



Illinois
Collaboration
on Youth



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Level Up: Illinois Coalition on Youth Community Data Collection Project



This report was prepared by R1 Planning Council

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Background Information

The R3 Grant: Restore. Reinvest. Renew.

Grants funded by R3 directly affect communities impacted by violence, excessive incarceration, and economic disinvestment across the five areas of: civic legal aid, economic development, reentry, violence prevention and youth development.¹ The purpose of R3 grants are to support and provide governance to local collaborations that will positively influence change in the lives of residents. Within the Rockford region, the school to prison pipeline is becoming an increasingly prominent concern. In January 2022, the Rockford Police Department arrested seven minors for gun-related crimes; six of the arrests happened on Rockford Public School grounds.² Based on 2018 census and Illinois Department of Juvenile Justice (IDJJ) data, Black youth were 15 times more likely than white youth in Winnebago County to be committed to IDJJ. The predominance of the effect of trauma on youth is being recognized in the community, through increased trauma-informed services including at schools.³ However, what these data points do not demonstrate is the environmental and social factors that contribute to the school to prison pipeline prevalence. The goal of Level Up is to use the funds provided by the R3 grant to create a community coordinated effort to understand points of preventative measures and ongoing services for youth and families in an effort to reduce and eventually eliminate the school to prison pipeline and ensure the safety of all Rockford area students.

Who was involved?

Level Up began as a coalition between the Illinois Collaboration on Youth (ICOY), Office of the Mayor and City of Rockford Family Peace Center, Youth Services Network and Rockford Public Schools. These organizations came together with their knowledge of youth impacted by trauma, resources, and centers of care to develop an R3 Grant plan to understand and eventually address the high rates of youth violence, trauma, and the school-to-prison pipeline.

The Illinois Collaboration on Youth (ICOY), is a statewide agency that collaborates with various counties to create a system of programs to advocate for legislation, policies and practices that promote healthy development for children and their families.⁴

The Family Peace Center is a multi-agency service hub in the Rockford area based out of the Mayor's Office that is dedicated to eliminating barriers to services for survivors of trauma and their families.⁵

Youth Services Network (YSN), is a fully trauma-informed state-licensed Child Welfare Agency that provides and coordinates services to improve the physical, psychological, and social well-being of youth and families in the Rockford area.⁶

Rockford Public Schools is one of the largest school districts in Illinois, educating approximately 28,000 students through early childhood and preschool programs all the way through high school and adult education programs.

Since the early planning period, this initiative has worked with many local organizations dedicated to improving the community and investing in Rockford's youth. The community organizations include:

- NAACP
- Booker Washington Center
- City of Rockford
- Kennedy Middle School

1 "Illinois-R3." n.d. R3.Illinois.gov. Accessed June 2, 2022. <https://r3.illinois.gov/>.

2 Ingalls, William. n.d. "13 Investigates Preview: Youth Gun Violence in Rockford on Pace to Quadruple in 2022." WREX. Accessed June 2, 2022. https://www.wrex.com/news/13-investigates/13-investigates-preview-youth-gun-violence-in-rockford-on-pace-to-quadruple-in-2022/article_8e581f02-8b79-11ec-a470-4f93628b3581.html.

3 Quirk, Stephanie. n.d. "School Board Members Concerned, 'the Kids Are Not Doing Okay Right Now.'" <https://www.wifr.com>. Accessed June 2, 2022. <https://www.wifr.com/2022/03/02/kids-are-not-doing-okay-right-now-rockford-school-board-discusses-new-program-help-youth-experiencing-trauma/>.

4 "History." n.d. Illinois Collaboration on Youth. Accessed June 2, 2022. <https://icoyouth.org/about/history>.

