

# Allston-Brighton Needs Assessment

Virtual 9.27 Meeting



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# Overview & Engagement

# 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.

# Planning in Allston and Brighton



# Community Engagement

ASG in partnership with ABCDC activated and managed a team of "Ambassadors" tasked with lowering the barrier to accessing critical information in targeted languages of English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian and Chinese

## Approach to Community Engagement

- Stakeholder identification was crucial to ensure that all relevant parties in Allston-Brighton were recognized and engaged, fostering inclusive decision-making in development projects.
- Community hubs serve as central gathering places, promoting interaction and cohesion among Allston-Brighton residents. (Schools, YMCA, West End House, Brighton-congregational Church)
- Collaboration among diverse stakeholders (Non-profits, places of religion, small businesses) brought together varied perspectives and resources, enabling more comprehensive approach in raising awareness.
- Effective outreach and communication started with hiring ambassadors who lived in Allston-Brighton and relying on their input to be a consistent and approachable at public events.



Stakeholder Identification



Community Hubs



Collaboration

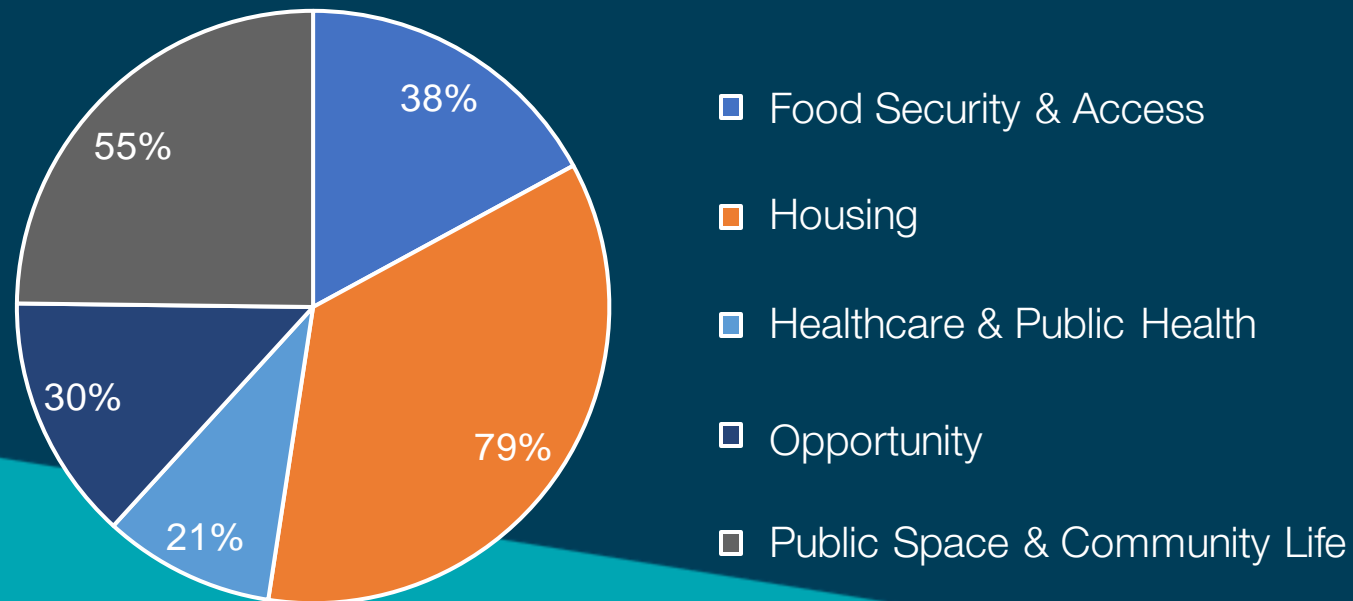


Outreach & Communication

# Overview of Survey Data

- This report utilizes 110 survey responses provided between Sept. 3rd and Sept. 13th of 2023.
- The results consists of 100 resident responses and 10 non-resident responses.
- Residents were provided with the option to select topic areas to investigate further.
- The chart below shows a percentage of survey respondents per topic.

