Comprehensive Plan Community Input Results

Duluth Health in All Policies Campaign Comprehensive Plan Community Input Results Speak Up Speak Out Campaign 03/01/2017

## The Duluth Health in All Policies Campaign includes:











## This report was authored by:

- Courtney Cochran, CHUM
- Salaam Witherspoon
- Brooke Wetmore, Zeitgeist Center for Arts & Community
- Advised by Kathleen Williams, US Environmental Protection Agency in Duluth, MN.

## The Health in All Policies Steering Committee includes:

Salaam Witherspoon John Williams Janet Kennedy, Cross Cultural Alliance of Duluth Karen Perry, NAACP Duluth Branch Tony Cuneo, Zeitgeist Brooke Wetmore, Zeitgeist

Jenny Peterson, Generations Health Care Initiatives Deb Hernandez Courtney Cochran, CHUM Matt Traynor, CHUM Lee Stuart, CHUM

## This work was funded by:



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## **Executive Summary**

The health of an individual is impacted by the opportunities, influence, and resources they have. Therefore, the planning a city does, the policies a city enacts, and the investments a city chooses to make and chooses not to make hugely impacts the health of its residents. Currently, there are large health disparities in Duluth between higher and lower income levels and racial backgrounds. These disparities are often measured across zip codes, where those with higher concentrations of lower income levels and people of color experience significantly decreased life expectancies. In order to better health outcomes, there needs to be equitable access to housing, transportation, jobs, and open space.

In order to ensure the voices of people of color and low-income residents in Duluth are included the city's long term, strategic plan, the Speak Up Speak Out campaign surveyed over 600 residents, targeting people of color and low income communities. The results of this targeted survey can be found within this report, and will be presented to the city for inclusion in its final product.

Survey Demographics	Key Findings
<ul> <li>603 Surveys Collected</li> <li>38% of respondents identified as People of Color</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Poor rental conditions</li> <li>High rent costs</li> <li>Lack of affordable housing options</li> </ul>
<ul> <li>41% stated they made less than \$10,000 per year</li> <li>44% identified as renters</li> <li>48% used the DTA as their main form of</li> </ul>	Lack of reliable and affordable transportation options during nights and weekends for non- car owners
transportation	<ul> <li>Hiring discrimination felt by both people of color and people with criminal backgrounds</li> <li>Lack of living wage jobs</li> </ul>
	<ul> <li>Lack of greenspace in the Hillside</li> <li>Lack of perceived safety in many parks especially due to drug use</li> </ul>

## **Report Introduction**

In 2016, the Duluth Health in All Policies Campaign sat down to look at the first draft of the survey results for the City of Duluth's Comprehensive Plan which is set to inform planning decisions for the next 10-20 years of our city. Although the campaign team was excited to see that Health and Fairness were rising to the top as primary themes to inform our city's future, there was something missing. When our team looked at these results, we did not see the voice of people of color, indigenous people, and low-income Duluthians reflected. We did not see ourselves and what we want and need for the future of our community reflected.

This was the spark that formed the Speak Up Speak Out Campaign. This campaign of the Health in All Policies team, has been a process of working with the City of Duluth to communicate the needs, desires, and vision for the future of Duluth from underrepresented communities often left out. The following report reflects the findings of three months of intentional grassroots conversations with people of color, indigenous people, people experiencing poverty, and people who have experienced homelessness in Duluth.

The goal is that this report will provide robust feedback from communities facing health inequities and give recommendations on how the city should proceed in addressing those disparities. We write and publish this report with the intention of working with the City of Duluth's Community Planning Department, Planning Commission, and City Council to implement these findings into the City of Duluth's Imagine Duluth 2035 Comprehensive Plan. We see that by giving weight to these results, our City can begin to repair the harm done over a long history of systemic oppression and trauma. Establishing the goals listed in this report is an important step in closing the life expectancy gap between various neighborhoods in Duluth and ensuring that people of color and people in poverty in our city have the same chance at a healthy and happy life.

