DEPARTMENT: 3/18/2025

AGENDA DATE: 3/18/25

PUBLIC HEARING DATE: 3/18/25

CONTACT PERSON NAME: Araceli Guerra   **PHONE NUMBER:** 915-212-1401

DISTRICT(S) AFFECTED: All Districts

STRATEGIC GOAL:

Goal 8 – Nurture and Promote a Healthy, Sustainable Community

SUBGOAL:

Goal 8.1 – Deliver prevention, intervention and mobilization services to promote a healthy, productive and safe community

SUBJECT:

Discussion and action to approve an amendment to the City of El Paso's 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan in order to revise the HOME Investment Partnership Program American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) Allocation Plan.

BACKGROUND / DISCUSSION:

On March 14, 2023, City Council approved the First Amendment to the 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan in order to add the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan. The total HOME-ARP funding allocation consists of $9,535,888.00. Due to the increasing need for development of affordable rental housing and the flexibility to leverage ARPA funding for Non-congregate shelters DCHD is proposing City Council approval of the revised funding allocation plan.

COMMUNITY AND STAKEHOLDER OUTREACH:

On February 10, 2023, the City of El Paso posted on its website public notice and allowed a 15-day public comment period regarding the First Amendment to the 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan.

PRIOR COUNCIL ACTION:

March 14, 2023 – City Council approved the First Amendment to the 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan in order to add the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan. The total HOME-ARP funding allocation consists of $9,535,888.00.

AMOUNT AND SOURCE OF FUNDING:

HUD - HOME Investment Partnership Program American Rescue Plan Act (HOME-ARP): $9,535,888.00

REPORTING OF CONTRIBUTION OR DONATION TO CITY COUNCIL:

N/A

NAME	AMOUNT ($)

******************REQUIRED AUTHORIZATION********************

DEPARTMENT HEAD: Abraham

Digitally signed by Abraham
Date: 2025.03.03 17:01:27 -07'00'

(If Department Head Summary Form is initiated by Purchasing, client department should sign also)

Clerk Dept. Rev.2.20241204

RESOLUTION

WHEREAS, on June 22, 2021, the City Council for the City of El Paso adopted the Annual Action Plan for 2021-2022 and on that date Authorized the City Manager to sign and submit to the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) the 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan to include all certifications contained therein; and

WHEREAS, the City of El Paso, Texas has been allocated $9,535,888 in HOME Investment Partnerships Program – American Rescue Plan (HOME-ARP) funding; and

WHEREAS, on February 10, 2023, the City of El Paso posted on its website public notice and allowed a 15-day public comment period regarding the First Amendment to the 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan.

WHEREAS, on March 14, 2023. The City of El Paso's 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan was amended (First Amendment) to add the HOME ARP allocation Plan.

WHEREAS, the City Council, based on the recommendation of the Interim Director, now desires to amend the 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan to revise the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan; and

NOW THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF EL PASO:

That the City of El Paso's 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan is hereby amended to revise the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan; and

That the City Manager, or designee, be authorized to sign and submit to the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan, Form SF-424 and Form SF 424 D, all certifications and assurances contained therein, and any documents necessary to comply with HUD requirements; and

That the City Manager, or designee, be authorized to sign Grant Agreements with HUD for the HOME-ARP allocation; and

That the City Manager, or designee, be authorized to sign all Letters of Support, Certifications of Local Government Approval, Release of Liens, Assurances and Certifications of Consistency with the Consolidated Plan required by HUD or the State of Texas for grant applications or applications for Low Income Housing Tax Credits for programs covered by the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan; and

That the City Manager, or designee, subject to completion of environmental review, be authorized to sign all contracts and documents with the agencies, entities, persons, and/or City

departments approved for funding related to the implementation and performance of the activities contained in the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan and corresponding programs. The City Manager, or designee, is authorized herein to sign amendments to such contracts which add to or reduce funding, including but not limited to the removal of the obligation of funds by mutual termination, and extensions to the contract period; and

That the City Manager, or designee, be authorized to sign all Environmental Assessments, Requests for Release of Funds, Certifications, and Performance Reports required by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for activities covered by the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan; and

That the City Manager, or designee, be authorized to sign agreements to secure matching funds which add to amounts allocated under the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan budget; and to sign amendments to match fund agreements, including extensions to the contract period; and

That the City Manager, or designee, be authorized to sign all amendments, subordination agreements, loan modification agreements, release of liens, assumption agreements, and other similar documents related to transactions performed under the HOME-ARP Allocation Plan so long as such documents are approved by the City Attorney's office as to form and comply with department policies and procedures; and

That the City Manager be authorized to execute letters of support, certifications, and other similar documents, that allow third parties to secure funding from state, federal, and local agencies which further the goals of the City's HOME-ARP Allocation Plan.

That the City Manager, or designee, be authorized to take any actions necessary to accomplish the intent of this resolution upon approval by the City Attorney's Office.

Except as amended in this Second Amendment the 2021-2022 Annual Action Plan remains in full force and effect.

APPROVED this _____ day of _____ 2025.

CITY OF EL PASO:

ATTEST:

_____
Renard U. Johnson
Mayor

_____
Laura D. Prine City Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM: **APPROVED AS TO CONTENT:**

Abraham Gutierrez
for Araceli Guerra

Russell Abeln
_____
Russell T. Abeln
Senior Assistant City Attorney

_____
Araceli Guerra
Interim Director
Community and Human Development

Summary of changes or the HOME - ARP Allocation Plan

The amended HOME-ARP plan for El Paso introduces noteworthy changes in its approach to affordable housing development, with a clear focus on adjusting to rising costs and prioritizing long-term solutions for the current need of affordable housing.

Here's a breakdown of the key changes in the amended plan:

1. Increased Budget for Affordable Housing Development

   - The budget for the acquisition and development of affordable rental housing was significantly increased from $2,935,888 to $4,282,300. This change reflects the increased cost of construction due to inflation, rising material costs, and higher labor costs.

2. Reduction in Non-Congregate Shelters

   - Originally, $1,200,000 was allocated for the acquisition and development of non-congregate shelters, but the amendment eliminates this allocation entirely. This shift in focus is in response to the growing need for permanent affordable housing, rather than temporary shelter solutions, as part of the city's broader strategy to combat homelessness and housing instability.

3. Focus on Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)

   - The allocation for Tenant-Based Rental Assistance (TBRA) reduced to $3,000,000. However, the city is emphasizing TBRA as a key component of its strategy to prevent homelessness and provide rapid rehousing for individuals and families.

4. Shift Toward Long-Term Affordable Housing Solutions

   - The amendment aligns the plan's funding priorities with the most pressing needs identified in the 2023 Community Needs Assessment (CNA), which highlighted the critical shortage of affordable housing in El Paso. The city now prioritizes the development of affordable rental units, aiming to produce at least 42 new units with HOME-ARP funds, leveraging additional resources to expand this number.

5. Adjustment to the Housing Cost Assumptions

   - The rising construction costs led to an upward revision of the cost per unit from previous estimates. The new cost of $200,000 to $250,000 per unit more accurately reflects the current market conditions, which had not been anticipated in the original plan. This adjustment ensures that the city can effectively allocate resources to meet the growing demand for affordable housing.

6. No Prioritization
   - The amended plan moves away from the previous Coordinated Entry preference for TBRA and introduces a policy where no preferences will be given to specific subpopulations (e.g., veterans, individuals with disabilities, families fleeing domestic violence) within the qualifying population (QPs). Instead, applicants for HOME-ARP

TBRA assistance will be selected in chronological order from a written waiting list. This approach ensures an equitable allocation of resources across all eligible applicants.
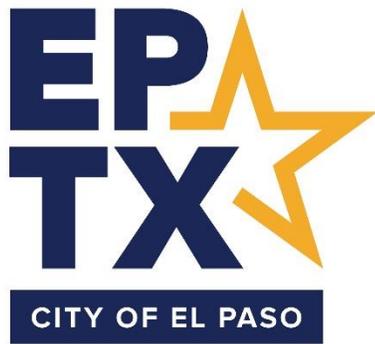
HOME-ARP Allocation Plan

The City Council of El Paso, Texas

Mayor   Renard Johnson
District 1   Alejandra Chávez
District 2   Dr. Josh Acevedo
District 3   Deanna Maldonado-Rocha
District 4   Cynthia Boyar Trejo
District 5   Ivan Niño
District 6   Art Fierro
District 7   Lily Limón
District 8   Chris Canales

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Executive Summary

The COVID-19 pandemic did not necessarily create many of the most pressing issues affecting vulnerable populations in El Paso, rather, it exacerbated and brought to the forefront issues that have long persisted. The homeless service system is stretched to capacity and underinvested in, both in terms of physical investment and investment in case management and wrap-around services for individuals experiencing homeless and those at-risk of experiencing homelessness. Further complicating this issue is an affordable rental housing supply that is shrinking at a time when expansion is required. While overall household income is increasing, it is significantly outpaced by rising rental rates.

As we transition from a response to recovery lens on the pandemic, it is critical to invest much needed yet limited resources in a focused, thoughtful manner to ensure a sustainable and equitable recovery across the community. As such, the City has spent over a year of consultation, outreach, and research to establish the priority needs and investments identified in this HOME-ARP Allocation Plan.

This plan allocates HOME-ARP funds to increase the supply of affordable rental units, , provide tenant-based rental assistance with intensive case management services to qualifying populations experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness All of these investment will reduce the pressure on low- to no-barrier emergency shelters that are often at capacity, and as a result, make available additional shelter for those in our community that are currently or may become unsheltered.

Consultation

Describe the consultation process including methods used and dates of consultation:
The City of El Paso, Department of Community + Human Development (DCHD) undertook two significant outreach and consultation initiatives to receive input and determine priority needs and gaps in services for persons experiencing homelessness. The first was a State of Homelessness work session and the second was a Community Needs Assessment.

DCHD conducted a half-day work session on Thursday, January 6th, 2022 to discuss the state of homelessness in El Paso. The intention of the work session was to convene key stakeholder partners in homeless service provision so that the City of El Paso can have a better understanding of the need for resources to fill gaps in the homeless service provider system and identify resources available to fill those gaps and create opportunities. This work session served as a key component of the upfront HOME-ARP allocation plan consultation process.

An agency pre-work session survey was sent out to the participant list. Responses from the survey were used to frame the discussions during the work session. Respondents were comprised of agencies and organizations that assist families and individuals experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness. 20 organizations responded to the survey.

In September of 2022, DCHD launched a Community Needs Assessment process. The purpose of the CNA was to obtain viewpoints from community members regarding housing and community development needs and proposed activities that support identified community vulnerabilities.

This process was led by the DCHD Civic Empowerment team. The DCHD Civic Empowerment team's primary objective is to advance equity, build sustainability and improve community outcomes through equitable programming volunteerism, and education designed to empower residents and strengthen their relationship with local government. In order to provide objective findings and conclusions, members of the CNA team do not administer or oversee DCHD grants, nor do they influence annual DCHD policies or procedures. A CNA survey was deployed across community stakeholders and 120 individual survey responses were received. The key takeaways from these responses indicated the greatest need for: 1) Programs that support those experiencing homelessness, 2) Assistance with Mental Illness, and 3) affordable housing assistance.

Also in September 2022, DCHD began hosting a series of roundtable events to acquire valuable responses from the community regarding housing and community development needs. Roundtable discussions, which resulted in a total of 96 participants, were offered in a variety of platforms ranging from a hybrid model, allowing individuals in an in-person setting to collaborate with those who selected to contribute virtually. Of those 96 participants, 31 community members were graduates of the City of El Paso's Neighborhood Leadership Academy, resulting in two Advanced Neighborhood Leadership Academy sessions. Participants within these exclusive sessions are actively involved community members that share a unique perspective to include solutions, on issues facing the community.

In addition to community residents, stakeholders from various community organizations, were present to discuss key issues within the sectors of Housing and Homelessness, Health and Wellbeing, Food Security and Family Stability; subject matter experts from El Paso Coalition for the Homeless, The Opportunity Center, YWCA, Project Amistad, United Way, The El Paso Community Foundation were among the organizations represented.

List of organizations consulted:

Agency/Org Consulted	Type of Agency/Org	Method of Consultation	Feedback
Center Against Sexual and Family Violence	Domestic Violence Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
Child Crisis Center of El Paso	Homeless Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
CoC	CoC	State of Homelessness Work Session; CoC Board Meeting	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
County of El Paso	Public agencies that address QP needs	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, Inc.	Public agencies that address QP needs	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
El Paso Apartment Association	Public or private organizations that address fair housing, civil rights, and needs of persons w/ disabilities	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
El Paso Center for Children	Homeless Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session, Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper. Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.
El Paso Coalition for the Homeless	CoC Lead Entity	State of Homelessness Work Session, Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper. Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.

El Paso Community Foundation	Community Foundation	Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.
El Paso County Housing Authority	Housing Authority	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
El Paso HOME	Housing Authority	State of Homelessness Work Session, Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper. Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.
El Paso Veterans Affairs	Veterans Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
El Paso Villa Maria	Homeless Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
Emergence Health Network	Public agencies that address QP needs	State of Homelessness Work Session, Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper. Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.
EP Human Services	Homeless Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
Family Endeavors, Inc.	Homeless Service Provider/Veterans Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
Justice Leadership Council	Public agencies that address QP needs	Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.
La Posada Home, Inc.	Homeless Service Provider/Domestic Violence Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.

OEM	Public agencies that address QP needs	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
Opportunity Center for the Homeless	Homeless Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session, Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper. Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.
Paso del Norte Children's Development Center	Public agencies that address QP needs	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
Paso del Norte Community Foundation	Public agencies that address QP needs	State of Homelessness Work Session, Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
Project Amistad	Homeless Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session, Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
Project Vida	Homeless Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session, Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper. Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.
Department of Public Health	Public agencies that address QP needs	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
Recovery Alliance	Homeless Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
Rescue Mission of El Paso	Homeless Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.

