



Allston-Brighton Needs Assessment

Final Report Presentation: November 8th, 2023

Allston-Brighton Needs Assessment Agenda

1. The BPDA
2. Project Overview
3. Community Outreach
4. Targeted Outreach
5. Needs Assessment Recommendations

Zoom Meeting Info + Tips

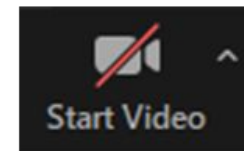
- **The BPDA will be recording this meeting** and posting it on the BPDA's project webpage. If you do not wish to be recorded during the meeting, please turn off your microphone and camera.
- **Zoom controls are available at the bottom of your screen.** Clicking on these symbols activates different features.
- **Use raise hand function** (dial 9 followed by 6 if joining by phone) **and wait to be called upon** before asking your question or providing comment.



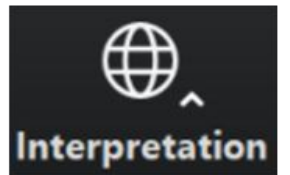
Mute/unmute



Raise hand to get in line to ask a question or provide comment



Turn video on/off



To join an interpretation channel



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The Boston Planning and Development Agency (BPDA)





Outline of Mayor Wu's Vision for the BPDA + What's Coming

2023

The need for change

Mayor Wu charged the BPDA with improving how planning and development are done in Boston to make the process more predictable for both community members and developers.

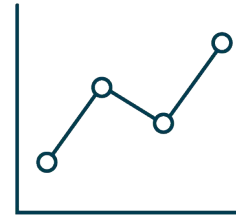
Our Goals



Address today's challenges: **resilience, affordability, equity**



Lead with **planning** to set a **citywide vision**



Embrace growth while creating a **predictable process**



Build **trust** with communities through **transparency**

Our Approaches



- Implement a new charter and mission
- Legally end Urban Renewal and replace it with modern tools
- Ensure public land serves public good



- Plan for growth and the future through neighborhood and citywide initiatives, such as our Design Vision
- Establish new Planning Advisory Council



- Update Article 80 code and process for staff, developers, and community members
- Update and modernize our zoning code to be more predictable



- Improve coordination and communication across agencies and with Boston residents
- Create community process for Article 80 that is consistent, inclusive, and predictable



Upcoming changes + engagement

2023

2024 and on

Winter-
Spring

- Home Rule Petition passed Council and sent on to State House
- Two RFPs issued for analysis of Article 80 operations and community engagement

Summer

- Lead public engagement efforts for -
 - Design Vision
 - Article 80 process improvements
 - Opportunity to weigh in on city's progress towards resilience, affordability & equity

Fall-
Winter

- Kick off Planning Advisory Council
- Continue public engagement
 - Share early findings from Article 80 analysis
 - Finalize City Design Vision

- Move staff to become a City agency
- Update approach to planning through increased coordination across departments and focus on city-wide efforts
- Kick off efforts to update city-wide zoning code



Learn more here:

<https://www.bostonplans.org/about-us/mayor-wu-vision-for-the-bpda>

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Planning in Allston and Brighton



Allston-Brighton Needs Assessment

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*BPDA Team: Yari Cortez, Planner and Joe Blankenship,
Transportation Planner*

History of the Allston Brighton Needs Assessment

- Requested by **Harvard Allston Task Force** during ERC public process.
- Harvard University **committed \$1m** as part of the ERC Phase A mitigation and community benefits package.
- **2008 Needs Assessment** was a **broad conversation about community needs specific to the Harvard Master Plan for Campus Development**, not necessarily focused on Allston-Brighton planning and development outcomes.
- Opportunity for alignment with the **upcoming Allston-Brighton neighborhood plan** and encourage outcomes that can be achieved through planning & development.

“where are the services lacking, what infrastructure needs repair and improvement? Why are people hurting? Research and obtain valid and reliable community insights on the needs of our residents.”

*- Harvard Allston Task Force,
November 2, 2021*

Goals of the Allston Brighton Needs Assessment

- 1. Prepare for the coming Allston-Brighton Neighborhood Plan.**
 - Direct recommendations for land-use, transportation, housing, open space, climate resiliency, and priority sub-areas within Allston-Brighton.
- 2. Empower the community to make modifications or community benefits requests from development projects.**
 - Information regarding neighborhood services, infrastructure, and how equity concerns and basic needs might be addressed.
- 3. Provide other City agencies and local non-profits with analysis to inform their decision-making**
 - City agencies and other groups focused on parks, transit, arts & culture, financial justice, health, and other topics may benefit from the findings in building momentum and/or consensus for requests from developers, policy, and programming initiatives.

Equity Framework

Key Impact Considerations:

- Access to Community Engagement
 - Language Access / Cultural Competency
 - Hearing / Sight Accommodations
 - Outreach Methods and Engagement Strategies
 - Community feedback should be assessed using Allston-Brighton demographics
- “Nothing about us without us” Approach
- All Analysis Topics should address 4 core equity questions:
 1. How was this need identified?
 2. How many residents are affected by this need?
 3. What are the demographics of the affected population?
 4. Where in Allston-Brighton are these needs the greatest geographically?
And how does it compare to greater Boston?



Project Overview: The Allston-Brighton Needs Assessment

Team AURA

- Team AURA carried out the needs assessment on behalf of the BPDA.
- Team AURA conducted background research, on-the-ground engagement within Allston and Brighton, and developed recommendations.
- AURA is an acronym for the four organizations who worked together on the needs assessment.



The logo for Rivera Consulting Inc is a teal square containing the text 'RIVERA CONSULTING INC' in white, uppercase, sans-serif font. Three small white circles are positioned to the right of the word 'RIVERA'.



