criminal justice system
- Workforce Development programs for living wage jobs in growing fields
- Strengthen family structure through economic security and wealth building opportunities for parents and guardians
- Regulate exploitive work situations
- Reform tax policies to support high-need communities
- Ensure equitable access to capital and investments
- Promote intentional investment in high-need communities

HEALTH-PROMOTING RESOURCES

HEALTH CARE:

- Provide appropriate mental health services to meet the varying needs to populations and communities
- Access to specialty care services needed, including behavioral health and oral health care
- Increase access to health care in communities with limited access

HUMAN SERVICES:

- Provide human services in schools for children and parents
- Improve access to affordable childcare

OTHER:

- Increase access to affordable healthy foods in neighborhoods and schools
- Increase open spaces

COMMUNITY SAFETY AND STABILITY

- Reform police department services to address mental health issues, implicit bias and issues of transparency
- Ensure safe community spaces
- Institute restorative justice and trauma-informed practices throughout organizations
- Address history of trauma and marginalization
- Increase resiliency of families

EDUCATION AND YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

- Prioritize neighborhood schools
- Provide early learning programs
- Ensure school and childcare staff have training in trauma-informed care and policies are implemented in these locations
- Strengthen school curriculum by incorporating issues of equity and social justice
- Engage youth in community planning

Themes, continued:

Below are the overarching themes that emerged from all these data collection efforts, listed in order of the frequency of their mentions. This represents an overview and is not inclusive of all issues.

EQUITY AND SYSTEMIC CHANGE

- Prioritize elimination of systemic racism and address deep-seated racial and economic segregation
- Establish transparent reporting mechanisms of available resources and inequities across neighborhoods
- Institutionalize Health in All Policies approach
- Concerns about negative trends of decreasing equity, inclusion and access to opportunities
- Unfair disinvestment in many neighborhoods
- Need to coordinate efforts for systemic change
- Increase accountability of public investments to address inequities
- Address issues of power and influence
- Ensure transparency of elected officials
- Foster collaboration to prevent system and project silos

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT/LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

- Engage parents and families to advocate for programming and funding of local schools
- Resident-driven community development
- Facilitate community decision making on local priorities
- Increase opportunities for community cohesion
- Build authentic communication channels between community and policymakers
- Honor community narrative
- Ensure efforts build community leadership and ownership

HOUSING

- Achieve greater housing stability and affordability throughout Chicago, including special populations (e.g., seniors and people with disabilities)
- Create adaptive policies to meet the unique housing needs of different neighborhoods

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- Build resilient communities to prepare for climate change
- Protect communities from disproportionate effect of pollution around industrial corridors
- Ensure children are protected from lead poisoning

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

- Combat history of redlining, disinvestment and segregation
- Work toward development without displacement
- Promote revitalization in neighborhoods
- Develop community arts programs in vacant buildings

TRANSPORTATION

- Improve transportation options, including public transit, bicycling, walking
- Address congestion on streets and highways
- Ensure transit safety