The Salvation Army	Homeless Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session, Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper. Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.
Underserved Communities Foundation	Public agencies that address QP needs	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
United Way of El Paso	Public or private organizations that address fair housing, civil rights, and needs of persons w/ disabilities	State of Homelessness Work Session, Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper. Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.
University Medical Center	Public agencies that address QP needs	State of Homelessness Work Session	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper.
Volar Center for Independent Living	Public or private organizations that address fair housing, civil rights, and needs of persons w/ disabilities	State of Homelessness Work Session, Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper. Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.
Workforce Solutions Borderplex	Public agencies that address QP needs	Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.
YWCA Paso del Norte Region	Homeless Service Provider/Domestic Violence Service Provider	State of Homelessness Work Session, Community Needs Assessment	Feedback was received in a group forum and recorded in aggregate in a State of Homeless White Paper. Feedback was received via agency survey and roundtable discussions and is reported in aggregate in the Community Needs Assessment.

Summarize feedback received and results of upfront consultation with these entities:
State of Homelessness Work Session Key Takeaways:
Key takeaways from the State of Homelessness Work Session suggest that a more coordinated street outreach system is required in order to bring more unsheltered individuals into the homeless service system. Every individual and their circumstances are not identical; therefore, tailored approaches should be undertaken. Identifying best practices for specific populations and catering to the unique needs of vulnerable individuals can increase the likelihood of successful outcomes. In addition to the implementation of a tailored approach, support for shelters and transitional living centers needs to also be prioritized considering outreach success largely depends on the availability of housing options. This indicates a need for additional non-congregate shelter units as is identified as a priority in this allocation plan.

Those, sheltered or unsheltered, who can be rapidly rehoused require intensive case management to sustain a stable living environment. This prevents returns to homelessness and eases the pressure on emergency shelter capacity. As such, significant investment in rapid rehousing programs with intensive case management is a key investment under this allocation plan.

Permanent supportive housing was mentioned numerous times as well, especially since it impacts other priority areas including case management and outreach. It is evident that there is a notable need for the increased availability and accessibility of housing options. Some suggested the new construction and development of more supportive communities (including landlord support) with better access to wraparound services, especially for disadvantaged youth and people with disabilities that are often underserved (i.e., tiny homes that include the option of renting to own).

The group collectively agreed upon the notion that diversion and prevention efforts need to be more focused. The utilization of a tiered system was sought as a possible solution. Additionally, many valid points were made including the continuously increasing cost of living in the community while wages are not keeping pace. By bringing attention to the various factors that exacerbate conditions that perpetuate homelessness, appropriate action can be taken.

Community Needs Assessment Key Takeaways:
1. Meeting Basic Needs
One of the key takeaways from our analysis is that the ability to meet basic needs such as food and housing is directly connected to fostering economic prosperity. Many of the participants stressed that the community needs support in meeting basic needs such as food, housing, utilities, transportation. We also heard that even access to broadband should be considered a basic need. Many of the conversations stressed the need for supporting people experiencing homelessness with wrap around services like mental health and food support. The hardships caused by the pandemic has been widespread, and in many cases, it exacerbated challenges that households were already facing such as food insecurity or housing affordability. Thus, continuing to support a family's ability to meet basic needs is still necessary in order to achieve economic prosperity at the household level.

2. Empowering Communities
For business owners, government officials, and our neighborhood associations, there were a number of conversations about being grateful for being invited to participate, and the desire to want to continue to be a part of future discussions. What we heard overwhelmingly is that community and business owners alike, want to contribute to the decision-making and planning processes. The analysis also showed that there are also perception interdependencies by empowering a broad range of stakeholders, you promote cohesive and engaged communities. Meaning, stakeholder empowerment increases the ability and confidence of the issues relating to each individual. While engagement significantly increases participation, empowerment aims to enable people to take control of the actions that affects their livelihoods.
Interview and survey responses revealed a need for enhanced collaboration to advance local and reginal planning. We saw a desire for long-term integrated planning within each of our perception assessments. Government officials, academia, and civil society all shared the same sentiments in the Fosters long term integrated Planning category. Integrated planning was particularly important when speaking to neighborhood leaders in the Advanced Neighborhood Leadership sessions. Participants often highlighted the need to have open dialogues during all phases of future planning process to ensure information is equitable shared and shaped by all stakeholders. However, there was a strong expression by some neighborhood leaders that they are being asked for input and collaboration, but their input often hasn't translated into actionable change. Communities of Excellence can be the springboard for this type of planning with members of the community, organizations can collectively deploy resources based off the community needs identified in this assessment and in turn continue to collaborate.

3. Homelessness: Mental Health and Housing Affordability
The causes of homelessness are extremely diverse and complex. The individual complexities that contribute to homelessness increases the difficulty of creating universal solutions to address homelessness. Our key takeaways from the Resident Survey results, showed us that community members see a high need in addressing mental health, housing affordability and homelessness. These three issues are linked to one another. Mental illness and substance abuse was often connected to the topic of homelessness. Similarly, the discussions around rising costs and

housing affordability were also discussed when the topic of homelessness was also raised. While some participants applauded the City's effort to prioritizing homelessness, the survey responses indicated a need to do more.

Poverty and homelessness exacerbate mental illness, and COVID-19 and the measures put in place to control the spread of the virus exacerbated metal health concerns for much of the community. Addressing this issue by identifying those in need of services and making those services accessible beyond the hours of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm will be important to meet the needs of this especially vulnerable population.

4. Prioritizing Multi-beneficial Projects
Funding limitations and agency capacity is always a challenge that all sectors face. Because of this, there is a need to identify projects that include multiple benefits across sectors that achieve multiple planning goals at one time. An example of this would to be to situate programming or facilities with multiple benefits that can help address multiple vulnerabilities, such as mental health, housing and homelessness. Addressing multi-benefits like mental health and homelessness under one roof can provide supportive individualized services to community members and enables better outcomes as a result. This model can be used with all vulnerable populations because of the complex nature of their situations. Another vulnerable population is opportunity youth, which often struggle with both education and employment. So tailoring solutions that address multiple vulnerabilities ensures that steps are being taken to find solutions to root causes and not symptoms.

Public Participation
Describe the public participation process, including information about and the dates of the public comment period and public hearing(s) held during the development of the plan:

- *Date(s) of public notice: 2/23/2023*
- *Public comment period: start date - 2/13/2023 end date - 2/28/2023*
- *Date(s) of public hearing: 2/28/2023*
- *Date(s) of public notice of Amendment: 2/23/2023*
- *Public comment period of Amendment: start date - 2/13/2023 end date - 2/28/2023*
- *Date(s) of public hearing of Amendment: 2/28/2023*
- *Describe the public participation process:*

The public participation process consisted of two robust, weeks-long efforts to receive input from the public and key stakeholders, emphasizing the voices of often underrepresented populations. The State of Homelessness Work Session engaged with key stakeholders, other funders, and service agencies that provide assistance and service to HOME-ARP qualifying populations. The Community Needs Assessment engaged the public at-large, along with targeted stakeholders with unique perspectives on the challenges facing El Paso's most vulnerable populations.

No Additional comment was received during the final public comment period.

Describe efforts to broaden public participation:
To ensure broad public participation, a newspaper ad was published in the major English and Spanish newspapers in El Paso identifying the HOME-ARP funds available for allocation, the eligible activities for HOME-ARP funds, and the proposed distribution of HOME-ARP funds to address critical needs and gaps in the community. Notice was also distributed to all 90+ neighborhood associations in El Paso; all agencies that participated in consultations, surveys, and needs assessment activities were notified of proposed allocation distributions; the City issued a press release and posted to social media sites the same information contained in the newspaper ads to ensure access to participation of vulnerable populations of all ages across the community.

Summarize the comments and recommendations received through the public participation process either in writing, or orally at a public hearing:
No Additional comment was received during the final public comment period.

Summarize any comments or recommendations not accepted and state the reasons why:
No Additional comment was received during the final public comment period.

Needs Assessment and Gaps Analysis

Homeless Needs Inventory and Gap Analysis Table

	Homeless													
	Current Inventory					Homeless Population				Gap Analysis				
	Family		Adults Only		Vets	Family HH (at least 1 child)	Adult HH (w/o child)	Vets	Victims of DV	Family		Adults Only		
	# of Beds	# of Units	# of Beds	# of Units	# of Beds					# of Beds	# of Units	# of Beds	# of Units	
Emergency Shelter	309	#	552	#	#									
Transitional Housing	147	#	95	#	#									
Permanent Supportive Housing	61	#	143	#	#									
Other Permanent Housing	#	#	55	60	#									
Sheltered Homeless						68	385	60	79					
Unsheltered Homeless						#	159	24	#					
Current Gap										0	0	#	#	

Suggested Data Sources: 1. Point in Time Count (PIT); 2. Continuum of Care Housing Inventory Count (HIC); 3. Consultation

OPTIONAL Housing Needs Inventory and Gap Analysis Table

Non-Homeless			
	Current Inventory	Level of Need	Gap Analysis
	# of Units	# of Households	# of Households
Total Rental Units	93,320		
Rental Units Affordable to HH at 30% AMI (At-Risk of Homelessness)	5,842		
Rental Units Affordable to HH at 50% AMI (Other Populations)	18,396		
0%-30% AMI Renter HH w/ 1 or more severe housing problems (At-Risk of Homelessness)		16,795	
30%-50% AMI Renter HH w/ 1 or more severe housing problems (Other Populations)		3,405	
Current Gaps			20,429

Suggested Data Sources: 1. American Community Survey (ACS); 2. Comprehensive Housing Affordability Strategy (CHAS)

Describe the size and demographic composition of qualifying populations within the PJ's boundaries:

Homeless as defined in 24 CFR 91.5

The January 2022 Point in Time count indicated that there were 839 individuals experiencing homelessness in El Paso, Texas on any given day. Of those 839, 544 are single adults, 295 are in families, 183 are unsheltered, 537 are in emergency shelters and 119 are in transitional housing. An additional 19 families and 107 single adults are in permanent supportive housing, 55 single adults are in other permanent housing, and 256 households with 437 individuals are in rapid rehousing programs.

Of the approximately 55 families in emergency shelters 56.9% are experiencing homelessness for the first time. Of the 84 veterans experiencing homelessness, 60 are in shelters and the other 24 are unsheltered. Of the 79 victims of domestic violence, 20 are in families and the other 59 are single adults.

Since there are 309 available beds for families in the emergency shelter system and based on PIT data for families (and several assumptions) there are 238 individuals in families in the emergency shelter system at any given time, there appears to be no significant gap in available emergency shelter beds for families. There are 552 available beds in the emergency shelter system for single adults and 544 single adults experiencing homelessness on any given day. This indicates that our emergency shelter system is stretched to its potential capacity. Neither the analysis for families nor for single adults takes into account homelessness surge events that El Paso has seen numerous times over the past several years. These surge events include significant increases to homeless populations during the first year or two of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as several large-scale increases in migrant populations coming into El Paso. These events have stretched the emergency shelter system well beyond its capacity and have unfortunately resulted in perceived increases in unsheltered homelessness in El Paso. Due to the PIT not accounting for these surge events, it is difficult to estimate an exact number of beds and units needed to accommodate these surge events, but an increase in emergency shelter capacity is anecdotally obvious.

A key strategy to relieve the pressure on emergency shelter capacity, and reduce the need for increased beds in the system, is to prevent households from becoming homeless and move individuals and families out of shelters and into suitable permanent housing arrangements via rapid rehousing programs with intensive case management components. The City's allocation plan addresses these needs by increasing emergency shelter capacity while also placing significant focus on investments in rapid rehousing and homeless prevention through tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA) and supportive services.

At Risk of Homelessness as defined in 24 CFR 91.5

2015-2019 CHAS data indicate that there are 93,320 rental units within El Paso. Of the 33,770 households in El Paso at or below 30% AMI, 22,680 are renters. Using 30% or less of household income going towards rent payments as the metric for a unit to be affordable, it is then determined that there are 5,842 rental units in the city that are affordable to households at or below 30% AMI (2020 ACS 5-yr Table B25063). This is based on affordable rents for

this population being below $350 per month. Since there are 22,680 renter households at or below 30% AMI and only 5,842 rental units that are affordable to those households, there is an estimated gap in affordable rental units at this income level of 16,838 units.

HOME, the housing authority for the City of El Paso has an inventory of 6,103 public housing units and strives to exceed the federal income targeting requirements by targeting more than 40% of all new admissions to public housing to families at or below 30% AMI. HOME also has 5,365 Section 8 Housing Choice Vouchers that effectively increase the stock of affordable rental units. However, HOME has an existing waiting list for HCVs of 7,032 families and 5,984 of those families have household incomes below 30% AMI. Accounting for the public housing units and HCV availability, the overall gap in affordable rental units is decreased, but a gap of approximately 11,500 units remains. This is the estimated number of households in El Paso that are at-risk of homelessness due to a lack of affordable rental housing units.

2015-2019 CHAS data also shows that there are 18,400 renter households with a housing cost burden in excess of 50% of the household's income. These households are considered to have severe housing cost burden and are at-risk of losing their homes. That same data set shows that there are 25,175 renter households that are experiencing at least 1 of 4 severe housing problems which are: incomplete kitchen facilities; incomplete plumbing facilities; more than 1 person per room; and cost burden greater than 50%. Assuming that all renter households with a housing cost burden in excess of 50% of the household's income are households at or below 30% AMI, this would mean that there are approximately 6,775 renter households at or below 30% AMI not experiencing severe housing cost burden but still experiencing one of the other three severe housing problems. This number aligns closely with the availability of 5,842 rental units that are affordable to households at or below 30% AMI as that offsets a significant amount of the 6,775 that are not severely housing cost burdened. However, it indicates a likelihood that many of those households in affordable units have more than one person per room.