## Background

The goal of Health in All Policies work being advanced through the Speak Up, Speak Out Campaign is to eliminate health disparities that exist within Duluth. As defined by the World Health Organization (1948), "health is a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being, and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity." (pg. 1). Therefore, health disparities exist when population groups (separated by race, gender, income, geographic location, etc.) differ in their physical, social, and/or mental well-being.

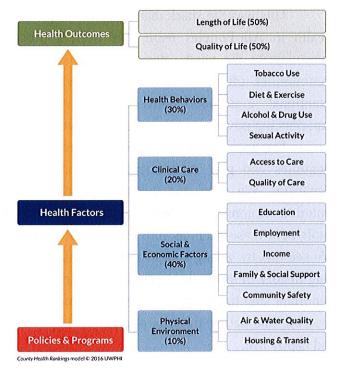
Traditionally, health is viewed as something that occurs within the walls of a hospital. However, it has now been proven that a person's health is largely made up of conditions and opportunities that exist outside of clinic walls. In actuality, the factors that matter the most in creating health are social and economic factors; what a person's income is, the quality of their education, the

social support they receive, and much more. This is clearly stated by the Minnesota Department of Health (2014):

Health is generated through the interaction of individual, social, economic, and environmental factors and in systems, policies, and processes encountered in everyday life. These include job opportunities, wages, transportation options, the quality of housing and neighborhoods, the food supply, access to health care, the quality of public schools and opportunities for higher education, racism and discrimination, civic engagement, and the availability of networks of social support. (p. 12)

As demonstrated further by the University of Wisconsin Population Health Institute's County Health Rankings model (2012), an individual's health is equally or more heavily impacted by their social and economic situation and the physical environment around them rather than the quality of their health care or their own personal health behaviors. Therefore, the planning a city does, the policies a city enacts, and the investments a city chooses to make and chooses not to make hugely impacts the health of its residents.

Currently, large health disparities exist within St. Louis County. As stated by the St Louis County Health Status Report (2013), major disparities exist across Zip codes,



household income levels, and race with the steepest disparities in St Louis County existing right here in Duluth. According to the report, the 55812 Zip code (including Endion, Chester Park, UMD, and part of Congdon Park) had the highest life expectancy in the county at 84.65 years. The lowest in the county, at 73.44 years, occurred in the zone made up of 55806 and 55802 zip codes (including Lincoln Park, Park Point, Downtown, and part of Central Hillside)<sup>1</sup>. Stated another way, that is an 11.21 year difference in life expectancy across Zip codes nearly adjacent, separated only by a few blocks.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Note: Data for the St Louis County Health Status Report was compared using Zip codes which explains the grouping of neighborhoods.

Incomes are also shown to correlate with life expectancy. The report states that Zip codes with the median household incomes under \$25,000<sup>2</sup> had a 7 year difference in life expectancy compared to areas with the median household greater than \$50,000<sup>3</sup>. The Bridge to Health Survey (Kjos, Kinney, & Finch, 2015) also indicated a clear divide across income levels showing that residents below 200% poverty level have much higher rates of chronic illness, chronic stress, and lesser well-being than residents above 200% of the poverty level.

Health disparities also exist across racial lines in Duluth. As reported in the St Louis County Health Status Report (2013), "The difference in life expectancy for all people of color in St. Louis County was 2.31 years less than the white population, ... and in Duluth, it was 4.32 years less." (p. 5).

It becomes apparent that communities and individuals in Duluth with opportunities, influence, and resources have much greater chances at having complete physical, social and mental well-being than communities and individuals currently without. Therefore, as the City of Duluth works to address health & fairness and eliminate inequities, it will require an intentional redistribution of opportunities, influence, and resources so that all people are empowered to achieve a state of complete physical, social and mental well-being.

## Methodology

The Speak Up Speak Out Campaign used a survey to collect the experiences and preferences of Duluthians who often do not attend public meetings. The survey was comprised of five open-ended questions that corresponded to the focus group areas that the City of Duluth is addressing in its Comprehensive Plan.<sup>4</sup> Thus, the questions focused on the concepts of fairness in housing, transportation, economic development, open space, and how these four elements combined impact health. The language was meant to be simple, easy to understand, and hold similar meaning across cultures. We also included a section to collect demographic information such as age, ethnicity, income, zip code, and gender. Please see Appendix I for full survey and the data analysis tool. The survey was available online and was administered in person.