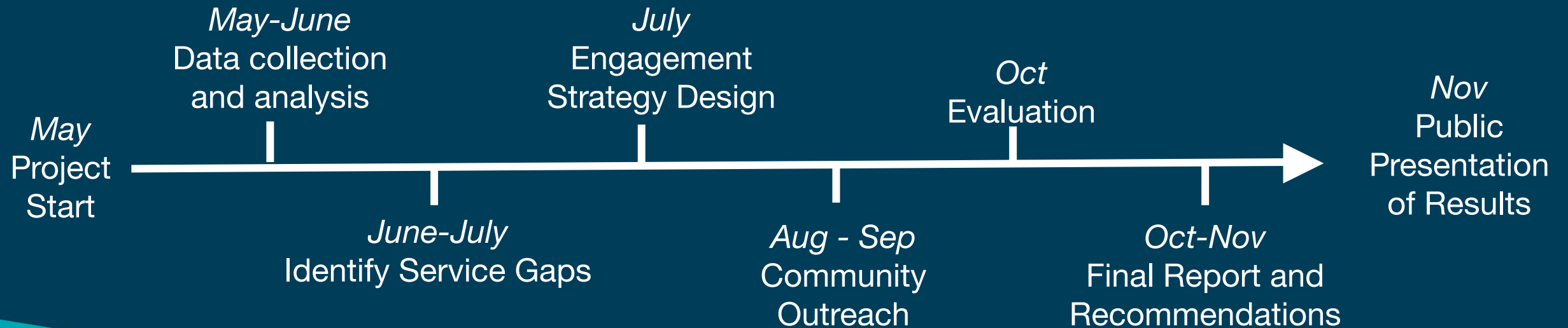
A - Archipelago Strategies Group (ASG)

U - Utile Design

R - Rivera Consulting Inc

A - Allston-Brighton Community Development Corporation

Needs Assessment Timeline



Key Pieces of the Needs Assessment



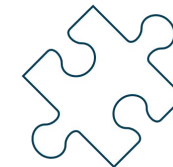
Background research, data mapping and analyzing to establish a baseline for understanding the people and places that make up Allston and Brighton.



Based on the research, created a plan of action to engage and gather feedback from the community.



Executed 2 months of widespread community outreach that included a survey, stakeholder interviews, events and multiple touchpoints within the community.



Conducted targeted outreach through stakeholder interviews and focus groups with local organizations and key service providers.



Gathered feedback into a report that will guide future plans for Allston and Brighton to get the resources they need most.

Identifying Core Needs

Category	Analysis Topics	Description
Basic Needs	Financial Security	Household salary, expenses, savings, etc. This topic serves as the basis to understand other needs.
	Food Security	Availability of food, access to food, and quality/nutrition of food.
	Safety	May include pedestrian safety, perception of crime, lighting in the public realm, etc.
	Health	Impacts of the built environment only, such as pollution, access to athletic facilities, etc.
	Housing	Supply and demand of housing. Housing type, cost, development pipeline, and projection. Displacement and resilience threats. Impact of planning and development.
Access to Opportunity	Education	Public and private schools. School seats availability and projected demand. School performances.
	Employment / Child Care	Employment rate, industry, job security, availability of child care, trends, opportunities, and weaknesses. Local and minority owned businesses.
	Mobility**	Transportation (vehicular + public), pedestrian connectivity, bike network, etc.
Community	Open Space	Open space network demand. Needed open space quantity and types.
	Arts + Culture**	Support for artists, spaces for artist performance and display, accessibility of cultural space
	Resilience	Climate resilience - heat, flooding, sustainability
	Civic Engagement + Social Cohesion	Participation in community organization, voting participation rate, etc. Community othering and belonging.
	Human Services	Ranges from laundromats and tailors (retail services accessibility), to EMS, fire department coverage, and social worker availability.

Our strategy to identify and categorize community needs was guided by the Needs Analysis Topics Table as outlined by the BPDA

3 Categories:

1. Basic Needs
2. Access to Opportunity
3. Community

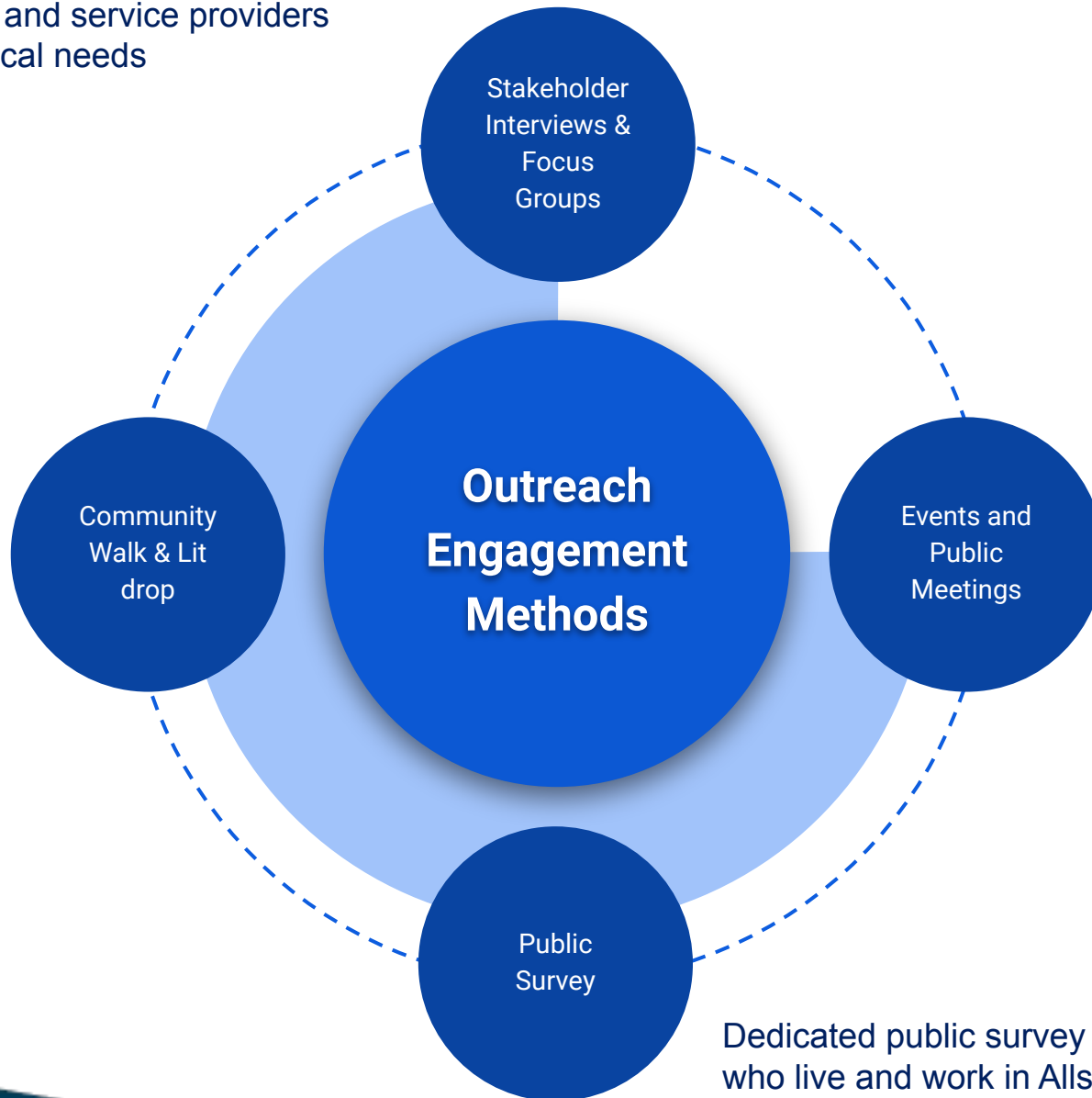
13 Topics:

1. Financial Security
2. Food Security
3. Safety
4. Health
5. Housing
6. Education
7. Employment / Child Care
8. Mobility
9. Open Space
10. Arts & Culture
11. Resilience
12. Civic Engagement & Social Cohesion
13. Human Services



Community Outreach

Detailed interviews with local organizations and service providers to identify critical needs

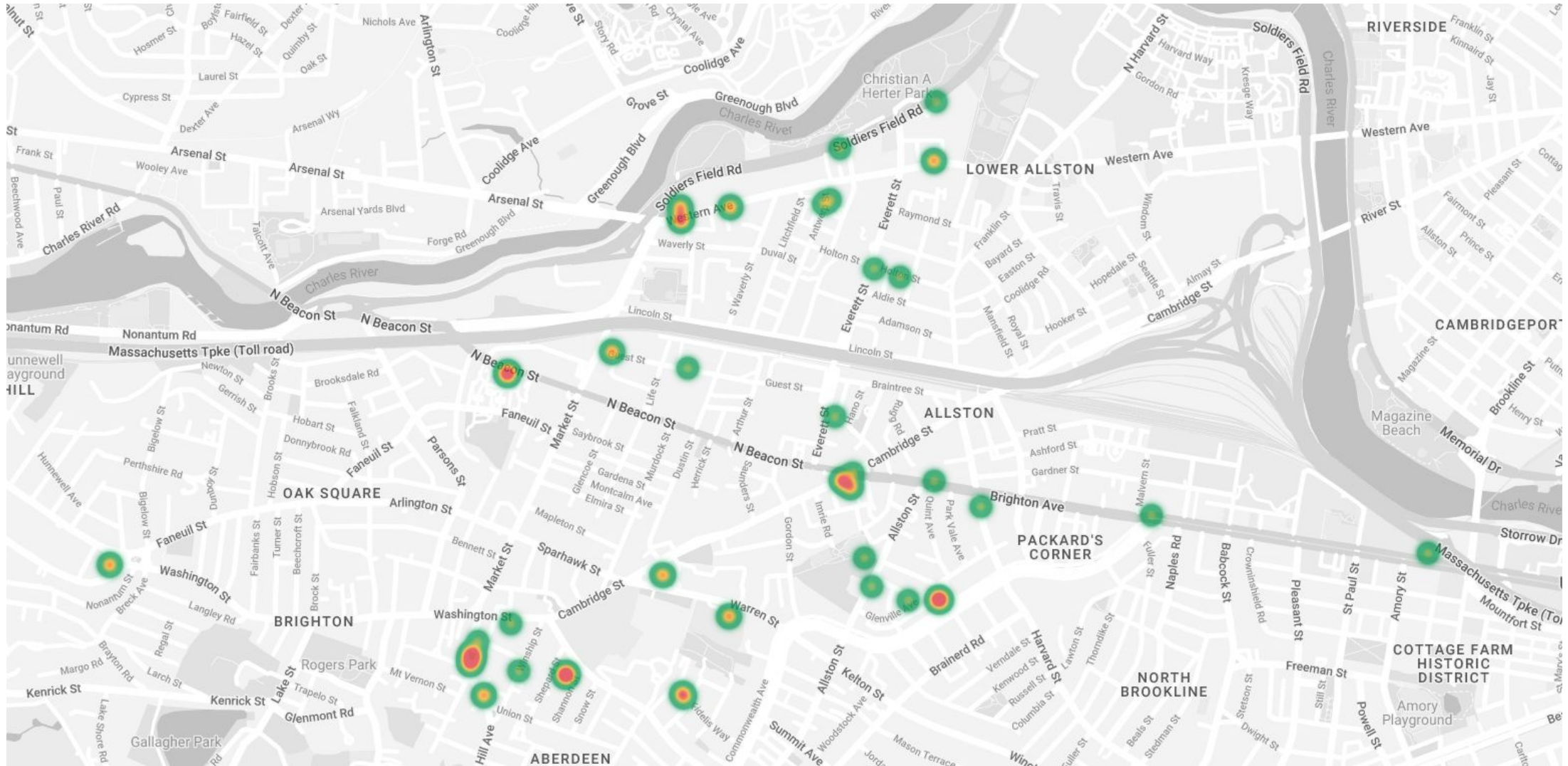


- A two-hour community walk with residents to gather on-the-ground feedback
- Targeted literature drop to canvas neighborhoods

- Dedicated needs assessment events
- Regular tabling at community events
- Public meetings

Dedicated public survey designed for those who live and work in Allston-Brighton collected 863 responses.