Additional affordable units are needed in El Paso. As such, a portion of this allocation plan provides funding for acquisition and development of affordable rental units.

Fleeing, or Attempting to Flee, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or Human Trafficking, as defined by HUD in the Notice
According to 2022 PIT data, 6.9% of families and 10.8% of single adults experiencing homelessness are fleeing domestic violence. The PIT also shows that there were 295 individuals in families and 544 single adults experiencing homelessness at any given time. Using those counts and the percentages of families and individuals fleeing domestic violence, it can be estimated that a total of 79 individuals (20 in families and 59 single adults) who are experiencing homelessness are fleeing domestic violence.

Other populations requiring services or housing assistance to prevent homelessness and other populations at greatest risk of housing instability, as defined by HUD in the Notice
2015-2019 CHAS data indicate that there are 93,320 rental units within El Paso. Of the 29,525 households in El Paso between 30% and 50% AMI, 16,145 are renters. Using 30% or less of household income going towards rent payments as the metric for a unit to be affordable, it is then determined that there are 12,554 rental units in the city that are affordable to households between 30% and 50% AMI (2020 ACS 5-yr Table B25063). This is based on affordable rents for this population being between $350 and $600 per month. Since there are 16,145 renter households between 30% and 50% AMI and 12,554 rental units that are affordable to those households, there is an estimated gap in affordable rental units at this income level of 3,591 units. This is the estimated number of households in El Paso that are within the "Other Populations" HOME-ARP category that are at-risk of homelessness due to a lack of affordable rental housing units. This analysis assumes that no households between 30% and 50% AMI are occupying units that are affordable to households at or below 30% AMI (units with rents below $350/month). For each of these households that does occupy a unit that is affordable to households at or below 30% AMI, that increases the number of sub-30% AMI households at-risk of homelessness.

This indicates that there is a significant gap in affordable rental units for households between 30% and 50% AMI, but that gap is not nearly as large as for those households at or below 30% AMI.

Additional affordable units are needed in El Paso. As such, a portion of this allocation plan provides funding for acquisition and development of affordable rental units.

Describe the unmet housing and service needs of qualifying populations:

Homeless as defined in 24 CFR 91.5
A service-provider survey that preceded the State of Homelessness Work Session found 92% of respondents indicating that individuals and families at risk of experiencing homelessness, and/or individuals and families experiencing homelessness are the population most in need of additional services and/or resources in our community. 28% of respondents considered Case Management as a top gap in our community's homeless service system. That is why this HOME-ARP Allocation Plan is targeted towards increasing the capacity of the emergency shelter system by investing a majority of HOME-ARP funds to rapidly rehousing those experiencing homelessness and providing intensive case management to those individuals and families to ensure sustainable housing solutions.

A key component of the State of Homelessness Work Session featured group discussions around the following topics to identify strengths and weaknesses in the homeless service system: case management, street outreach, permanent supportive housing, mental health, and prevention and diversion. Results of those discussions follows.

Case management

Following the breakout session, several community agencies raised the need for improved case management. Not only does a need exist for increasing the number of case managers in the community but there is also a need to enhance the quality of case management that already exist in current systems. By increasing the number and quality of case managers within the community, clients would significantly benefit as they can be provided with more options and better resources and services to address individual needs. Additional context on case management was brought forth by the El Paso Apartment Association that proposed having case management services for re-housed individuals will make more landlords comfortable in opening units for rapid rehousing.

Street Outreach

Street outreach was also identified as a top priority by a number of organizations. Every individual and their circumstances are not identical; therefore, tailored approaches should be undertaken. Identifying best practices for specific populations and catering to the unique needs of vulnerable individuals can increase the likelihood of successful outcomes. In addition to the implementation of a tailored approach, support for shelters and transitional living centers needs to also be prioritized considering outreach success largely depends on the availability of housing options.

Permanent Supportive Housing

Permanent supportive housing was mentioned numerous times as well, especially since it impacts other priority areas including case management and outreach. It is evident that there is a notable need for the increased availability and accessibility of housing options. Some suggested the new construction and development of more supportive communities (including landlord support) with better access to wraparound services, especially for disadvantaged youth and people with disabilities that are often underserved (i.e., tiny homes that include the option of renting to own).

Mental Health

The lack of available services for those that are impacted by mental health issues is a growing concern throughout the community. Community stakeholders have expressed the dire need for increased access and availability of mental health services. By improving the accessibility and availability of mental health services, the stigma associated can also be addressed; fostering an environment where individuals are more receptive to intervention and general assistance.

Utilizing psychiatric services has proven to be effective in various facilities that serve the homeless and vulnerably housed. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and other factors, the implementation of tele-psychiatry services for clients should also be considered; mental health issues can be addressed while assuring the safety of clients and staff.

Diversion and Prevention

The group collectively agreed upon the notion that diversion and prevention efforts need to be more focused. The utilization of a tiered system was sought as a possible solution. Additionally, many valid points were made including the continuously increasing cost of living in the community while wages are not. By bringing attention to the various factors that exacerbate conditions that perpetuate homelessness, appropriate action can be taken.

This allocation plan seeks to address the issues of case management, diversion and prevention, and making funds available for rapid rehousing programs with intensive case management components.

At Risk of Homelessness as defined in 24 CFR 91.5
Unfortunately, the high level of rental assistance that was available during the first two years of the COVID-19 pandemic have been expended and local resources are insufficient to sustain that level of assistance. As such, an increase in demand for rapid rehousing and homeless prevention services through HOME-ARP TBRA has become evident and is therefore included in this allocation plan.

Fleeing, or Attempting to Flee, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, Stalking, or Human Trafficking, as defined by HUD in the Notice
There are three agencies in El Paso with programs that focus on sheltering and housing individuals and families fleeing violence, the Center Against Sexual and Family Violence (CASFV), La Posada Home, and the YWCA Transitional Living Center. These programs have historically had the capacity to provide services to all families in need. While these populations will have equal access to HOME-ARP funded programming under this allocation plan, a need for targeting resources specifically for these populations has not arisen.

Other populations requiring services or housing assistance to prevent homelessness and other populations at greatest risk of housing instability as defined by HUD in the Notice
The needs assessment section of this plan lays out the gap in affordable housing options for households between 30% and 50% AMI and establishes that there are significant housing cost burden issues for households below 30% AMI. The City of El Paso is issuing a Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA) for $15 million to leverage additional funding sources and construct and/or rehabilitate hundreds of affordable rental units in El Paso. A separate NOFA will be released to contract homeless prevention and rapid rehousing programs in the form of HOME-ARP TBRA in order to provide stable housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at-risk of experiencing homelessness.

Identify any gaps within the current shelter and housing inventory as well as the service delivery system:
There is a gap in affordable housing units for households below 30% AMI of approximately 11,500 units. There is an additional gap of approximately 3,500 affordable units for households between 30% and 50% AMI. These populations are at great risk of homelessness and represent a capacity burden for the homeless service system, as this is in addition to the 839 individuals already experiencing homelessness on any given day in El Paso, according to the most recent PIT data. Rapid Rehousing programs across the community are under-funded and often struggle to place households in affordable units. An injection of rapid rehousing funding will allow for more households to be served and will ease the pressure on emergency shelters. At the same time additional non-congregate units are needed to further ease that capacity burden.Since the inception and adoption of the original plan, the city has been able to supplement funding for non-congregate shelters with ARPA funding and has since invested one million dollars in non-congregate shelter.

Under Section IV.4.2.ii.G of the HOME-ARP Notice, a PJ may provide additional characteristics associated with instability and increased risk of homelessness in their HOME-ARP allocation plan. These characteristics will further refine the definition of "other populations" that are "At Greatest Risk of Housing Instability," as established in the HOME-ARP Notice. If including these characteristics, identify them here:

The City plans to utilize the characteristics for instability and increased risk of homelessness as established in the HOME-ARP notice. There is significant need established for households making less than 30% AMI and with severe housing cost burden, as well as families between 30% and 50% AMI with other qualifying conditions, that additional characteristics, or limiting of eligibility, is not required.

Identify priority needs for qualifying populations:

As described throughout this allocation plan, the priority needs for qualifying populations are availability the access to affordable, stable housing options for those at-risk of homelessness and other lower-income El Pasoans. Since the inception and adoption of the original plan, the city has been able to supplement funding for non-congregate shelters with ARPA funding and has since invested one million dollars in non-congregate shelter.

Explain how the PJ determined the level of need and gaps in the PJ's shelter and housing inventory and service delivery systems based on the data presented in the plan:

Data from the most recent Point-in-Time Count, CHAS, and American Community Survey data were used to establish the level of need and gaps in shelter and housing inventory as presented in the Needs Assessment and Gaps Analysis section of this plan. Service delivery system needs and gaps were identified through the State of Homelessness Work Session activities and the Community Needs Assessment detailed in the Consultation section of this plan.

HOME-ARP Activities

Describe the method(s)that will be used for soliciting applications for funding and/or selecting developers, service providers, subrecipients and/or contractors:

Notices of Funding Availability for acquisition and/or development of affordable rental housing, TBRA programs, will be released by the City' Department of Community + Human Development. Local government entities, non-profit organizations, and for-profit developers are eligible to apply for HOME-ARP funds. Preference will be given to proposals that leverage other funding sources and expand the impact and long-term sustainability of HOME-ARP investments. For construction projects, once subrecipients are identified, written agreements with subrecipients will dictate procurement requirements for selection of contractors and subcontractors.

Describe whether the PJ will administer eligible activities directly:

The City of El Paso will not be administering eligible activities directly. All eligible activities will be sub-awarded to subrecipients and their contractors, as applicable

If any portion of the PJ's HOME-ARP administrative funds are provided to a subrecipient or contractor prior to HUD's acceptance of the HOME-ARP allocation plan because the subrecipient or contractor is responsible for the administration of the PJ's entire HOME-ARP grant, identify the subrecipient or contractor and describe its role and responsibilities in administering all of the PJ's HOME-ARP program:
This is not applicable to the City of El Paso HOME-ARP Allocation Plan.

Use of HOME-ARP Funding

Original Approved Plan Allocation	Funding Amount	Percent of the Grant	Statutory Limit
Supportive Services	$ 1,300,000		
Acquisition and Development of Non-Congregate Shelters	$ 1,200,000		
Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)	$ 4,000,000		
Development of Affordable Rental Housing	$ 2,935,888		
Non-Profit Operating	$ 100,000	1.05 %	5%
Non-Profit Capacity Building	$ 0	0 %	5%
Administration and Planning	$ 0	0 %	15%
Total HOME ARP Allocation	$ 9,535,888		

Amended Approved Plan Allocation	Funding Amount	Percent of the Grant	Statutory Limit
Supportive Services	$ 1,300,000		
Acquisition and Development of Non-Congregate Shelters	$0		
Tenant Based Rental Assistance (TBRA)	$ 3,000,000		
Development of Affordable Rental Housing	$4,282,300		
Non-Profit Operating	$0		
Non-Profit Capacity Building	$ 0		
Administration and Planning	$ 953,888	10 %	15%
Total HOME ARP Allocation	$ 9,535,888		

Describe how the PJ will distribute HOME-ARP funds in accordance with its priority needs identified in its needs assessment and gap analysis:
The needs assessment and gap analysis shows a need for investment in numerous areas. There is a gap in affordable rental units that puts low-income El Pasoans at risk of homelessness, and TBRA to prevent homelessness and rapidly rehouse those experiencing homelessness increases affordability and reduces capacity strains in the shelter system. The above Funding Plan supports each of these needs and will provide stability for El Paso households.

$3,000,000 is being allocated for TBRA with an additional $1,300,000 towards Street Outreach, case management and wraparound services for TBRA clients, $$4,282,300 is being allocated towards development of affordable rental housing.

Since 2022, the Community Needs Assessments (CNAs) have consistently identified the greatest need in our community as the development of affordable housing stock. The findings from the 2023 CNA have further supported this need, providing detailed insights and allowing us to prioritize affordable housing development more effectively.

The proposed changes in the amendment are directly informed by the latest CNA. These updates reflect the community's most pressing needs and aim to ensure that resources are allocated efficiently to address the ongoing housing challenges.

The cost of building affordable housing in El Paso County has increased significantly. Recent estimates show that it now costs **$200,000 to $250,000 per unit**, which is much higher than the numbers used in the original plan. This increase is due to rising costs for materials, labor, and inflation, which weren't fully accounted for in the initial estimates.

Given these higher costs, the original plan didn't reflect the true financial needs for affordable housing development. The initial numbers were based on outdated figures, and now we need to adjust the plan to match the current cost reality. Prioritizing affordable housing is even more important now to avoid relying on temporary solutions like shelters.

Amending the plan will allow us to allocate resources more accurately and ensure that we can meet the growing demand for affordable housing in El Paso County.

Describe how the characteristics of the shelter and housing inventory, service delivery system, and the needs identified in the gap analysis provided a rationale for the plan to fund eligible activities:
The needs assessment and gap analysis indicates a shelter system that is regularly operating near capacity. Cold weather events, increases in migrant activity, public health emergencies, and other non-regular, but somewhat frequent, events create a surge in demand on the shelter system that cannot currently be absorbed. Though there is still a need in non congregated shelter, While the need for congregate shelters remains, reallocating funds toward the development of affordable housing can alleviate the burden on these shelters. By increasing the availability of affordable housing, individuals and families are less likely to experience homelessness, thereby reducing the demand for emergency shelter services.
Research indicates that homelessness rates are directly correlated with increases in rent, particularly when housing costs exceed 30% of an area's median income. In regions where

affordable housing is scarce, more individuals are pushed into homelessness, increasing reliance on shelters.