Responses per Topic





# Overview & Qualitative Data



# Qualitative Data



## Housing

The number one concern for housing was the cost of living. There needs to be more affordable housing for families and individuals.



## Safety

Most residents felt there needed to be safer bike lanes, more disability/pedestrian friendly crosswalks, and night safety (brighter lights, cameras, police presence).



## Health

The number 1 recommendation was regarding rats. Additionally, better health coverage and access to doctors.



## Financial Security

Affordable housing, affordable childcare, and more financial support around utilities.



## Food

Many residents felt strongly about having closer grocery stores (too far for bus or train), food pantries to supplement food needs, and more affordable groceries.

BASIC NEEDS

# Qualitative Data



## Mobility

Mobility had the largest request from residents. The top three requests were: lower/free public transit costs along with a change in the stops (too long of a walk for many residents), more bike, and better pedestrian crossing.



## Employment & Childcare

For the residents to find employment to support their families, they need additional education supports. Also access to higher quality employment (not minimum wage) and access to affordable childcare for children under the age of 5.



## Education

Due to the diverse community of Allston/Brighton the biggest request was for ESOL classes, there is not enough, and the waiting lists are long. More opportunities for adult education to increase their skills or complete their basic education. Another suggestion was for K-12 schools to have high quality and affordable afterschool programs, youth sports, and programs for teens.

ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

# Qualitative Data



## Resilience

Community members want more options around more renewable energy. Another suggestion was to plant more trees to assist with drainage issues and flooding.



## Civic Engagement

More diverse representation and more engagement with community members.

Develop and provide a safe space for community members to express their feelings through protest or community meetings.



## Human Services

The top 3 comments were the lack of affordable housing (the rent is too high), lack of childcare options (just too expensive), and the lack of available resources (grocery stores, food, utilities).



## Arts & Culture; Open Space

Not enough open space, need for more parks or green space. This would allow for more community events.

Cleaner streets, accessible benches, more public trash cans and tables for outdoor eating.