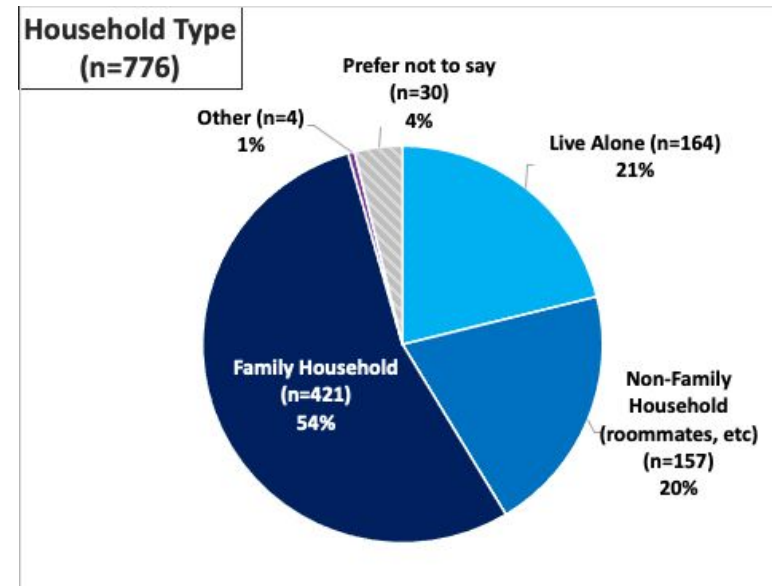
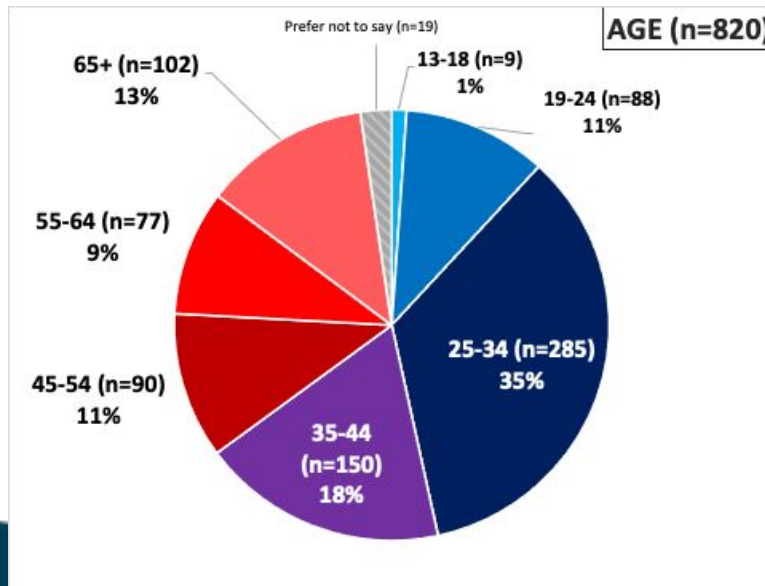
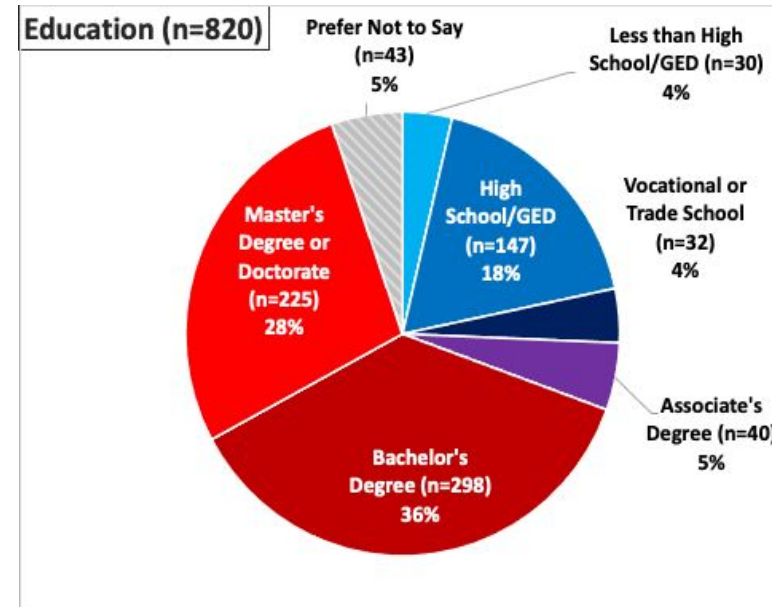
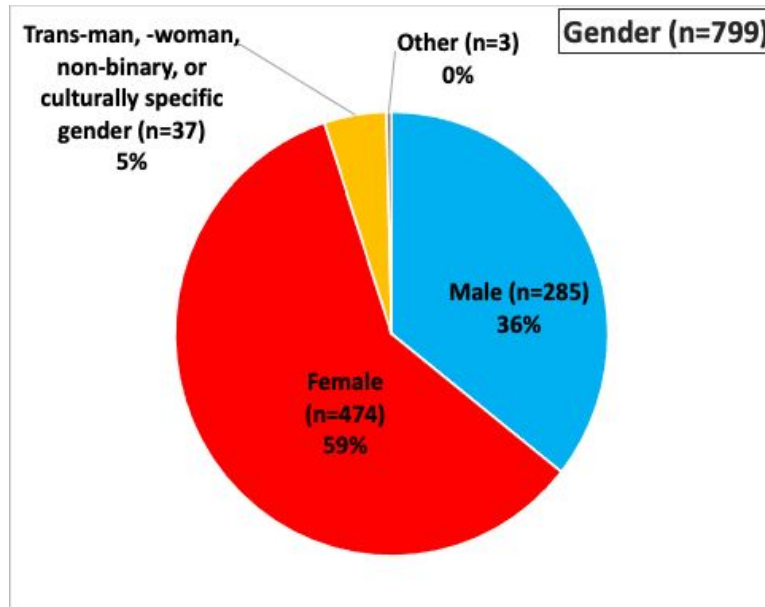