Implementing a "Housing First" approach, which prioritizes providing permanent housing to those experiencing homelessness, has proven effective in reducing homelessness and decreasing the use of emergency services. By investing in affordable housing, communities can address the root causes of homelessness, leading to a decreased need for congregate shelters and more sustainable, long-term solutions for housing insecurity.

The needs assessment and gap analysis demonstrate a significant gap in affordable rental units that places thousands of El Pasoans at risk of experiencing homelessness. Adding new affordable rental units is part of that solution, while providing TBRA to keep families in their homes or to rapidly rehouse them, while also provide street outreach, intensive case management services to ensure housing stability, makes the occurrence of homelessness less likely and briefer for vulnerable households in El Paso.

HOME-ARP Production Housing Goals

Estimate the number of affordable rental housing units for qualifying populations that the PJ will produce or support with its HOME-ARP allocation:

Affordable Rental Units

Budget	4,282,300
Cost/unit	$ 20200,000
HOME-ARP share of unit cost	50%
HOME-ARP cost/unit	$ 100,000

Total HOME-ARP units   42

The City will seek to leverage HOME-ARP funds at a 1-to-1 match in order to produce at least 42 new affordable rental units. This is in addition other resources being deployed by the City for affordable rental housing developers to expand the stock of affordable rental units in El Paso.

TBRA

Budget	$ 3,000,000.00
Avg. monthly TBRA assistance	$ 1000.00
Avg # month of assistance	6
Avg. total assistance per household	$ 6,000
Number of households (affordable units)	**500**

An additional 500affordable units will be made available through the provision of TBRA as calculated above. .

Describe the specific affordable rental housing production goal that the PJ hopes to achieve and describe how the production goal will address the PJ's priority needs:
As described above, the City seeks to add 542 new affordable units to the stock of affordable housing. The additional availability of these units will provide housing stability for at least 542 El Paso families that would otherwise be experiencing, or be at risk of experiencing, homelessness. This in turn will reduce the strain on capacity in the emergency shelter system and make shelter available to more of the unsheltered population in El Paso, which according to the most recent Point-in-Time (2024) count is 189 persons on any given day.

Preferences

A preference provides a priority for the selection of applicants who fall into a specific QP or category (e.g., elderly or persons with disabilities) within a QP (i.e., subpopulation) to receive assistance. A *preference* permits an eligible applicant that qualifies for a PJ-adopted preference to be selected for HOME-ARP assistance before another eligible applicant that does not qualify for a preference. A *method of prioritization* is the process by which a PJ determines how two or more eligible applicants qualifying for the same or different preferences are selected for HOME-ARP assistance. For example, in a project with a preference for chronically homeless, all eligible QP applicants are selected in chronological order for a HOME-ARP rental project except that eligible QP applicants that qualify for the preference of chronically homeless are selected for occupancy based on length of time they have been homeless before eligible QP applicants who do not qualify for the preference of chronically homeless.

Please note that HUD has also described a method of prioritization in other HUD guidance. Section I.C.4 of Notice CPD-17-01 describes Prioritization in CoC CE as follows:

"Prioritization. In the context of the coordinated entry process, HUD uses the term "Prioritization" to refer to the coordinated entry-specific process by which all persons in need of assistance who use coordinated entry are ranked in order of priority. The coordinated entry prioritization policies are established by the CoC with input from all community stakeholders and must ensure that ESG projects are able to serve clients in accordance with written standards that are established under 24 CFR 576.400(e). In addition, the coordinated entry process must, to the maximum extent feasible, ensure that people with more severe service needs and levels of vulnerability are prioritized for housing and homeless assistance before those with less severe service needs and lower levels of vulnerability. Regardless of how prioritization decisions are implemented, the prioritization process must follow the requirements in Section II.B.3. and Section I.D. of this Notice."

If a PJ is using a CE that has a method of prioritization described in CPD-17-01, then a PJ has preferences and a method of prioritizing those preferences. These must be described in the HOME-ARP allocation plan in order to comply with the requirements of Section IV.C.2 (page 10) of the HOME-ARP Notice.

In accordance with Section V.C.4 of the Notice (page 15), the HOME-ARP allocation plan must identify whether the PJ intends to give a preference to one or more qualifying populations or a subpopulation within one or more qualifying populations for any eligible activity or project.

- Preferences cannot violate any applicable fair housing, civil rights, and nondiscrimination requirements, including but not limited to those requirements listed in 24 CFR 5.105(a).
- The PJ must comply with all applicable nondiscrimination and equal opportunity laws and requirements listed in 24 CFR 5.105(a) and any other applicable fair housing and civil rights laws and requirements when establishing preferences or methods of prioritization.

While PJs are not required to describe specific projects in its HOME-ARP allocation plan to which the preferences will apply, the PJ must describe the planned use of any preferences in its HOME-ARP allocation plan. This requirement also applies if the PJ intends to commit HOME-ARP funds to projects that will utilize preferences or limitations to comply with restrictive eligibility requirements of another project funding source. **If a PJ fails to describe preferences or limitations in its plan, it cannot commit HOME-ARP funds to a project that will implement a preference or limitation until the PJ amends its HOME-ARP allocation plan. For HOME-ARP rental housing projects, Section VI.B.20.a.iii of the HOME-ARP Notice (page 36) states that owners may only limit eligibility or give a preference to a particular qualifying population or segment of the qualifying population <u>if the limitation or preference is described in the PJ's HOME-ARP allocation plan.</u>** Adding a preference or limitation not previously described in the plan requires a substantial amendment and a public comment period in accordance with Section V.C.6 of the Notice (page 16).

<u>**Template:**</u>

Identify whether the PJ intends to give preference to one or more qualifying populations or a subpopulation within one or more qualifying populations for any eligible activity or project: No preference is anticipated for any qualifying population or subpopulation for placement into acquired and/or developed affordable rental units under this Plan, TBRA, or Supportive Services. PJ will provide services chronological order based on a written waiting list.
If a preference was identified, explain how the use of a preference or method of prioritization will address the unmet need or gap in benefits and services received by individuals and families in the qualifying population or subpopulation of qualifying population, consistent with the PJ's needs assessment and gap analysis:

Limitations in a HOME-ARP rental housing or NCS project

Describe whether the PJ intends to limit eligibility for a HOME-ARP rental housing or NCS project to a particular qualifying population or specific subpopulation of a qualifying population identified in section IV.A of the Notice:
The City does not anticipate limiting eligibility for any HOME-ARP rental housing or NCS to any one or more qualifying population nor subpopulation. Since funds will be allocated to specific projects based on responses to Notices of Funding Availability, should any project require limited eligibility, a substantial amendment to the Plan will be approved through established requirements for substantial Annual Plan amendments in compliance with Federal regulations.

If a PJ intends to implement a limitation, explain why the use of a limitation is necessary to address the unmet need or gap in benefits and services received by individuals and families in the qualifying population or subpopulation of qualifying population, consistent with the PJ's needs assessment and gap analysis:
Should an Annual Plan substantial amendment be required for any HOME-ARP project, this information will be detailed in that Annual Plan amendment.

If a limitation was identified, describe how the PJ will address the unmet needs or gaps in benefits and services of the other qualifying populations that are not included in the limitation through the use of HOME-ARP funds (i.e., through another of the PJ's HOME-ARP projects or activities):
No limitations identified at this time, however, should an Annual Plan substantial amendment be required, this information will be detailed in that amendment.

Appendices

Appendix 1. State of Homelessness Work Session White Paper

Appendix 2. Community Needs Assessment

Appendices

Appendix 1. State of Homelessness Work Session White Paper

Overview

The City of El Paso, Department of Community and Human Development conducted a half-day work session on Thursday, January 6th, 2022 to discuss the state of homelessness in El Paso. The State of Homelessness work session was facilitated by Nicole Ferrini, Chief Resilience Officer of the City of El Paso's Community and Human Development Department.

The intention of the work session was to convene key stakeholder partners in homeless service provision so that the City of El Paso can have a better understanding of the need for resources to fill gaps in the homeless service provider system and identify resources available to fill those gaps and create opportunities. This work session also served as a key component of the HOME ARP allocation plan consultation process and validated the City of El Paso's initial assessment of investing those funds.

Agency Participation

The following agencies attended the State of Homelessness work session:

County of El Paso	La Posada Home, Inc.
City of El Paso	Paso del Norte Community Foundation
Child Crisis Center	Project Amistad
Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, Inc.	Project Vida
El Paso Apartment Association	Rescue Mission of El Paso
El Paso Coalition for the Homeless	The Salvation Army
El Paso Center for Children	The Opportunity Center
El Paso Human Services	University Medical Center
El Paso HOME	United Way of El Paso
El Paso Veterans Affairs	Underserved Communities Foundation
El Paso Villa Maria	Volar Center for Independent Living
Emergence Health Network	YWCA Paso del Norte Region
Family Endeavors, Inc.	

Community Stakeholder survey

Survey Background

An agency pre-work session survey was sent out to the participant list. Responses from the survey were used to frame the discussions during the work session. Respondents were comprised of agencies and organizations that assist families and individuals experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness. **20 organizations responded** to the survey, which includes **25 individuals**. Survey consisted of **eight** qualitative questions.

Summary of Survey Results

The differences and similarities identified in this report provide critical information about how community partners perceive the homeless community needs.

Results were as follows:

I. **92%** of the respondents believe **individuals and families at risk of experiencing homelessness**, and/or **individuals and families experiencing homelessness** are the **population most in need of additional services and/or resources.**

II. **28%** of respondents consider **Case Management** as a **top gap** in our community's homeless service system. Concerns included lack of funding, lack of case managers, and inconsistencies in case management standards. Also, **20%** noted **lack of mental health services** a **top gap** in the system.

III. **20%** of respondents believe resources should be allocated to **case management** to address the gaps in the system, and **20%** believe resources should be allocated **to mental health services**.

IV. **44%** of respondents believe **collaboration** is the **top strength** in our community's homeless service system.

V. **32%** of respondents stated resources should be allocated to **housing programs** to leverage the strengths of the homeless service systems.

VI. **28%** respondents credited the **Delta Welcome Center** as the **most successful initiative** that safeguarded families and individuals experiencing homelessness, or at risk of experiencing homelessness during COVID-19. **28%** also credited **programs to prevent homelessness** such as RRH.

VII. **44%** have **no concerns** about sharing data with the local **Public Health Information Exchange,** as long as client PPI is protected.

VIII. **12%** expressed the need for effective **collaboration and leadership**.

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) recently did a robust outreach initiative on revamping the strategic planning on homelessness. The following initiatives and priorities were presented at the work session:

- End the criminalization of homelessness and implement solutions that treat **housing as a right.**
- Commit to addressing **racial disparities and advancing racial equity** across systems, policies, and programs that target structural harm and generational trauma, incorporate intersectional lenses, and provide culturally relevant resources and services.
- **Align housing resources and strategies** at every level of government.
- Create new and preserve existing **affordable housing.**
- **Prevent homelessness** through a regional systems-level approach that reduces evictions and provides flexible cash assistance as well as quick access to mainstream benefits.
- **Streamline referral and intake processes** to reduce barriers to housing and strengthen implementation of the Housing First approach.
- Increase availability of and access to **supportive and wraparound services** that pair with housing interventions.
- Support **community-driven solutions** and systems that provide and facilitate **flexibility and coordination**, particularly between the health and homeless systems.
- Acknowledge **unique barriers and tailor solutions** to meet diverse needs of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), LGBTQ+, Veterans, and youth.
- **Create partnerships** for local communities, providers, and people with lived experience to work together with the federal government throughout the policymaking process.
- Expand the availability and accessibility of **affordable housing.**
- Meaningfully include—compensate and/or hire—people with lived experience in decision-making processes, adopting the notion of **"nothing about us without us."**
- Address systemic bias to disrupt barriers that further historic disparities.
- Incorporate a **whole-of-person approach** to care that recognizes unique barriers and needs, and provides wraparound services, including emotional, social, and peer career supports.
- Integrate **culturally specific and trauma-informed care** to service delivery.
- Prevent homelessness with holistic efforts that **break the cycle of poverty**.
- Disrupt the vicious cycle of criminalization and homelessness by prioritizing and expanding access to **low-barrier housing and supportive services, including landlord mediation resources.**

Questions posed by the group:

The group collectively raised several pertinent questions in an effort shed light on prominent issues that act as significant barriers and exacerbate homelessness throughout the community.

How do we address the challenge of assisting individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues?

How can we help people that fall through the cracks of existing programs?

How do we increase accessibility of health care possibilities?

How do you provide assistance for individuals without a dwelling to place them?

What incentives can be offered to landlords?

How can we provide adequate assistance for those with disabilities, lack of familial support, and limited transitional centers?

Moderated Panel

During the work session the following attendees participated in a moderated panel to define the roles that agencies historically held in the community and specific roles during the pandemic:

Andrea Ramirez, Project Amistad

Despite Amistad being a part of numerous conversations, it was "not at the table." The agency has been in the community for 46 years and operates on a no excuses, just results philosophy. The pandemic presented many challenges for staff however, the challenge was accepted. Staff engaged the frontlines with effective strategy and ample experience to acquire necessary resources (i.e., PPE) and train their team accordingly to combat Covid-19. - Beautiful disaster/perfect storm

Amistad helped the community by providing essential transportation services and managed care for those in need, especially veterans and individuals dealing with homelessness. Amistad not only incorporated heightened safety measures to protect staff and clients but also continuously worked with several entities (with homeless initiatives) to maximize strengths and relationships to continue to serve El Paso.

Ben Miranda, Family Endeavors Inc.

Although Endeavors has operated in El Paso since 2017, the agency is no stranger to serving vulnerable populations. Endeavors has provided social services to communities throughout the State of Texas for over 50 years and has been able to expand across the United States and Puerto Rico.

