Linking Community Building Blocks for Educational, Economic and Equity Outcomes

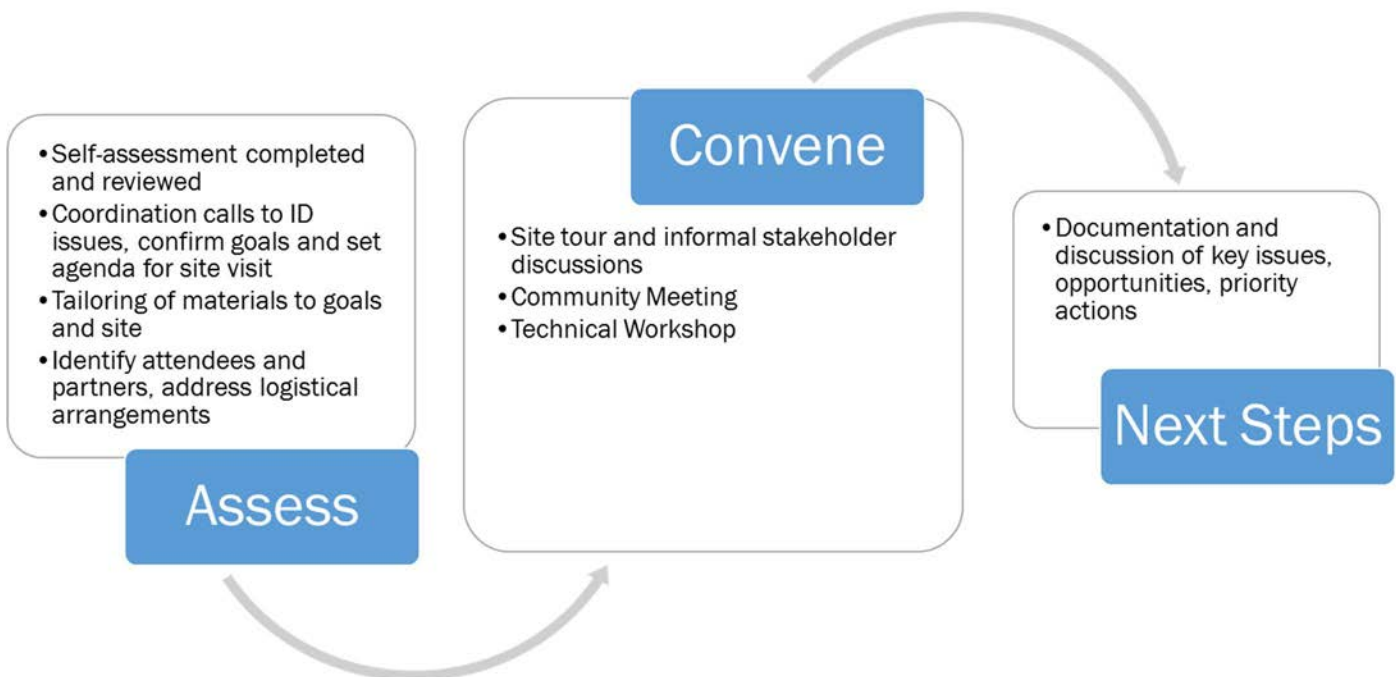**BUILDING BLOCKS TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**
Oak Park Public Library, Triton College and Equity Team of Oak Park
Next Steps Memorandum

September 2018

INTRODUCTION

The core mission of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is to protect human health and the environment. EPA's Office of Community Revitalization (OCR) helps support this mission by working with communities to reach development goals that have positive effects on air, water, public health, economic vitality, and quality of life for residents. OCR created the Building Blocks Technical Assistance program to provide quick, targeted assistance on specific smart growth development topics by bringing subject matter experts to communities. OCR has teamed up in 2018 with the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) to provide Building Blocks Technical Assistance upon request to the museums and libraries across the country that are participating in IMLS' Community Catalyst program.

The Building Blocks Technical Assistance process helps a community or organization move through a process of assessment, convening, and action planning — sharing information about a given topic and helping people create a plan to move forward on implementation. It includes a series of pre- and post-workshop conference calls, a self-assessment, and an on-site convening of residents and community leaders to discuss issues, next steps, and actions related to advancing the community's specific goals. These efforts help a given community gain a deeper understanding of a particular smart growth issue and identify specific steps necessary to move them closer to implementation. The diagram below outlines the typical flow of a Building Blocks Technical Assistance engagement.

Assess
- Self-assessment completed and reviewed
- Coordination calls to ID issues, confirm goals and set agenda for site visit
- Tailoring of materials to goals and site
- Identify attendees and partners, address logistical arrangements

Convene
- Site tour and informal stakeholder discussions
- Community Meeting
- Technical Workshop

Next Steps
- Documentation and discussion of key issues, opportunities, priority actions

THREE STAGES OF TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

This memorandum documents the key outcomes of the technical assistance for the Activating Community Opportunities (ACO) program, a partnership between Oak Park Public Library, Triton College and the Equity Team of Oak Park. These community partners requested technical assistance

through their application to the Community Catalyst grant program from the Institute of Museum and Library Services and determined that the Building Blocks program's Equitable Development tool would be the best fit for their focus. The technical assistance helped the lead organizations and their community development partners identify key community issues, high priority strategies, and specific actions to achieve the following goals:

1. **Goal 1 – Assess and sustain current programming:** Solidify the nature and sustainability of the Activating Community Opportunities program with respect to program design, organizational capacity, funding and community participation/support.
2. **Goal 2 – Strengthen coordinated approaches to community development:** Identify and vet project and programmatic concepts for addressing issues of economic stability for Oak Park's low and very-low income residents, including:
   a. Solutions for affordable housing and housing to address temporary and chronic homelessness;
   b. Transportation access and walkability relative to patrons and the immediate area of the Main Library; and
   c. Food security and healthy foods access.

COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Oak Park is a village adjacent to the west side of the City of Chicago. The village and its neighboring communities have a long and unique cultural, social, and economic history that is marked by urban evolution, diversification, neighborhood change and all of the tension that comes with those dynamics. It is still defining itself, as public-private partnerships are attracting new investment and spurring on economic development while a large number of local governmental entities, agencies, and organizations grapple with how to coordinate community decisions, define their roles as agents of change, and set a unified vision for the advancement of the community and its residents.

OAK PARK IS RICH WITH HISTORY, COMMUNITY ASSETS AND URBAN AMENITIES. IT IS AN ECONOMICALLY DIVERSE COMMUNITY WITH ITS OWN SHARE OF BIG CITY CHALLENGES AND OPORTUNITIES. (PHOTO CREDIT: STEINBECK)

Oak Park has the character and function of a well-designed small city with access to all of the opportunities the greater region has to offer. There is obviously a great amount of care put into the stewardship of the place and its buildings, infrastructure, and assets would be the envy of most cities of similar size. Oak Park is a center of economic activity in its part of the region, and a destination worth visiting and experiencing.

The current population of over 50,000 is a mix of people that spans the whole economic spectrum. Perhaps as much as any area of the Chicago Region, there exists a highly diverse patchwork of affluent neighborhoods, mixed income neighborhoods and low-income, low-wealth neighborhoods within Oak Park and in neighboring communities.

The Oak Park community is well-resourced with people and organizations that are striving for social welfare, equity, stability, and improved economic outcomes. Many policies, programs, and community conversations are centered around how people of different economic means, races, and cultures can share space, be urban neighbors, and work together to thrive. One of the persistent challenges of the community is the educational attainment gap that exists between students from different economic and racial backgrounds.

It is this gap, and the opportunity to work cooperatively to close this gap, that has brought together institutional and organizational partners to develop the ACO program. The ACO program is a family and student mentoring/coaching consortium made up of the Oak Park Public Library, Triton College, and the Equity Team. In this collaborative work, the Oak Park Public Library is the site for the tutoring, Triton College is organizing volunteer tutors and the Equity Team is working with the parents of students in the program.

The development of the program and the first phase of its delivery is being funding through a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services as part of its Community Catalyst Initiative. The ACO program uses a Dual Capacity-Building Framework model, which includes family engagement initiatives (the focus of the E-Team) and student engagement (the focus of Triton College and the volunteer tutor network) all aimed at improving student success. The overall goal of the initiative is to help create equitable access to educational attainment by addressing needs one student and one family at a time.

The Building Blocks Technical Assistance workshop came at an important moment as the ACO program partners implement the first phase of the educational program. From the beginning, these partners recognized the that primary elements of household stability are important supportive elements for educational success and closing the opportunity gap. Providing reliable and quality housing, food, and transportation are foundational elements for families and students to succeed. The ACO stakeholders and its community partners used the Building Blocks Technical Assistance opportunity to define where and how they can focus their programming and community development efforts in the coming years. This Next Steps Memorandum outlines the process of the technical assistance, key issues and opportunities, and a set of strategies and next steps in addressing the goal areas identified during the assistance.

COMMUNITY CONVENING

The Building Blocks Technical Assistance workshop occurred on July 12 and July 13, 2018 at the Oak Park Public Library. The workshop brought together area residents; representatives from the Village of Oak Park and the Oak Park Township; Oak Park Public Library staff; Triton College; and numerous non-profits and civic organizations at work in the community. Several of these organizations participated on a Steering Committee to organize the two-day workshop. Representatives of the U.S. EPA,

THE COMMUNITY TOUR INCLUDED A VISIT TO THE OAK PARK RIVER FOREST FOOD PANTRY, WHICH SERVES APPROXIMATELY 1,400 HOUSEHOLDS A MONTH THROUGH A CLIENT CHOICE MODEL WHERE CLIENTS CAN SHOP FOR ITEMS AT THE FACILITY. (PHOTO CREDIT: STEINBECK)

IMLS, and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development also attended the workshop. Two EPA contractors facilitated the gathering along with the federal partners.

Community Tour

ACO and other Library Programs

The workshop began with presentations and discussions at the library that focused on the educational component of the community's coordinated programming. The initial discussion covered the relationship between the Oak Park Public Library and other community partners in conducting educational programming and community development initiatives. The tour of the library included the facilities used for the ACO program and other programs occurring there. There is a dedicated room at the library where tutoring is conducted. Triton College and Oak Park Public Library staff described the program's functions and desired outcomes. The thrust of the college and career readiness initiative is to give students tutoring and coaching to succeed in life after high school.

The Library also sponsors youth-oriented programing that works in concert with and supplements the ACO program. There are two social workers on staff at the library that play a number of roles in outreach, inter-organizational community development collaborations, library program design, and library patron services. The tour highlighted the weekly discussion circles that involve teens, library staff, and others. The circles use Restorative Justice techniques to engage teens in open conversation about personal and other challenges they are facing. In addition to promoting healing and development through sharing in this environment of trust, the program also emphasizes social, academic, and inter-personal skills that youth need to succeed in education and future work life.

Equity Team

In addition to learning about the Equity Team's role in the ACO program, the tour included a presentation by the organization on the nature of the work and the approach being used. The presentation included statistics on the educational and opportunity gaps that exist in student populations. It also gave information on how the organization works with parents to help their children succeed and to work within and with the educational system to address their children's educational needs and challenges.

Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry

The first stop on the tour was the Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry. The organization provides services to approximately 1,400 households per month with operations on Wednesday and Saturday. The food-insecure families in the community typically fall one-week short on food each month and the pantry's services are designed around closing that gap. The pantry operates through food donations, discounted food available at a regional food bank, financial contributions, and USDA food allotments of produce and other perishable goods. The pantry runs on staff of 12 full time and part time personnel. There is also volunteer time dedicated to the effort, which includes a network of 700-800 active volunteers at any given time that dedicates the equivalent of 15 full time staff in hours each month.