The results shown in this report were collected primarily through canvassing (door knocks) and hosted discussions in affordable housing buildings all over Duluth. The Speak Up Speak Out Campaign led door knocks in Central Hillside, Lincoln Park, Norton Park, Spirit Valley, Morgan Park, and Gary/New Duluth. We hosted events in affordable housing buildings,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Includes 55806, 55802, and 55805 Zip Codes (Lincoln Park, Park Point, Downtown, & both Central and East Hillside)

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup>Zip code 55803 including Hunters Park, Woodland and northern townships including Normana, Rice Lake, etc.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> As a note, this survey was created prior to the creation of the "Energy and Conservation" focus area and therefore, no question were asked regarding this focus area.

mobile home parks, group residential housing, and shelters all over Duluth. The sites we visited include: Francis Skinner Apartments, San Marco Apartments, Pleasantview Mobile Home Park, Faith Haven Apartments, Steve O'Neil Apartments, CHUM Shelter/Drop-in Center, Loaves & Fishes Community, Tri-Towers Apartments (HRA Office), Ramsey I, Ramsey II, and Community Action Duluth. We also hosted neighborhood input sessions in Central Hillside and Morgan Park, where the City of Duluth had a staff member present to hear the concerns and visions of neighborhood members for the future of Duluth. We included a small incentive for each individual that completed a survey of a \$5 gift card to local grocery store SuperOne.<sup>5</sup> In total, we surveyed 603 Duluthians.

We used a Google Form-based qualitative content analysis tool that was developed for this survey with a researcher at the US EPA Office of Research and Development. In the analysis tool, there was a list of potential answers under each survey question. The answers were developed through a conventional content analysis, and refined through consultation. Answers that did not fit in the predefined categories was entered into notes. We read each survey and then entered the results in the Google Form. The results can be found below.

One of the limitations in our methodology was the construction of the survey questions to ask about what could be fairer in housing, transportation, economic development, and open spaces. Our goal was to intentionally consult with the individuals who might experience unfair conditions in their daily lives. However, we noticed that some (or many) of those we surveyed expressed gratitude for what they had after experiencing traumas like homelessness and/or incarceration. This often left them unable to answer the question of what they see as fair, because they were happy for what they had even if they said they couldn't afford their rent and/or their apartment was poorly maintained. It is a challenge for us because we want to include their voices, but it is hard to ask for the higher-order value of fairness when basic needs are not met.

Another limitation was that many of those surveyed had trouble relating the areas of housing, transportation, open space, and economic development to their health. This question often went unanswered or was confusing to those surveyed. Lastly, we noticed that many of the questions went unanswered throughout the survey process for many of the reasons listed above.

## **Findings**

## Demographics:

In total we surveyed 603 Duluthians with targeted outreach in underrepresented communities and neighborhoods.

#### Gender:

- 55 percent female
- 45 percent male

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> The use of incentives in surveys can and should be used to help increase participation, especially when there is a potential burden on the respondent (i.e., recounting stressful conditions) (Singer and Bossarte, 2006).

## Age:

- 5 percent under 20 years old
- 23 percent 21-30 years old
- 22 percent 31-40 years old
- 12 percent 41-50 years old
- 22 percent 51- 60 years old
- 16 percent 61 year of age or older

## **Household Income:**

- 41 percent under \$10,000/year
- 28 percent \$10,000-\$20,000/year
- 12 percent \$20,000-\$30,000/year
- This indicates that over 84 percent of those surveyed made \$30,000/year or less.
- Only 16 percent made over \$30,000 year

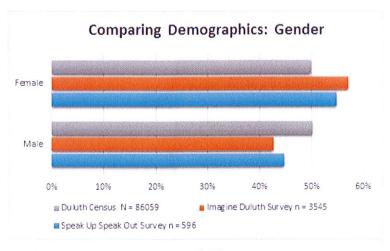
## Zip Code:

- 29 percent: 55805
- 27 percent: 55806
- 11 percent: 55807
- 11 percent: 55808
- 22 percent lived in another zip code area