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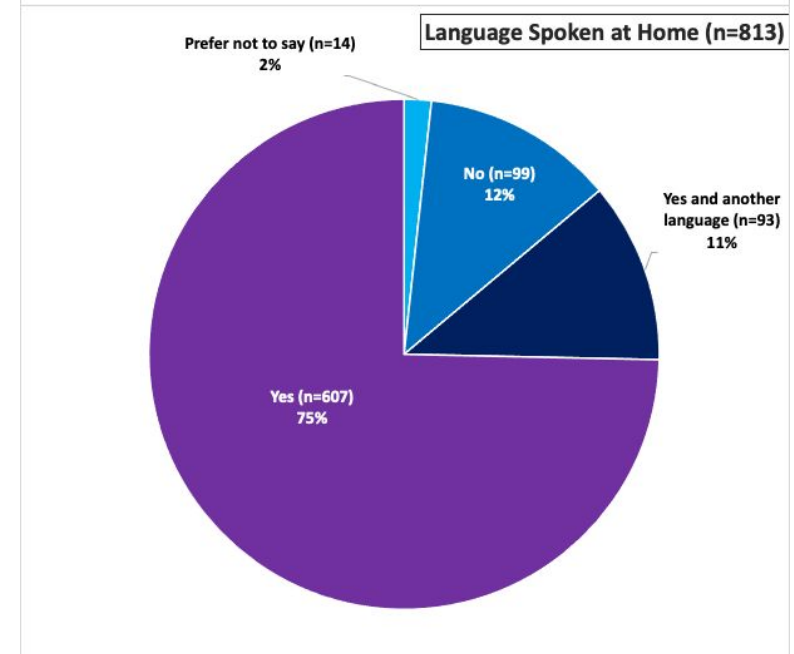
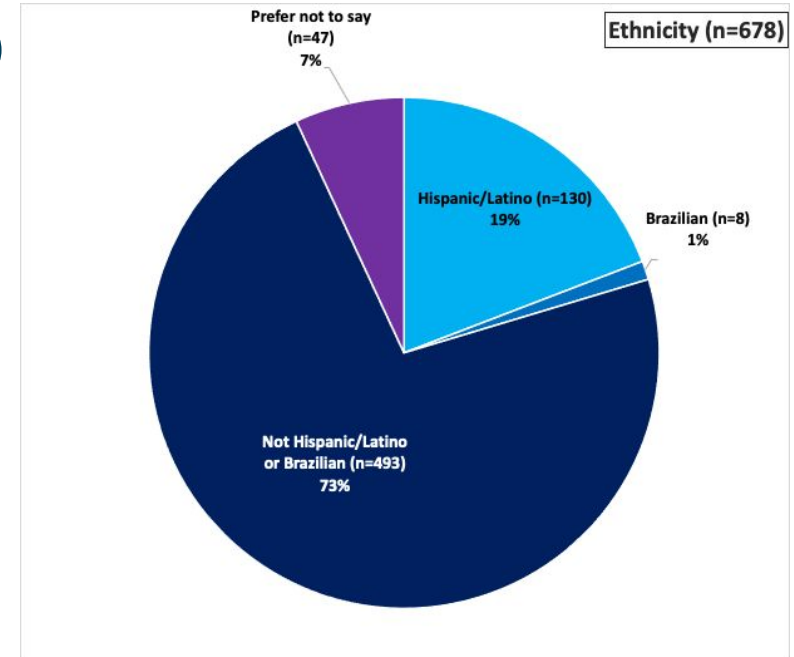
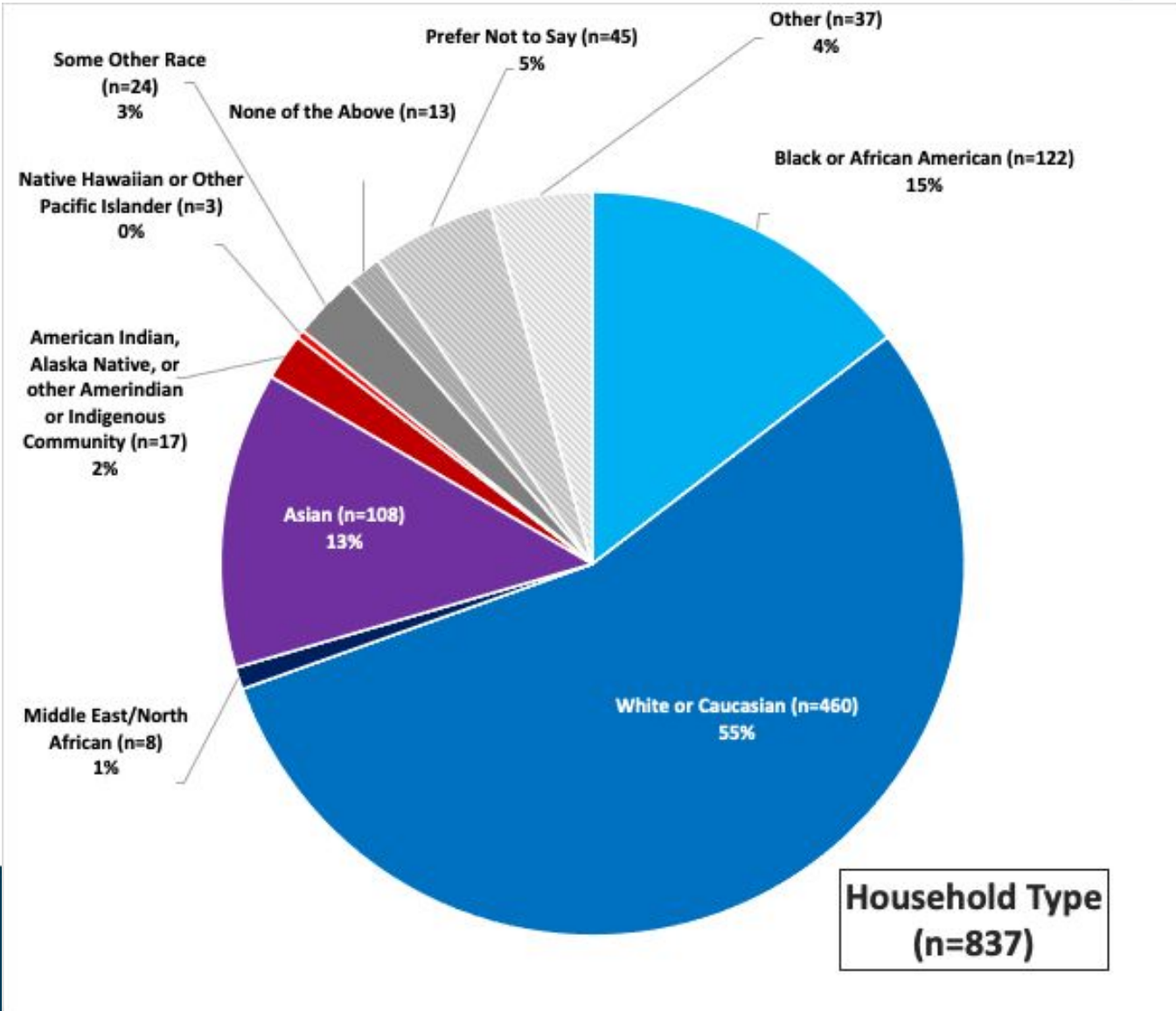
Who We Spoke To

Total Survey Responses:

863



Who We Spoke To



Findings: Survey

AFFORDABILITY creates acute hardship for residents and their ability to engage with *multiple types* of community resources

- “Affordability” usually the most significant barrier to access for community members across all survey topics.
- Even when affordability is not the most significant barrier, it is almost always the second or third most significant obstacle.
- The more often residents reported using a community service like supermarkets, etc, the more likely they were to identify affordability as an issue.
- “Service Quality” is a notable barrier as well. particularly for residents’ assessment of educational services or public space, parks, etc.

