

FY 2024 Community Needs Assessment

Community Development Funding Program

The City of Duluth is an Entitlement Community as defined by the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which means that the City receives about \$3 million in community development funds annually. These funds assist households with low- and moderate incomes and neighborhoods where most of the residents have low- and moderate-incomes. Annual funding sources include Community Development Block Grant (CDBG), HOME Investment Partnership (HOME) Program, and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Program.

The City Planning & Development Division collaborates with many community organizations to meet the needs of and assist low- and moderate- income individuals and the neighborhoods in which they live. This includes improving housing stock, increasing economic self-sufficiency, and supporting social programs in the city. To help understand the critical needs in the community and inform the priorities for each funding year, the City conducts an annual Community Needs Assessment. The Community Needs Assessment process typically includes reviewing surveys conducted in the community, gathering feedback from community partners as well as a Public Hearing by the Community Development (CD) Committee. The CD Committee uses the information gathered during the Community Needs Assessment to set funding priorities for the next fiscal year of the Community Development Program.

Fiscal Year 2024 Outreach Methods

To gather input on funding priorities for the fiscal year 2024 Community Needs Assessment, the City of Duluth conducted a survey of 22 staff from 11 partner agencies during spring 2023 and reviewed surveys and reports produced by different community agencies including that reached at least 7,039 people. This document contains a summary of the fiscal year 2024 Community Needs Assessment.

Key Findings

Upon review, mental health services, addressing increasing drug use and housing needs were some of the highest needs found in the community. Closely followed by transportation, challenges recruiting and retaining staff, a lack of childcare, racial inequity, safety, community building and increasing costs associated with materials, infrastructure and upkeep.

Housing

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Affordable housing, Neighborhood Revitalization, Homeless Services

- A number of agencies reported improvement in this area. Still, more capacity is needed and issues persist with getting people into the right housing situation for their needs, repairing older housing and having the right mix of housing, permanent and temporary, to meet the community's needs.

Increasing drug use

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Health Services and Public Services

- Many organizations mentioned observing increases in drug use and overdoses.

Difficulty gaining access to medical care

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Health Services

- A number of respondents mentioned challenges meeting medical needs. Warming shelters were mentioned success they attributed to hosting weekly visits from LSCHC.

Need mental health support and access to care

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Health Services

- Poor mental health was mentioned frequently and associated difficulties accessing or connecting folks with care

Lack of social connection and attributed isolation

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Neighborhood Revitalization, Public Services and Health Services

- Tying into mental health, safety, outreach and building community. Respondents see a lack of social connections for folks to feel supported and a part of the community. An effort needs to be made to be intentional about reaching these individuals.

Need to build community

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Neighborhood Revitalization, Public Services and Health Services

- There is a need to make spaces feel more comfortable and inviting. Including increasing cultural competency and reducing microaggressions.
- Amongst the agencies there seems to be better collaboration and new relationships forged during covid that have been maintained.

Safety

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Neighborhood Revitalization

- Making spaces safe and inviting so folks aren't discouraged from accessing services. Safety was identified as a top need at the World Café Housing Summit.

Transportation

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Transportation Access and Public Services

- Assistance is needed in transport to services, acquiring driver's licenses, gas cards, bus schedules designed around agency programming and car sharing programs. SOAR mentioned jobs off the bus line pay more so people without cars are receiving lower pay.

Childcare

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Childcare Access

- Not enough and keeps parents from taking the next step in their life. The YWCA noted that even when there is childcare available, it is challenging for parents to access it. The Entrepreneur

Fund attributed rising costs of childcare to hiring, recruiting and retention issues in the workforce.

Difficulty conducting outreach

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Public Services

- Continued effort to connect services to those who need them is needed. Veterans are a specific group that has resources available to them that are under-utilized.

Bureaucracy and “jumping through hoops”

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Public Services

- This manifests on two levels
 - o At the agency level, it can be challenging meeting funding requirements. Green New Deal reported the timeline for reimbursement was difficult as a new and smaller agency.
 - o At the individual level, the questions to access services can feel too invasive or there are too many steps to a process. CCHC noted this is especially an issue when accessing mental healthcare.

Breaking barriers to employment, especially BIPOC

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Create Living Wage Jobs, Increase Incomes, Homeless Services

- From tech skills to transportation to graduating school or acquiring a GED. FFC noted that employment opportunities are especially difficult for black youth to access.
- SOAR noted that people’s matrix of stability isn’t being met to hold employment.

Racial inequality/ systemic racism

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Neighborhood Revitalization

- Continued focus on BIPOC community members is needed to address disproportionate rates of homelessness.

Issues recruiting and retaining staff

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Public Services, Increase Incomes and Create Living Wage Jobs

- In line with the economic climate, agencies are having difficulty with staffing and workforce needs.

Rising costs of materials

Attributed Consolidated Plan Goals: Increase Incomes, Neighborhood Revitalization, Food Access, Homeless Services, Affordable Housing, Public Services, Childcare Access

- Material costs and inflation are tightening budgets and making it challenging to afford everything from day to day material needs to repairs, upkeep and larger infrastructure investments.