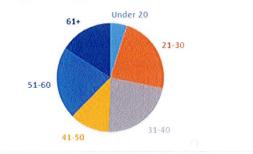
## **Ethnicity:**

- 59 percent White/Caucasian
- 21 percent Black/African American
- 9 percent Native American/ Indigenous
- 2 percent Latinx
- 1 percent Asian
- 8 percent Multi-racial or other

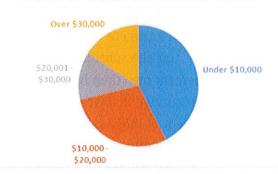
As shown in the graphic on the following page, SUSO intentionally overrepresented populations of color for this survey as compared to the actual



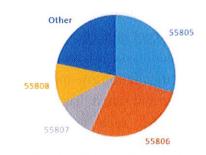


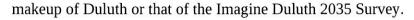


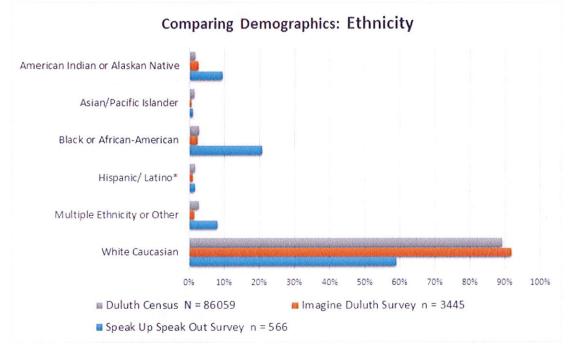
# INCOME SPEAK UP SPEAK OUT SURVEY N=582



ZIP CODE SPEAK UP SPEAK OUT SURVEY N=588







## Housing:

We surveyed 603 Duluthians to see what their current housing situation was and what they thought could be fairer for their housing and housing in the city of Duluth in general. What follows are the main themes that came out of our surveys about housing.

- 44 percent are renters.
  - 19 percent of renters lived in Subsidized Housing (Through vouchers and on-site subsidies).
- 14 percent own their homes.
- 7 percent live in a Group Residential housing or Board and Lodge Facility.
- 5 percent of those surveyed were currently experiencing homelessness
  - Another 2 percent had experienced homelessness in the past.
  - An additional 5 percent indicated that they do not have their own housing but live with family or friends.
- 2 percent of those surveyed either rent or own a mobile home.

When asked how housing could be fairer, Duluthians gave the following answers:

- 25 percent indicated that housing is not affordable in Duluth.
- An additional 14 percent of people indicted that there needs to be more housing specifically for low-income renters.
- 10 percent stated that there needs to be more accountability for landlords and gave examples such as falling apart buildings, excessive application fees, bug infestations, rent price hikes, and high levels of criminal activity.

- 11 percent specifically said that their housing needed to be repaired.
- 5 percent of people stated that they did not think their housing was safe.
- 5 percent of people felt that there was discrimination in housing based on race or ethnicity.
- 15 percent of all those that answered took the surveys felt that they did not have other housing choices in Duluth.

Yet, some of the strongest information came from qualitative stories and not the data.

- One person stated that they pay 95 percent of their income on housing, but are thankful to have housing and could not see what could be better.
- Many people indicated that their housing was substandard or unsafe. Including issues such as: bed bugs, drug trafficking in the building, drug needles in the hallways, unsafe neighbors, falling apart buildings, unaccountable landlords, too small of a space for their family, and having costs too high for low quality housing.
- Many people stated that they live paycheck-to-paycheck and balance which bills to pay each month and/or which days to eat to get by.
- Many stated that is nearly impossible to get into housing from homelessness in this city and that this is even more difficult with a criminal record, bad credit history, and/or an eviction on your record. Some even stated they felt they had to beg to get into housing and have no choices of what housing they live in.
- Stories were shared about how the pathway to homeownership in Duluth is almost non-existent and that it is impossible to get ahead and save to buy a house while renting.
- Many shared stories of racist landlords and one woman even said the racism of housing only went away after she bought her own home.