5 N.d. Rockford family peace center. 2022. <https://rockfordfamilypeacecenter.org/>.

6 B. Garrett. 2017. "Illinois Child Welfare Agency | Youth Services Network." September 27, 2017. <https://ysnkids.com>.

- Comprehensive Community Solutions
- Youthbuild
- ALPHA

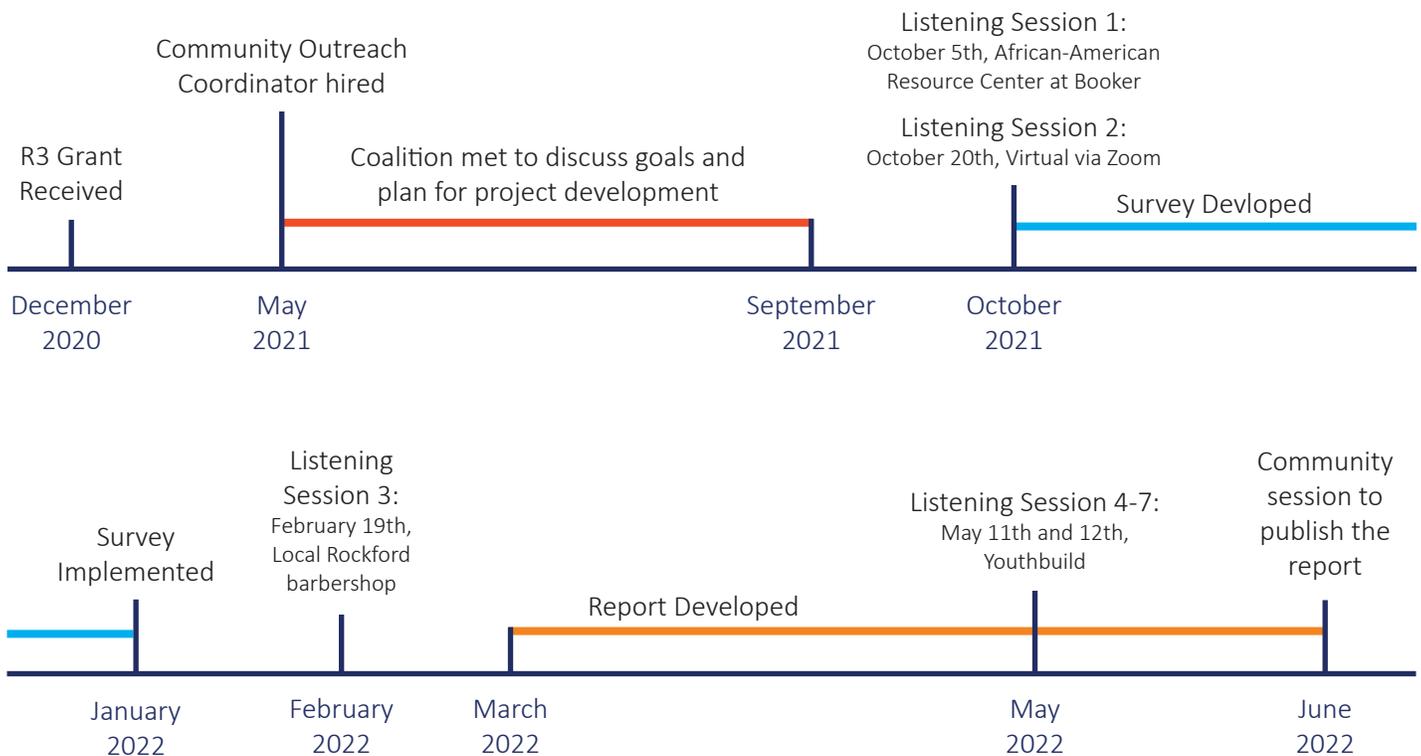
Without the support of their team members, community members, and leadership, the coalition would not have been able to gather this data. The coalition is grateful for the time and energy each partner and individual provided and the continued vital work they do for the community.

Level Up

Level Up is a multi-disciplinary, coordinated effort with an immediate goal of ensuring the safety of all Rockford area students by identifying students experiencing trauma, and pinpointing barriers to their safety and security while establishing a clear and attainable path to therapeutic services. By working directly in the schools and collaborating with families, Level Up strives to identify what resources within the community are available and what families’ experiences have been with the existing services. In doing so, the coalition hopes to find what previously prevented community members from being incarcerated, and what more can be done to prevent today’s at-risk youth from entering the criminal justice system.

In determining a vision, all collaborating partners agreed that they see a community where children and families impacted by trauma are able to receive attainable, high-quality services to keep them safe and succeeding academically, socially, and emotionally. The primary purpose of the program is to develop a more complete understanding of the existing service gaps for children and their families who have been impacted by violence – either as victims, perpetrators, or both. The secondary purpose is to explore the efficacy of the No Entry diversion model, which aims to redirect adolescents away from the criminal justice system.

Timeline



Data Collection

The Community Outreach Coordinator worked to collect data in several ways, including through a survey provided in person, through conversation with community members, and through listening sessions in a variety of venues. The data collected was both quantitative, including giving number values to opinions on local school policy, and qualitative, including themes pulled from multiple conversations. The Data and Analysis section will provide further information on the outcomes of that data.

Survey Creation

The survey was developed in several iterations based on the questions from the original grant as well as a small amount of demographic information. The full survey can be found in the Appendix.

The final survey was used for all age groups and included a brief demographic section. This was to ensure that data could be disaggregated by certain identities the Level Up team members wanted to understand more about. Demographics included age, community identity (for example “youth,” “parent,” or “community leader”), and geography by zip code among other things.

The same survey was used for all ages after community input identified that the questions asked in a specifically adult-oriented survey should also be asked to the youth subgroup rather than a youth-specific set of questions. This also allowed the final data to be analyzed across all age groups.

Questions proposed by the team members in the original application were intended to understand:

1. How young people currently experience their community including school, home, and shared spaces; what they see as strengths and barriers; and what they want to see change.
2. How adults and parents experienced their community both as youth and how they experience it with their children now; what they see as strengths and barriers; and what they want to see change.
3. How community leaders understand the strengths and barriers in local systems

This included asking questions about what people enjoy most about their community, what they’d like to see change, their opinion of local school policies, and what resources they think the community could use most. During interviews and discussions, other questions were used to further the information gathered.

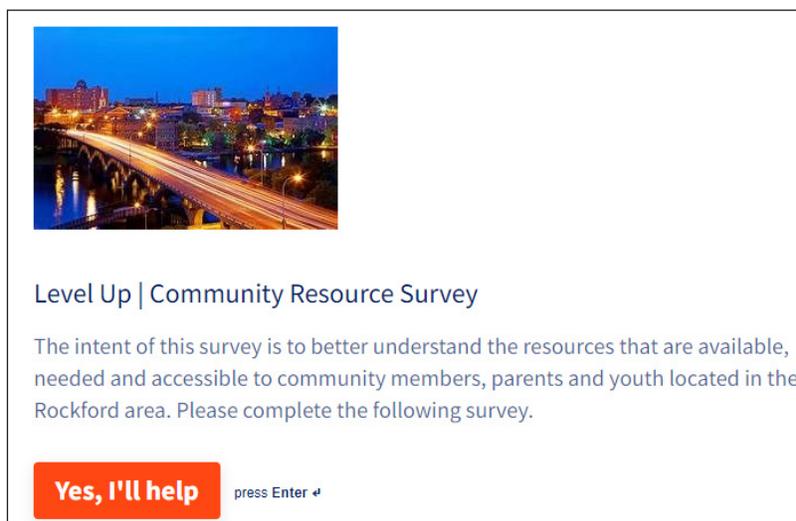


Figure 1. Screenshot of a question from the online survey.

