

Woodbury basic needs assessment

A report for Woodbury Community Foundation

Background

Woodbury Community Foundation connects people and organizations with causes that strengthen the community and ensure that Woodbury is a premier place to live, work, and play for all its residents. The Foundation promotes philanthropy and acts as a catalyst for change by convening community partners around key issues and funding nonprofits serving the Woodbury community.

This summary highlights key findings from a basic needs assessment conducted by Wilder Research. The purpose of this assessment is to guide the Foundation in effectively directing its resources and leveraging partnerships.

Methods

Wilder Research used a mailed survey of 938 Woodbury residents (24% response rate, sent to 4,000 residents), and reviewed and analyzed secondary data from surveys conducted by Decision Resources for the City of Woodbury, and data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the Washington County Sheriff's Office (foreclosures), and other sources.

Key findings

Economy and employment

Over three-quarters (78%) of survey respondents agree or strongly agree that a lot of people in Woodbury are feeling stress or anxiety because of our country's current economic situation. Additionally, two-thirds (65%) of respondents believe that children in Woodbury are missing out on opportunities because of the bad economy. Data indicate that credit card and/or loan debt is a problem for about one-third (34%) of Woodbury households.

More than one-quarter (26%) of respondents reported that a member of their household was experiencing difficulty in dealing with a job loss. At the same time, just under half (48%) of respondents disagree or strongly disagree that there are enough stable jobs available in Woodbury for those who want to work.

Thirteen percent of respondents said a member of their household could use help finding a job or getting job training so they could obtain a better job.

SURVEY RESPONDENTS' RATINGS OF VARIOUS ASPECTS OF LIFE IN WOODBURY



Housing

While most survey respondents own their homes and are able to make their mortgage payments, the number of foreclosures in Woodbury increased from 30 foreclosures in 2003 to 404 in 2009 (as of Dec. 12th).

Further, the significant proportion of respondents who reported a need for help with home repairs (16%) indicates that many Woodbury residents may be in danger of foreclosure and/or may have difficulty selling their homes due to lack of upkeep. Other needs commonly reported by respondents were: making their home more energy efficient (23%) and getting a loan to buy a home (7%).

Housing affordability is a widespread concern in Woodbury. One-third (32%) of all respondents (including those who are not personally struggling to pay their housing-related expenses) believe there is not enough affordable housing to meet the needs of all community members in Woodbury.

Other needs

About 1 in 10 survey respondents reported being worried about not being able to afford food for their household during the past 12 months. Only about two-fifths (41%) of those respondents are aware of food assistance programs in Woodbury, but just 1 percent indicated that they had actually used a food shelf in Woodbury in the past 12 months.

About 1 in 6 respondents reported problems with access to a reliable car, affording auto insurance, and/or affording gasoline for their car. Seven percent reported problems getting transportation to work.

Eighteen percent of respondents indicated difficulty obtaining health insurance for all members of their household, and 15 percent report having difficulty getting the health care they need.

A small proportion of respondents indicated that someone in their household needs assistance with:

- Depression or mental health issues (5%)
- Overcoming a drug or alcohol problem (2%)
- Dealing with a relationship problem (3%)
- Dealing with conflict or abuse at home (1%)

Quality of life & community engagement

Nearly all residents agree or strongly agree that Woodbury offers a high quality of life, particularly in the following areas:

- Public safety and city services
- Education
- Parks and other natural amenities

Most residents said they are able to find volunteer opportunities, although other research conducted for the City of Woodbury indicates that most residents who volunteer do so through their faith community. Therefore, non-faith-based organizations may want to consider additional ways of promoting volunteering, and especially focusing on engaging newer Woodbury residents.

Summary and conclusions

Basic needs are interdependent. As Woodbury residents experience financial issues due to the poor economy, needs in areas including employment, debt, housing, food, and health care, will continue to increase. Related issues such as mental health problems, chemical dependency, and domestic violence could increase as the stress and strain of economic hardship puts added pressure on families.

Upstream interventions (those that reach people before they are in a crisis situation) can do a lot to promote household stability and a high quality of life for all Woodbury residents.

For more information

This summary presents highlights of the report: *Woodbury basic needs assessment – A study for Woodbury Community Foundation*.

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