THE TOUR INCLUDED A VISIT TO HOUSING FORWARD, WHICH TAKES A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO HOMELESSNESS PREVENTION. (PHOTO CREDIT: STEINBECK)

Housing Forward

The second stop on the tour was the Oak Park office of Housing Forward. A member of the Oak Park Homelessness Coalition, it works in Oak Park and a number of other communities in west Cook County to prevent temporary and chronic homelessness. The work of Housing Forward centers around direct client services. The organization helps individuals and families retain and find permanent housing, including preventing the loss of housing before it occurs, alleviating the need for long-term shelter, moving people into sustainable permanent housing solutions, and improving housing retention.[1]

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[1] From https://www.housingforward.org/.

Community Meeting

The Oak Park Public Library hosted a community meeting during the evening of July 12. Approximately 50 people attended, representing agencies, organizations and neighborhoods.

The purpose of the meeting was to engage community members in sharing and learning about the ACO program, issues of equity, and the broader community development needs identified for the workshop. After a brief introduction about the ACO program and the two-day workshop, facilitators delivered a presentation addressing the connections between equitable development principles and the education, housing, food access, and transportation topics that were the focus of the workshop.

Two work sessions followed the presentation.

The first session was an asset mapping exercise designed to identify the organizations in the community that were focused on community development. Participants identified over 60 organizations and public programs at work in Oak Park. Most of the organizations were located in and focused on the Oak Park community. Participants also identified gaps in the current network of organizations, services being delivered, and topics being covered.

COMMUNITY MEETING PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR EDUCATION, HOUSING, TRANSPORTATION, AND FOOD ACCESS. (PHOTO CREDIT: STEINBECK)

Oak Park Community "Building Blocks" Identified at the Meeting by Participants:

- People
- Organizations
- Diversity
- Strong social capital
- Quality of place and services
- History and culture
- Public infrastructure
- Housing availability and affordability
- Stable local business district

During the second session participants identified key issues related to transportation, housing, education, and food insecurity. The results are documented in the Key Community issues section of this document. Results were used as the basis for the next day's discussions and recommendations.

Technical Workshop

On July 13, over 30 people representing a diverse cross-section of government, non-governmental organizations, academia, and residents attended a day-long technical workshop to help chart a path forward. After summarizing what was learned before the visit, during the community tour, and at the community town hall meeting, the facilitation team led participants through a series of discussions during the morning that helped to clarify needs, goals, barriers, and gaps for the ACO program and for education, housing, food access and transportation.

The workshop facilitators presented an overview of equitable development principals and provided case stories and strategies used in other communities. The presentation also included a summary of the community meeting results from the night before and the findings of a walking audit of the area around the library.

The morning session included a panel discussion on education-based initiatives in the community. The panel included representatives from Triton College, the Equity Team, and the Oak Park Public Library.

The workshop attendees spent the afternoon session developing action plans for each of the topic areas. Priority actions were developed in groups using the opportunities identified at the community meeting the night before. Each group focused in on steps that could be taken in the short term to address each goal area.

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS FORMED GROUPS TO DEVELOP STRATEGIES FOR EACH OF THE DEFINED GOAL AREAS. (PHOTO CREDIT: STEINBECK)

Recommended approaches to building community:

- Facilitate meaningful community engagement in public decisions
- Promote public health and a clean and safe environment
- Strengthen existing communities and neighborhoods
- Provide housing choices and strive for affordability
- Provide transportation options
- Improve access to opportunities and daily needs
- Preserve and build on the features that make a community distinctive

KEY COMMUNITY ISSUES

The following issues and opportunities were identified by the participants at the community meeting on July 12.

Education

Participants felt that challenges rose from limited resources allocated according to practices that historically tended to exclude minority students and those from households where parents are not engaged in the educational experience of their pre-school, grade school, middle school or high school age children. Opportunities being explored emerge from or augment the cradle to career approach:

EDUCATION CHALLENGES ARE BEING ADDRESSED BY THE ACTIVATING COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITIES PROGRAM AND OTHER PROGRAMS AT THE OAKLAND PARK PUBLIC LIBRARY. (PHOTO CREDIT: STEINBECK)

engage family, focus on early education, and provide enrichment tailored to student character and learning style. *Innovations:* Combine resources and talent of teaching staff with Triton College and Oak Park Library to close gaps in programming and grow expectations.

Challenges

- Equitable access to educational resources, including class placement, enrichment and services
- Achievement gap is significant along racial and economic lines
- Limited high quality, affordable early learning care
- People from underrepresented groups often aren't connected to the community
- Real social integration and friendships across races are lacking
- Bullying policies without known and implemented actions
- Need to upgrade existing resources to 21st century learning
- Inadequate resources for post-secondary training
- Unemployment is 4 times higher in African American community
- Low expectation, limited vision, and few role models

Opportunities

- Tutoring for middle school and early high school, especially girls
- Building stronger connection with Triton College
- Oak Park & River Forest High School scholarships
- Business partners with educational organizations for job training and internships
- Triton to increase program successes in post-secondary and early childhood classes
- Triton/OPPL and others collaborating on workforce development
- EDU assistance and initiatives
- After school care for kids under 12 from 3 to 6 pm

- Saturday collective work
- Collaboration for early childhood education
- Field trips: tutoring, sports and art activities
- Training in persistence
- Work with businesses that need to hire (develop readiness program for new employees)
- The high school has surplus funds that can be used to help low-wealth students

Housing

Challenges focused on unmet need. The costs of purchasing and for maintaining a home in Oak Park is increasingly out of reach for many. Opportunities described potential models for increasing the supply of housing that would be accessible for low income households/individuals beyond the current initiatives of the Village of Oak Park and others working in the region. *Innovations*: Engage those needing affordable housing in design. Permit and encourage co-housing and shared housing approaches to expand affordable housing options.