## Transportation:

We surveyed 603 Duluthians to see what their current transportation situation was and what they thought could be fairer for their transportation and transportation in the city of Duluth in general. What follows are the main themes that came out of our surveys about transportation.

- 48 percent identified using the bus as their primary form of transportation
- 44 percent identified that they had their own car
- 15 percent of people identified that they walked
- 7 percent identified that they mostly used taxis
- 3 percent identified that they primarily bike for transportation

When asked how transportation could look fairer for them and their community, the following responses surfaced as the primary themes for transportation inequities:

• 17 percent of those surveyed stated that bus routes needed to expand the distance they cover and/or the times they are in service.

- 12 percent stated that a reduction in bus fares and/or free bus passes for people with low-income would make transportation more accessible.
- 8 percent of people stated that sidewalks needed to be better maintained, with better lighting to make streets accessible for all including those with children, elderly people and those with disabilities.
- Many talked about west end food deserts and accessibility of grocery stores, citing the need to expand the grocery express.
- Many others shared that they have struggled to maintain a working car and wish that there were affordable car repair options and/or more affordable routes to buying a car in Duluth.
- Many stories were shared about the need for lower gas costs/gas vouchers, cheaper car insurance options.
- We also heard that there is a big need for more affordable transportation for those with disabilities and to medical appointments because services like Stride get to be too expensive.

## Economic Development:

We surveyed 603 Duluthians to see what their current work situation was and what they thought could be fairer for their work situation and economic development in the city of Duluth in general. What follows are the main themes that came out of our surveys about economic development.

- 37 percent indicated that they are currently employed
- 17 percent indicated that they are unemployed or underemployed
- 10 percent indicted that they are retired
- 8 percent indicated disabled
- 5 percent indicated that they have a fixed income (SSI, RSDI, SSDI, GA, MFIP)
- 13 percent indicated they are currently looking for work.

Many shared that they wished for more programs to help with employment, including training, and for the services that do exist to be better advertised. Others expressed the need for on-the-job training opportunities. Some Duluthians shared stories of discrimination based on race and/or criminal background and wished for more employment opportunities. Others shared stories of having a disability and wanting to find part-time work, but not being able to find a workplace that is accommodating. 25 percent of those surveyed shared that they wish they could receive a livable wage and be given enough hours to get by. Many of those in college or recently out of college shared that "young professionals" are struggling to get by with low pay and high rents in Duluth.

## Open Space:

We surveyed 603 Duluthians to see what their current use of local open spaces was and what they thought could be fairer for open spaces in the city of Duluth in general. What follows are the main themes that came out of our surveys about opens spaces (mostly parks).

- 15 percent of those surveyed indicated that they do not spend time outside
- 15 percent indicated that they use the Lakewalk or other trails
- 31 percent indicated that they use parks
- 28 percent indicated that they spend sime outside not in parks or on trails

Many Duluthians surveyed indicated that they did not feel there needed to be any changes to the parks and that they are already fair and equal. We noticed that many of those that completed the survey could not describe how parks could be fairer. In fact, many of those that completed the surveys either had positive comments about the parks in Duluth or told us that they do not use parks. Yet others indicated that the park need to be cleaned up, especially in low-income neighborhoods and that there are often needles in parks. Some parents surveyed indicated that they do not feel that parks in Duluth are safe for their children. Many Duluthians indicated that community gardens need to be expanded and made more accessible. Other parents indicated that they feel that Central Hillside and the West Side of Duluth need more green space and open space. Parents stated that parks need more playground equipment for children and that they wish there were more low-cost and/or free activities for families. Many Duluthians shared that they do not have time to enjoy the open space in our community because they have to work multiple jobs to get by. Other Duluthians shared stories of how open space is not accessible to them--some because of transportation and others because of handicap accessibility.

## Health Impacts:

We surveyed 603 Duluthians to see how they thought housing, transportation, economic development, and open spaces impacted their health. What follow are the primary themes we found about health impacts of housing, transportation, economic development, and open space.

Many of the respondents recognized that having access to these four needs (housing, transportation, jobs, and open spaces) improved health.