Survey Implementation

The online survey was sent out to the networks of team members and community partners for three weeks in January 2022 and had 70 respondents primarily from the zip codes 61101, 61102, and 61103. Surveys were also provided in-person to community partners to people of all ages and from various zip codes. The purpose of the questionnaire was described to participants prior to answering the questions and questions were explained to participants as necessary. No identifying information about participants was collected. Some surveys were also provided during a broader conversation with participants and those conversations provided qualitative information to the Community Outreach Coordinator (see the section Community Interviews for more information). A total of 40 surveys were collected in person, adding to 110 surveys overall.

Both surveys had the same questions, but the online survey did not allow respondents to “select all that apply” on some questions while in-person respondents were able to. No information was removed when analyzing the data to preserve all respondents’ honest feedback. Some percentages may therefore represent different numbers of responses in the analysis.

Community Interviews

During this process, the Community Outreach Coordinator took part in formal and informal conversations with community members and community partners. Major themes as well as areas for further inquiry are discussed in the Interview and Listening Session Data section. These community interviews also provided insights into locations, questions, or people to follow up with.

Community Listening Sessions

The Community Outreach Coordinator provided public listening sessions throughout the data collection period. These were advertised primarily digitally through the networks of team members and community partners and each lasted for approximately 1-2 hours. The Community Outreach Coordinator took notes on what was said while other community members led the meetings or led the meeting and noted themes during and after. These notes were used to develop a qualitative understand of residents’ experiences. The locations for the listening sessions were determined by team members and partners who identified places where people who live in the chosen R3 zones would be able to participate.

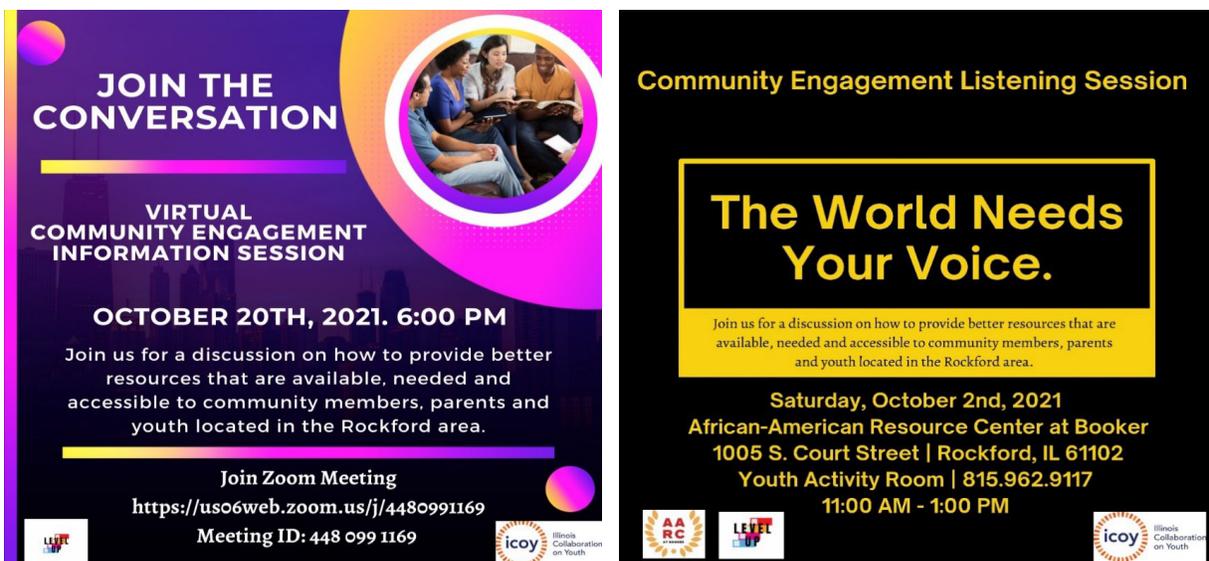


Figure 2. Images of the community listening sessions fliers. Dates and times also listed in the Timeline section.

Data

Data collected during this process included both quantitative and qualitative data. Both types were analyzed for patterns or ideas that stood out. Specific analytics were chosen to highlight the information team members identified as important in the original grant, including strengths, barriers, and opinions by zip code and age. Analytic method, assumptions, and limitations are described below. Some analytics combine answers under one option to maintain the confidentiality of responses.