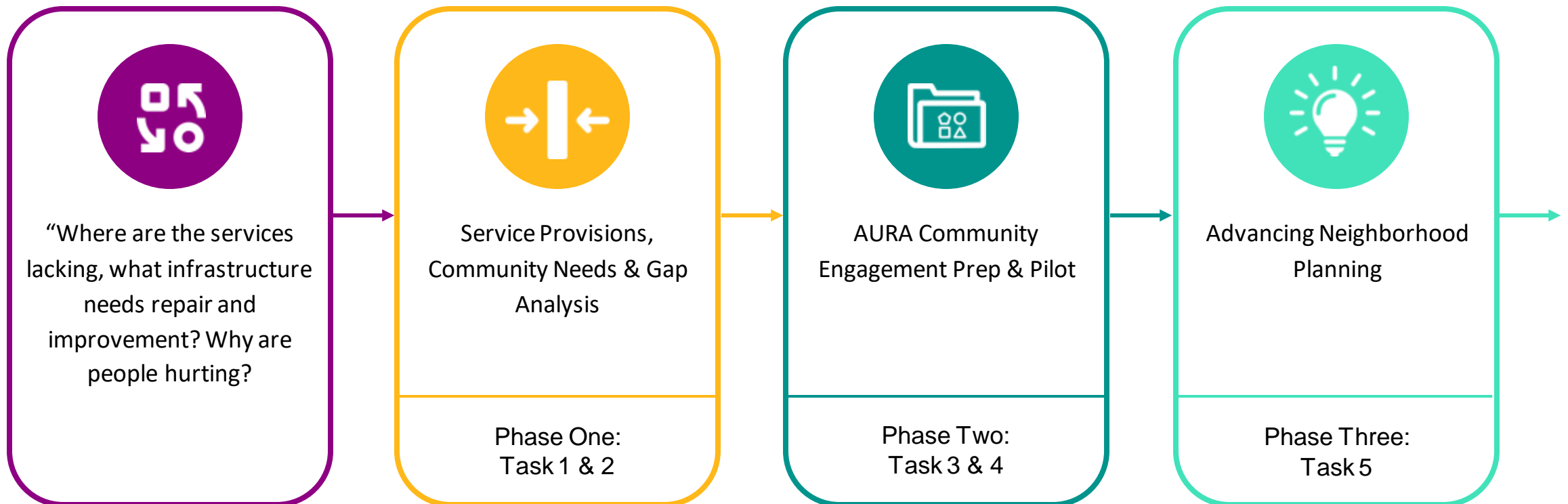
COMMUNITY



# Research Engagement Framework

# Our Research & Engagement Framework

The Allston-Brighton Needs Assessment centers **basic needs, access to opportunity, community, and engagement** by layering **inclusive & equitable data** across all core tasks that address our **central research question**.



# Research & Analysis

## Round 1 Stakeholder Interviews

**Basic Need:** *Insight on issues such as access to healthy food, community safety in the public realm and the current state of housing amenities.*



**Access to Opportunity:** *Community topics that increase both short- and long-term economic opportunity.*



**Community:** *Different types of social fabric that exist to support residents in creating a thriving and vibrant neighborhood and civic culture.*



**Engagement:** *The tactics and strategies employed by both service providers and municipal government actors to build trust and relationships to connect residents with programmatic opportunities and critical resources.*



# Basic Needs Assets & Barriers



## Assets

There is a strong, well integrated network of nonprofits that shape planning and development in Allston-Brighton.

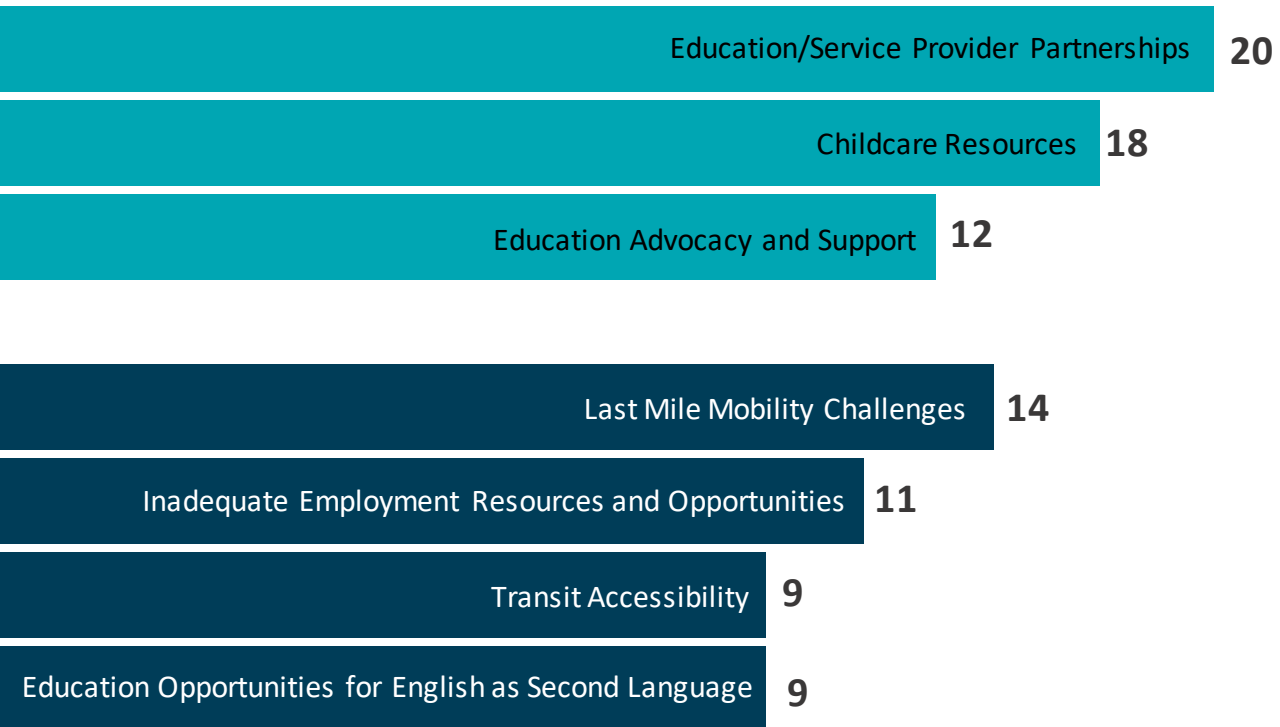
A networked effect has led to the development of affordable and healthy food sources in the neighborhood. It has also given space to stronger, housing advocacy efforts that improve housing access.