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Following the breakout session, several community agencies implored the need for improved case management. Not only does a need exist for the amount of case managers in the community but there is also a need to enhance the quality of case managers that already exist in current systems. By increasing the number and quality of case managers within the community, clients would significantly benefit as they can be provided with more options and better resources and services to address individual needs. Additional context on case management was brought forth by the El Paso Apartment Association that proposed having case management services for re-housed individuals will make more landlords comfortable in opening units for rapid rehousing.

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Permanent supportive housing was mentioned numerous times as well, especially since it impacts other priority areas including case management and outreach. It is evident that there is a notable need for the increased availability and accessibility of housing options. Some suggested the new construction and development of more supportive communities (including landlord support) with better access to wraparound services, especially for disadvantaged youth and people with disabilities that are often underserved (i.e., tiny homes that include the option of renting to own).

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The group collectively agreed upon the notion that diversion and prevention efforts need to be more focused. The utilization of a tiered system was sought as a possible solution. Additionally, many valid points were made including the continuously increasing cost of living in the community while wages are not. By bringing attention to the various factors that exacerbate conditions that perpetuate homelessness, appropriate action can be taken.

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garner more resources but also enhance the quality of services rendered to the most vulnerable in our population, contributing to the ongoing efforts to end homelessness.

Conclusion

The State of Homelessness Session, while being the first of its kind will not be the last. The City of El Paso is committed to convening sessions in the future to better align resources amongst the social service provider network. Overarching themes that we heard throughout the session include access to mental health care, case management services and permanent supportive housing for difficult to house populations. While the efficacy of the "housing first" philosophy is acknowledged by the City and the Social Service providers, for certain populations, transitional housing may be a better option, particularly in the context of populations that require additional assistance and services. Integration of homelessness data into the Public Health Information Exchange (PHIX) will allow for better-informed decision-making for future deployment of resources to address the challenges and gaps within homeless service provision. Surge capacity for emergency shelter was briefly discussed, and the last 2 years of surge events in homelessness, whether it be migrant or COVID related, illustrates that this continues to be a serious gap within the homeless service system. As we heard in the session, community collaboration and the alignment of resources is critical as we work to continue to respond to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appendix 2. Community Needs Assessment

Overview

The Department of Community and Human development introduced the Community Needs Assessment to document and gather robust public input on what is needed to improve their communities. The Community Needs assessment (CNA) serves as the starting point in addressing community vulnerabilities. In September of 2022, at the beginning of the entitlement funding cycle, the Department of Community and Human Development (DCHD) launched the Community Needs Assessment process. The purpose of the CNA is to obtain viewpoints from community members regarding housing and community development needs and proposed activities that support identified community vulnerabilities.

This process was led by the DCHD Civic Empowerment team. The DCHD Civic Empowerment team's primary objective is to advance equity, build sustainability and improve community outcomes through equitable programming volunteerism, and education designed to empower residents and strengthen their relationship with local government. In order to provide objective findings and conclusions, members of the CNA team do not administer or oversee DCHD grants, nor do they influence annual DCHD policies or procedures.

Community Vulnerabilities are defined as groups and communities at a higher risk for poor health as a result of the barriers they experience to social, economic, political, and environmental resources, as well as limitations due to illness or disability (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health 2022).

DCHD conducted 13 one on one interviews with members of Council, civilians, and business owners. 120 individual survey responses resulting from a total of 45 submitted surveys, that pertinent data was collected.

Community stakeholders and community members were invited to participate in one of seven roundtable discussions, which resulted in a total of 96 participants. In addition to roundtable discussions, DCHD conducted one on one interviews with members of Council, community members and leaders from community organizations. Thirteen individual stakeholder interviews were conducted;

Overall, a total of nearly 500 unique factors were captured and entered into the Community Needs Assessment wheel outlining the strengths, weaknesses and improvement areas within the community.

Communities of Excellence

The City of El Paso creates opportunities for innovation and collaboration through strategic partnerships which have been demonstrated throughout our Communities of Excellence Initiative. Communities of Excellence (COE) is a formalized group of community organizations, across key sectors that take a systemic approach to improving overall community performance through collaboration and partnerships. The COE is an essential part of the planning process because it allows for businesses, organizations, and governments to collaborate more successfully across sectors, and align their strategic priorities more effectively. The Community Needs Assessment consisted of a combination of surveys and focus groups from organizations representing the following categories:

- Equity + Inclusion
- Housing +Homelessness
- Family Stability
- Health and Wellbeing
- Food Security

To ensure maximum participation and representation, organizations that have a vested interested in each one of the categories were also invited to participate. Below are organizations that had a representative at our Community Roundtables.

Equity + Inclusion
- YWCA
- Volar
- Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
- Sunrise El Paso
- Justice Leadership Council

Housing + Homelessness
- Amistad
- HOME
- Opportunity Center
- Coalition for the Homeless
- Salvation Army

Family Stability
- EP Center for Children
- Workforce Solutions Borderplex
- Philosophic Systems Institute
- United Way

Health and Wellbeing
- Emergence Health Network
- Paso Del Norte Health Foundation
- MCA Foundation
- Mental Health Policy Institute
- Project Vida

Food Security
- Desert Spoon
- UT Health
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program Board
- El Paso Community Foundation

Government
- EPPD
- EPISD
- YISD
- County
- DMD
- UTEP

NGO
- Texas Gas
- El Paso Electric

Civil Society
- Neighborhood Associations
- El Paso Neighborhood Coalition
- Neighborhood Leadership Academy
- Boards and Commissions

Businesses
- Microsoft
- LIFT Fund
- El Paso Chamber of Commerce
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

<u>Perceptions Assessment Methodology:</u>

Civic Empowerment assessed perceptions by engaging COE Stakeholders, Neighborhood Associations and members of the public by conducting formal stakeholder input sessions. This method allowed us to capture stakeholder feedback collected in 12 different categories, ranging from leadership and strategy, health and wellbeing, infrastructure and environment, and economy and society. Participants were asked to assess whether the input is an area of strength or if it's an area of improvement.

The key tools to analyze and assess stakeholder feedback is done through a perceptions assessment tool. The perceptions assessment tool is a circular model composed of twelve drivers that represent the main outcomes that a resilient city should aim for. The perceptions assessment tool provides a set of 52 indicators and adequate metrics for measuring and assessing city's resilience.

The Perceptions Assessment Tool helps us assess the personal views of various stakeholders gathered through interviews, online surveys, focus groups, workshops, conferences and meetings. A wide range of stakeholders was approached with the aim to give voice to city groups that are usually excluded from the decision-making process. Thus, the different initiatives involved city districts' council members, city staff and elected officials, central government authorities, NGOs, neighborhood associations, homeless, senior citizens and more.

Each participant was asked a series of questions:

1. What is El Paso's greatest vulnerability?

2. What is El Paso's greatest strength?

Each of those responses were recorded as a factor of resilience. A factor is an asset, system, practice or procedure that contributes to the city's ability to prepare, recover, and adapt in the face of shocks and stresses. The objectives for the Perceptions Assessment Tool included:

- Establish a baseline of the city's resilience strengths and vulnerabilities as perceived by city stakeholders though a qualitative but systemic and inclusive process
- Surface key priorities, opportunities and issues
- Engage stakeholders in a meaningful way

Each of the factors that were recorded were then assigned a corresponding resilience driver. Resilience drivers are indicators that essentially tell us what matters most when a city faces chronic stresses or sudden shocks. Below are the 12 resilience drivers that were assigned to each one of the factors given during the roundtable sessions and surveys:

Resilience Drivers:

1. Meets Basic Needs
2. Supports livelihoods & employment
3. Ensures public health services
4. Promotes cohesive & engaged communities
5. Ensures social stability, security & justice
6. Fosters Economic prosperity
7. Maintains & enhances protective natural & manmade assets
8. Ensures continuity of critical services
9. Provides reliable communication & mobility
10. Promotes leadership & effective management
11. Empowers a broad range of stakeholders
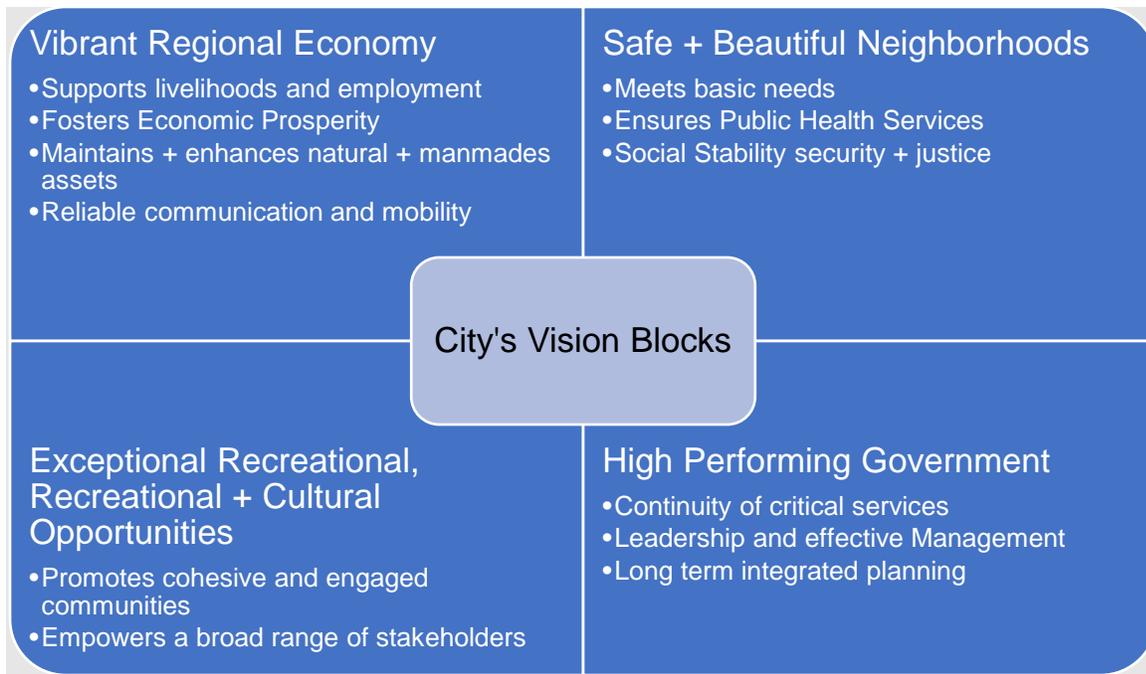12. Fosters long term integrated planning

The City of El Paso has adopted 4 Vision Blocks for the City of El Paso. These vision blocks ensure that each one of our City's strategic objective share alignment across the organization. The vision blocks can be seen below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: City of El Paso's Strategic Vision Blocks

Four Vision Blocks

ensure goals, strategies and strategic objectives are aligned across all operations by the key areas ingrained in the vision statement:

GOALS 1-3 — VIBRANT REGIONAL ECONOMY

SAFE + BEAUTIFUL NEIGHBORHOODS — GOALS 2-7-8

GOALS 4 — RECREATIONAL, CULTURAL + EDUCATIONL OPPORTUNITIES

HIGH PERFORMING GOVERNMENT — GOALS 5-6

To ensure that each of the resilience factors aligned with the City's vision blocks, we then categorized them within the City's 4 vision blocks. Below in Figure 2, Each of the 12 resilience factors can be categorized in our City's 4 vision blocks as seen below.

Figure 2: Resilience Drivers Categorized by Vision Block

Community Roundtables:

During the month of September 2022, the Community and Human Development department began hosting a series of roundtable events to acquire valuable responses from the community regarding housing and community development needs. The Community Needs Assessment was launched with the primary objective of improving the quality of life for residents through equity, education and empowerment. A total of seven roundtable discussions were held.

Roundtable discussions, which resulted in a total of 96 participants, were offered in a variety of platforms ranging from a hybrid model, allowing individuals in an in-person setting to collaborate with those who selected to contribute virtually. Of those 96 participants, 31 community members were graduates of the City of El Paso's Neighborhood Leadership Academy, resulting in two Advanced Neighborhood Leadership Academy sessions. Participants within these exclusive sessions are actively involved community members that share a unique perspective to include solutions, on issues facing the community.

In addition to community residents, stakeholders from various community organizations, were present to discuss key issues within the sectors of Housing and Homelessness, Health and Wellbeing, Food Security and Family Stability; subject matter experts from El Paso Coalition for the Homeless, The Opportunity Center, YWCA, Project Amistad, United Way, The El Paso Community Foundation were among the organizations represented.

In order to accurately capture the information being provided during all roundtable discussions, the Civic Empowerment team utilized the use of color coded post-it notes- pink, yellow and blue, which were provided to participants. Participants were then asked to write their comments, factors, on the specific color of post-it, which allowed the team to accurately notate areas where improvement is necessary to areas of strength; pink- need to do better, yellow- doing well, but can improve, blue- area of strength.

Below is a summary of the direct responses that were recorded as part of the Community Roundtable sessions that were hosted.

Appendices

Appendix 1. State of Homelessness Work Session White Paper

Overview

The City of El Paso, Department of Community and Human Development conducted a half-day work session on Thursday, January 6th, 2022 to discuss the state of homelessness in El Paso. The State of Homelessness work session was facilitated by Nicole Ferrini, Chief Resilience Officer of the City of El Paso's Community and Human Development Department.

The intention of the work session was to convene key stakeholder partners in homeless service provision so that the City of El Paso can have a better understanding of the need for resources to fill gaps in the homeless service provider system and identify resources available to fill those gaps and create opportunities. This work session also served as a key component of the HOME ARP allocation plan consultation process and validated the City of El Paso's initial assessment of investing those funds.

Agency Participation

The following agencies attended the State of Homelessness work session:

County of El Paso	La Posada Home, Inc.
City of El Paso	Paso del Norte Community Foundation
Child Crisis Center	Project Amistad
Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services, Inc.	Project Vida
El Paso Apartment Association	Rescue Mission of El Paso
El Paso Coalition for the Homeless	The Salvation Army
El Paso Center for Children	The Opportunity Center
El Paso Human Services	University Medical Center
El Paso HOME	United Way of El Paso
El Paso Veterans Affairs	Underserved Communities Foundation
El Paso Villa Maria	Volar Center for Independent Living
Emergence Health Network	YWCA Paso del Norte Region
Family Endeavors, Inc.	

Community Stakeholder survey

Survey Background

An agency pre-work session survey was sent out to the participant list. Responses from the survey were used to frame the discussions during the work session. Respondents were comprised of agencies and organizations that assist families and individuals experiencing homelessness, or at risk of homelessness. **20 organizations responded** to the survey, which includes **25 individuals**. Survey consisted of **eight** qualitative questions.

Summary of Survey Results

The differences and similarities identified in this report provide critical information about how community partners perceive the homeless community needs.

Results were as follows:

I.   **92%** of the respondents believe **individuals and families at risk of experiencing homelessness**, and/or **individuals and families experiencing homelessness** are the **population most in need of additional services and/or resources.**

II. **28%** of respondents consider **Case Management** as a **top gap** in our community's homeless service system. Concerns included lack of funding, lack of case managers, and inconsistencies in case management standards. Also, **20%** noted **lack of mental health services** a **top gap** in the system.

III. **20%** of respondents believe resources should be allocated to **case management** to address the gaps in the system, and **20%** believe resources should be allocated **to mental health services**.

IV. **44%** of respondents believe **collaboration** is the **top strength** in our community's homeless service system.

V.   **32%** of respondents stated resources should be allocated to **housing programs** to leverage the strengths of the homeless service systems.

VI. **28%** respondents credited the **Delta Welcome Center** as the **most successful initiative** that safeguarded families and individuals experiencing homelessness, or at risk of experiencing homelessness during COVID-19. **28%** also credited **programs to prevent homelessness** such as RRH.

VII. **44%** have **no concerns** about sharing data with the local **Public Health Information Exchange,** as long as client PPI is protected.

VIII. **12%** expressed the need for effective **collaboration and leadership**.

The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) recently did a robust outreach initiative on revamping the strategic planning on homelessness. The following initiatives and priorities were presented at the work session:

- End the criminalization of homelessness and implement solutions that treat **housing as a right.**
- Commit to addressing **racial disparities and advancing racial equity** across systems, policies, and programs that target structural harm and generational trauma, incorporate intersectional lenses, and provide culturally relevant resources and services.
- **Align housing resources and strategies** at every level of government.
- Create new and preserve existing **affordable housing.**
- **Prevent homelessness** through a regional systems-level approach that reduces evictions and provides flexible cash assistance as well as quick access to mainstream benefits.
- **Streamline referral and intake processes** to reduce barriers to housing and strengthen implementation of the Housing First approach.
- Increase availability of and access to **supportive and wraparound services** that pair with housing interventions.
- Support **community-driven solutions** and systems that provide and facilitate **flexibility and coordination**, particularly between the health and homeless systems.
- Acknowledge **unique barriers and tailor solutions** to meet diverse needs of BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, and People of Color), LGBTQ+, Veterans, and youth.
- **Create partnerships** for local communities, providers, and people with lived experience to work together with the federal government throughout the policymaking process.
- Expand the availability and accessibility of **affordable housing.**
- Meaningfully include—compensate and/or hire—people with lived experience in decision-making processes, adopting the notion of **"nothing about us without us."**
- Address systemic bias to disrupt barriers that further historic disparities.
- Incorporate a **whole-of-person approach** to care that recognizes unique barriers and needs, and provides wraparound services, including emotional, social, and peer career supports.
- Integrate **culturally specific and trauma-informed care** to service delivery.
- Prevent homelessness with holistic efforts that **break the cycle of poverty**.
- Disrupt the vicious cycle of criminalization and homelessness by prioritizing and expanding access to **low-barrier housing and supportive services, including landlord mediation resources.**

Questions posed by the group:

The group collectively raised several pertinent questions in an effort shed light on prominent issues that act as significant barriers and exacerbate homelessness throughout the community.

How do we address the challenge of assisting individuals with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse issues?

How can we help people that fall through the cracks of existing programs?

How do we increase accessibility of health care possibilities?

How do you provide assistance for individuals without a dwelling to place them?

What incentives can be offered to landlords?

How can we provide adequate assistance for those with disabilities, lack of familial support, and limited transitional centers?

Moderated Panel

During the work session the following attendees participated in a moderated panel to define the roles that agencies historically held in the community and specific roles during the pandemic:

Andrea Ramirez, Project Amistad

Despite Amistad being a part of numerous conversations, it was "not at the table." The agency has been in the community for 46 years and operates on a no excuses, just results philosophy. The pandemic presented many challenges for staff however, the challenge was accepted. Staff engaged the frontlines with effective strategy and ample experience to acquire necessary resources (i.e., PPE) and train their team accordingly to combat Covid-19. - Beautiful disaster/perfect storm

Amistad helped the community by providing essential transportation services and managed care for those in need, especially veterans and individuals dealing with homelessness. Amistad not only incorporated heightened safety measures to protect staff and clients but also continuously worked with several entities (with homeless initiatives) to maximize strengths and relationships to continue to serve El Paso.

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garner more resources but also enhance the quality of services rendered to the most vulnerable in our population, contributing to the ongoing efforts to end homelessness.

Conclusion

The State of Homelessness Session, while being the first of its kind will not be the last. The City of El Paso is committed to convening sessions in the future to better align resources amongst the social service provider network. Overarching themes that we heard throughout the session include access to mental health care, case management services and permanent supportive housing for difficult to house populations. While the efficacy of the "housing first" philosophy is acknowledged by the City and the Social Service providers, for certain populations, transitional housing may be a better option, particularly in the context of populations that require additional assistance and services. Integration of homelessness data into the Public Health Information Exchange (PHIX) will allow for better-informed decision-making for future deployment of resources to address the challenges and gaps within homeless service provision. Surge capacity for emergency shelter was briefly discussed, and the last 2 years of surge events in homelessness, whether it be migrant or COVID related, illustrates that this continues to be a serious gap within the homeless service system. As we heard in the session, community collaboration and the alignment of resources is critical as we work to continue to respond to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Appendix 2. Community Needs Assessment

Overview

The Department of Community and Human development introduced the Community Needs Assessment to document and gather robust public input on what is needed to improve their communities. The Community Needs assessment (CNA) serves as the starting point in addressing community vulnerabilities. In September of 2022, at the beginning of the entitlement funding cycle, the Department of Community and Human Development (DCHD) launched the Community Needs Assessment process. The purpose of the CNA is to obtain viewpoints from community members regarding housing and community development needs and proposed activities that support identified community vulnerabilities.

This process was led by the DCHD Civic Empowerment team. The DCHD Civic Empowerment team's primary objective is to advance equity, build sustainability and improve community outcomes through equitable programming volunteerism, and education designed to empower residents and strengthen their relationship with local government. In order to provide objective findings and conclusions, members of the CNA team do not administer or oversee DCHD grants, nor do they influence annual DCHD policies or procedures.

Community Vulnerabilities are defined as groups and communities at a higher risk for poor health as a result of the barriers they experience to social, economic, political, and environmental resources, as well as limitations due to illness or disability (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health 2022).

DCHD conducted 13 one on one interviews with members of Council, civilians, and business owners. 120 individual survey responses resulting from a total of 45 submitted surveys, that pertinent data was collected.

Community stakeholders and community members were invited to participate in one of seven roundtable discussions, which resulted in a total of 96 participants. In addition to roundtable discussions, DCHD conducted one on one interviews with members of Council, community members and leaders from community organizations. Thirteen individual stakeholder interviews were conducted;

Overall, a total of nearly 500 unique factors were captured and entered into the Community Needs Assessment wheel outlining the strengths, weaknesses and improvement areas within the community.

Communities of Excellence

The City of El Paso creates opportunities for innovation and collaboration through strategic partnerships which have been demonstrated throughout our Communities of Excellence Initiative. Communities of Excellence (COE) is a formalized group of community organizations, across key sectors that take a systemic approach to improving overall community performance through collaboration and partnerships. The COE is an essential part of the planning process because it allows for businesses, organizations, and governments to collaborate more successfully across sectors, and align their strategic priorities more effectively. The Community Needs Assessment consisted of a combination of surveys and focus groups from organizations representing the following categories:

- Equity + Inclusion
- Housing +Homelessness
- Family Stability
- Health and Wellbeing
- Food Security

To ensure maximum participation and representation, organizations that have a vested interested in each one of the categories were also invited to participate. Below are organizations that had a representative at our Community Roundtables.

Equity + Inclusion
- YWCA
- Volar
- Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
- Sunrise El Paso
- Justice Leadership Council

Housing + Homelessness
- Amistad
- HOME
- Opportunity Center
- Coalition for the Homeless
- Salvation Army

Family Stability
- EP Center for Children
- Workforce Solutions Borderplex
- Philosophic Systems Institute
- United Way

Health and Wellbeing
- Emergence Health Network
- Paso Del Norte Health Foundation
- MCA Foundation
- Mental Health Policy Institute
- Project Vida

Food Security
- Desert Spoon
- UT Health
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program Board
- El Paso Community Foundation

Government
- EPPD
- EPISD
- YISD
- County
- DMD
- UTEP

NGO
- Texas Gas
- El Paso Electric

Civil Society
- Neighborhood Associations
- El Paso Neighborhood Coalition
- Neighborhood Leadership Academy
- Boards and Commissions

Businesses
- Microsoft
- LIFT Fund
- El Paso Chamber of Commerce
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

Perceptions Assessment Methodology:

Civic Empowerment assessed perceptions by engaging COE Stakeholders, Neighborhood Associations and members of the public by conducting formal stakeholder input sessions. This method allowed us to capture stakeholder feedback collected in 12 different categories, ranging from leadership and strategy, health and wellbeing, infrastructure and environment, and economy and society. Participants were asked to assess whether the input is an area of strength or if it's an area of improvement.

The key tools to analyze and assess stakeholder feedback is done through a perceptions assessment tool. The perceptions assessment tool is a circular model composed of twelve drivers that represent the main outcomes that a resilient city should aim for. The perceptions assessment tool provides a set of 52 indicators and adequate metrics for measuring and assessing city's resilience.

The Perceptions Assessment Tool helps us assess the personal views of various stakeholders gathered through interviews, online surveys, focus groups, workshops, conferences and meetings. A wide range of stakeholders was approached with the aim to give voice to city groups that are usually excluded from the decision-making process. Thus, the different initiatives involved city districts' council members, city staff and elected officials, central government authorities, NGOs, neighborhood associations, homeless, senior citizens and more.

Each participant was asked a series of questions:

1. What is El Paso's greatest vulnerability?

2. What is El Paso's greatest strength?

Each of those responses were recorded as a factor of resilience. A factor is an asset, system, practice or procedure that contributes to the city's ability to prepare, recover, and adapt in the face of shocks and stresses. The objectives for the Perceptions Assessment Tool included:

- Establish a baseline of the city's resilience strengths and vulnerabilities as perceived by city stakeholders though a qualitative but systemic and inclusive process
- Surface key priorities, opportunities and issues
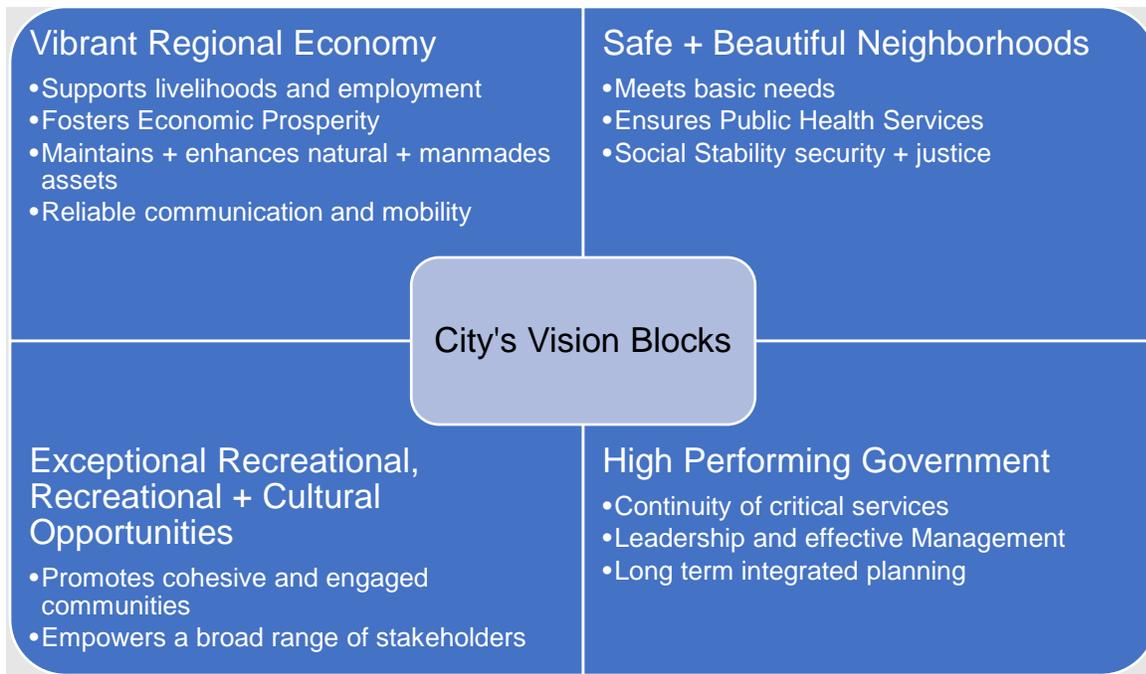- Engage stakeholders in a meaningful way

Each of the factors that were recorded were then assigned a corresponding resilience driver. Resilience drivers are indicators that essentially tell us what matters most when a city faces chronic stresses or sudden shocks. Below are the 12 resilience drivers that were assigned to each one of the factors given during the roundtable sessions and surveys:

Resilience Drivers:

1. Meets Basic Needs
2. Supports livelihoods & employment
3. Ensures public health services
4. Promotes cohesive & engaged communities
5. Ensures social stability, security & justice
6. Fosters Economic prosperity
7. Maintains & enhances protective natural & manmade assets
8. Ensures continuity of critical services
9. Provides reliable communication & mobility
10. Promotes leadership & effective management
11. Empowers a broad range of stakeholders
12. Fosters long term integrated planning

The City of El Paso has adopted 4 Vision Blocks for the City of El Paso. These vision blocks ensure that each one of our City's strategic objective share alignment across the organization. The vision blocks can be seen below in Figure 1.

Figure 1: City of El Paso's Strategic Vision Blocks

Vibrant Regional Economy
- Supports livelihoods and employment
- Fosters Economic Prosperity
- Maintains + enhances natural + manmades assets
- Reliable communication and mobility

Safe + Beautiful Neighborhoods
- Meets basic needs
- Ensures Public Health Services
- Social Stability security + justice

City's Vision Blocks

Exceptional Recreational, Recreational + Cultural Opportunities
- Promotes cohesive and engaged communities
- Empowers a broad range of stakeholders

High Performing Government
- Continuity of critical services
- Leadership and effective Management
- Long term integrated planning

Community Roundtables:

During the month of September 2022, the Community and Human Development department began hosting a series of roundtable events to acquire valuable responses from the community regarding housing and community development needs. The Community Needs Assessment was launched with the primary objective of improving the quality of life for residents through equity, education and empowerment. A total of seven roundtable discussions were held.

Roundtable discussions, which resulted in a total of 96 participants, were offered in a variety of platforms ranging from a hybrid model, allowing individuals in an in-person setting to collaborate with those who selected to contribute virtually. Of those 96 participants, 31 community members were graduates of the City of El Paso's Neighborhood Leadership Academy, resulting in two Advanced Neighborhood Leadership Academy sessions. Participants within these exclusive sessions are actively involved community members that share a unique perspective to include solutions, on issues facing the community.

In addition to community residents, stakeholders from various community organizations, were present to discuss key issues within the sectors of Housing and Homelessness, Health and Wellbeing, Food Security and Family Stability; subject matter experts from El Paso Coalition for the Homeless, The Opportunity Center, YWCA, Project Amistad, United Way, The El Paso Community Foundation were among the organizations represented.

In order to accurately capture the information being provided during all roundtable discussions, the Civic Empowerment team utilized the use of color coded post-it notes- pink, yellow and blue, which were provided to participants. Participants were then asked to write their comments, factors, on the specific color of post-it, which allowed the team to accurately notate areas where improvement is necessary to areas of strength; pink- need to do better, yellow- doing well, but can improve, blue- area of strength.

Below is a summary of the direct responses that were recorded as part of the Community Roundtable sessions that were hosted.

Method	Greatest Strengths/ Assets	Key Areas for Improvement
Community Roundtables	• The people, the community always step up to help one another in time of need • Opportunities for growth and development • Agencies working together to address homelessness • Downtown revitalization • Working with UTEP to promote resources for youth • Binational, bicultural community • Adelante's diversion program- only one of its kind. • Organizations that invest in the environment • First time homeowner programs • Knowledge of community • Integration of community services • Family values • Entertainment • Technology • Neighborhood Leadership Academy	• Engagement between city leaders and community members • Access to resources for at risk and vulnerable populations • Affordable Housing • Accessible Transportation • Streets and Maintenance • The need for more Police • Need for more activities • Better access to resources and organizations providing the resources • Housing for Seniors and Low-Income populations • Street repairs and traffic mitigation • Inclusion of community members in decision making • Resources for Seniors • Access to Mental Health resources • Low Wages • Access to food • Increases in taxes • Disability services • Economic growth • Affordable Healthcare

Strategic Leadership Interviews

In addition to the roundtable sessions and the survey, key informant interviews were scheduled with different agencies in the community. In order to select our panel of participants for the strategic leadership interviews, we targeted participants who held a leadership role utilizing the strategic vision blocks set forth in the City's strategic plan.

Stakeholder interviews were comprised of key strategic leadership under the City's four vision blocks.:

- Vibrant Regional Economy- Cindy Ramos Davison, El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Safe and Beautiful Neighborhoods- Debora Zuloaga, United Way of El Paso County
- Recreational, Cultural + Educational Opportunities- Eric Pearson, El Paso Community Foundation
- High Performing Government- City Manager Tommy Gonzalez

The objective was to have one-on-one conversations with key leadership that are especially knowledgeable and offer perspectives from their experience within the City's four vision blocks. These initial meetings targeted individuals representing a diversity of interests and organizations to explore a range of issues and needs. The individual nature of these discussions enabled participants to be more candid and in-depth than they otherwise might be in a larger roundtable community discussion. Moreover, discussions could be focused on the topics important to each individual.

Below is a summary of the direct responses that were recorded as part of the Strategic Leadership Interviews.

Method	Greatest Strengths/ Assets	Key Areas for Improvement
Strategic Leadership Interviews	- Interventions in homelessness - Integrated partnerships - Small businesses - Education – partnerships with UTEP and Texas Tech	- Attracting businesses downtown - Handling supply chain issues/ inflationary costs - Expanding partnership opportunities - Youth is an untapped resource - Investment in specific quality of life environments and built environment around - There will always be a need for more programs

Council Member Interviews

Each of the members of Council were asked to participate on a one-on-one interview. These interviews provided additional perspective from elected officials throughout the City's eight representative districts.

Below is a summary of the direct responses that were recorded as part of the Council Member interviews that were hosted.

Method	Greatest Strengths/ Assets	Key Areas for Improvement
Council Member Interviews	- City hired an ombudsman to help expedite permitting and assist businesses - The City was able to educate the community and pilot projects throughout the pandemic. - The different Non-Profit agencies throughout the city	- Labor and materials shortages - Opportunities to invest in low-moderate income areas - Focused resources to address the needs of individual homeowners - Focus resources on aging infrastructure - Need a plan and buy-in for a facility addressing food security and other vulnerabilities - Large gap for mental health services - Satellite food distribution - Need projects that benefit community as a whole

Resident Surveys

In an effort to secure well-rounded data, Community Needs Assessment surveys were sent out to various community members and community groups; a total of 45 surveys were returned, capturing 120 individual responses on various needs faced by the community, including community strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement.

When asked the question, "What do you see as the greatest need in our community," the majority of responses stated that affordable housing was the greatest need within the community. Following the need for affordable housing, was infrastructure, which included street repairs, lighting installations, speed bumps, etc. Mental Health Accessibility, well-paying jobs, migrant assistance, resources for the unhoused, and assistance for the elderly, were also vastly noted as a great need within the community.

Regarding what makes the community most vulnerable, low wages, access to resources for underserved populations, immigration, homelessness, access to affordable housing, and the lack of attracting large scale businesses, were among the most notable responses.

Included in the survey, individuals were asked to rate the level of need for the following, Community Facilities, ADA Improvements, Programs that Support Homelessness, Mental Illness Assistance, Food Security Assistance, Affordable Housing Assistance, Street and Sidewalk Improvements, Childcare Assistance, and Energy Efficiency/Weatherization Improvements. Individuals classified the level of need by selecting "Great Need," Moderate Need," or "Low Need."

Figure 3: Resident Survey Results

"Please rate the level of need of each of the following by selecting "Great Need" "Moderate Need' or Low Need"
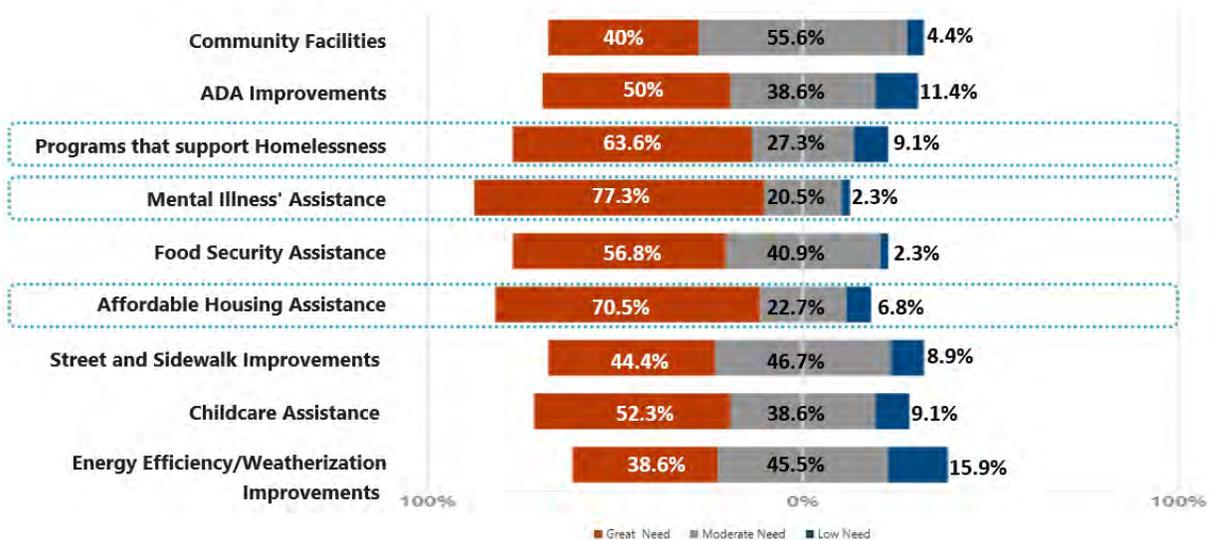
Community Facilities were viewed as a Moderate Need, with nearly 56 percent of the responses classifying it as such. Half of the responses, rated ADA Improvements as a Great Need. Programs that Support Homelessness were also seen as a Great Need at almost 64 percent of responses. Mental Illness Assistance was selected as a Great Need by 34, (or 77 percent) of the 45 individuals who submitted a survey. Food Security Assistance and Affordable Housing, and Childcare Assistance were also identified as a Great Need within the community. Street and Sidewalk Improvements in addition to Energy Efficiency/Weatherization Improvements, were noted as Moderate Needs.

Figure 3 was based on 9 categories of focus; *Community Facilities, ADA Improvement, Programs the Support Homelessness, Mental Illness' Assistance, Food Security Assistance, Affordable Housing Assistance, Street and Sidewalk Improvements, Childcare Assistance and Energy Efficiency/Weatherization Improvement.* Participants were asked to rank priorities based on a scale of low need, moderate need and great need. The following are the results that were recorded:

- **3 Greatest Need Categories**
  - Mental Illness' Assistance 77.3%
  - Affordable Housing Assistance 70.5%
  - Programs that Support Homelessness 63.6%
- **3 Moderate Need Categories**
  - Community Facilities 55.6%
  - Street and Sidewalk Improvements 46.7%

- o Energy Efficiency/Weatherization Improvements 45.5.%
- **3 Lowest Need Categories**
  - o Energy Efficiency/Weatherization 15.9%
  - o ADA Improvements 11.4%
  - o Programs that Support Homelessness/ Childcare Assistance 9.1%

Senior Recognition Survey

During the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) celebration of 48 years of service to the community, RSVP held its recognition event on October 1st, 2022, at the Chamizal Recreation center. We Volunteers and guests were invited to a breakfast event to collect their recognition items. Volunteer and attendees also took the time to participate in submitting a community needs assessment survey. The surveys were both in English and in Spanish. Forty (40) surveys were collected from Seniors who participated in the event.

Boards and Commissions

Four City Boards and Commissions were selected to participate in the Community Need Assessment:

- o **Accessibility Advisory Committee –** Addresses Accessibility concerns and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- o **AmeriCorps Seniors Advisory Council -** Advisory Council of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, and the Foster Grandparent Program.
- o **Fair Housing Task Force-** Identifies impediments to housing and fair housing choice
- o **Veterans Affairs Advisory Council-** Advisory Council related to resources available to Veterans

These boards and commissions were selected because each of the boards represent a vulnerable or underrepresented population. Capturing the voices of those who represent these populations was essential to the perceptions assessment process to ensure a wide range of perceptions were collected. A presentation to the board was conducted at each meeting and staff would record board member's feedback. Additionally, a survey was sent to each of the board members where the board member would take time to provide additional feedback based on their role as a board member and the populations they represent.

Perceptions Assessment Results

Over 420 different factors were entered into the perceptions assessment tool. According to Figure 4, you'll see that driver 4- *Promotes cohesive and engaged communities*, 6- *Fosters Economic Prosperity*, and 11- *Empowers a broad range of stakeholders* have the most perceptions associated to them. Driver 4- *Promotes cohesive & engaged communities* has the highest number of associations, with an even split of perceptions with ratings on 'need to do better' and an 'area of strength'.

Figure 4: Overall Perceptions Assessment

Government Perceptions Assessment

Most respondents in the government field overwhelmingly responded that *fostering long-term & integrated planning* needs to do better, followed by *supporting livelihoods and employment*. Government officials actively operate based on strategic plans that guide day-to-day operations and based on these responses, feel that the monitoring and integration of those plans needs to improve. Long-term mapping can be seen to fall short based on changes that the originally drafted standards and procedures didn't take into account. The correlation between the two drivers of fostering long-term & integrated planning and supporting livelihoods and employment demonstrates the need for change on how the City intends on amending labor policy, improving residents' access to living wages, and proactively stimulating business development. Although, based on the level of "doing well but can improve" responses in the *supports livelihoods and employment* category, if the City can ameliorate its continuous planning efforts and adopt long-term, but tangible solutions, then there may be an opportunity to shift the *supports livelihoods and employment* category into an area of strength.

**Figure 5: Government Assessment**

Business Perceptions Assessment

Maintaining and enhancing protective natural and manmade assets was the top factor in which the business community responded that needs improvement, with both *fosters long-term and integrated planning* and *fostering economic prosperity* immediately following. These two categories go hand-in-hand with local business development, inward investments, and subcategories that directly impact small businesses and large corporations. The business sector also provided a clear consensus in claiming that *promoting cohesive and engaged communities* is an area of strength for El Paso. This is an area of opportunity that can potentially be leveraged by continuing to engage with our community to then explore implementing environmental policy and/or safeguarding existing infrastructure, resulting in the advancement of how the City *maintains and enhances protective natural and manmade assets* to then become an area of strength. It's also important to note that driver 2 – *supports livelihoods and employment* and driver 11 – *empowers a broad range of stakeholders* received a high percentage of "doing well but can improve" from the business community.

Figure 6: Business Perceptions Assessment
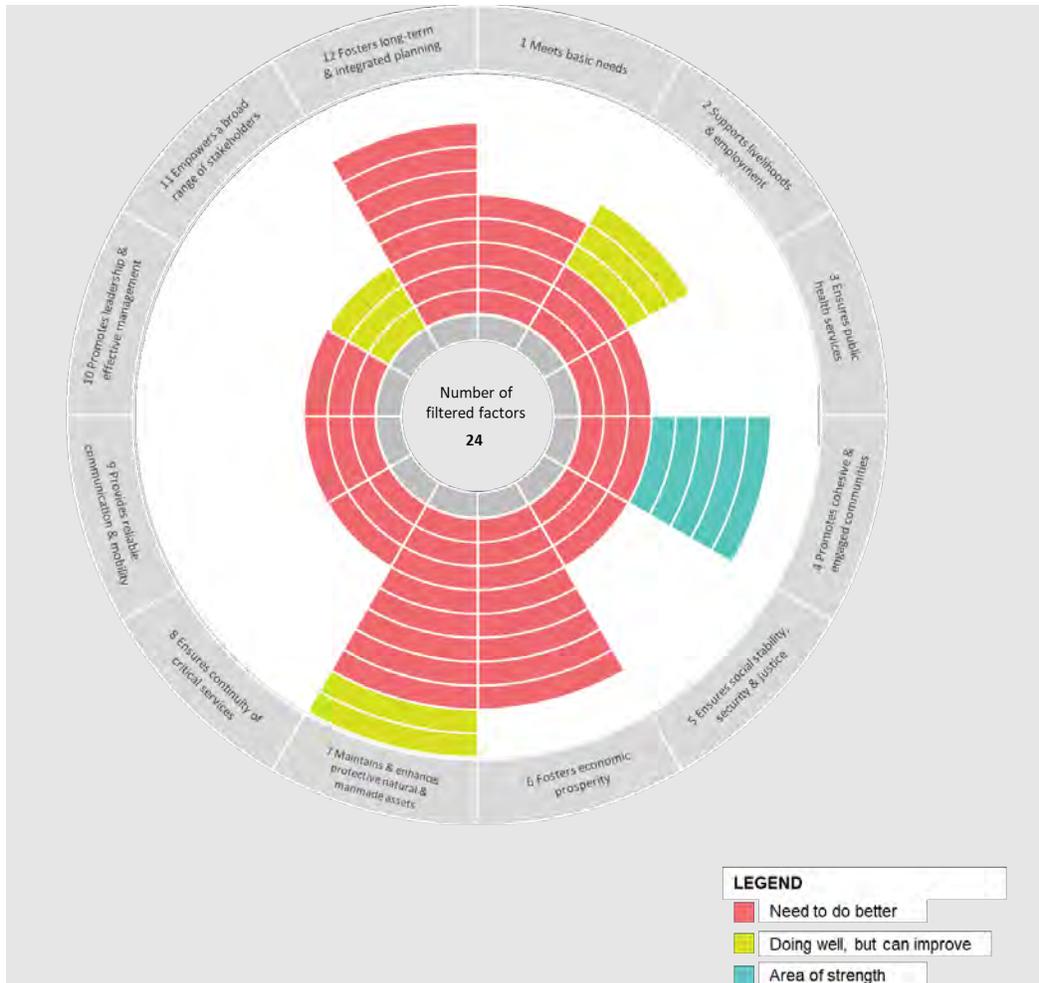
Civil Society Perceptions Assessment

The Civil Society participants made up approximately 70% of the filtered factors, with a high 50/50 split of *promoting cohesive and engaged communities* needing to improve and standing as an area of strength. In reference to Figure 7 below, the area of opportunity lies in the connection between how the City galvanizes community participation and how we *empower a broad range of stakeholders*. The City has an opportunity to drive its evident influence in promoting social connectivity to strengthen its investment in educating its residents, share best practices, and diversify its stakeholders, with the intent of converting future CNA responses on driver 11 – *empowers a broad range of stakeholders* into a category that community sees as an area that the City excels in. The Civic Society assessment also demonstrated the highest percentage of feedback on needing to improve driver 2 – meets basic needs, overwhelmingly in the area of housing; nearly 90%.

Figure 7: Civil Society Assessment
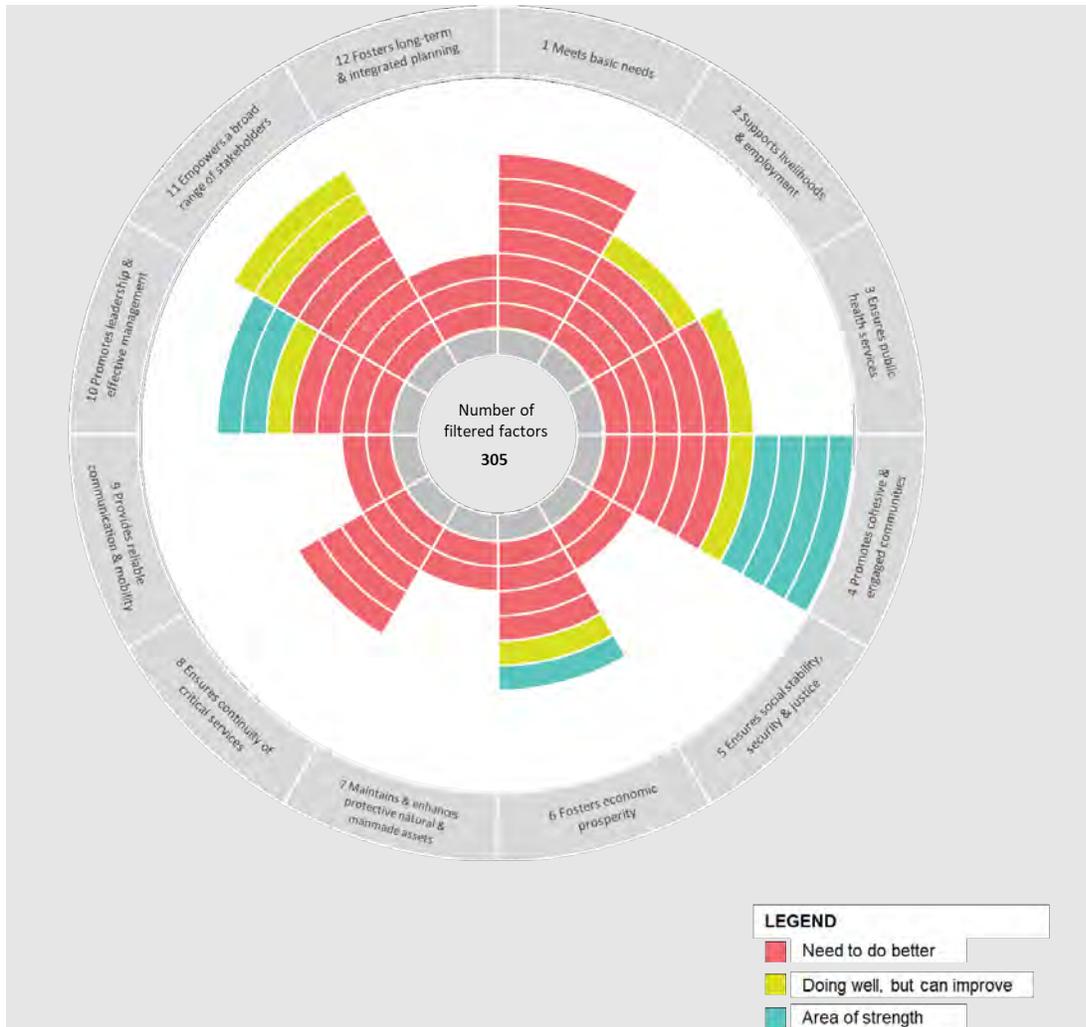
Academia Perceptions Assessment

With just over 30 filtered factors from stakeholders in academia, the input provides a clear picture that the City needs to do better in supporting livelihoods and employment. Similar to other assessments though, our community's culture and manner in which it collectively unites in times of need were traits that were praised about El Paso. These stakeholders addressed concerns about food and economic insecurities that create a cycle of poverty among those who need resources the most. This wheel demonstrates yet another opportunity that entails leveraging the community's strong participation and sense of family cohesion to become more responsive to our residents' needs and insecurities by increasing their access to financial gain, skills training, and a more secure qualify of life.

Figure 8: Academia Assessment

Key Takeaways- Priorities Emerging From the CNA

The Community Needs Assessment included interviews from key stakeholders, community roundtables and surveys. We listened carefully and noted that there were many linkages and convergences on many of the discussions and responses. The following are top priorities and takeaways from the CNA.

1. *Meeting Basic Needs*

One of the key takeaways from our analysis is that the ability to meet basic needs such as food and housing is directly connected to fostering economic prosperity. Many of the participants stressed that the community needs support in meeting basic needs such as food, housing, utilities, transportation. We also heard that even access to broadband should be considered a basic need. Many of the conversations stressed the need for supporting people experiencing homelessness with wrap around services like mental health and food support. The hardships caused by the pandemic has been widespread, and in many cases, it exacerbated challenges that households were already facing such as food insecurity or housing affordability. Thus, continuing to support a family's ability to meet basic needs is still necessary in order to achieve economic prosperity at the household level.

2. *Empowering Communities*

For business owners, government officials, and our neighborhood associations, there were a number of conversations about being grateful for being invited to participate, and the desire to want to *continue* to be a part of future discussions. What we heard overwhelmingly is that community and business owners alike, want to contribute to the decision-making and planning processes. The analysis also showed that there are also perception interdependencies by empowering a broad range of stakeholders, you promote cohesive and engaged communities. Meaning, stakeholder empowerment increases the ability and confidence of the issues relating to each individual. While engagement significantly increases participation, empowerment aims to enable people to take control of the actions that affects their livelihoods.

Interview and survey responses revealed a need for enhanced collaboration to advance local and reginal planning. We saw a desire for long-term integrated planning within each of our perception assessments. Government officials, academia, and civil society all shared the same sentiments in the *Fosters long term integrated Planning* category. Integrated planning was particularly important when speaking to neighborhood leaders in the Advanced Neighborhood Leadership sessions. Participants often highlighted the need to have open dialogues during all phases of future planning process to ensure information is equitable shared and shaped by all stakeholders. However, there was a strong expression by some neighborhood leaders that they are being asked for input and collaboration, but their input often hasn't translated into actionable change. Communities of Excellence can be the springboard for this type of planning with members of the community, organizations can collectively deploy resources based off the community needs identified in this assessment and in turn continue to collaborate.

3. Homelessness: Mental Health and Housing Affordability

The causes of homelessness are extremely diverse and complex. The individual complexities that contribute to homelessness increases the difficulty of creating universal solutions to address homelessness. Our key takeaways from the Resident Survey results, showed us that community members see a higher need in addressing mental health, housing affordability and homelessness. These 3 causes arguably are linked to one another. Mental illness and substance abuse was often brought up on the topic of homelessness. Similarly, the discussions around rising costs and housing affordability were also discussed when the topic of homelessness was also raised. While some participants applauded the City's effort to prioritizing homelessness, the survey responses indicated a need to do more.

Poverty and homelessness exacerbate mental illness, and COVID-19 and the measures put in place to control the spread of the virus exacerbated metal health concerns for much of the community. Addressing this issue by identifying those in need of services and making those services accessible beyond the hours of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm will be important to meet the needs of this especially vulnerable population.

4. Prioritizing Multi-beneficial Projects

Funding limitations and agency capacity is always a challenge that all sectors face. Because of this, there is a need to identify projects that include multiple benefits across sectors that achieve multiple planning goals at one time. An example of this would to be to situate programming or facilities with multiple benefits that can help address multiple vulnerabilities, such as mental health, housing and homelessness. Addressing multi-benefits like mental health and homelessness under one roof can provide supportive individualized services to community members and enables better outcomes as a result. This model can be used with all vulnerable populations because of the complex nature of their situations. Another population that comes to mind is opportunity youth, which often struggle with both education and employment. So tailoring solutions that address multiple vulnerabilities ensures that steps are being taken to find solutions to root causes and not symptoms.

Opportunities for Improvement

Despite information sharing and reaching across diverse sectors, we were challenged by interviewing subjects with lived experience, particularly those who are experiencing homelessness. In future needs assessments, we think a key component of our stakeholder interviews will be to ensure that voices of lived experiences are captured.

Another recommended population to capture in the future would be to ensure that the voice of our youth is represented. Particularly those within the 16–24-year-olds age range will be vital for future iterations of this assessment.