Many of the analytics are shown on a map by zip code. Figure 3a is a reference map of where in Rockford each zip code is. R3 zones, however, are mapped to individual census tracts. Figure 3b shows the names of those census tracts as neighborhood names. The neighborhood names were developed during prior community engagement with the Erikson Institute.⁷

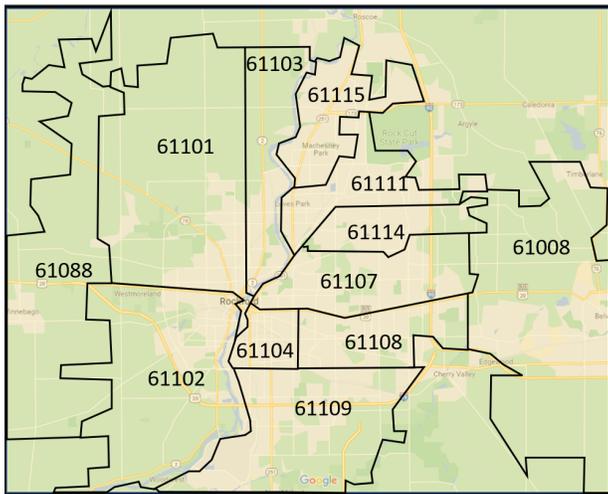


Figure 3a. Zip code and road map of the Rockford area.

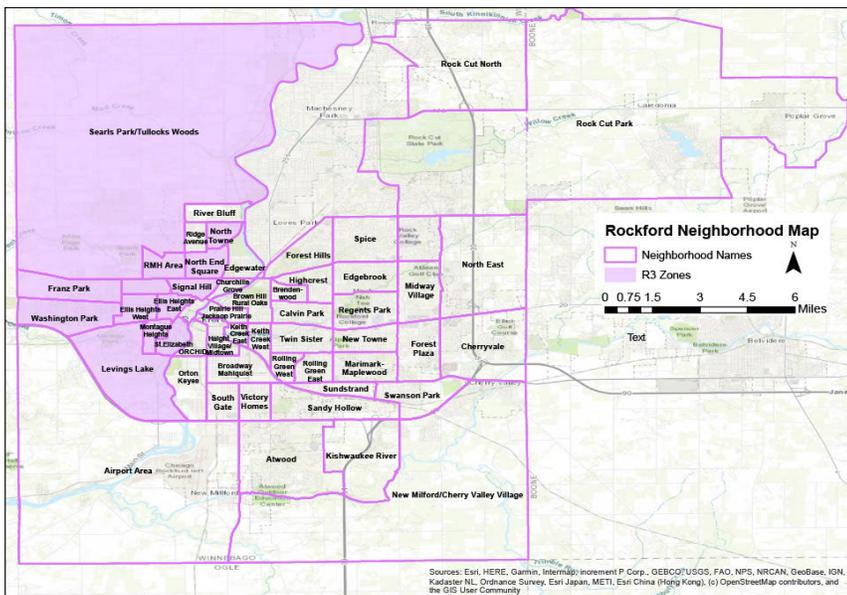


Figure 3b. Neighborhood map of the Rockford area.

⁷ Erikson Institute. n.d. "Erikson Institute Early Development Instrument." Erikson Institute Early Development Instrument. Accessed June 3, 2022. <https://edi.erikson.edu/map/?area=rockford>.

Table 1 shows the relationship between zip code, census tract, neighborhood name, and R3 zone. As discussed, R3 zones have the same outlines as census tracts. Zip codes do not line up with census tracts, however, so each neighborhood may fall into one or more zip codes.

Neighborhood Name	R3 Zone	Census Tract	Zipcode
Levings Lake	580	22	61102
Franz Park	581	23.01	61101, 61102
Washington Park	582	23.02	61102
Washington Park	583	24	61102
Ellis Heights West	584	25	61101, 61102
Ellis Heights East	585	26	61101, 61102, 61103
Montague Heights	586	27	61102
St. Elizabeth	587	28	61102
Signal Hill	589	31	61101, 61103
Blaisdell Area	590	32	61101
RMH Area	591	33	61101, 61103
North End Square	592	34	61103
Searls Park/Tullocks Woods	593	36.01	61101, 61103
Searls Park/Tullocks Woods	594	36.02	61101, 61103
North Towne	595	36.06	61103

Table 1. Which R3 zones fall into which Rockford area zip codes.

Survey Data

The survey had responses from 110 residents from across the Rockford area. About 20% of respondents were youth (under age 25) and 10% reported being over the age of 65 (Table 2a). Almost half of respondents identified themselves as parents, one third identified themselves as community leaders or small business owners, and one fifth identified as service providers or school employees. This question allowed respondents to choose all identities that applied to them, meaning most of the respondents chose two or more identities to describe themselves (Table 2b).

Respondents came from all over Rockford, but the zip codes most represented were 61101, 61102, and 61103 (64% of respondents) (Table 2c). These three zip codes encompass all of the chosen R3 zones (see Table 1 for where these R3 zones are). The final demographic question asked how long respondents had lived in the Rockford Area; 66% had lived in the area for longer than 10 years (Table 2d).

The survey also collected data about how respondents get around their neighborhood. The majority of respondents across the community responded that they use cars the most.