## Barriers

Rising rents have led to high costs of living and therefore increased people’s dependence on affordable food sources. Connectivity to these food sources therefore surfaces as a barrier to regular and equitable access.

Housing development itself needs to cater to a diverse population, such that it recognizes families and older adults as underserved residents.

# Access to Opportunities Assets & Barriers



## Assets

Education partnerships that use grassroots knowledge of nonprofits and the resources of larger institutions such as the Harvard Ed Portal are new, innovative service models.

Social infrastructure in the neighborhood also plays a crucial role in the delivery of childcare services and long-term programming for economic mobility.

## Barriers

Unstable and therefore unreliable transportation system affects access to youth programming and adult education opportunities.

Simultaneously there is a need for employment resources that foster local employment that is accessible even for non-college degree holders.



# Community Assets & Barriers



## Assets

Community centers serve as important spaces for the ideation of new programs and help organizations root efforts into specific sites in the neighborhood.

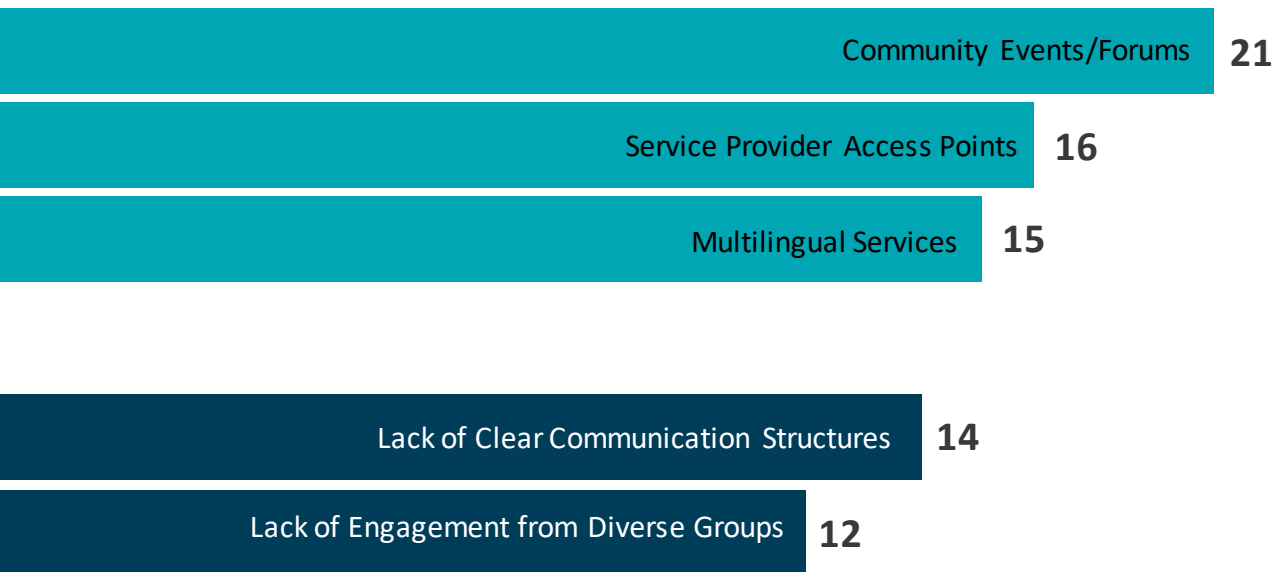
The upgradation of green spaces becomes foundational for new forms of social infrastructure such as farmers markets which are critical for community building and engagement.

