



## Centering Southeast Georgetown Community Voices 2019

### *Update, Explore Emerging Needs, & Evaluate Impact of Georgetown Health Foundation (GHF) Response to 2015 Assessment*

Georgetown Health Foundation (GHF) commissioned a needs assessment in 2015 for the Southeast Georgetown community conducted by the Institute for Urban Policy Research and Analysis (IUPRA). Findings from the 2015 study revealed there were 10 Critical Needs identified by residents in the community<sup>1</sup>. The Georgetown Health Foundation ratified the 10 Critical Needs as its strategic priorities, and the Foundation invested in a set of initiatives that addressed 8 of the 10 Critical Needs.

In 2019, IUPRA was selected again to conduct a follow-up needs assessment for GHF that fulfilled two goals:

- 1) to explore emerging needs and challenges, and**
- 2) to collect community feedback on the actions taken by GHF since the 2015 findings were released.**

The multi-staged research project spanned the months of March through November and involved interviewing key-informants, conducting focus groups with Georgetown residents, and analyzing quantitative data on Southeast Georgetown collected by the Williamson County & Cities Health District. Additionally, the Georgetown Community Advisory Board (GCAB)<sup>2</sup> participated in a photovoice project in which they used photography as a research tool to examine challenges in the Southeast Georgetown area. We used this information to complement the findings that emerged as a result of our 2019 study. This summary provides a brief overview of the findings from our project.



Our findings are comprised of nine areas of perceived need identified by the collective of residents, key-informants, and GCAB members who participated in the research process.



<sup>1</sup> The 10 Critical Needs of 2015 are as follows: 1) public transportation; 2) affordable and quality housing; 3) access to college readiness programs; 4) accessibility of daycare, afterschool programs, and play for children; 5) access to healthy foods and nutrition education; 6) greater economic security; 7) treatment at Georgetown health care facilities and affordability and access to dental care; 8) availability and accessibility of quality mental health services; 9) acknowledge and reframe power differentials in systems; and 10) leaders connect with Southeast Georgetown community.

<sup>2</sup> The Georgetown Community Advisory Board consisted of eight community representatives that were selected in collaboration with the Georgetown Health Foundation. The advisory board was created to assist in fostering connections with community members and to provide feedback on research activities throughout the project.



## **Transportation**

Transportation was an issue that surfaced in conversations with both community members and key-informants. Both groups expressed the difficulties that community members have when traveling to destinations within and outside of Georgetown.

## **Housing**

The main issues related to housing are affordability, homelessness, and concerns regarding gentrification in Southeast Georgetown. Parents of teens and young adults are especially concerned about the financial challenges their children might encounter moving out on their own. Most everyone expressed that more needs to be done to address the homeless population in Georgetown.

## **Food**

Several residents alluded to the issue of food insecurity in Southeast Georgetown. They are grateful for the organizations that provided food assistance to those in need. However, most feel there should be more measures in place to address the lack of food resources.

## **Workforce**

Workforce needs that community members highlighted include increased wages, job opportunities, and access to job training. Several stated there is "no work in Georgetown," which leads people to find work in surrounding areas such as Austin.

## **Education**

The quality of education in Georgetown is essential to those in Southeast Georgetown. Overall, there is a desire for the Georgetown Independent School District to provide the best education for students. To fulfill this goal, residents suggest enhancing the academic experience, creating inclusive environments, and addressing teacher compensation in their schools.

## **Racial Issues**

Residents of color expressed that the prejudicial attitudes of some contribute to their feelings of exclusion from certain areas in Georgetown spaces. Representation matters to them as they desire to see others like themselves in social spaces, professional positions, and leadership roles in the City.

## **Teens and Youth**

The top priority for youth and teens is increasing their access to affordable programs and services. Community members want youth to live in a city where they can enjoy social and recreational activities.

## **Georgetown Leadership**

Community members expressed they felt Georgetown leaders were not as concerned about the needs of their neighborhoods in comparison to other areas. For instance, residents noted how their perspectives seem to be disregarded in decisions related to public matters. The perceived dismissal of their voices influences the community members' connection to City leaders.

## **Immigrants and the Undocumented**

Consistent with the national political climate around immigration, key-informants noted an increased fear among this population. Key-informants perceived that deportation concerns among the undocumented are related to a hesitancy to utilize their services.



GCAB members also generated research findings through their photovoice project regarding the perceived needs of those living in Southeast Georgetown. Their concerns focused around issues of safety (e.g., lack of crosswalks for pedestrians), the upkeep of spaces in Southeast Georgetown, a perceived lack of inclusivity for some residents, housing affordability, and the challenges of those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds.

Community members also provided feedback on the initiatives created to address the 10 Critical Needs as outlined in the 2015 findings. Overall, most residents were aware of the GoGeo public transportation service in Georgetown and the services provided by the Boys and Girls Club of Georgetown. Residents indicated they had limited to no awareness of other GHF initiatives related to improving housing, post-secondary education, economic security, mental health, and supporting greater engagement and communication pathways between leadership and community members.

**The full report is available on the Georgetown Health Foundation website, [www.gthf.org](http://www.gthf.org).**