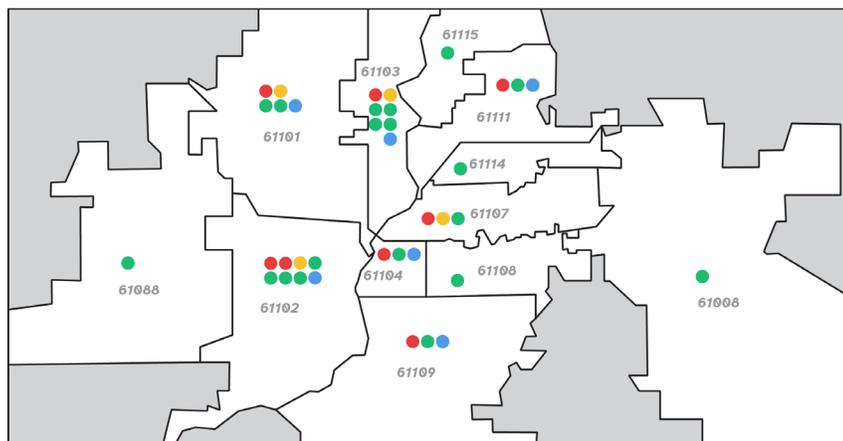


Figure 4. How respondents answered the question “What transport do you use most?” by zip code.

2a.	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Age bracket</th> <th>Number of respondents</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Under 25</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>25 - 44</td> <td>20</td> </tr> <tr> <td>45 - 64</td> <td>34</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Over 64</td> <td>10</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	Age bracket	Number of respondents	Under 25	20	25 - 44	20	45 - 64	34	Over 64	10						
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Table 2. Summary of demographic information of respondents.

Table 2a. Age of respondents.

Table 2b. Community identity of respondents.

Table 2c. Zip codes of respondents.

Table 2d. Length of time living in the Rockford Area of respondents.

Neighborhood and Community

The following graphic, Figure 5, describes what respondents from different zip codes felt was the best part of their neighborhood. Zip codes across the area had similar responses to each other, but in the zip codes with the most responses (61101, 61102, and 61103), Home ranked very highly, while Shops and Services ranked lower. This question was one where some respondents were able to “select all that apply” but others were not.

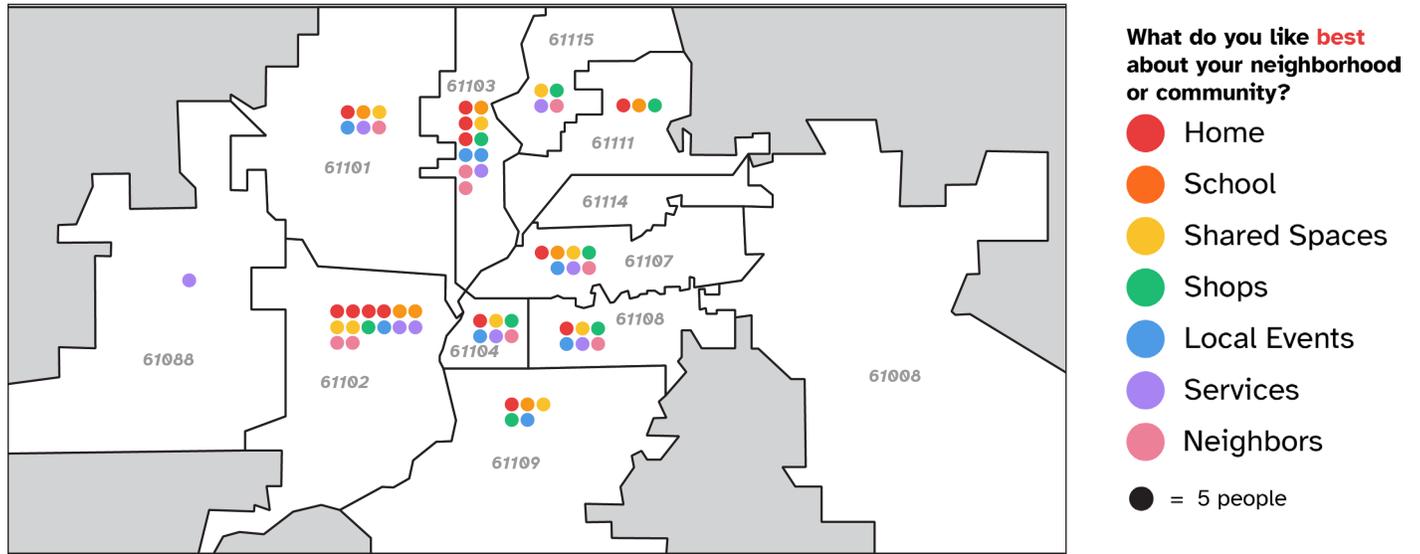


Figure 5. How respondents answered the question “What do you like best about your neighborhood/community?” by zip code.

In aggregate, respondents chose Home, Neighbors, and Shared Spaces as what they enjoy most about their communities. School and Services ranked at the bottom.

What do you like best about your neighborhood/community?

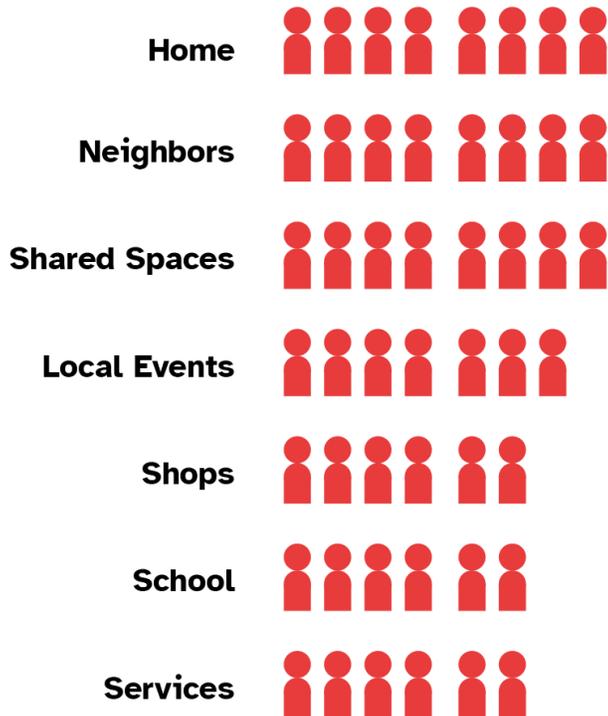


Figure 6. How respondents answered the question “What do you like best about your neighborhood/community?” across all respondents. Each symbol represents 5 responses.