- 59 percent of respondents noted either that having access to these needs had a positive impact or that the absence of these needs had a negative impact on health.
- 13 percent directly mentioned the negative effects that stress the stress of food insecurity, job insecurity, unreliable transportation, racism, or perceived lack of safety - has on overall well-being.

#### Recommendations

Below are a number of recommendations the Health in All Policies team advises the City of Duluth's Community Planning Department, Planning Commission, and City Council implement through the Imagine Duluth 2035 Comprehensive Plan.

- Strengthen the language of the February 15th, 2017 Vision Committee approved Health Principle language to use more action oriented verbs.
  - February 15th, 2017 Vision Committee language:

Develop a healthy community
Supporting health and well-being is a priority. The City will actively promote access for all to health resources, quality food, recreation, social opportunities, and a clean and secure environment. Policy decisions will consider impacts on health and health equity.

Proposed Correction:

Develop a health community

Supporting health and well-being is a priority. The City will actively promote access for all to health resources, quality food, recreation, social opportunities, and a clean and secure environment. Investments and policies will improve and maximize health and health equity in the City.

- Intentionally educate and empower a subset of public commissions and advisory boards
  to hold city administration accountable to implementing the language, concepts, and
  recommendations included in the Comprehensive Plan. Ensure that a number of those
  boards and commission have members that include representation from communities of
  color and low-income communities.
- Invest in personnel and/or processes that can better ensure city government will follow the leadership of underrepresented communities. An example might include the hiring of a racial equity coordinator to work with administrative departments in bringing underrepresented voices into decision making and planning processes.
- Housing:
  - Increase accountability for landlords & inspectors (work with HRC and landlords) to provide safe, well-maintained rental units at affordable rates,
  - Pair increased enforcement and standards with tools to help landlords afford those new standards. This might include new investments in low interest loan products, or loan to grant conversions based on multi-year compliance with increasingly

- higher housing condition standards. Ultimately, the goal is to convert blighted properties into safer, higher quality housing creating a larger pool of quality rental housing without skyrocketing rental rates.
- Expand investment of city resources into affordable housing development and improving access to resources in communities where large amounts of affordable housing already exist.

## Transportation

- Support affordable car ownership options and assistance for those trying to get a driver's license
- Expand affordable public transit options into nights and weekends
- Improve bus shelter and street lights infrastructure at bus stops in the western half of Duluth
- Incentivize the recruitment of car share services & increase regulations on local taxicab services to ensure residents who lack a car, live off of bus lines, or need transportation outside of DTA hours have safe, reliable, and affordable means of transportation.
- Support, build, and maintain pedestrian infrastructure that people of all abilities, ages, and incomes can safely and comfortably use as a reliable form of transportation to reach any address within the city.

## • Economic Development

- Incentivize the development of food retailers and/or markets throughout the city with special focus in the Gary/New Duluth, Morgan park, and Norton Park Area
- Actively work to eliminate racial discrimination from hiring practices
- Remove barriers to employment for residents with a criminal background

#### Open Space

- o Increase the amount of public green space in the Hillside
- Support and invest in neighborhood rec centers that are well maintained with more recreational opportunities: swimming, free sports, free sports lessons

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## **Appendix I: Survey**

Spea	k U	p and	l Speal	k Out!
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The Duluth Health in All Policies Campaign are seeking to gain vision from underrepresented communities through our Speak Up and Speak Out Campaign. This will help ensure fairness is viewed and represented through all lenses during the process of creating a road map for the development of the City of Duluth.

1.	Explain your current housing situation. Please give examples of how your housing could look more fair and equal.
2.	What is your means of transportation? Please give examples of how your transportation could look more fair and equal.
	<u></u>
3.	Are you looking for work or satisfied with your current work? Please give examples of how economic opportunities could look more fair and equal.
· ·	

	Tell me about the time you spend outside areas? If not, why not? What would make	it more fair and equal?
5.	How do these four areas (housing, transp	ortation, economic opportunities, o
•	spaces) impact your health?	ortation, economic opportunities, of
5.	Demographics: Must do Demographics & Na	me if getting \$5 SuperOne Card
	Demographics: Must do Demographics & Na	me if getting \$5 SuperOne Card c. Ethnicity
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