## Barriers

Persistent development in Allston-Brighton has converted parks into dumping grounds. **Residents, especially parents and seniors find it unsafe to use open spaces.**

The closure of multiple youth programs has resulted in an under utilization of various open spaces.

# Engagement Assets & Barriers



## Assets

A strong network of nonprofits and community organizations have led to collaborations, the development of new community forums and increased the frequency of interactions with community members. **Organizations lean on each other's strengths and bridge access gaps, in the process creating more localized models of service delivery.**

## Barriers

Larger organizations have more access to city agencies and are the first point of contact for the city to understand the neighborhood context. **Smaller organizations find it difficult to convey knowledge and resource needs to the city government.**

**Inclusive access to services is dependent on the employment of multi-lingual staff.** Services often see a fall in engagement when a staff member is no longer in the job.



# High Level Takeaways from Stakeholder Interviews

## Basic Needs Recommendations

### *Food Justice and Security*

- Cross-departmental Food Justice
- Investing in Food Voucher Programs and Community Education

### *Housing Access and Health Delivery*

- Affordable Housing and Community Benefits Packaging
- City-Sponsored Service Provider Convening (Health)

## Access to Opportunity Recommendations

### *Youth Programming, Local Employment Pathways & Language Access*

- Youth Oriented Programming and Education Leadership
- Prioritize Local Employment and Small Business Pathway to Opportunities
- Codify Multilingual Processes for Resource Allocation and Access

## Community Recommendations


### *Open Spaces, Green Infrastructure and Social Cohesion*

- Upgrading Open Spaces and Green Infrastructure
- New Models for Service Delivery
- Arts Programming for Social Cohesion

## Engagement Recommendations

### *Transparent governance, Stronger feedback loops & Service Provider Partnerships*

- Foster Stronger Service Provider Partnerships
- Government Transparency & City-led Touch points
- Streamline Community Feedback using new platforms



# Upcoming Round 2 Qualitative Research

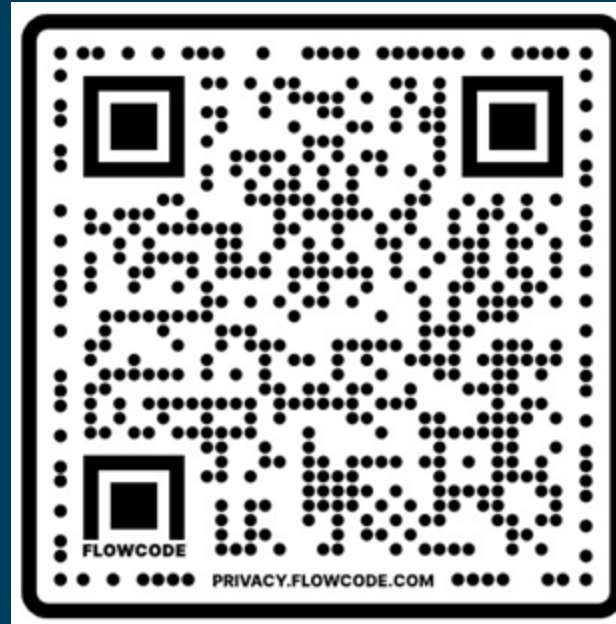
## *Community Walk – September 30, 2023*

- A participatory research exercise where participants, many of whom will be residents of the community will engage in a conversation about the neighborhood experience by reflecting on the built environment
- Data will be collected through detailed notes, pictures documenting individual concerns and experiences in the neighborhood as well as through a cognitive mapping exercise at the planned engagement event

## *Round 2 Stakeholder Interviews – Week of September 25*

- **Four**, 90 minute focus group discussion will take place during the week with the following participants; Harvard University, BPD, EMT, Fire Department, BHA, Office of Economic Development, BPL and Office for Early Childhood Education
- Thematic areas of research will be build on the phase 1 qualitative needs assessment memo that was developed. New themes are developed to further the analysis and they will be; Collaboration, Programming, Community Engagement and Resources

# Take the Survey



<https://bit.ly/A-BCommunityNeedsAssessmentSurvey>

# Allston-Brighton Needs Assessment

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**Thank You!**