People from across Rockford selected many options when asked “What needs to change in your community for people to be safe?” Every zip code identified that additional resources for Physical Health were needed, and zip codes with more respondents identified all eight areas as needing additional resources, although in different proportions. See Figure 7 for the breakdown by zip code.

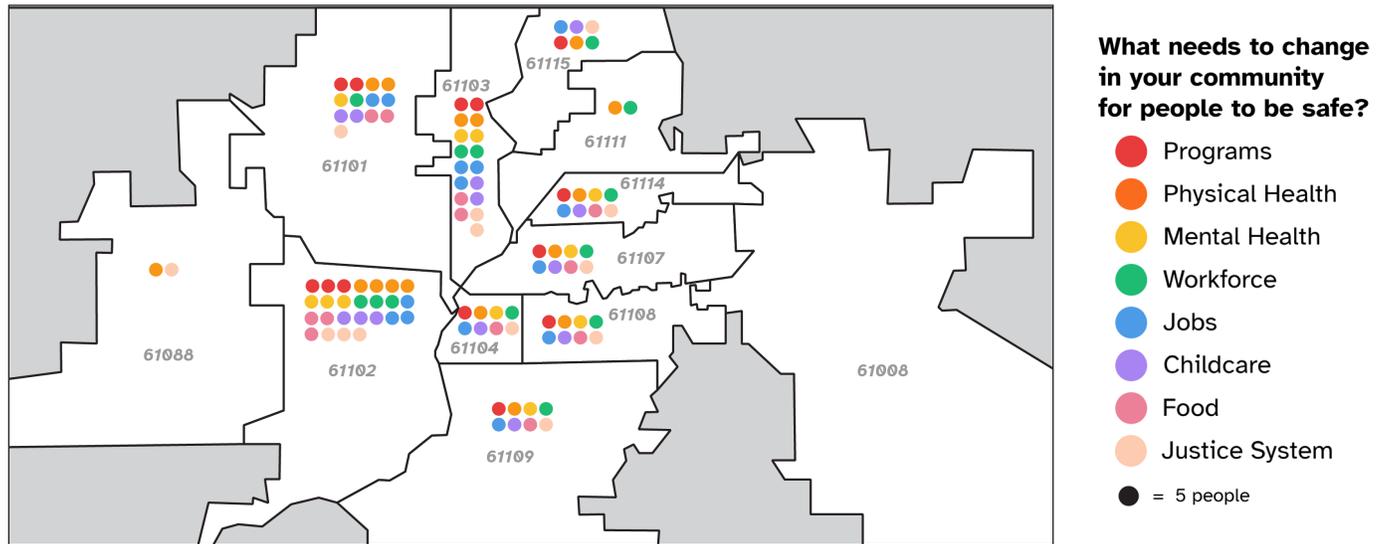


Figure 7. How respondents answered the question “What needs to change in your neighborhood/community for people to be safe/live in peace?” by zip code.

Breaking the responses to this question down by age shows different patterns (Figure 8). Youth under the age of 25 answered that they identified mental health services as a need, while people between 25 and 54 saw programs as the major area of need.

What needs to change in your neighborhood/community for people to be safe/live in peace?

The most common response by age group was:

<25	Mental health services
25-34	Programs (after-school clubs, youth spaces, sports), Job or Workforce Services Job Opportunities
35-44	Programs (after-school clubs, youth spaces, sports), Mental health services
45-54	Programs (after-school clubs, youth spaces, sports)
55-64	Mental health services, Child care services, Justice system services
65+	Job or workforce services

Figure 8. Most common responses to the question “What needs to change in your neighborhood/community for people to be safe/live in peace?” by age.

When asked what resources their community needed to support youth impacted by trauma, funding and programs were identified as the main needs (Figure 9).

What resources does your community need to serve youth impacted by trauma?

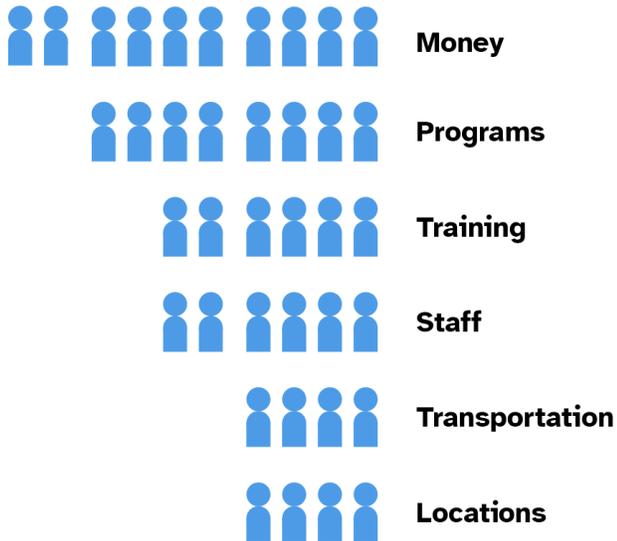


Figure 9. How respondents answered the question “What resources do you/your organization/community need to serve youth impacted by trauma better?” across all respondents. Each symbol represents 5 responses.