Challenges

- Availability and affordability
- Quality affordable housing is lacking
- High taxes making otherwise affordable homes unaffordable
- Cost of housing (price, taxes, services) is driving residents out
- Demand exceeds supply for publicly managed housing
- Housing Voucher Program resources are limited
- Subsidized senior housing has 2 year waiting list for Oak Park residents
- Providing support to increasing eligible population for housing assistance and for elderly to age-in-place
- Resegregation is happening in certain areas
- Development that preserves village assets/character is lacking

THE FEEDBACK RECEIVED AT THE COMMUNITY MEETING REVEALED NUMEROUS STRATEGIES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR ORGANIZATIONS TO WORK TOGETHER FOR ACHIEVING COMMON GOALS. (PHOTO CREDIT: STEINBECK)

Opportunities

- Affordable, communal, progressive housing for retirees who want to stay in Oak Park
- Encourage and/or require mixed-income housing
- Multi-generational housing
- Consider converting existing under developed properties to co-housing – particularly for elderly
- Home-sharing. Leverage housing stock for affordable housing with services included
- Attract human-scale, creative development
- Co-operative housing for affordability

- Require set percentage of new units to be affordable (not allowing for fee-in-lieu options)
- More access to building rehabilitation loans and incentives
- Housing for youth
- Engaging the consumer in the work of housing policy and program development

Food Insecurity and Health

Challenges include more than just the economic dimension of the need. The experience of food insecure individuals has to be understood and "designed" in order to be successful. Opportunities included nutrition education and cooking demonstrations as well as expanding access through coordinated participation retailers, restaurants, farmers, and non-profit partners. *Innovations:* Establish umbrella organization to coordinate resources and elevate awareness.

Challenges

- Stigma attached to being food insecure
- Lowest income families typically can only afford 3 weeks of food per month
- Access to healthy, affordable, locally grown food
- Farmers market is expensive
- Federal regulations prevent Oak Park from getting funding for summer food programs
- Lack of healthy and vegetarian options in restaurants

Opportunities

- Double Dollar value at farmers marking for SNAP vouchers and EBT purchases
- Cooking and nutrition instruction and cooking demonstrations
- Connecting food insecurity at Triton College with Oak Park, coordinate resources, increase awareness
- Expand home delivery of groceries to home-bound (test program of food pantry)
- Population density metric to attract food market
- Lunches served by Township

Transportation

Challenges focused on trip costs and parking. Opportunities and remedies addressed gaps in the existing system for youth and elderly, as well as the realities of varied destinations and travel times. *Innovations:* Subsidy for ride-share to expand routing and access at low public cost. Analyze existing subsidy and actual cost of public parking program.

Challenges

- Rising cost of transportation
- Parking availability
- Public transport is encouraged, but challenges of parking are not solved, especially for renters
- Cost for low income elderly
- Too many cars
- Parking overly subsidized or not disincentivized

- Parking spots for residents and overnight visitors still a problem in Oak Park downtown (although better now than in the past)
- Disability spots also in busy areas near PDP facilities
- Multi-destination transport
- Insufficient technologies for scheduling and routing
- Youth access to activities

Opportunities

- Township Senior Service bus
- Increasing ride share programs might be utilized to fill transportation gaps
- Transportation for long distance (schools and other institutions could connect ride-share dispatch/concierge as additional aspect of existing security service)
- Door-to-door transport, and accompanying inside as needed
- Increase availability of taxi coupons
- Available Township rides with a reservation
- Subsidized costs for low income and elderly
- Walk and bike for exercise and primary trip purposes

NEXT STEPS

The Building Blocks Technical Assistance workshop worked with the participating Oak Park community stakeholders to identify a set of strategies and specific actions to achieve two overarching goals, which are:

1. **Goal 1 – Assess current programming:** Solidify the nature and sustainability of the Activating Community Opportunities program with respect to program design, organizational capacity, funding and community participation/support.
2. **Goal 2 – Strengthen coordinated approaches to community development:** Identify and vet project and programmatic concepts for addressing issues of economic stability for Oak Park's low and very-low income residents, including:
   a. Solutions for affordable housing and housing to address temporary and chronic homelessness;
   b. Transportation access and walkability relative to patrons and the immediate area of the Main Library; and
   c. Food security and healthy foods access.

The community meeting helped reveal and elevate the values and priorities of community members, and the technical workshop on day 2 focused on identifying strategies that are aligned with those values. The participants of the technical workshop on day 2 came up with numerous strategies to address those challenges and build on the opportunities that had been identified.

After reviewing the strategies that emerged from the group brainstorming activity, workshop participants refined the conversation into to a consolidated set of high priority strategies that became the focus of the action planning, which workshop attendees led in the final work session. The high priority strategies are:

1. Advance the work of the Activating Community Opportunities program to achieve more equitable access to educational resources and more equitable attainment of educational outcomes.
2. Create an equitable, high quality education system through coordinated efforts among educational institutions and other stakeholders.
3. Develop a comprehensive affordable housing assessment of Oak Park and strategies for making affordable housing available for specific groups in need.
4. Establish The Food Coalition, a new umbrella entity to coordinate the local food network, grow the local food economy and ensure access to healthy food for all residents.
5. Identify strategies for increasing and better coordinating transportation services and infrastructure that serves local transportation needs.

The following section lists specific short term next steps for making progress towards implementing each strategy.

Strategy #1 – Advance the work of the Activating Community Opportunities program to achieve more equitable access to educational resources and more equitable attainment of educational outcomes.

The stakeholder partners implementing the ACO program have had the opportunity to establish a working relationship, deploy the first wave of program services and assess the initial findings of the program's impact, successes and challenges. It is early in the process and the organizing stakeholders can solidify the program's position and maximize its effect through coordinated communication with others, alignment of partners and addressing topics beyond education and the primary thrust of the program.

Specific Actions/Initiatives	Why is this important?	Immediate Next Steps	How will we measure success?	Time Frame	Lead and Support Roles	Costs and Implementation Resources
Cultivate a broad network of community partners	Necessary for academic success and builds trust between parties	Broaden the number of stakeholders engaged and set up social media strategy	Level of participation and having leaders engaged in the process	1 school year	School boards, organizational directors, families and students, engagement coordinator	Meeting spaces, child care, transportation, food and materials
Create a collective impact model for communication	Siloed approach does not work so resource integration and awareness expansion are needed	Set baseline and identify area communicators, set timeline for and milestones for effort, update videos and roadshow	Levels of participation, resource utilization and diversity of voices	1-2 years	Coordinator-facilitator, area communicators and stakeholders	Staff time, materials

Specific Actions/Initiatives	Why is this important?	Immediate Next Steps	How will we measure success?	Time Frame	Lead and Support Roles	Costs and Implementation Resources
Scaling up, connecting and making accessible the tutoring program and surrounding activities	This builds on the foundation already established, catalyzes the program and levels the playing field for beneficiaries of the program	Conduct an audit of comparable programs, define needs and align efforts with partner programs and organizations in the area	Academic outcomes, attendance and family evaluations	1-3 years	Families, school tutors, funders, teachers and community resources	Volunteer coordinator, volunteers, meeting space, teacher time, training and transportation

Strategy #2 – Create an equitable, high quality education system through coordinated efforts among educational institutions and other stakeholders.

Educational institutions and stakeholders can and should work together to develop and implement programs and services that lead to improved educational outcomes at all levels. This includes ensuring readiness for post-secondary education, but also includes preparing Oak Park's youth and younger residents for jobs through skills development, mentorship and apprenticeship.

Specific Actions/Initiatives	Why is this important?	Immediate Next Steps	How will we measure success?	Time Frame	Lead and Support Roles	Costs and Implementation Resources
Continue to leverage resources and expertise to improve equitable access to high quality early childhood learning services	Early childhood development is the first big lever for equitable educational outcomes	Launch of early development instrument findings to engender community-wide, specific action steps	Level of increased awareness and sustained governmental and donor support	1 year	Collaboration – jurisdictions, Success of All Youth (SAY) and early childhood providers	Staff time and communication materials

Specific Actions/Initiatives	Why is this important?	Immediate Next Steps	How will we measure success?	Time Frame	Lead and Support Roles	Costs and Implementation Resources
Continue to integrate and align all education programs and actors to create a more equitable education system	The efficiencies gained through collaboration will lead to more effective approaches	Convene high-level meeting to develop process to get to a plan	Plan clear commitments to align and integrate efforts	1 year	SAY, educational partners, parent organizations and kids	Staff time and trained facilitator
Increase access to after school opportunities	Increases social and emotional learning, builds skills and offers organized and constructive play	Conduct a community needs analysis and communication plan	Comprehensive plan created	1 year	SAY, funders, school districts and out-of-school-time partners, parent organizations and kids	Community needs analysis funding is required

Strategy #3 – Develop a comprehensive affordable housing assessment of Oak Park and strategies for making affordable housing available for specific groups in need.

Affordable housing is a complex topic and is a phrase that tends to elude clear definition. Yet clear definition and targeted strategies are needed as the Oak Park community strives to create an inclusive approach to housing and housing affordability. Housing is abundant in the Chicago area, but providing for reliable, quality and resource-accessible housing that does not burden household incomes is the key. There are many different sociodemographic groups that need specific housing arrangements and supportive policy, financial and programmatic infrastructure. Those include the elderly, individuals and families with low and very low incomes, persons necessary to the workforce that do not have the income needed to live in the communities they work in, the economically insecure and the homeless. A comprehensive assessment of affordable housing need will identify gaps in the current infrastructure and clarify actions that can be taken to address needs in Oak Park and coordination that might need to take place with neighboring communities.

Specific Actions/Initiatives	Why is this important?	Immediate Next Steps	How will we measure success?	Time Frame	Lead and Support Roles	Costs and Implementation Resources
Identify plans and similar resources already in existence	To prevent reinventing the wheel and to document past efforts	Research and gather information from all stakeholders	Research has been done and all stakeholders have been identified and consulted	1-3 months	Homeless Coalition sub-committee with support from Housing Forward	Staff time
Identify stakeholders for the purpose of convening working committee	To ensure buy-in from community members, providers, users, funders and decision makers	Identify members, recruit for participation and conduct outreach about the initiative	Having formal agreements and commitments to participate along with regular attendance at meetings	3-6 months	Homeless Coalition sub-committee with support from Community Foundation	Staff time and materials
Assess what has been done elsewhere that could be done in Oak Park	To ensure strategies are evidence-based and applicable to Oak Park	Reach out to communities and research centers across the country	A diverse set of strategies to address the multi-faceted aspect of affordable housing	6-8 months	Homeless Coalition with support of sub-committee	Staff time, potential travel and cost of technical assistance
Create an Oak Park assessment	To understand Oak Park's needs and resources and create a plan that fits the affordable housing needs	Define scope of work for publication	Initiate 3 or more strategies identified in the plan	8-12 months	Homeless Coalition with support from stakeholders	Staff time

Strategy #4 – Establish The Food Coalition, a new umbrella entity to coordinate the local food network, grow the local food economy and ensure access to healthy food for all residents.

A new "umbrella" entity is needed to coordinate existing resources, identify new partners, advocate for relevant policies, and grow philanthropic, political, and volunteer support. The organization will help build a complete local network of those working on issues of food insecurity and health to manage the delivery of nutritious food, teach food preparation focused on diverse cuisines, and address common health challenges. The coalition will also promote food production through urban farming at a demonstration garden and on community plots. The group will identify opportunities for food production on a commercial scale.

Specific Actions/Initiatives	Why is this important?	Immediate Next Steps	How will we measure success?	Time Frame	Lead and Support Roles	Costs and Implementation Resources
Establish Food Coalition: **Expand capacity through partnership, management and powerful message. Staff with talent to succeed, resource to sustain multi-year start-up.** **Grow resources and awareness around gaps in existing services.**	Opportunity to improve effectiveness of local food network participants if there was an entity to convene and organize around the challenge of food insecurity. Gaps in existing programs create "islands" of food insecurity for some populations for certain times of year	Confirm support. Draft and distribute description of objectives. Identify gaps that need to be filled.	This will engage various "sectors" (e.g. partners, volunteers, donors, growers, coordinating agencies) and there need to be measures to gauge success for every sector. This would include units delivered, food "recycled", dollars deployed, satisfaction recorded, hours worked, produced	6 months: Agree to goals, mission, partnerships. Build awareness. Contact current providers to confirm need and to utilize existing familiar delivery settings and methods. Year 1: Begin operation under coalition "banner". Develop year 1, 2, 3 work plan. Circulate with Township, village and primary partners.	Oak Park River Forest Food Pantry, Dominican University, Public Schools, Library, Sugar Beet, Deep Roots, Township, Hospitals, Triton College	Executive leadership to manage this across/with varied communities, constituencies, entities, and organizations. Organizational support for logistics, meetings, and materials. Thought leadership. A campaign dependent on good

Specific Actions/Initiatives	Why is this important?	Immediate Next Steps	How will we measure success?	Time Frame	Lead and Support Roles	Costs and Implementation Resources
			weighed, and households transitioned from food insecurity.	Year 2: Launch pilot initiatives with new partners. Establish benchmarks and communications strategies. Year 3: Secure year-to-year funding, offices, as well as food prep and distribution facilities. Explore commercial channels for prepared food and produce.		communications, printed materials, and distribution of information across a variety of media channels.
Promote Urban Farming: **Create a network of growers, organizations and sites that collaborate to provide fresh seasonal produce.**	The volume may be a small % of the need, nevertheless, growing is a sociable endeavor that brings people together around a life-sustaining purpose. Organizing growers and sites	ID point person(s) for growers and sites that may participate. ID partner receiving kitchens that will be able to use the products of	Area under cultivation, sites that participate year-to-year, pounds of produce distributed and consumed, growers that participate, training hours, volunteer hours.	Year 1: Meet to coordinate planting schedule for inaugural 2019 growing season. Commit growers, folks to make delivery, participating kitchens, and cooks.	Food Coalition, Library, Austin, churches, schools, Township, Village, Farmers Market	Time and effort to convene partners with possible need for sites to be made available through donation or access rights

Specific Actions/Initiatives	Why is this important?	Immediate Next Steps	How will we measure success?	Time Frame	Lead and Support Roles	Costs and Implementation Resources
	will expand the pipeline of good food and talented people. Workforce training possibilities exist.	weekly harvests. Meet to coordinate planting schedule for inaugural 2019 growing season.		Year 2: Add additional sites and participating tables. Identify partner for cold-weather operation		

Strategy #5 – Identify strategies for increasing and better coordinating transportation services and infrastructure that serves local transportation needs.

There is a very strong wave of change in how transportation needs are being served. Transportation network companies (e.g. Uber and Lyft) are occupying an increasingly large space and presenting both challenges and opportunities for those that maintain and operate public transportation infrastructure, provide public transportation, and deliver and coordinate human services transportation. In light of these dynamics, Oak Park has the opportunity to identify what this means for the community, how local transportation services can be coordinated and provided to better serve residents, and what changes might be made in the provision of public services.

Specific Actions/Initiatives	Why is this important?	Immediate Next Steps	How will we measure success?	Time Frame	Lead and Support Roles	Costs and Implementation Resources
Identify and review working models in peer communities for coordinated local transportation networks	There are successful models of technology-supported, coordinated systems that could be used in Oak Park	Identify lead researcher and audience for the findings	Completed document with a list of possible strategies for Oak Park	3-6 month	Oak Park Township with support of local service providers	Staff time

Specific Actions/Initiatives	Why is this important?	Immediate Next Steps	How will we measure success?	Time Frame	Lead and Support Roles	Costs and Implementation Resources
Assess feasibility of an umbrella coordinator supported by user technology and coordinated scheduling software	It might be feasible to build a fleet of vehicles from various agencies that can work in concert under one coordinated system	Identify agencies and organizations with vehicles that might want to participate	Coming to conclusion regarding feasibility and identifying benefits and costs	9-12 months	Oak Park Township with support of local service providers	Staff time and possible need for technical assistance from experienced mobility manager
Identify gaps in local transportation services to and from Oak Park Public Library	Needs of all sociodemographic groups can be identified and results can benefit participants in the ACO program	Create questionnaire content and deployment strategy	Getting meaningful results from general patrons and ACO participants	6-9 months	Oak Park Public Library, other ACO program organizers, Oak Park Township	Staff time and volunteer time to conduct effort and compile results

APPENDIX

The self-assessment completed by the community and the workshop presentations are attached.

Additional Resources

U.S. EPA Building Blocks for Sustainable Communities

- http://www.epa.gov/dced/buildingblocks.htm

Institute of Museum and Library Services' Community Catalyst Program

- https://www.imls.gov/issues/national-initiatives/community-catalyst-initiative

Equitable Development

Age-Friendly: Inspiring Communities Report (2015)

A collection of 16 age-friendly "good practices" to support equitable development for communities of all ages.

- http://www.aarp.org/livable-communities/network-age-friendly-communities/info-2015/8-domains-of-livability-case-studies.html

Creating Equitable, Healthy, and Sustainable Communities: Strategies for Advancing Smart Growth, Environmental Justice, and Equitable Development (2013)

This report provides a menu of land use and community design strategies that bring together smart growth, environmental justice, and equitable development principles and that community-based organizations, local and regional decision-makers, developers, and others can use to revitalize their communities.

- http://www2.epa.gov/smartgrowth/creating-equitable-healthy-and-sustainable-communities-strategies-advancing-smart-growth

Educate and Empower: Tools for Building Community Wealth (2015)

This report draws on case studies of 11 different community economic development initiatives from across the United States that provide strategies on helping low-income communities and communities of color build capacity and wealth.

- http://democracycollaborative.org/content/educate-and-empower-tools-building-community-wealth-0

U.S. EPA EJ Screen

This online mapping and screening tool combines environmental and demographic indicators for a given area to compare it with the rest of the state, EPA region, or the nation. The tool can be used to help users identify areas with minority and/or low-income populations, potential environmental quality issues, and other factors of interest.

- http://www2.epa.gov/ejscreen/what-ejscreen

The Equitable Development Toolkit

This online toolkit created by PolicyLink includes 27 tools to reverse patterns of segregation and disinvestment, prevent displacement, and promote equitable revitalization.

- http://www.policylink.org/equity-tools/equitable-development-toolkit/about-toolkit

Leveraging Anchor Institutions for Economic Inclusion (2015)

This brief is an introduction to developing and implementing an anchor strategy that can advance equity and economic inclusion in order to promote regional prosperity.

- http://www.policylink.org/find-resources/library/leveraging-anchor-institutions-for-economic-inclusion

Housing

Recent press coverage of local affordable housing initiatives

- http://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/oak-park/news/ct-oak-park-affordable-housing-tl-0928-20170926-story.html
- http://www.oakpark.com/News/Articles/7-31-2018/Oak-Park-earmarks-$1M-for-affordable-housing-/
- http://mobile.oakpark.com/News/Articles/9-11-2018/Oak-Park-advances-affordable-housing-/
- http://www.oakpark.com/News/Articles/9-11-2018/Thumbs-up-given-to-senior-home-in-River-Forest/

Preserving, Protecting and Expanding Affordable Housing: A Policy Toolkit for Public Health (2015)

A useful compendium of best practices for preserving affordable housing in gentrifying neighborhoods – an important fair housing complement to housing mobility and desegregation strategies.

- http://www.nationalresourcenetwork.org/en/Document/305424

Renter's Equity Programs

Rent equity rewards long-term renters with cash rewards annually for staying in place and contributing to the quality and stability of a property.

- http://www.ohiohome.org/research/cornerstone.aspx
- http://cornerstone-equity.org/

Maintaining Diversity in America's Transit-Rich Neighborhoods: Tools for Equitable Neighborhood Change (2010)

This report explores the relationship of gentrification and displacement in transit-rich neighborhoods and provides a toolkit for equitable neighborhood change with real-world examples of each.

- http://www.northeastern.edu/dukakiscenter/transportation/transit-oriented-development/maintaining-diversity-in-americas-transit-rich-neighborhoods/

National Community Stabilization Trust in Prince George's County (2015)

Housing Initiative Partnership buys vacant, foreclosed and distressed homes in Prince George's County, renovates them to high standards, and sells them to first-time lower-income home buyers.

- http://hiphomes.org/wp/?utm_source=NCST&utm_campaign=NCST&utm_medium=email

Preserving, Protecting and Expanding Affordable Housing: A Policy Toolkit for Public Health (2015)

A useful compendium of best practices for preserving affordable housing in gentrifying neighborhoods – an important fair housing complement to housing mobility and desegregation strategies.

- http://www.changelabsolutions.org/sites/default/files/Preserving_Affordable_Housing-POLICY-TOOLKIT_FINAL_20150401.pdf

Food Systems

Farmers' Market and Local Food Promotion Program

This new program makes approximately $30 million available annually to farmers markets, other direct producer-to-consumer venues, and other businesses in the local food supply chain. Funding is evenly split between two components: Farmers Market Promotion Program (FMPP) for direct consumer-to-producer marketing opportunities, and Local Food Promotion Program (LFPP) for local and regional food business enterprises. Both FMPP and LFPP have a maximum grant of $500,000, and the LFPP applicants must have 25% matching funds or in-kind donations. By supporting development and marketing activities for farmers markets, food hubs, roadside stands, agri-tourism activities and other local and regional enterprises, the grants can help small and mid-sized farmers access new markets and meet growing consumer demand.

- https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/fmpp (FMPP) or
- https://www.ams.usda.gov/services/grants/lfpp (LFPP).

Socially-Disadvantaged Groups Grant (SDGG)

The primary objective of the SDGG program is to provide technical assistance to socially-disadvantaged groups through cooperatives and Cooperative Development Centers. Each fiscal year, applications are requested through a Notice published in the Federal Register and an announcement posted on Grants.gov. Examples of technical assistance are feasibility studies, business plans, strategic planning and leadership training.

- http://www.rd.usda.gov/programs-services/socially-disadvantaged-groups-grant

Community Food Projects Competitive Grant Program

Community Food Projects are designed to increase food security in communities by bringing the whole food system together to assess strengths, establish linkages, and create systems that improve the self-reliance of community members over their food needs. Grants are intended to help eligible private nonprofit entities in need of a one-time infusion of federal assistance to establish and carryout multipurpose community food projects. More information is available here:

- http://www.nifa.usda.gov/funding/cfp/cfp_synopsis.html.

Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program

The 2014 Farm Bill created this program, which supports projects to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables among people participating in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Applicants may propose small pilot projects (up to $100,000 for 1 year), multi-year community-based projects (up to $500,000 for up to 4 years), or larger-scale multi-year projects (more than $500,000 for up to 4 years). USDA is looking to fund innovative projects that will test community based strategies for how to increase the purchase of fruits and vegetables by SNAP participants through incentives at the point of purchase. USDA will give priority to projects in underserved communities and to projects that provide locally- or regionally-produced fruits and vegetables. More information is available here:

- http://nifa.usda.gov/program/food-insecurity-nutrition-incentive-fini-grant-program

Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE)

The mission of the SARE program is to advance sustainable innovations in American agriculture. SARE is uniquely grassroots, administered by four regional offices guided by administrative councils of local experts. Non-profit organizations, researchers, and individuals producers are eligible to apply.

- http://www.sare.org/.

Local Food: Strong Communities: Underserved and Urban Communities

This guide contains information on building raised beds and maintaining healthy soils; zoning, code and permit requirements for community gardens; and business and market planning. While the guide is based off of research in West Philadelphia, it is intended to be a replicable model for individuals in other urban areas.

- https://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/SARE-Project-Products/Northeast-SARE-Project-Products/How-to-Guide-for-Aspiring-Urban-Micro-Agricultural-Entrepreneurs

Baltimore Farm Alliance

While Baltimore has significant vacant land, limited access to fresh food, and high unemployment, it also has strong neighborhoods and a burgeoning food movement. The idea for a network grew out of existing collaborations. Farmers were already teaming up on seed orders, lending tools, and sharing knowledge, but we wanted to do more. Operating a small-scale, sustainable, urban farm is challenging, and we saw the potential to increase our impact, earn more revenue, and save money by working together.

- https://www.sare.org/Learning-Center/SARE-Project-Products/Northeast-SARE-Project-Products/The-Baltimore-Farm-Alliance

Farm to School Grants

Farm to School Grants are available to help schools source more food locally, and to provide complementary educational activities to students that emphasize food, farming, and nutrition. Schools, state and local agencies, tribal organizations, producers and producer groups, and non-

profits are eligible to apply. Planning, implementation, and support service grants are available from $20,000 to $100,000.

- www.fns.usda.gov/farmtoschool/farm-school.

Racial and Ethnic Approaches to Community Health (REACH)

The program focuses addressing health disparities in racial and ethnic communities with a focus on proper nutrition, physical activity, chronic disease prevention, and risk reduction and management.

- https://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dnpao/state-local-programs/reach/.

Non-Profit / Foundation Opportunities

The Kresge Foundation

The Kresge Foundation offers a variety of grant and social investment opportunities in a variety of "focus areas" including: place-based initiatives, local systems, accelerating community-centered approaches, and developing healthy places. Grant opportunities are available on a rolling basis, a time-limited basis, and by invitation.

- http://kresge.org/opportunities

The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation

Through grant programs and funding partnerships, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation funds a wide array of research and initiatives to help address some of America's most pressing health challenges.

- http://www.rwjf.org/en/how-we-work/grants/funding-opportunities.html

The Awesome Foundation

The Awesome Foundation awards monthly $1000 micro-grants to small scale, innovative projects. Anyone can apply – individuals, groups, or organizations. Projects are more likely to be funded if they have a community impact and if they will see significant incremental benefit from a small grant. There are about 50 chapters throughout the United States – mainly in larger cities. See the website for chapter locations and eligibility.

- http://www.awesomefoundation.org/en

Aetna Foundation Cultivating Healthy Communities Grant Program

The Cultivating Healthy Communities (CHC) grant program is geared specifically to local nonprofit organizations that work with underserved, low-income, and minority populations in the continental United States. The program seeks grantees committed to improving the health of their participants by focusing on activities that align to one or two of five domains including built environment, community safety, environmental exposures, healthy behaviors, and social/economic factors. The program awards grants from $50,000 to $100,000 for projects lasting between 18 and 24 months.

- https://www.aetna-foundation.org/grants-partnerships/grants/cultivating-healthy-communities-rfp.html

EDUCATION

Best Practices for Communication Schools and Caregivers

In April 2018, Philadelphia-based William Penn Foundation brought together national and local experts to discuss best practices for communication between schools/childcare centers and the parents and caregivers of students. We heard from Learning Heroes, a national research organization and parent resource, about how parents feel about their children's education and about how to talk with parents about their role in students' learning.

- https://www.williampennfoundation.org/what-we-are-learning/engaging-families-clear-communication-student-success

School-based Partnerships

School-based partnerships expose students to more diverse learning opportunities and community resources, offer continuity in services across multiple years, and have the potential to improve student social and academic outcomes. For schools, partnerships offer external reinforcement of skills taught in classrooms, an improved school culture and reputation, and added resources and staff support. Partnerships also can increase parental engagement at a school, which can promote student success as measured by grades, attendance, attitudes toward school, motivation, and graduation rates.

- https://www.williampennfoundation.org/what-we-are-learning/partnering-student-success-practical-guide-building-effective-school-based

Partnerships for Community Impact: Higher Education and CDFI's Working Together (2012)

Community development financial institutions (CDFIs) are private financial institutions dedicated to delivering responsible, affordable lending to help low-income, low-wealth, and other disadvantaged people and communities join the economic mainstream. This link provides a summary on the impact of higher education institutions partnering with CDFI's on community development projects.

- http://www.dupontfund.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/Partnerships-for-Community-Impact-Higher-Education-and-CDFIs-Working-Together.pdf

Workshop Attendees
COMMUNITY MEETING ATTENDEES (DAY 1)

Date: 7/12/16   Location: Oak Park

Name	Affiliation/Organization	Telephone	Email Address
Cathy Yen	OPRF Chamber	708 205 4766	cyen@opfchamber.org
Valerie Lester	Food Pantry West Cook/Beyond	708-383-4940	val-gcyle@yahoo.ca
Adrienne Otten		773-510-6551	awanning32x@hotmail.com
Carolyn Newberry Schwartz	Collaboration 9 C	708 613 6122	cnewberryschwartz@labyrkob.org
Adriana Ricco	OPRF Food Pantry	708 386 1324 x 104	adriana@oprffoodpantry.org

Date: 7/12/18   Location: U/he Park

Name	Affiliation/Organization	Telephone	Email Address
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Willie Chandler Oak Park	Oak Park	708.491.0444	Claress1999@yahoo.com

Date: 7/12/18   Location: Oak Park

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Josh Klayman	VOICE Oak Park		voiceOakPark@gmail.com

Date: 7/12/18   Location: OAK PARK

Name	Affiliation/Organization	Telephone	Email Address
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TECHNICAL WORKSHOP ATTENDEES (DAY 2)

Date: 7/13/10   Location: Oak Park

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Date: 7/13/18   Location: OAK PARK

Name	Affiliation/Organization	Telephone	Email Address
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