MOBILITY is possible, in some places. It’s not everywhere.

- The bus is key. More residents indicated they use the bus at any level of frequency than those that did so for MBTA rail service, *overall* and many bus riders travel routinely on both modes.
- Getting around *inside* Allston-Brighton presents issues, a greater proportion of residents reported using a personal car to get to a workplace *in Allston-Brighton* than they did so if their workplace was in an adjacent town or in Boston.
- Childcare, primary, and elementary education generally still requires a caregiver to use a personal car or other private means. School bus, MBTA bus, walking become more popular elementary and high-school access.

HOUSING *We want to stay here.*

- Over 80% of residents and non-resident respondents said they would be “much” or “significantly” more likely to stay or chose to live in in Allston-Brighton if they could access affordable, quality housing options.
- Yet over 50% residents also claim housing as a “serious” concern - the highest of 4 options in the survey. The concern creates a constant negative impact on their quality of life.
- There aren’t *any* affordable options for many. 44% of, in this case, 574 respondents, said there were “very few or no” affordable options in their neighborhood.



Targeted Outreach



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Focus Groups and Interviews

Round 1

Small-scale Service Provider Interviews

- 2Life Communities
- 35 Fidelis Way/Commonwealth Tenants Association
- Allston-Brighton Health Collaborative
- Brighton Marine
- Brazilian Women's Group
- Chinese Progressive Association
- Josephine Fiorentino Community Center at Charlesview
- Presentation School Foundation Community Center
- Sisters of St Joseph of Boston
- Veronica Smith Senior Center
- West End House

Round 2

Large-scale Service Provider Focus Groups

- **Education, Childcare, & Community Opportunities**
 - The Boston Public Library
 - Boston Public Schools (Capital Planning)
 - The Mayor's Office of Early Childhood Education
- **Housing & Economic Development**
 - The Mayor's Office of Economic Opportunity and Inclusion
 - The Mayor's Office of Housing and Community Development
 - The Boston Housing Authority
- **Public Safety**
 - Boston Police Department
 - Boston Fire Department
 - Boston Emergency Medical Services
 - Office of Emergency Management
- **Institutional Case Study (Harvard University)**
 - Planning Staff
 - Design Staff
 - Community Engagement Staff

Key Findings: Grassroots Service Provider Interviews

- The impact of rising housing costs is viewed as an intersectional issue that impacts all other Needs Analysis topics in an outsized way compared to any other topics
- While A-B had adequate options for utilizing SNAP/ HIP vouchers, there is a need for small, ground level retail that is culturally competent
- For immigrant families, English language learners, and lower-middle income residents, gaps in language access and intentional public-community partnerships are impacting access to available public resources
- While prevalent in the neighborhood, irregular maintenance and surrounding construction has made open space infrastructure less accessible for residents in high-development areas of the neighborhood

Key Findings: Municipal and Institutional Focus Groups

- With increased development limiting physical space available to public service provision, there is growing concern that future planning is not taking into consideration space needed for emergency preparedness; this same concern applies to space available for smaller family child care service provision
- The goals of agency and institutional collaboration with grassroots service providers can sometimes be limited in their impact due to limited channels of collaboration on a departmental level
- The development of outreach materials overall to promote participation and attendance at resource-based events is inconsistent across agencies and institutions, with the accessibility of materials for the average citizen challenging
- There is a desire for more consistent and smaller forms of facilitation and collaboration along the ladder of engagement between city agencies, larger institutions, community neighborhood groups, and residents that focus on primary basic needs, both for policy implementation and long-term neighborhood planning

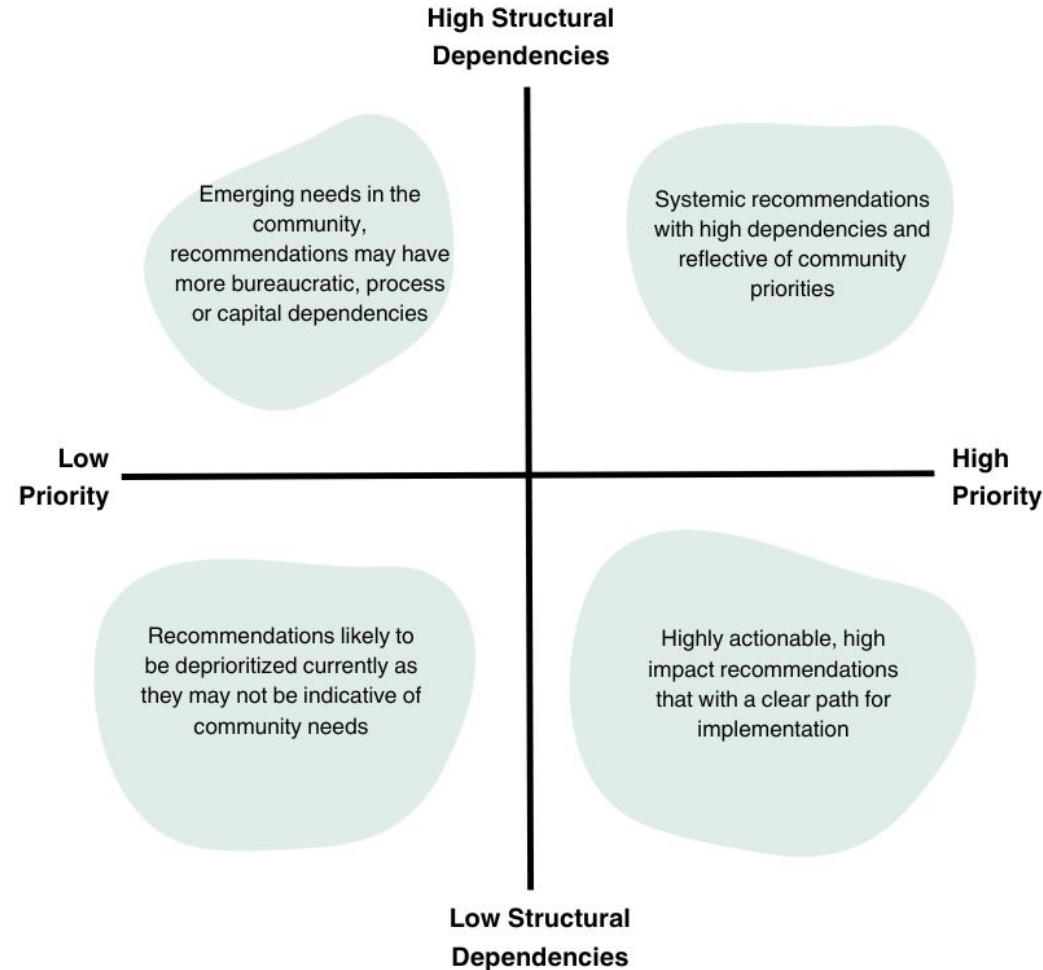


Needs Assessment Recommendations for Allston-Brighton

Needs Assessment Recommendations

Priority Level

- 1) Does it directly impact priority resident groups?
- 2) Does it address a core issue?
- 3) Is it reflected in multiple engagement touchpoints?
- 4) Does it utilize neighborhood assets such as small and large provider networks?
- 5) Does it create opportunities for new sustainable service provider partnerships?



Structural Dependencies:

- 1) Does it require buy in from multiple city agencies?
- 2) Is it a proposal on a policy level?
- 3) Does it require heavy capital investment?
- 4) Does it require more innovative sources of financing?

Basic Needs Recommendations

2 Proactive disaster management planning. The neighborhood plan can plan for and provide more space to fire and EMT services especially in the Beacon Park area



1 Development of a cross departmental tracker of programmatic initiatives can aid proactive strategy development

4 Widen median income spread of IDP units. Instead of a strict criterion of 70% of the Area Median Income it can be 50 to 80%, a range that is broader and more inclusive

12 Working with the Office of Small Business to provide small business loans for a more thorough local grocery retail network

15 Streamlining of the process that a developer goes through for IDP voucher utilization

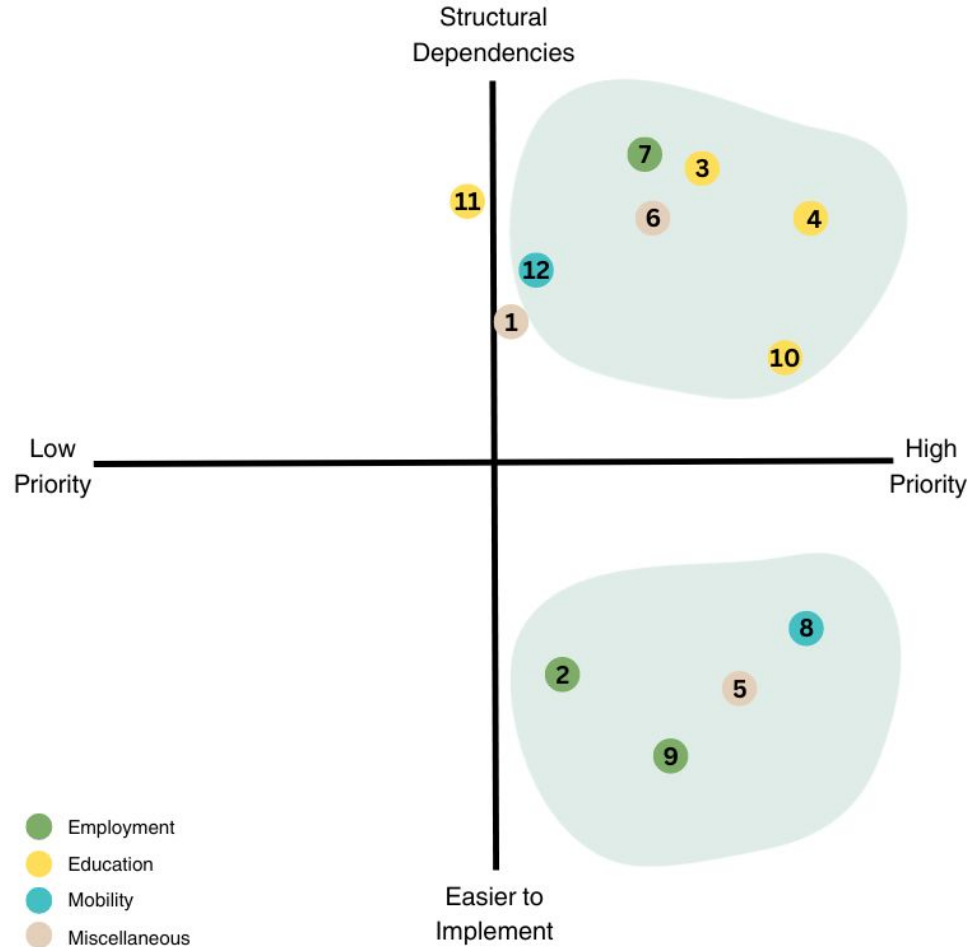
5 There is an opportunity for Office of Housing and Office of Economic Development to have joint efforts for intergenerational wealth generation

6 Utilize space within the neighborhood for capacity building/ training of key public facing service staff including but not limited to public safety staff, health workers and more

8 Building off and scaling Boston EMS's model to connect mental health patients to service providers directly and avoid wait time in emergency rooms

ATO Recommendations

- 1 Development of a community job center in the neighborhood that shares the responsibility of populations accessing employment with larger institutions



4 Invest in physical school infrastructure such as technology and laboratories to ensure sustainability of partner programs with institutions

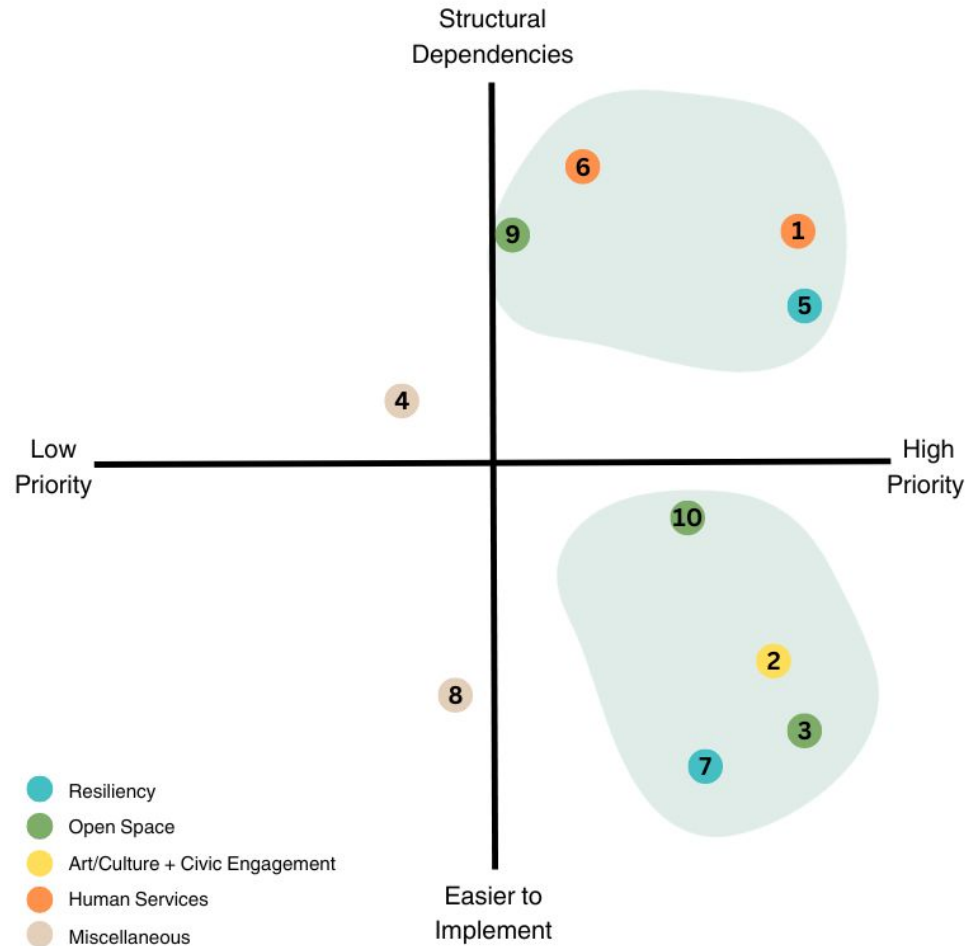
7 Roles of youth workers need to be re-evaluated, they need the job security and financial stability to hone into the role and reach kids but also the community at large.

10 Formalize the change in the zoning text amendment for childcare services (proposal) in messaging to the public and support services for small family care providers for outreach

8 Communicate the dependencies in a project that impact timelines directly to the public. Currently residents expect updates about various projects that were initiated based on the 2021 mobility study

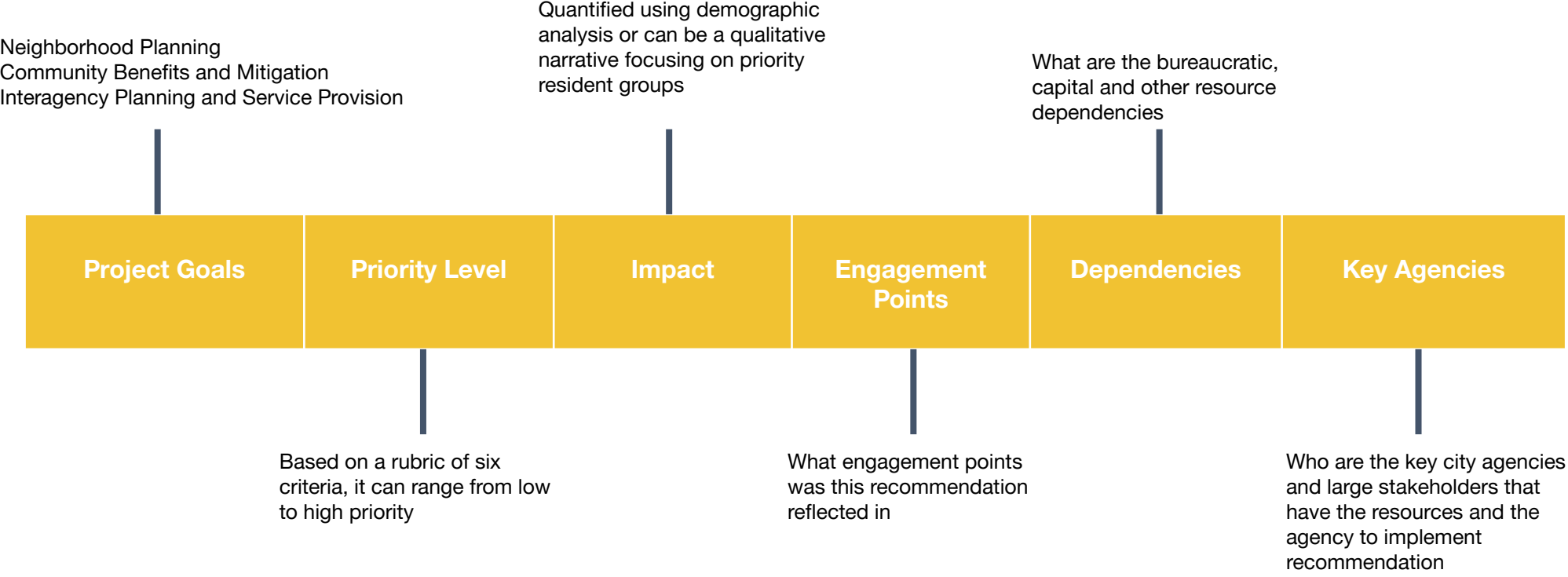
9 There is an opportunity for BHA to partner with the Center for Working Families in their Boston Savings Program and offer a collective service for minority communities in AB to access financial services

Community Recommendations



- 1** Office of Early Childhood Development has developed spaces such as the Family Engagement committee to center caregiver voices in the development of policies. Similar spaces can be developed to center the voices of a target audience in different areas of work
- 2** With the closing of Jackson Mann in June 2022 proactive planning needs to take place to offer more designated spaces for arts and cultural activities in their neighborhood to strengthen social fabric.
- 3** Immediate opportunity to repair and restore access to an open space Telford pedestrian bridge what connects community to Artesani Park.
- 4** Alternative and longer-term financing is needed for programs that bridge digital divide especially in multi-cultural neighborhoods such as AB
- 5** Build public facing messaging and conversation about climate adaptation strategies within development projects such that it becomes a shared priority
- 6** Communications to the public about climate change effects can be disseminated through formats such as radio or organic channels such as Whatsapp
- 7** Resiliency
- 8** Miscellaneous
- 9** Open Space
- 10** Open Space

Building an Implementation Roadmap





Thank You!