School Policies

Respondents answered the question “Would you say that Rockford Public Schools have policies that are fair, sometimes fair/sometimes unfair, or unfair?” on a Likert scale where 1 was Unfair, 3 was Sometimes Fair/Sometimes Unfair, and 5 was Fair. Across all respondents, 93% responded with scores between 1 and 3 (see Figure 10 below). For respondents identified as youth or parents, 90% responded with a score between 1 and 3 with the majority selecting 3.

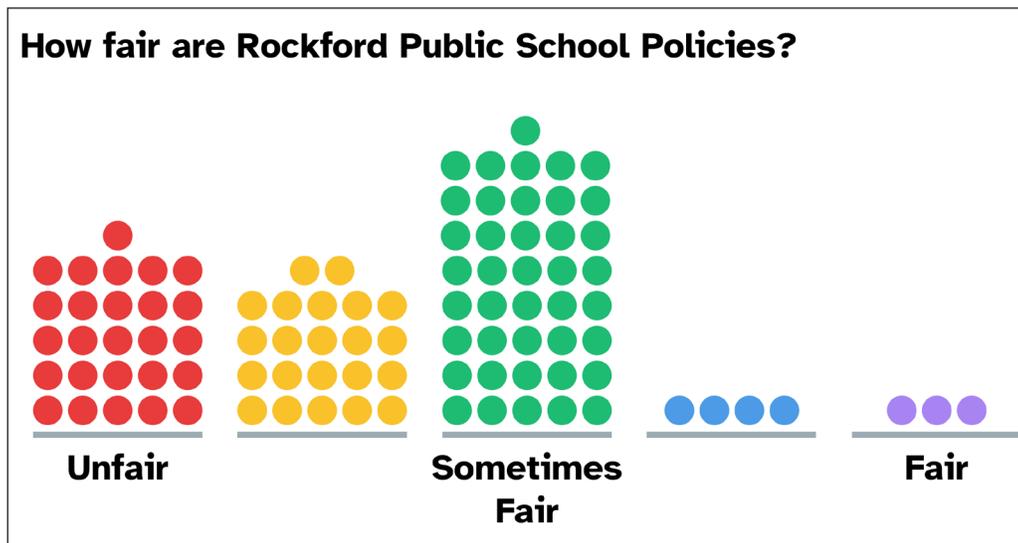


Figure 10. How respondents answered the question “Would you say that Rockford public schools have policies that are fair, sometimes fair/sometimes unfair, or unfair?” across all respondents. Each symbol represents one response.

By zip code, the answers varied slightly with the 61101, 61102, and 61103 zip code areas having an average score of closer to 2.2. Figure 11 shows the breakdown of average score by zip code.

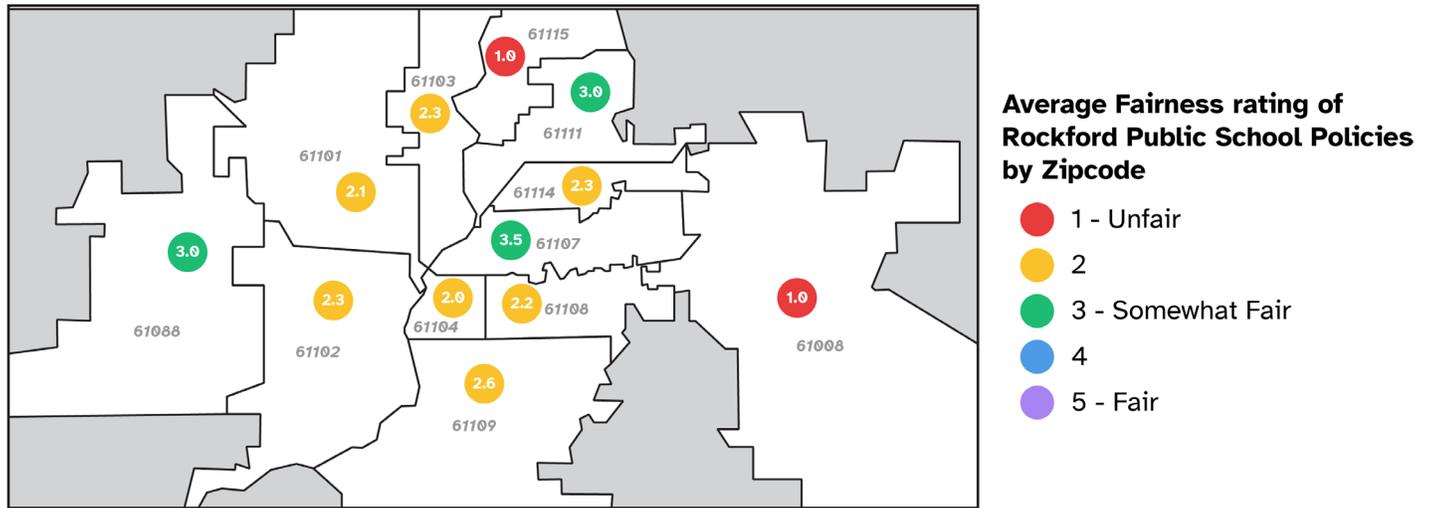


Figure 11. How respondents answered the question “Would you say that Rockford public schools have policies that are fair, sometimes fair/sometimes unfair, or unfair?” by zip code.

Interview and Listening Session Data

Interviews and listening sessions were held in a number of venues (see the Timeline section for the locations) and provide a descriptive lens of the survey data, especially showcasing the areas and ideas for future exploration. Many of the residents who participated in these sessions were from the West side of Rockford. While the listening sessions were based on the survey questions, they went in the direction attendees decided.

Across the listening sessions, it was clear what residents enjoy about Rockford; recreational locations, their community, their neighbors, and local food. Beyond this, however, some areas for further analysis came to light. These include transportation and other necessities, student and family experiences at school, positive and negative outcomes of mentorship, safe activities and specific places for youth, gentrification and uneven resource flow in the city, long-term solutions, communication and trust across the Rockford community, and mental health supports.

Some of these indicate practices or occurrences that residents identified as obstacles, such as negative experiences in schools, gentrification, uneven resource flow, and little communication about opportunities. Others indicate what requires extra support or needs to be created, such as more ways for people to meet basic needs, increased positive mentorship, spaces and activities for youth, trust in community members, and improved mental health supports. Suggested uses for this information and potential further questions can be found in the Next Steps section.

Next Steps

The Rockford region is currently experiencing an influx of funds including COVID-related resources and local mental health funding that may allow organizations to move forward on projects that previously had barriers to funding. This report indicates several questions that organizations and communities can ask of their partners, clients, and members to understand where to direct that funding. For instance, while it is useful to know that youth in the community see the need for additional mental health support, it is important to understand the types of mental health support needed or why other age groups see other changes as more important. The following is a short list of questions that could be further explored.

- What would better community investments look like? Where exactly should additional resources be provided?
- Where is gentrification showing up?
- Are residents aware of programs available to them or is more outreach needed? Which programs are serving people well?

- How do existing systems like faith communities or schools positively and negatively affect residents? How could systems serve youth better?
- Who finds that school policies are unfair? Where does bias against students show up and is there disparity based on community identities?
- What physical spaces could be made safer?

This data can support organizations in applying for potential grants that may address community concerns or ideas for change. It may also indicate directions that existing programs could move into or grow to encompass. Finally, it is a helpful starting place to understand a baseline of community experiences so as programs grow and change, their impact can be measured.

Appendix

Full Survey

Level Up | Community Resource Survey

The intent of this survey is to better understand the resources that are available, needed and accessible to community members, parents and youth located in the Rockford area. Please complete the following survey.

1. Please choose ALL categories that apply to you.
Choose as many as you like.
 - A.) Parent
 - B.) Youth (Under age 24)
 - C.) Community Leader
 - D.) Small Business Owner
 - E.) Legislator
 - F.) School Personnel
 - G.) Service Provider
2. What is your Zip Code?

3. What do you like best about your neighborhood/community? This question is required*
 - A.) Home
 - B.) School
 - C.) Shared space (park, YMCA, my neighborhood's outdoor area, the pool)
 - D.) Places to buy things
 - E.) Local events
 - F.) The services I use
 - G.) Neighbors
4. How long have you resided in the Rockford area?
 - A.) Less than a year
 - B.) 1 - 5 years
 - C.) 5 - 10 years
 - D.) 10 - 15 years
 - E.) 15 + years
 - F.) I do not live in the Rockford area
5. How old are you? This question is required*
 - A.) 15 or younger
 - B.) 16 to 17
 - C.) 25 to 34
 - D.) 18 to 24
 - E.) 35 to 44

- F.) 45 to 54
- G.) 55 to 64
- H.) 65 to 74
- I.) 75 or older
- I prefer not to answer

6. How many people, including yourself, live at home with you? This question is required*
- 1 2 3 4 5 6 7
7. When you were a kid, what problems did you face at home? With your friends? At school? In your neighborhood?
- A.) Problems with friends
 - B.) Problems with feeling or mental health
 - C.) Problems with physical health (tired, chronic illnesses, etc.)
 - D.) Trouble getting basic needs - food, somewhere to sleep
 - E.) Problems with substance use
 - F.) Trouble with teachers/school
 - G.) Trouble with the law
8. What transportation do you use the most? This question is required*
- Choose as many as you like.
- A.) Walking
 - B.) Motorcycle
 - C.) Bike
 - D.) Car
 - E.) Bus
 - F.) Metro
 - G.) Train
 - H.) Airplane
9. Would you say that Rockford public schools have policies that are fair, sometimes fair/sometimes unfair, or unfair?
- 1 (Unfair) 2 3 (Sometimes fair) 4 5(Fair)
10. What needs to change in your neighborhood/community/society for people to be safe/live in peace?
- A.) Programs (after-school clubs, youth spaces, sports)
 - B.) Mental health services
 - C.) Physical health services
 - D.) Job or workforce services
 - E.) Job opportunities
 - F.) Childcare services
 - G.) Food services
 - H.) Justice system services
11. What resources do you/your organization/community/need to serve youth impacted by trauma better?
- A.) Staff
 - B.) Training
 - C.) Locations
 - D.) Transportation
 - E.) Money
 - F.) Programs

ANY COMMENTS OR QUESTIONS: