

Member Graves introduced the following resolution and moved its adoption:

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-84

RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING A COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PILOT
PROGRAM WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS FOR THE OPPORTUNITY SITE

WHEREAS, in 2018 the City of Brooklyn Center (“City”) entered into a preliminary development agreement with Alatus regarding the development of the 35 acre Opportunity Site and in 2019 the focus of the agreement was narrowed to a 15 acre area known as Blocks 11, 12, and 13 (“Reduced Development Area”); and

WHEREAS, the City of Brooklyn Center (“City”) has also been engaged in a process to update the 2006 Opportunity Site Master Plan (“Plan”) originally developed for the entire 80 acre Opportunity Site; and

WHEREAS, the process to update the Plan involved community engagement, but the City Council determined that additional public engagement was needed before moving forward with the development of this critical community asset; and

WHEREAS, the City formed a engagement working group among various community groups to co-create an engagement strategy with greater community representation; and

WHEREAS, an updated engagement strategy was presented to the City Council in March 2021; and

WHEREAS, the City sought interest from community organizations to provide assistance in implementing the revised engagement strategy and several organizations responded with proposals; and

WHEREAS, the City would like to move forward with a pilot project to engage up to 10 organizations that would serve as community partners to assist the City in its enhanced community engagement process, particularly with respect to the Reduced Development Area, with a budget for this pilot project not to exceed \$300,000; and

WHEREAS, the City Council is committed to having a more inclusive and transparent process to gather community input regarding the development of the Opportunity Site and determines the proposed pilot project to contract with community partners to carry out a more effective community engagement process is in the best interests of the community.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, by the City Council of the City of Brooklyn Center as follows:

1. The proposed pilot project to contract with community partners to carry out an enhanced community engagement strategy for development of the Opportunity Site is approved.

RESOLUTION NO. 2021-84

2. The City Council approves a not to exceed budget for the pilot project of \$300,000.
3. The Acting City Manager is authorized and directed to enter into contracts with community partners to undertake the enhanced community engagement process and to take such other actions, and to execute such additional documents as may be needed, to carry out the pilot project on behalf of the City.

June 28, 2021

Date



Mayor

ATTEST:



City Clerk

The motion for the adoption of the foregoing resolution was duly seconded by member
Butler

and upon vote being taken thereon, the following voted in favor thereof:

Butler, Graves, Lawrence-Anderson, Ryan

and the following voted against the same: None

whereupon said resolution was declared duly passed and adopted.

PILOT OPPORTUNITY SITE ENGAGEMENT *REPORT*



Contents

Brooklyn Center Opportunity Site	4
Community Engagement Management	5
Process of Selection	5
Community Outreach and Engagement Services	6
Reporting and Presentation	6
Engagement Strategy	7
Description of Community Partners' Activities Outcomes and Objectives	8
Project Management Meeting Type	10
Resources Provided	12
Summary of Community Engagement Activities	12
About Our Community Partners	13
MN Zej Zog	13
MIND	15
Minnesota African United	16
Minnesota African Coalition (MAC)	17
LIBRA	18
Brooklyn Bridge Youth Alliance	19
Community Make-Up	20
The Hmong in Brooklyn Center	20
MIND	20
Minnesota Africans United	21
Minnesota African Coalition	21
LIBA	22
Brooklyn Bridge Youth Alliance	22
Engagement Activities and Feedback	23
MN ZEG ZOG	23
Door-Knocking	23
Responses – Door-Knocking	24

Translated OS Documents	25
Culturally Specific Events	25
Social Media Outreach	28
Business Interviews	28
Observations/Closing Comments	29
MIND	29
Focus Groups	29
Survey Responses	30
Minnesota Africans United	31
Focus Groups	31
Minnesota African Coalition	33
Door-Knocking	34
Focus Groups	35
Town Hall Meetings	36
Social Media Report	37
LIBA	38
Focus Group	38
Technical Assistance Activities	39
Brooklyn Bridge Youth Alliance	40
 CHALLENGES	 49
MN ZEG ZOG	49
MIND	49
Minnesota African United	50
Minnesota African Coalition	50
LIBA	51
Brooklyn Bridge Youth Alliance	51
 APPENDIX	 55

BROOKLYN CENTER OPPORTUNITY SITE

The Brooklyn Center Opportunity Site is an approximately 80-acre area the City of Brooklyn Center (“the City”) has identified for redevelopment as part of the Becoming Brooklyn Center Initiative—a collection of related activities that make progress toward the City’s vision of a thriving, diverse, safe, and inclusive community.

The goals of the Opportunity Site are to create a downtown center and signature destination that offers green space, is well maintained, and has appropriate amenities that will drive the City’s future economic growth, serving the entire community that calls Brooklyn Center home.

Additional benefits are intended to include:

- ✓ Increased tax base
- ✓ Benefit to community schools
- ✓ New parks and recreation amenities
- ✓ Increased shopping, dining, and entertainment options
- ✓ More housing options
- ✓ Spaces for local businesses
- ✓ Water quality improvements to Shingle Creek

The City elected to implement the Becoming Brooklyn Center Initiative through the development of the Opportunity Site Pilot Project. The project consists of a proposed development for approximately 15 acres of the Opportunity Site. The Pilot Project’s Development Team is led by Alatus, the development company working in partnership with Project for Pride in Living and Resurrecting Faith World Ministries. The proposed plan for the Pilot Project includes a mix of housing, small business incubator space, and community amenities such as an event center, public plaza, and public art.

The City created a pool of qualified Community Partners to lead and implement a variety of community engagement activities that will gather feedback and participation from target demographic groups in the Brooklyn Center community to respond to the Pilot Development Project in the City’s Opportunity Site.

Community Partners have led a wide variety of community engagement activities. The community feedback gathered through the engagement work led by the selected Community Partners will inform and shape the Pilot Project in a way that is authentically inclusive and representative of local community voices in the City. This engagement work around the Pilot Project will also inform and shape the community benefits requested from future public and private investments and a Community Benefits Plan, which will outline how the Opportunity Site as a whole can achieve identified metrics that will support local community thriving.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT MANAGEMENT

NEOO Partners was selected to manage the community engagement process for the Brooklyn Center Pilot Opportunity Site. NEOO was tasked with developing an engagement process that was inclusive, representative of community voices, and collaborative, with a goal to interweave community inputs into the final development program and design. NEOO Partners was also tasked with identifying qualified community partners to carry out engagement activities for the Brooklyn Center Opportunity Site, outlining and coordinating the engagement process and providing guidance on best practices. Additionally, NEOO Partners was charged with managing the budget and other administrative duties.

As a firm that understands the intricacies of diverse communities combined with barriers that may exist due to culture, language, trust, and accessibility, NEOO Partners sought to develop a process that removed barriers and opened opportunities to learn from each other.

The premise was to identify community organizations in the Brooklyn Center community with a history of engaging the public in various issues that are affecting the community. From previous engagement attempts, NEOO learned that there was a level of distrust among certain community members due to misunderstandings, miscommunication, and a lack of engagement. To reverse the apathy in previous engagements, NEOO Partners and the City felt it necessary to have a process led by trusted community leaders.

Process of Selection

NEOO Partners worked with the City to develop a Request for Qualifications (RFQ) to solicit community partners to participate in the engagement process. Working with the client, NEOO Partners identified more than 20 community groups in the Brooklyn Center community and reached out directly to solicit participation. The RFQ was distributed on the City's website, on social media pages, and to local places of worship and schools.

The RFQ included information about the 15-acre pilot site, a description of community and engagement services needed, consulting services, reporting and presentation, key dates, and evaluation criteria.



Community Outreach and Engagement Services

The ideal Community Partner was required to have the skills, experience, and existing relationships to help build relationships between the City and the most impacted target groups that have been historically marginalized and left out of traditional community engagement and public planning processes. In their role, the Community Partners were responsible for gathering input and feedback from a variety of community, public, private, and nonprofit voices and stakeholders through methods such as the following:

- ✓ Organizing, hosting, and facilitating community conversations
- ✓ Convening interviews and focus groups
- ✓ Conducting online, paper, and in-person surveys
- ✓ Using translation and/or interpretive services in targeted languages such as Spanish, Somali, Hmong, and West Africa Pidgin

Consulting Services

The selected Community Partner was tasked with developing specific community engagement strategies that are culturally appropriate for the group being represented, including the following:

- ✓ Create an engagement plan that can be effectively executed and documented
- ✓ Oversee and implement the community engagement plan related to the specific target group
- ✓ Record and analyze community input and recommendations and develop a report of findings
- ✓ Develop and support communication plans by creating key messaging; developing flyers, mailers, and other written communications; and advertising using print, social media, press, radio, and other outlets

Reporting and Presentation

The Community Partner was required to provide regular updates to City staff, the City's Community Engagement Manager, and the Pilot Project Development Team through periodic check-in meetings, and provide reports and summary information related to the nature, timing, and methods of engagement as requested. The Community Partner will also deliver summaries of the stakeholder feedback it gathers from meetings, interviews, surveys, or other methods of community engagement.

The RFQ was released in spring 2021. Approximately 15 community organizations submitted their qualifications. NEOO Partners reviewed each submission and interviewed each community member to better understand their qualifications.

The results of reviewing the submissions and interviews revealed that a number of organizations were heavily skilled in one or more of the areas and lacked engagement skills in another area. NEOO released a second proposal that encouraged combining teams that met the necessary criteria in order to carry out complete engagement activities. Teams were to be skilled in door-knocking, facilitating town halls and focus groups, and distributing and collecting surveys. The teams were asked to submit a budget that was equivalent to the engagement tasks they were to perform. Many of the community organizations combined into teams. There were seven submittals and represented communities across the African diaspora, the Hmong community, business groups, and youth groups. The cumulative budget request was \$423,000. Working with the community partners, NEOO Partners was able to right size the cumulative budget to \$300,000. Each community group was tasked with engagement activities that represented the skills of their teams. Some of the community partners only performed door-knocking, while others did a combination of town hall meetings, focus groups, and door-knocking. The average size of the contract was approximately \$33,000.

| Engagement Strategy

Community Partners were selected to lead and implement a variety of community engagement activities that resulted in feedback and participation from target demographic groups in the Brooklyn Center community regarding the Opportunity Site Pilot Project. Community Partners were given the autonomy to carry out engagement activities that best fit the needs of their communities. For example, some community partners were tasked with door-knocking. The approach to door-knocking varied greatly among community partners. Some community partners set up one-on-one meetings with community members to discuss the survey and then completed it on their behalf, sometimes virtually and other times face to face. Others canvassed neighborhoods and randomly knocked on doors. The goal was to not create a one-size-fits-all engagement activity. Below is a chart that describes the activities, outcomes, and hours allocated for each Community Partner.



Description of Community Partners' Activities Outcomes and Objectives

#	Community Partner Name	Activities	Docket Number	# of Hours Allocated for Staff & Leadership
1	MN Zen Zog	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Door-knocking (200) Material translation services Town hall session (3) Cultural event tagalongs (3) Social media post and ads (12) Asian business focus group (50) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reach 200 addresses door to door Translate all public materials into Hmong Host three culturally specific town hall sessions Attend up to three cultural events to share information about the project Reach 50,000 through social media targeted ads Conduct business focus group interviews with 25 Asian businesses Translation Food 	500
2	LIBA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Business roundtable – town hall session (2) Business technical assistance (10) (prep for opportunities) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Convene 50 business leaders to discuss the Opportunity Site and engage in ways for them to be included economically (3) Provide technical assistance (preparation) to 10 businesses (30 hours each) for opportunities with the Opportunity Site 	350
3	MAC	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Door-knocking (1,000) Town hall session (4) Culturally specific community meetings (6) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Reach 1,000 people door to door Conduct 4 large cross-cultural town hall meetings Conduct 8 culturally specific focus groups Reach 50,000 through social media 	500
4	MAU	Focus groups (12)	Conduct 12 focus groups in the MAU community	95

5	ACER	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Door-knocking (200) 2. Material translation services 3. Town hall session (3) 4. Cultural event tagalongs (3) 5. Social media post and ads (12) 6. Asian business focus group (50) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Manage the day-to-day of the Community Task Force 2. Select Community Task Force 3. Provide written report for all engagement to City Council 4. Provide written community benefits plan back to City Council 	350
6	BBA	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Business roundtable – town hall session (2) 2. Business technical assistance (10) (prep for opportunities) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conduct 20 youth focus groups with high school students who live in Brooklyn Center 2. Reach 400 youth who live in the City of Brooklyn Center 	350
7	Task Force	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Door-knocking (1,000) 2. Town hall session (4) 3. Culturally specific community meetings (6) 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Task force to review community engagement materials collected 2. Provide recommendations and framework for community benefits agreement 	355
8	NEOO	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Engagement manager of entire framework 2. Quality control 3. Technical assistance to community partners 4. General community engagement city-wide 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. General supervision 2. Door-knocking 300 residents 3. Project meeting attendance across all community partners 4. Finalize graphic report for council approval 5. Negotiate community benefits agreement with Development Team 6. Reach 100,000 people on social media 	65
	Total			2565
	Total sans NEOO			2500

Project Management Meeting Type

Community Partner Meeting

Representatives from each of the seven community organizations met collectively with the Project Engagement Manager and the City Planning Director. While only one member from each community group was required to attend the meetings, the meetings were often made up of the leaders and support staff. The average meeting had 25 participants. The meetings were held monthly and served as an opportunity for community partners to provide feedback on their engagement activities. During the Community Partners' meetings, each community organization reported their successes and challenges. Those with challenges were provided with advice from the engagement manager and other community partners on how to address the challenges they faced.

The most requested assistance was for how to increase community participation. COVID-19 impacted traditional engagement activities such as in-person meetings. Suggestions included increasing the use of social media to advertise for events, posting on the City's website, sending email blasts to existing list serves, and partnering with other community events. Virtual meetings were the leading type of engagement activities. However, organizations such as MN Zeg Zo held cultural and social events they felt would garner more engagement than virtual meetings. At these events they set up tables to collect surveys as part of the sign-in process or to receive event swag. Food and gift cards were also used to incentivize attendance among many of the groups.

As the project progressed, two recurring themes arose that Community Partners were hearing in the community. Community members across the City had concerns regarding safety and ownership of assets in the final development, particularly around the incubator space.

During the September 2021 community meeting, the Brooklyn Center Chief of Police and a community police officer joined the Community Partners' meetings to solicit concerns about safety. Many of the Community Partners expressed that having a closer relationship with the police department could help curtail criminal activity and called for a safety plan to address installing more lighting and cameras and promoting relationship building between the community and the police department.

During the October 2021 Community Partners' meeting, a discussion was held on the need for the incubator space and interest in owning space. The Community Partners wanted to better understand how they could own space. Representatives from the Alatus team were present to hear their interests, but no discussion was held regarding next steps. However, a second phase of engagement activities has been planned that will solicit comments from Community Partners on the design of the space. The incubator engagement process for design will begin in February 2022.

Meeting with Task Force

The Task Force was devised to develop a community benefits plan utilizing the input gathered during the community partner engagement activities. The community benefits plan is an agreement between the City and the community that reflects what the community and City government mutually desire to see developed at the Opportunity Site. The plan is meant to serve as not only a policy document for future development but also a contractual agreement between the citizens and the City government to ensure that the plan does not deviate from its original intent.

The Task Force is made up of 12 members from the community. Applications to serve on the Task Force went through ACER, a local community-centered organization that worked hand-in-hand with the Task Force.



Meeting with the Development Team

Alatus is the chosen developer for the first phase of the Opportunity Site. As a priority for the City, input from community engagement activities would be used to inform the program and design of the Opportunity Site. The Development Team met monthly with the Community Partners to hear feedback received from engagement activities and demonstrate how their input was being used in the development.

Input from community engagement informed the development in several ways. The development will provide opportunities for new, affordable housing for Brooklyn Center residents so they won't be displaced. In our selection for a general contractor (GC), the utilization of BIPOC GCs, subs, and labor is a high priority for us, and our track record in this regard is very good. Our residents frequently don't have access to cars and certainly don't have multiple cars, so public transit and walkability are high priorities for us as well. The proximity and availability of child- and family-friendly amenity spaces are also of value, and the design includes many of those, including multiple opportunities for public art. That said, ownership and the wealth-building opportunity that presents should probably be incorporated into the next phase of the development. We are listening.

The original plan for affordable housing was affordable housing.

Resources Provided

The community engagement technique that was employed was designed to gather feedback from the community using trusted community leaders who already had existing relationships with the community. In a community as diverse as Brooklyn Center with more than xxx ethnic groups, it was important to the City to remove any barriers that could have prevented input gathered, including barriers regarding information about the Opportunity Site, lack of real estate development knowledge among the community partners, and technical assistance. The community engagement manager worked hand-in-hand to provide assistance through the following:

- ✓ One-on-one meetings
- ✓ Guides of what to focus on
- ✓ Background information about the project
- ✓ Meetings with the Development Team
- ✓ Depository with examples
- ✓ Peer-to-peer support (community partners were encouraged to share their best practices with each other, and many used what was shared).

Summary of Community Engagement Activities

The Community Partners took part in various engagement activities, including door-knocking, focus groups, virtual and in-person town hall meetings, and surveys. Despite the engagement technique, a recurring theme was found throughout the community. Each community expressed a high level of need for affordable housing, home ownership opportunities, safety, incubator space, cultural and outdoor space, more international market spaces particularly for food, and art reflective of their diverse community. Collectively, the Community Partners engaged nearly 2,000 Brooklyn Center residents and more than 60 businesses. The following report details their engagement activities and provides community feedback regarding desired community benefits, concerns, and opportunities.

ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY PARTNERS

| MN Zej Zog

MN Zej Zog empowers the Hmong community by nurturing the Hmong language, healing through the arts and wellness, and education across generations.

What We Do at MN Zej Zog

[MN Zej Zog](#) grew out of extended grassroots efforts over the last decade and finally turned our passionate work into a nonprofit in 2020. The [board](#) at MN Zej Zog is 90% Hmong-led, made up of dedicated educators, parents, and youth leaders. Our grassroots network has more than 200 Hmong professionals and has impacted more than 10,000 Hmong people across the United States for the last decade. Our collaborations among six primarily volunteer-based programs emerged in response to direct calls from Hmong youth, parents, and educators for resources related to [Hmong language revitalization](#) through Hmong language and culture education ([National Coalition of Hmong Language Educators](#)), Hmong arts and cultural education (Voice and Power with the Arts), Hmong youth leadership and power-building (C.L.I.M.B. Youth Program), Hmong community mental health and wellness education ([Project Tshav Ntuj](#)), Hmong MN Educators Support ([MN Hmong Educators Coalition](#)), and our most recent initiative (Making the Brooklyns Our Home). The thread that connects these efforts is recognition of the power and impact of Hmong language and culture revitalization and sustainability in recognizing and healing the mental and emotional impacts of intergenerational traumas experienced by the Hmong community's survival of genocide, family separations through refugee displacements, and socioeconomic and racial barriers experienced as multilingual immigrant people of color in the United States.

MN Zej Zog's primary concern is bringing Hmong community visions for social transformation to life by supporting community-driven initiatives and leveraging the extensive social fabric of the Hmong community to organize, communicate, teach, and strengthen in ways that support Hmong language and cultural knowledge, hope, healing, and mental-emotional wellness.

Some of our 2021 activities to create social transformational changes this year include national and local initiatives—arts and healing sessions, virtual Hmong film showing, healthy eating at the Brooklyn Center Thursday Farmers’ Market, virtual kwv txhiaj/lug txhaj class, national professional development training on Hmong Ethnic Studies and Hmong Leng/Ntsuab curriculum, collaboration with the City of Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park to make the Brooklyns more like home to the Hmong people, Hmong New Year celebration in Brooklyn Park, QPR training, a virtual mental health concert, and more.

Furthermore, MN Zej Zog’s community organizing efforts leverage the commitments shown across the community, led by Hmong community member leaders who have long-standing relationships with and investment from youth, parents, and educators to shift narratives and make changes to the fabric of inequality and harms the Hmong community has experienced since being settled as refugees in the United States. Nonetheless, the connecting thread of these is the role of language revitalization and reclaiming cultural knowledge. Not only is bilingualism and intercultural knowledge kept strong in the community, they also create space to recognize the mental health impacts of intergenerational trauma in the community because Hmong educators and parents are the first line for identifying warning signs and efforts to self-medicate.

Our Whys

When MN Zej Zog was approached with the task of taking on this project, our hearts knew it was the right thing. With the large number of our board living in the Brooklyns or having made Brooklyn Center their homes in the past, we had a strong commitment with ties to the City and knew the rich assets of the Hmong-American and Asian-American communities that reside in Brooklyn Center.

MIND

Minnesota Institute for Nigerian Development

The Minnesota Institute for Nigerian Development (MIND) represents all Nigerians in the state of Minnesota. While it is common to see other organizations in the Nigerian community, they represent different ethnic groups. The country of Nigeria is made up of more than 250 languages and dialects, so it is not surprising to see organizations represent some of those ethnic groups. However, MIND is the umbrella organization that represents all Nigerians with all its ethnic groups. It is estimated that 15,000–20,000 Nigerians call Minnesota home. About a third of this population live, work, play, or have businesses in Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park. We as a community interact with both cities due to their proximity.

Because of the number of Nigerians who reside in Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park, many activities are hosted there, be it sports tournaments, parties, or shopping. Our culture, tradition, and way of life dictate that we gravitate to where our people are. The Brooks, as we call Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center, have a vibrant Nigerian community. Perhaps this is one reason we partnered with Brooklyn Center to facilitate and engage our Nigerian community in the development of the proposed Opportunity Site. With this new development, we believe that more of our Nigerian families will move to live, work, or have a business in Brooklyn Center.

MIND's Objectives and Reasons for Participating in the Opportunity Site Project

Nigeria is a country of cultural, ethnic, and religious complexities. It is the harem of natural and human resources with vegetation that is very diverse and inhabitants who number more than 200 million and speak well over 500 languages and dialects. Abroad, it seems as though the only thing connecting people of this great country is their common passport as Nigerians. It became very apparent, therefore, that these people must connect in this foreign land, especially because others (governments and other parastatals) see us as one people from the same continent, same country, and same race. We also noticed that many Nigerian organizations were springing up based on their ethnic or tribal lineage, making it almost impossible for us as people from the same country to come together as one.

Further, this division was causing a rift between us, a rift that was defined by ethnic and religious undertones. Nigerians were getting further and further apart as the need for us to come together became more and more imperative. At the start of the 1980s, a group of well-meaning Nigerians who were eager to bring all Nigerians of different creeds and languages under one umbrella in Minnesota came together to form what is now known as the Minnesota Institute for Nigerian Development (MIND). The organization became the great connector and unifier of all Nigerians, friends of Nigerians, and their affiliates in Minnesota. Giving the organization a name like "institute" for development makes it all the more important to see it also as a learning institution where we learn more about one another, our language, our cultures, our norms, and our traditions, and to support the growth and development of all Nigerians.

This umbrella organization for all Nigerians then became the unifier and also the clearing house for everything Nigerian. MIND is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization established in 1988 and officially registered with the state of Minnesota in 1994. The organization now draws its membership from all Nigerian ethnic and cultural groups living in Minnesota. Membership could be individual or representative of other subcultural organizations. Although membership is open to every Nigerian in Minnesota, the organization draws from the community that comprises academia, educators, physicians, nurses, entrepreneurs, administrators, and, of course, college students, to mention a few. The organization's members have laudable human capital and experiences they pull together to tackle community challenges as they arise.

Its purpose is defined through its mission and vision statements. Its mission is to provide a platform that allows Nigerians and other groups to become productive citizens culturally and economically. Its vision is to be the umbrella organization for Nigerians in Minnesota that fosters unity through social, educational, and economic development.

| Minnesota Africans United

Minnesota Africans United was started in 2017 after several years of seeing that support, education, and empowerment were needed in the African immigrant community in Minnesota. Our first meeting brought leaders from 26 African countries to discuss the importance of an umbrella organization that would work to represent the needs of the 54 countries represented in Minnesota and strengthen their communities. These leaders brought knowledge and energy to help build this organization for Africans who now call Minnesota home.

Soon after, Minnesota Africans United was created. It is an umbrella organization for African immigrants in the state. As the organization has grown, it has become a unifying force for African immigrants, centering on closing the many racial inequity gaps that burden the state such as housing stability, workforce, and economic development, which is the engine of wealth building for our community. Our work is simple: we create opportunities for African immigrants to succeed in life through local and national partnerships. It is our goal to unite and bring prosperity to African immigrants in Minnesota by helping close the opportunity gap, provide small business development opportunities, cultivate and develop African leaders in the community, maintain cultural traditions, and leverage resources to improve Minnesota as a whole.

We are interested in working on the Opportunity Site because we know there are thousands of African immigrants who live in Brooklyn Center, and we want to make sure their voices are heard. Our ultimate goal is to engage the community so everyone will understand there will be a place that will offer opportunity in Brooklyn Center that may lead to jobs, business startups, housing development, enjoyment, and networking.

Minnesota African Coalition (MAC)

We started the Minnesota African Coalition to close the communication and resource gap between our community and the rest of Americans. We believe that building the capacity of African immigrant businesses and nonprofit organizations will position our community to utilize the opportunities available to them to live the American dream.

Our mission is to:

- ☑ Become the development and empowerment tool for every Minnesotan, especially African immigrants, to live a fulfilling and satisfying life in the United States.
- ☑ Represent a collection of various minority as well as immigrant-owned enterprises from the African diaspora.
- ☑ Support African organizations in Minnesota through the Africa Resource Center (ARC), improve the life of every African in this great state, and empower us to contribute our full potential to the community development where we reside.

MAC has evolved to be a reliable partner with the City of Brooklyn Center and a fierce advocate of the marginalized communities in the city. MAC has hands-on experience working with African immigrant community groups that have been historically marginalized and left out of traditional community engagement and public planning processes. We have built trust with these communities through continuous collaboration and interactions with community organizations, businesses, individuals, troubled youths, concerned mothers, single moms, leaders, and involvement in small and big community-based projects.

We have partnered with church leaders, community-based group leaders, and other nonprofit organization leaders in the African immigrant communities to reach out to the underserved and underprivileged members of these communities. In this project, MAC collaborated with OLM, Mwanyagetinge, and Paadio for the deliverables.

We have participated in volunteering for the Opportunity Site in the past two years. We volunteered extensively in the drafting of the Master Plan and made considerable input to shape the outcomes. We believe that underrepresented communities should have adequate access and opportunity to participate in life-changing developments such as the Opportunity Site. We not only participated in the project but also were instrumental in bringing in other organizations to team up and do this project. That helped the City reduce duplication and redundancy.

LIBA

The Liberian Business Association in the diaspora was founded to aid, counsel, assist, and protect the interests of small and micro businesses while working to preserve free competitive enterprise. We engage in advocacy, partnerships, and projects that promote entrepreneurship, build business capacities, and foster dialogues on economic development and private sector issues and challenges with the goal of promoting solutions and best practices that lead to sustained economic growth and private sector empowerment.

LIBA works with minority businesses, especially African immigrant small and micro businesses nationwide. The African immigrant community is an emerging community in the northwest suburbs, and many LIBA members are African immigrant businesses. Brooklyn Center is home to many of these businesses. For example, the 3300 building on County Road 10, the 5701 building, and the 5901 building are host to most of the African immigrant businesses. Apart from the businesses with office spaces, the retail businesses stand to benefit from the Opportunity Site Project since most of the spaces in those buildings were not meant for the kind of retail currently there.

LIBA was started in 2007 in Maryland. The Liberian immigrant population began to increase in both the DMV area and Minnesota. A small group of Liberian business owners came together to form an association to do three things: identify all Liberian-owned businesses in the diaspora, share resources and best practices among members, and leverage the collective potential.

From 2007 to 2015, the association struggled to identify resources to carry on its work. In 2016, the leadership decided to reconvene and reestablish its headquarters in Minneapolis, Minnesota, with the same objectives and focus. The difference this time was that Minnesota hosted the largest concentration of Liberians in the diaspora.

Although Liberians were the largest African immigrant community in the northwest suburb, LIBA recognized the need to open its doors to other African immigrant and minority business communities. Though LIBA still maintains the name, the association is open to all minority businesses in the country.

The mission of LIBA is to aid, counsel, assist, and protect the interests of small and micro businesses while working to preserve free competitive enterprise. We engage in advocacy, partnerships, and projects that promote entrepreneurship; build business capacities; and foster dialogues on economic development and private sector issues and challenges, with the goal of promoting solutions and best practices that lead to sustained economic growth and private sector empowerment.

LIBA's goal of working with the City of Brooklyn Center regarding the Opportunity Site is simple: LIBA believes in the process and understands the benefits this opportunity brings to both the City and the business community. When asked by the City to do the promotional video, LIBA Executive Director Jackson George agreed and produced what is now the video the City is using to promote the project.

LIBA enjoys a partnership with the City and sees the City as the fair and equitable partner. This project is rich with LIBA participation.

Brooklyn Bridge Youth Alliance

The Brooklyn Bridge Alliance for Youth (BBAY) is a quasi-governmental intermediary organization formed in 2013 by nine public partners that serve youth in Brooklyn Park and Brooklyn Center. Much of our youth engagement work is shaped by your Youth and Community Engagement Policy and our efforts in assessing and evaluating the needs of young people in Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park. Our interest in this work stems from the large potential impact that development can have for youth in our communities. We were also invited by the City of Brooklyn Center to engage with youth populations within Brooklyn Center to further inform the development of the proposed Brooklyn Center Downtown Masterplan.

This work was a direct continuation from previous engagement efforts completed by the BBAY during the Fall of 2019 where we asked the central question, “What do you want to see in Brooklyn Center in 2040 that would help you reach your fullest potential, stay in Brooklyn Center and build an awesome city?” The following list below were four major themes that emerged from those initial efforts.

2019 Themes:

- ☑ Investing more funds into schools and education
- ☑ Expanded Retail and Entertainment Options
- ☑ Affordable housing opportunities and expanded housing
- ☑ Community Spaces for Youth and Families to bond

During our time with these students, we silently noticed a disconnect between their uninhibited desire for development that included retail and corporate eating options and their strong importance around affordable and expanded housing for community members. We realized that these students were uninformed around the potential housing inequities that can arise from development. To address this potential issue for this iteration of engagement, we shifted our approach to focus on community- and relationship-building with the youth we were engaging with. This was partly so we could have more time with youth to inform students on the potential impacts of development (both negative and positive), but also to understand our youth community-members at a deeper level beyond going to them and asking about their opinions on the proposed masterplan. We wanted to be able to build a foundation of trust and belonging as it was important to us that they felt received, seen, and comfortable.

Our engagement with youth was made possible through strong partnerships with Brooklyn Center Community Schools Independent School District 286. Special thanks to Dr. Constance Robinson, Longkee Vang, Megan Custer, Andrea Guinn, Lauren Fairlie, Angel Smaller, Jacqueline Hayden, Choua Lee, and other staff at both the Brooklyn Center Early College Academy and Brooklyn Center Secondary School for enabling us to do successful outreach. Alongside that strong partnership was the strong work from our summer youth interns, Shreya Bika (Champlin Park Senior High), Kai Johnson (Brooklyn Center Secondary School), Joana Enriquez Lopez (Brooklyn Center Secondary School), and Mercy Nyamao (Osseo Senior High) who helped with initial outreach and design of the engagement approach. Lastly, special thanks to Community Mediation and Restorative Services (CMRS) for providing meaningful training in healing and community circles.

COMMUNITY MAKE-UP

The Hmong in Brooklyn Center

In the mid-1970s to the late 1980s, several hundred Hmong families settled in Minnesota throughout the St. Paul and Minneapolis areas. The Hmong families who settled in Minneapolis primarily lived in North Minneapolis in the projects or Section 8 housing. Many Hmong households consisted of multi-generational members along with both immediate and extended families. They did this to help save money and help each other get ahead. Over the last two decades, many Hmong families were in search of better neighborhoods to raise their families as families moved up in socioeconomic status and/or the City of Minneapolis no longer met their social and community needs. These needs caused many families to move into the Brooklyn Center and Brooklyn Park areas in the late 1990s since the homes were affordable and rambler homes met the needs of one-level living spaces. Today many families who moved to the area more than 20 years ago still reside in Brooklyn Center. Currently, the City of Brooklyn Center has an Asian population of 16%; we believe Hmong is the majority ethnicity represented in that total population.

MIND

The approximately 15,000–20,000 Nigerians in Minnesota seem to be gravitating to the Brooks as a viable option for housing, shopping, and business destination. As a result, it is our humble ambition to be part of this wonderful and potentially rewarding endeavor to work on the Opportunity Site. It will not only be beneficial for Nigerians in Brooklyn Center but it will also draw more Nigerians to this very warm, welcoming City that many are already calling home.



Minnesota Africans United

Minnesota Africans United is focused on engagement with the African immigrant community in Brooklyn Center. According to national data, there are roughly 8,700 black or African American residents who live in Brooklyn Center; we expect a third of those are African immigrants. Liberians, Kenyans, Nigerians, Somalis, Guineas, Ethiopians, Ghanians, and Gambians are the most represented African countries in Brooklyn Center. These individuals are well-established in Brooklyn Center, and many own their homes, small businesses, and restaurants. Many are devoted to their religion, representing Catholics, Muslims, Pentecostals, and non-denominational groups. Many work in healthcare and hold a variety of positions. Others are entrepreneurs. They like to socialize and attend or host events focused on their traditional cultures through food, dance, and entertainment. Many speak their African dialect in their households and in public among themselves. Many speak broken English, thus creating a language barrier with other cultures in the community. Many enjoy sharing about their lives on social media. Their preferred social media app is WhatsApp, and they have many friends and family groups on the app. They are proud of their children. They value family, eating together, and sharing with one another. It is often known that these communities engage and support each other first. Children call those who are older their aunties and uncles, whether they are blood related or not.

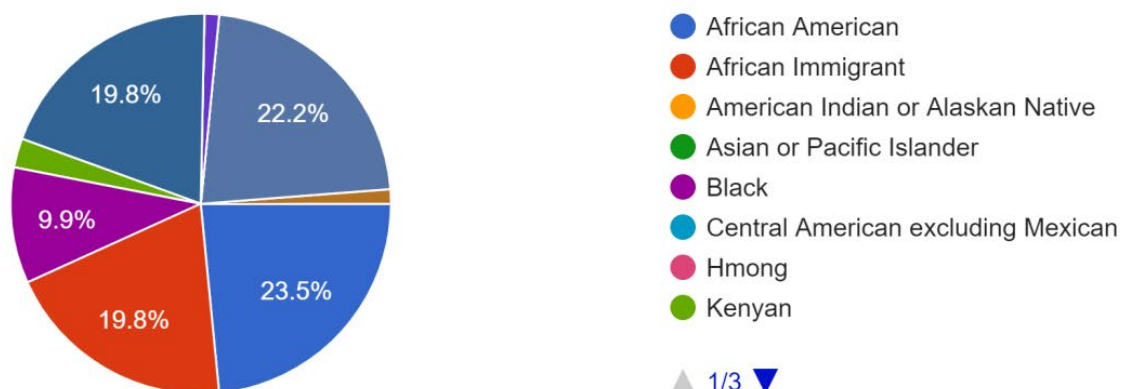
Minnesota African Coalition

Our Opportunity Site engagement in Brooklyn Center focused on the African immigrant community. According to Census.gov, blacks make up almost a third of the entire population of the City at 29%. Although we do not have an exact number of African immigrant population in this mix, we believe it is substantial.

In our remarkable survey for the Opportunity Site, out of 85 respondents, 23.5% identified as African American, 22.2% as whites, 20% as African immigrants, 20% as Liberians, and 10% as blacks.

Race: please check the boxes that describe you

81 responses



African immigrants like to socialize and use any opportunity to throw parties such as birthdays, naming ceremonies, baby showers, wake keeping, and weddings. They send for parents who visit from Africa, fundraise, and plan anything you can think of. That is why there was strong interest in the Opportunity Site.

The average income of blacks in the City is \$36,000, which is substantially less than white income in the City. From the work of NEOO Partners and ACER Inc. on the Brooklyn Center Entrepreneurship Market Strategy, “more than 50% of the occupied units paying rent in Brooklyn Center pay 30% or greater of their housing income on rent.” That is why the Opportunity Site is so important since it will provide housing choices that are affordable and accessible to low-income renters. Another important characteristic of African immigrants is the desire to own houses. From our online survey, door-knocking, focus groups, and town hall meetings, it was a recurring theme—how to own a house in the Opportunity Site. Although the Opportunity Site Pilot Project does not include housing development for ownership, it is important for the City to incorporate a home ownership model in the context of the development plan in the Opportunity Site.

LIBRA

The Liberian community has over 40,000 Liberians in the state of Minnesota and approximately 150 businesses in the LIBA network. Within the LIBA network Africans speak over 300 languages including 16 Liberian languages, Over 78 Nigerian languages, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Togo, Guinea.

Brooklyn Bridge Youth Alliance

Brooklyn Center is rich in diversity especially amongst cities in the state of Minnesota, with more than 55% of its population of 33,700 comprised of residents of Color (US Census, 2020). This is enriched further with the youth population of 9,700, where 70% of youth under the ages of 18 are youth of Color (American Community Survey, 2014). Many of these youth are first-generation or second-generation students who may also speak other languages at home such as Oromo, Swahili, Somali, Spanish, Hmong, Lao, Vietnamese

ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES AND FEEDBACK

MN ZEG ZOG

Door Knocking

From October 16 to November 6, 2021, from the fall weather to colder November temperatures, our team of three staff walked through the streets of Brooklyn Center to speak to 216 Hmong households, with a 60% success rate of speaking to residents. We had strategies in place to ensure that we hit the numbers needed in the time frame given. We learned that the majority of Hmong resided in the Brooklyn Boulevard and 63rd corridor of Brooklyn Center. Here's what we asked adults we spoke to who ranged in age from their 20s to their 60s:

The Questions

Typical Door Knocking questions asked (5-45 minutes interviews - 100+ conversations out of est 200+)

- Have you heard about the new Downtown BC is building?
- A little bit about MZZ
- What do you think about a new Downtown?
- How long have you lived in BC?
- Rent/Own?
- Where do you shop?
- What stores would you like to see in BC?
- Business opportunities/Event Center
- Concerns you have for this new DT?
- How do you feel about safety? in BC in general? Safety at the new DT?
- What do you think about parks?
- Schools your kids to?
- Who's in your family?

In homes that did not open doors but were home to residents who were not home, we left Opportunity Site materials with translations and information on how they can follow up with our organization if needed. With COVID-19, we know that some families are hesitant to open doors to strangers who are wearing masks.

Responses – Door-Knocking

- ☑ 99% of residents have not heard about the Opportunity Site (OS)
- ☑ 95% positive feedback about the OS; excitement for the new development
- ☑ Some worry about:
 1. Safety in the City and how to keep up with safety with the new downtown
 2. Affordable housing may increase possible rise in crimes from inner city
 3. Traffic control – residents were worried that the streets are currently not big enough to sustain the projected traffic and wondered what the City’s plans are for this
- ☑ Excitement about:
 1. The opportunities for home business owners to thrive and own their own business. How will the OS impact current businesses?
 2. Event center – needs of the diverse community in a space large enough to fit friends, families, and community; love the idea of allowing caterers from the community
 3. Opportunities for the Hmong in St. Paul who need affordable housing so they can move to Brooklyn Center
 4. Possible new and more diverse retail shops and restaurants that are more representative of the residents of Brooklyn Center
- ☑ **Retirement:** Hard for working class parents to see when they can retire, but most likely they will retire near their children or in the South where the temperatures are warmer.
- ☑ Many are long-time residents who are going nowhere because Brooklyn Center is home; however, they would like the City to make improvements and investments by developing and having opportunities for engagement, including:
 1. Positive relationships with law enforcement
 2. Workshops offered by the City to help homeowners with programs, loans, and potential hazards (mold, asbestos, etc.)
 3. A large percentage of elementary age students in Hmong charter schools and their parents would like local school districts to offer Hmong language programming from K–12 to meet their needs
 4. Senior housing specific for cultural groups, whether they are different cultural groups in different corners of the same level space or different levels with specific cultural groups, then a multi-cultural space for all to convene and share their similarities to build community
 5. Asks: 99% of residents ask for an international market square where diverse food and cultural vendors are welcomed and supported

Translated OS Documents

Please feel free to share both of these translated OS documents. It took a lot of hard work to translate academic vocabulary that did not exist in the Hmong language. As always, when sending out translated materials, make sure to include both language documents. Here's the link to the Hmong OS translated documents: [Hmong final: Meeting in a Box](#) and [Hmong final: OS One-Pager](#)



Culturally Specific Events

With more than two decades of engaging with the community, we knew we had to be strategic about how to engage the Hmong community at events. With the help of our Hmong youths and artists from the community, we were able to bring out 300+ people to two events we created to bring the community together and inform the Hmong community about the Opportunity Site. We also were part of two other events to share the OS with the community: Arts in Autumn, the Hmong New Year at the Brooklyn Park Community Activities Center; and the Opportunity Site Community Meeting. Pictures speak a thousand words.

Our first event in the community was the Arts in Autumn where we tabled at Palmer Lake Park to share about our organization and spread important information about the OS project. We met local community members who did not know much about the OS and were interested in learning more.



The Center Mash Up was to kick off the excitement of introducing the Opportunity Site to the Hmong Community. Lilly Vue, our youth intern, shared her experience that cold, fall evening, talking to local folks about the Opportunity Site. Lilly remembers that day like it was yesterday. It was an amazing turnout. Many students and their families arrived even though it was extremely cold. Lilly was nervous, but the more she spoke about the Opportunity Site, the more excited she became. Although the evening was cold, Lilly felt warm talking to folks. The amazed expression on people's faces when Lilly mentioned the Opportunity Site was rewarding. Lilly recalls asking a family who stopped by the booth if they were from Brooklyn Center. The family replied yes. After explaining the Opportunity Site, the family was extremely shocked and amazed. The family stated, "Wow! We live in Brooklyn Center and haven't even heard about this place. We are excited to see the outcome. Thank you for the information." Lilly felt incredible that day as she educated the Brooklyn Center Hmong community about the Opportunity Site.

The event showcase started with an Opportunity Site excitement over a book release and a hip-hop break dance show performance with out-of-state and local performances all in one. CCX News stopped by to capture the excitement.

Our next stop was the Hmong New Year in Brooklyn Park, hosted by MN Zej Zog and the City of Brooklyn Park. We had a table for attendees to stop by to learn more about the Opportunity Site. Lilly Vue remembers a memorable conversation with a Hmong man. Every time someone came up to Lilly, they asked, "What is the Opportunity Site?" But this man said, "It's wonderful what you guys are doing." Lilly asked him, "Are you from Brooklyn Center? Have you heard about the Opportunity Site?" The man answered yes and then showed Lilly his work badge. He worked for the City of Brooklyn Center. Lilly was amazed and surprised to see someone from the City supporting MNZZ. Lilly felt even more confident seeing how much support MNZZ has.



It was a fun-filled night to remember. In addition to the tabling, the Hmong New Year show lineup featured 279ONLINE students who narrated a skit in the Hmong language, weaving in a Hmong family speaking to Lilly about the OS and later fatality battles from COVID-19 inspired by true stories. Four days after the Hmong New Year, MN Zej Zog hosted a Thanksgiving Bingo afternoon with a chance to engage about the OS. Although it was a smaller turnout compared to the other events, there was time for deeper discussions that were meaningful and fruitful. When asked what is missing from Brooklyn Center that could potentially be included in the OS, participants shared the importance of having great diverse food that is easily accessible instead of driving to St. Paul.



One participant expressed, “It’s important we not only have a Hmong village similar to St. Paul but something more diverse to meet the needs of the city.” The importance of having senior living spaces that reflect the community also surfaced as a need to prepare for the elders and make them feel at home instead of going all the way to St. Paul for the senior day programs. Donations of gift prizes were made possible by private donations.



Finally, we invited residents to a community OS event on December 8 at the Brooklyn Center Community Center. One local business entrepreneur learned how that could impact her business and the potential to grow her business with the new OS development. Unfortunately, we were not able to host our last community event due to multiple postponements and cancellations at the last minute.



In response to the need of the Hmong community to get information about the OS in various formats, we worked with the developers in collaboration with 3HmongTV to carry out a segment about the OS so the Hmong community can learn more about it. Hmong elders are more engaged via YouTube, so this platform also works for them.

An article will be published in the Sahan Journal about MN Zej Zog’s experience, along with other perspectives on the OS by Katelyn Vang, a journalism student at the University of Minnesota. Look for it in the near future.

| Social Media Outreach

Though the goal was to reach 50,000 in a targeted audience through our social media outreach, we have reached about 15,000 people. Note that this was during the height of the Facebook ad interruption. We struggled with figuring out why some ads were not posted or did not reach as many audiences.

| Business Interviews

With the busyness of the fall, we found it hard to conduct focus groups with local Asian businesses. Instead, we strategized to do what will work for the community. Our first set of businesses was local farmers. On a brisk Saturday morning, our team headed to the Saturday farmers' market to speak to vendors, many of whom are elders who farm for their mental health and live locally in Brooklyn Center. Some come from as far as St. Paul to do business. Some of the vendors have been there since the opening of the market, while others are newer there.

When asked by more than a dozen Hmong farmers to see if they have heard of the Opportunity Site, the farmers said it was all new to them. While some were excited about the Opportunity Site and what potential it could mean for business opportunities, others were more concerned about the financial impact on their businesses. One farmer shared how he and many others left the Minneapolis Farmers' Market because of multiple costs associated with parking, space fees, bathrooms, and so on. It wasn't feasible anymore, so he came to do business at the Sun Foods Farmers' Market instead. If the OS has a farmers' market space, the fees must be low so the farmers can make ends meet. In addition, bathrooms are a must. Furthermore, an all-season farmers' market is a must to provide fresh farm produce to local residents.

We spoke to a dozen local Asian businesses in Brooklyn Center. A vast majority of the business owners were interested in what OS could bring to their business and wondered if existing businesses would get the first chance at new opportunities that come from the new developments. They felt that OS could drive more business for them, which would, in turn, increase revenue and possibly bring new brick-and-mortar opportunities as well. As exciting as that may sound to business owners, the price point was also a major concern. They felt the new development would mean automatic increases in taxes, along with increased cost of goods. Nonetheless, businesses felt the new development is an exciting opportunity and is greatly needed since the City currently feels run down.

| Observations/Closing Comments

Participating in the OS community engagement was a rewarding project that MN Zej Zog is proud to be part of. Engaging with community members through grassroots efforts such as door-knocking required a lot of planning and boots-to-the-ground work. The direct contact with local residents was both refreshing and very eye-opening, particularly in how residents truly feel about living in Brooklyn Center and their desires to see the City evolve so they can continue to remain residents of Brooklyn Center. Residents are vested in this City and are eager to see the City grow.

MN Zeg Zog is honored to have been selected as a partner with the City of Brooklyn Center to serve and engage the Hmong community about the upcoming changes and new developments. We felt that the City's willingness, desire, and commitment to connect with community members shows their good faith in truly creating something that represents the voices of the different and unique residents of Brooklyn Center. We believe the efforts put into this initiative by the City as well as other local agencies will make the Opportunity Site a success if plans are followed through on as promised.

Attendance at events:

☑ MN Zeg Zog

1. Mash Up with OS: 310 people
2. Hmong BINGO with OS: 8 people
3. Dec Parent Meeting at New Millennium Academy Hmong Charter School was canceled twice (in Nov and Dec)

☑ Other Community Events

1. Arts in Autumn: 35 people
2. Hmong New Year: 250 people
3. OS Meeting in BP: 3 people

| MIND

Focus Group

Focus group discussions and community engagement were adopted for the gathering of data collection. First, two focus groups were held virtually. For each one there was a PowerPoint presentation detailing what the Brooklyn Center Opportunity Site is all about and what the participants were expected to do. After each presentation, participants asked some questions and made some comments, ranging from what the Opportunity Site is all about to how affordable the housing project will be to concerns about the fate of small businesses. A link to the online questionnaire was posted, requesting participants to click, respond to the items to the best of their ability and knowledge, and submit. Eleven and seven people, respectively, participated in the first and second focus group discussion activities. Eight participants completed and submitted their questionnaires.

Due to the low turnout in the focus group discussion events, we decided to focus on community engagement events. Fortunately, the Brooklyn Center community had a Halloween celebration event at the time of this study. As a result, we subscribed to a stand during this event. With a synopsis of the Opportunity Site and a flyer with QR code, we made a series of "curbside" presentations to small groups and individuals as they visited our stand or as we intercepted them at the main event registration tables. After the short presentations, participants were advised to scan the code, follow the link, complete it, and submit the survey. With evidence of submission displayed on the participants' phone screen, they were instantly rewarded with a gift card. There were two of these events—on Halloween and Black Friday.

Survey Responses

A total of 101 participants completed and submitted the questionnaire. Among the respondents, 75.1% stated that they live in Brooklyn Center compared to 26.9% who said they do not live in the City. On the other hand, 79.6% said they do not have a business in the City compared to 20.4% who said otherwise. Also, 63.4% were black or African American, 23.8% were white, 8.9% were Asian, 3% were American Indian or Alaskan, and 1% indicated six other categories.

In responding to items relating to the residential needs of the community, 35 (34.7%), 42 (42.6%), and 24 (23.8%) indicated that their household size is between 1–2, 3–4, and 5 and above, respectively. Also, 37 (36.6%), 60 (59.4%), and 4 (4%) further indicated that the number of bedrooms that will meet their needs are 1–2 bedroom, 3–5 bedrooms, and 5 and above, respectively. An overwhelming majority, 83 (82.2%), stated that it is important that every member of their household has his or her own bedroom. Among the respondents, 48.5% agreed that the present cost of housing in Brooklyn Center is affordable as opposed to 30.7% who disagreed and 20.8% who were undecided. In contrast, 59.4% agreed that the housing cost in the City was expensive, while 22.8% disagreed, and 20.8% had no opinion on that.

For the issue relating to the economic developmental needs of the community, among other things, 50 (49.5%) said there is enough places to shop for everyday needs, while 30 (29.7%) said there is hardly enough, and 21 (20.8%) said there is not enough places to shop for everyday needs. On how the Opportunity Site can support local businesses, 52 (51.5%), 46 (45.5%), and 39 (38.6%) said the City can support small businesses by creating small business opportunities, providing small business soft loans, and providing affordable stalls, respectively. Also, the overwhelming majority, 84 (83.2%) prefer childcare facilities to be located in their neighborhood.

On parks and open space needs, 76 (75.2%), 23 (22.8%), and 6 (5.9%) said it is very important, important, and not important, respectively, to have parks in their neighborhood. The overwhelming majority agreed that is important to have a space for their pets as well as community gardens.

On community benefit, 92 (91.1%) of the respondents considered it very important or important to establish a unique cultural identity. Similarly, 97 (96%) of the respondents consider it very important or important to have ethnic businesses in the City. The same number, 97 (96%), of respondents had the same opinion about having a cultural center in Brooklyn Center. Finally, the overwhelming majority of the respondents agreed that there is enough transportation in the City and also agree that it is very important or important to residents of the City.

Minnesota Africans United

The work we did for the project started with a WhatsApp group. We created it for individuals, families, and businesses of African immigrants who live in Brooklyn Center. We uploaded updates about meetings and activities, and collected opinions and feedback on the project. It was also through this group that we sent out surveys. We used this group as a way to engage others to join the Opportunity Site Project.

Focus Groups

On October 18, our subcontractors Off the Blue Couch and Peace Global Health Foundation hosted a Facebook Live event for all who live, work, worship, and play in Brooklyn Center to discuss the Opportunity Site. There were 24 attendees, and the feedback we received was that African businesses in Brooklyn Center deserve an opportunity to prosper, and the site is that opportunity.

<https://www.facebook.com/111109707258226/videos/466851021706200/>

On October 26, our subcontractor Ignite Business Investment Groups hosted a Zoom virtual information session to discuss the site. The session was informational based on how the project may support small business owners. We discussed how our community could help fulfill the City's mission to address everyone's needs. The group meeting was so large (25 attendees) and the time so limited that not everyone had a chance to speak. Those who were able to speak gave feedback on supporting financial literacy and planning, as well as home ownership opportunities that this project may be able to offer. Moving forward, Ignite Business Investment Groups will work with ACER (African Career, Education, and Resources) to develop a survey for all attendees.

On October 27, our subcontractor Triumph Graphics hosted an in-person event at the Brooklyn Center Community Center. This event focused on entrepreneurs, small business owners, residents of the city, and children—all who love or are connected to the arts. There were four attendees at our October event. We discussed opportunities for arts at the site. Feedback we received is that the City should build an area where people of all ages can engage in different forms of art at a reasonable cost. The pictures and images represented at the site should be diverse and include African immigrants. Art is an important component in the lives of African immigrants, so ways to partner with the community are welcomed. We also discussed a co-area for entrepreneurs and artists to work together for economic development. From this event, we realized that hosting in-person events is still challenging for our community due to COVID-19 and safety measures. However, we will create a survey to send to those who did not show up and provide more information about the new site.

On November 6, our subcontractor, a Brooklyn Center community member, hosted a virtual Zoom information session to discuss the site. Eleven business members joined the group and discussed how financial literacy and cash flow can help businesses grow through the use of the incubator. We also discussed that the incubator should provide opportunities to teach and train those who do not have financial literacy and are struggling with their finances.

This messaging is important for city members and should not be focused only on businesspeople but rather on the whole community so everyone can benefit. African community members could provide cultural insurance by putting their own shares in people's businesses, which will take African immigrants to come to this space. We also discussed how people can grow their assets without running a business; therefore, this space should be open for all. We learned that a challenge for community members is that grandparents are not great at being involved in the community, but this space may allow generations to come together. Another challenge is that we should try to refrain from hosting events on the weekends because these are holy days for various African cultures. One of our guests was from KJTV and shared that we can use KJTV to promote this project so other residents of Brooklyn Center can voice their opinions on this project. It was also brought up that the development site can be used as a place to heal and improve mental health for our community. Also, large and small spaces for the building were recommended so a variety of organizations and people can utilize the correct space. Attached is the marketing flyer for the event.

On November 11, our subcontractor Peace Global Health Foundation hosted a Facebook Live event for all who live, work, worship, and play in Brooklyn Center to discuss the Opportunity Site. There were XXX attendees. (attach Facebook link).

On November 13, our subcontractor Multicultural Kids Network hosted a virtual information session about the Opportunity Site. There were nine attendees, and the feedback we heard was that kids should have a place they call home that teaches them their culture.

In December and January, a group of nine African immigrants associated with the Opportunity Site Project took some time to go door-knocking in the community. COVID-19 and Omicron made this difficult as people were hesitant to have in-person conversations, regardless of mask protection. We were still able to connect with more than 100 homes. We did door-knocking in apartment complexes, individual homes, commercial homes, and businesses. During our conversations, we discussed the Opportunity Site and asked for feedback. We also hung flyers around our community and on doors of apartment complexes and businesses to share information about the project.

The feedback we received from attendees and the number of attendees were mostly outlined in the description of each event above. Additional feedback we received from door-knocking was that there were several refugees who are hopeful that there will be healing through the arts represented in the Opportunity Site. This is important to them because of their past trauma and difficult life they lived prior to coming to Brooklyn Center. Responses also included the need of family homes to accommodate larger-sized families (4–6 bedrooms). Health and wellness were big components discussed; families were hoping for a gym and weight room that would be available for all ages, including those with disabilities. Because some of these families are already living in poverty or depressed communities, this Opportunity Site would be a place where they could come to get fulfilled and be safe. Finally, feedback was given that this was the first time in many families' histories in Brooklyn Center that they felt heard and cared about, and that their opinions and interests were valid in the decision-making process. They hope to continue to be involved as the project moves forward.

Minnesota African Coalition

The channels we used to solicit feedback were focus groups, surveys, town hall meetings, door-knocking, and social media. At the beginning of the project, organization leaders and contractors gathered together to discuss their individual plans on how to execute the job as contained in the contract. Our target was community members who would not usually show up at City-organized meetings or events. Our drive was to give every resident of the City a chance for their voice to be heard. Our strategy was to target church services, church events, and other activities to locate those who are associated with the City of Brooklyn Center and engage them.

Getting members familiarized with the Brooklyn Center Opportunity Site Project was important in order to get direct feedback from the community about what they want to see developed in the project. That also helped us connect better with more community members.

Door-knocking provided us the opportunity to physically go out into the Brooklyn Center community and speak directly to residents. People were encouraged to attend town hall meetings to gain more insight and actively participate in the development project. Door-knocking essentially served the same purpose as town hall meetings except it was a one-on-one experience that was personal and enriching.

We created and posted social media flyers regarding the Brooklyn Center Opportunity Site via MAC's Facebook, community WhatsApp pages, MAC's website, and Community Instagram platforms. The Opportunity Site Explainer Video ad ran on Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, MAC's website, Paadio website, and community social media platforms.

We engaged the residents of Brooklyn Center through:

- ✓ Door-knocking
- ✓ Focus group meetings (in person and virtual)
- ✓ Town hall meeting (in person and virtual)
- ✓ Online survey
- ✓ Social media

We understand that other organizations contracted for the same projects are doing some of the same things we are doing, so we decided to engage and ask different questions that will provide more value to the overall engagement efforts. The Opportunity Site resulted from tax incentives provided to investors who will invest their capital gains and hold them for more than 10 years without paying taxes on them to the IRS. The Brooklyn Center Opportunity Zone qualifies as one of the economically distressed communities designed to attract new investments, which, under certain conditions, receive this preferential tax treatment. On this premise, we focused on how low-income residents can directly and indirectly benefit from investments in the Opportunity Site.

Door-Knocking

We knocked on the doors of 1,205 residents and shared information about the Opportunity Site and specifically the Pilot Project. For those who were willing, we asked their feedback and encouraged them to attend our town hall meetings. We also encouraged them to attend City Council meetings and engage with the City's actions and policies, which will enhance citizen education, enlightenment, and participation.

We printed photo-quality flyers with a QR code for them to keep and scan anytime to:

- ✓ Participate in the Opportunity Site survey
- ✓ Get updates on Opportunity Site engagement



Outcomes from Door-Knocking

- ✓ A greater number of those who live in apartments indicated interest in buying from the Opportunity Site, and others generally indicated interest to rent from the development.
- ✓ The general consensus from renters show that rents are increasing beyond their incomes based on their responses to the questions we asked them.
- ✓ In some neighborhoods, a good number of those we visited have not heard about the Opportunity Site development plan. It gave us the opportunity to get to the basics of the Opportunity Site and the value it will bring to the City and residents alike.
- ✓ They were enthusiastic about the Opportunity Site, and a good number of them indicated they would participate in town hall meetings.
- ✓ They were excited to hear that the Opportunity Site would provide affordable apartments.
- ✓ They were concerned about whether low-income families will be given first priority to apply for affordable apartments.
- ✓ They were concerned about having access to the business incubator center since they may need financial and other resources to start a business or scale.

Focus Groups

We conducted six focus group meetings. Four were in person, and two were virtual.

Almost half of them had not heard about the Opportunity Site development plan.

We focused on their understanding of the Opportunity Site and how they can be involved from the planning stage to occupancy, emphasizing the short, mid, and long terms of the project.



We asked participants what change they want to see in their community. We wanted to make sure these groups' voices are heard since they make up a substantial part of the City's population. Participants wanted to see rent-to-own opportunities and access to different spaces and resources in their community rather than having to commute to other cities for their needs. People wanted communal spaces for kids and families such as parks, community centers, daycares, small businesses, education, and affordable housing, which were just some of their interests in the Opportunity Site development.

Meeting Outcome

- ☑ For those who are not familiar with the Opportunity Site planning, there is a need for ongoing education and discussions to bring them up to date with the Site planning and development.
- ☑ Generally, there was enthusiasm from attendees about learning which ways residents and community members could actively and directly participate in contributing to the Opportunity Site development.
- ☑ There was a strong desire to have a piece of ownership of some kind in the Opportunity Site development:
 1. They were concerned that a lot of immigrants and BIPOC community members may not have the resources to pursue the kind of ownership the Opportunity Site provides.
 2. There were suggestions of better career opportunities and strong support for small businesses so they can develop the resources needed for property ownership.
 3. There is a strong need to educate the residents on property ownership and resources available for them to prepare ahead of time.



- ☑ There was a desire among attendees to continue widespread awareness about the Opportunity Site development, as well as increasing community participation in the early stages of development. Some of them called themselves Opportunity Site Ambassadors.
- ☑ Some participants shared the lack of black contractors and handymen in Brooklyn Center who could provide their services in developing the Opportunity Site and voiced the urgency to train those who are willing to fill in the gaps.

Town Hall Meetings

The goal of the town hall meeting was to share information on the Opportunity Site development and the current pilot development. We conducted three town hall meetings in person with a total of 108 attendees. We conducted a virtual meeting with a 1,600-person reach. The attendees were highly engaged and interactive and asked a lot of questions.



Some of the themes we discussed include:

- ☑ **Home ownership or renting in the Opportunity Site – which do you prefer?**

For those who live in apartments, they have a strong desire to buy houses in the new development, although some of them asked if there would be support for them as houses are becoming less affordable.

- ☑ **What does having a community gathering space mean to you?**

There is great enthusiasm for the community event center. Some wanted to know if they could bring in their own food and even alcohol. There was a lot of excitement and energy around the event center.

- ☑ **How can the Opportunity Site support local businesses?**

There is strong support from attendees for local businesses, and many of them advocated for equity to support BIPOC businesses to grow in the incubator space in order to start reducing the wealth gaps.

A highlight in one of the meetings was three men who said they are real estate investors and asked questions about how they can directly invest in the Opportunity Site. We referred them to EDA and the council for direct conversation on investing in Opportunity Site development or City properties.

- ☑ There was a wide concern among attendees about understanding how Brooklyn Center residents will be directly affected and/or benefit from the Opportunity Site development.
 1. Participants were skeptical that the sentiments of immigrant and BIPOC members of the community would be considered.
 2. Participants were concerned about how immigrant and BIPOC members of the City would be impacted by this huge development that will redefine Brooklyn Center.
- ☑ Attendees asked about elaborate plans that would ensure that a safe, comfortable, and friendly environment would be established for the community and its residents.
- ☑ Some of the questions were:
 1. How will the City continue to engage the residents when this current engagement ends?
 2. For self-driven individuals, how and where do they plug in to actively participate in the development of the Site?
 3. What is in it for me?

| Social Media Report

We created and posted social media flyers regarding the Brooklyn Center Opportunity Site via MAC's Facebook, Community WhatsApp pages, MAC and Community Instagram platforms.

The Opportunity Site Explainer Video ad ran on Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, MAC's website, Paadio website, and community social media platforms. We reached 70,000+ for the duration of the engagement from Facebook ads targeting Brooklyn Center and the surrounding communities.

We created two variations of explainer videos that aired on MAC's website and partner's website for the duration of the engagement and throughout the engagement period. The video has a voice-over by African immigrant youths and young adults highlighting the importance of the Opportunity Site for the multiple generations of the African immigrant community in Brooklyn Center and surrounding communities. The explainer is also inviting the African immigrant population to participate in the decision-making process of the Brooklyn Center Opportunity Site.

We also did a Facebook Live broadcast with a panel discussing the benefits of the Brooklyn Center Opportunity Site. The broadcast will feature members of the African immigrant communities who educated the rest of the communities on the benefits of the Opportunity Site. Facebook Live broadcasts were featured on several partners' social media pages. It reached 1,600 on the MAC Facebook page.

We updated our partners' websites with the explainer videos, which will keep running even after the engagement contract has ended.

[Opportunity Site Video Link](#)

LIBA

Focus Group

LIBA conducted four focus group meetings with the intent to share, distribute, and gather information and feedback. Three of those meetings were held at the Brooklyn Center Community Center at 6301 Shingle Creek Parkway on November 3, 10, and 17, 2021, and the fourth was held at the LIBA office at 6248 Lakeland Avenue North in Brooklyn Park at its general meeting on November 18, 2021.

LIBA used three approaches to gather information and feedback from small and micro businesses. The strategy employed included town hall style meetings, door-knocking, and one-on-one technical assistance and education on the impact the project will have on small and micro businesses, especially for the immigrant community.

Surveys are not the best way to gather information from the African immigrant community. Notwithstanding, some members of the community did participate. There is still a lot of work to be done to educate and share information about the project.

LIBA conducted four focus group meetings to inform, share, and gather information from business owners. Presenters at the meetings included Alatus, Project for Pride in Living (PPL), and Resurrecting Faith World Ministries. The City of Brooklyn Park staff was there to answer questions. Many of the questions and concerns included:

- ☑ What is the Opportunity Site Project?
- ☑ What are the benefits this project brings to small and micro businesses?
- ☑ How was selection conducted in bringing the parties to the table?
- ☑ How was the initial survey conducted, and how was it conducted around small and micro businesses?
- ☑ How much is the project going to cost?
- ☑ Who is paying for the project?
- ☑ Will the retail and business areas be affordable?
- ☑ Would businesses be able to own commercial space in the Opportunity Site?
- ☑ Will the structure of residential be inclusive of retail spaces?
- ☑ How many spaces will be created for small and micro businesses?
- ☑ How will the selection be made as to who qualifies to be in that space?
- ☑ Will funds be provided to businesses to prepare them to acquire these spaces?
- ☑ Will the developers contract with minority businesses in the project?
- ☑ Is the City putting money into this project?

- ☑ How much does the project cost?
- ☑ Is the City going to manage the property or outsource the management of the property?

Technical Assistance Activities

The businesses listed below were provided technical assistance in micro loans and were informed about the Opportunity Site. They were provided all the necessary information.

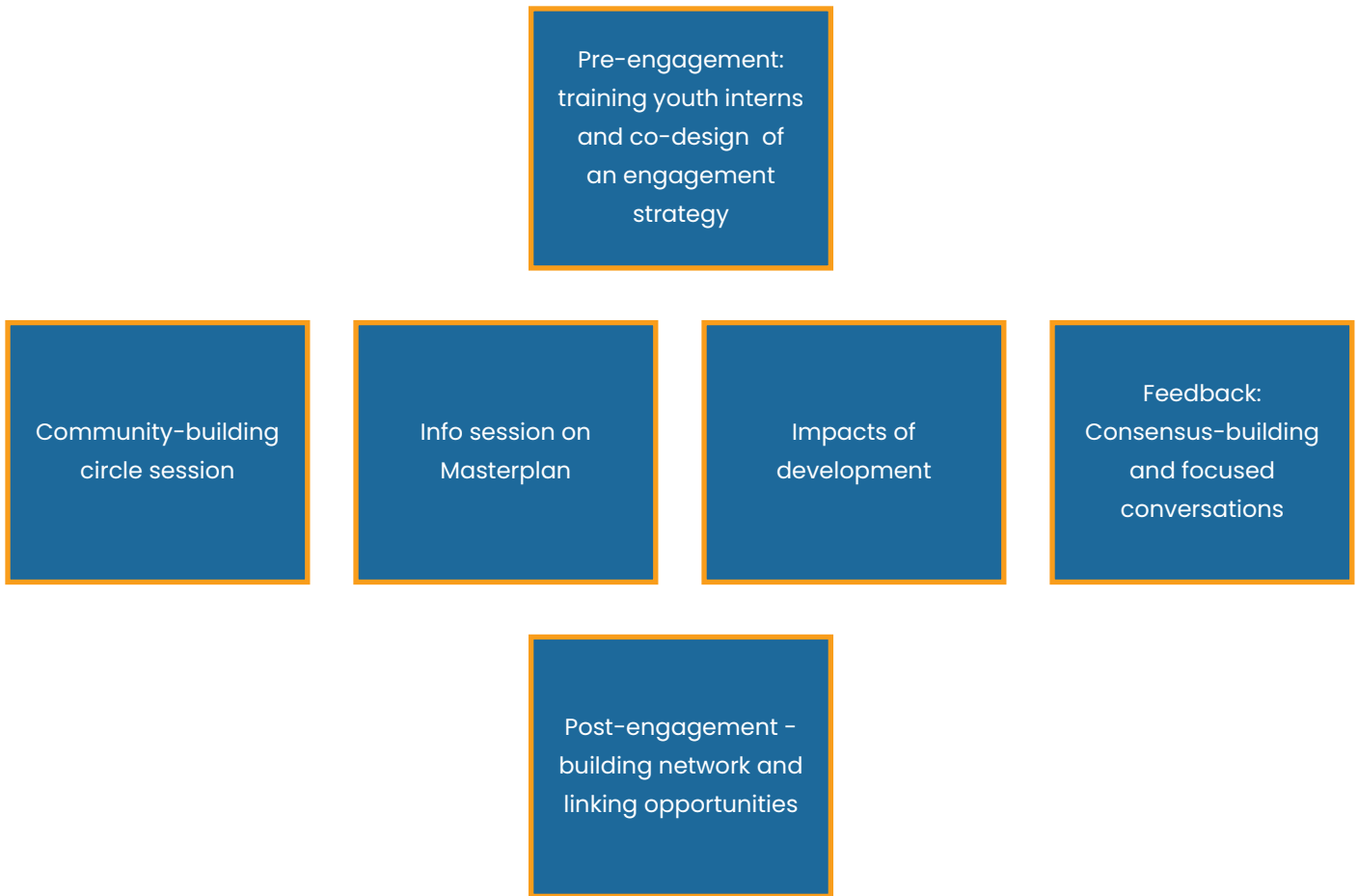
#	BUSINESS NAME	BUSINESS ADDRESS	BUSINESS TYPE
1	IFRI, LLC	5615 Brooklyn Blvd. #200, Brooklyn Center, MN 5542	S-Corp
2	More of Liberia, LLC	3300 County Rd 10 #201 Brooklyn Center, MN 55429	Sole Proprietorship
3	House Royals D'Afrique Boutique	5901 Brooklyn Blvd. # 1146, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430	Sole Proprietorship
4	Moneyline Group Corp.	5901 Brooklyn Blvd. # 207, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430	C-Corp
5	Cavalla Travel & Tour	5701 Shingle Creek Parkway #325 Brooklyn Center, MN 55428	Limited Liability Company
6	Vee Event Décor	1400 57th Ave. N. Brooklyn Center, MN 55430	Sole Proprietorship
7	Taye Service Corporation	5901 Brooklyn Blvd. # 207, Brooklyn Center, MN 55430	C-Corp
8	Car World, LLC	6500 Brooklyn Blvd. #207, Brooklyn Center, MN 55429	S-Corp
9	SA & Associates, LLC	3300 County Rd 10 Ste. 512i Brooklyn Center, MN 55429	S-Corp
10	Nissi Investment Group	5901 Brooklyn Blvd. #114B Brooklyn Center, MN 55429	Sole Proprietorship
11	Nuda Distributors LLC	3300 County Rd 10 STE. 500 I, Brooklyn Center	Limited Liability Company
12	0127739	98-10 577A	12/28/2001
13	0205067	00-01 704	5/24/2002
14	0206057	98-17 217	6/10/2002
15	0218110	99-23 094	12/16/2002
16	0308538	94-22 139	5/6/2003

#	DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES	# OF PARTICIPANTS
1	1st Focus Group Meeting	15 Participants
2	2nd Focus Group Meeting	18 Participants
3	3rd Focus Group Meeting	20 Participants
	LIBA Monthly Business Meeting	19 Participants
4	3 Flyers Developed	750 Flyers distributed
5	WhatsApp Information Distribution	250 Contacts 10 times distributed
6	Constant Contact Information Sharing	1,000 Contacts 3 times distributed
7	LIBA Newsletter Electronic	1,000 Contacts
8	LIBA Newsletter Hard Copy	500 Contacts
9	LIBA Internal Email Distribution	250 Distributed 3 times
10	Door-Knocking to Businesses	Over 100

Brooklyn Bridge Youth Alliance

From our history of engagement and partnership with community, we have learned that the best work comes in partnership with those that we are engaging with. To this effort, we hired four youth interns from the community to help in designing our outreach and engagement plan as well as the delivery of information based on their experience on understanding and learning about the proposed Brooklyn Center Downtown Masterplan.

Interns studied the proposed masterplan and created a collaborative presentation to report back how they understood the plan and would explain it to others. Then we prepared a curriculum of learning on the historical impacts that development has had on Black and Brown communities in MN and the greater United States. This included learnings on gentrification and displacement and the strength of community engagement to bring about renewal, healing, and progress. From that, we designed an iterative engagement model that was about being able to deliver information to youth and learning from them while simultaneously building relationships with cohorts of students that were recruited at Brooklyn Center Highschool and Brooklyn Center Early College Academy. Ultimately, we wanted youth to be able to provide feedback on the proposed Masterplan while also understanding their values as it relates to their community at present and in the future.



Engagement model for Brooklyn Center Community Development Youth Engagement

The interns were also trained in a facilitation method called Youth-as-Facilitative-Leaders Training (YFL) that teaches on how to facilitate focused conversations and large group consensus-building. This training was given with the anticipation of having them assist in facilitating engagement sessions with youth in the schools, but due to numerous challenges that resulted in conflicting schedules, school workload, and other activities, this was not possible. To finish off their internship at the BBAY, they helped initiate recruitment for the first cohort of students.

Overall, recruitment and outreach involved extensive partnership from Brooklyn Center Community Schools (BCCS). Brooklyn Center Highschool allowed our Youth Engagement Specialist to regularly teach an extra-curricular class to the first cohort of students. From there, we were also able to recruit students during after-school programming to form a second and third cohort of mostly ninth graders to participate in virtual sessions. A fourth cohort was formed with the aid of Brooklyn Center Early College Academy (ECA), which is the alternative-learning center for BCCS. We were able to do hybrid sessions for the fourth cohort allowing for in-person and virtual engagement. Cohorts 1 and 4 underwent a consensus-building workshop, while cohorts 2 and 3 shared their feedback through a facilitated focused conversation. In total fifty-three students across four cohorts were recruited across different modes and mediums. Each cohort experienced the aforementioned engagement model split up into a multitude of sessions based on the amount of time we had available with each group. For example, the first cohort that was taught during class was only available on Tuesdays and Thursdays for one hour each day.

We were committed to meeting with them at least one of those days each week from October – December. Because we knew we had more time with this cohort, we were intentional with spreading out the material. For other cohorts, these students were recruited and voluntarily participated rather than being enrolled in a class. This meant that we had less time with them, and we needed to be concise and intentional with the sessions we had. We did not want to start a cohort with the intention of having youth undergo a multiple-week long curriculum only to see students unable to attend each consecutive week. Instead, we had fewer overall sessions that were longer in length to capture the attention of students while also allowing us to continue to build relationships and learn what we needed to learn.

Overall, the process for outreach relational in nature. It was important to us that we went directly to where we knew students were. As we recruited, we focused on learning about who each individual student was and for them to get a glimpse of who we were so that when they entered the larger shared spaces, they would be able to make meaningful connections to us as facilitators and the content that we wanted to share. This was key to the success in engagement.

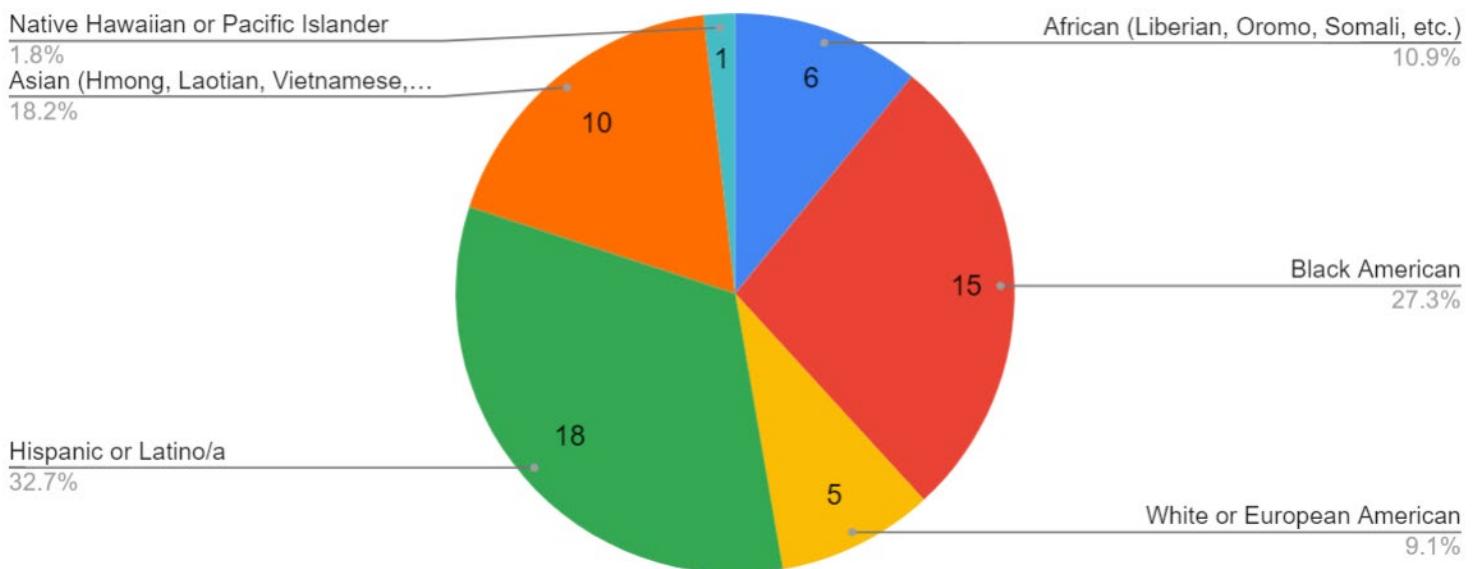
For the engagement model listed above, much of the level-setting and community-building happened during the loose community-circles where we were able to build relationships with the young people in the space and learn about how they viewed their community and their city. From that, students were given a high-level presentation on the proposed Brooklyn Center Downtown Masterplan and an overview of the first phase of development. We also taught students about gentrification, displacement, and the impacts of development so they could fairly participate in providing feedback. The finale of each cohort session was gathering feedback either through building consensus or having focused conversations on the overall information using the YFL method. To present the findings, we consolidated common themes from the feedback gathered across four different cohorts.

Community Involved

Fifty-three students from Brooklyn Center Community School District were engaged. Below are the demographic data.

Brooklyn Center High School		Brooklyn Center Early College Academy	
31		22	
9th Grade	10th Grade	11th Grade	12th Grade
18	6	9	20
Male		Female	
22		31	
Live in Brooklyn Center		Live outside of Brooklyn Center	
36		17	

Race of participants



This is a representative visualization of race across all cohorts. The total number listed in the above pie chart exceeds the total number of participants because some youth identified as mixed race.

Youth Feedback

In total, thirteen engagement sessions were conducted across four different cohorts with fifty-three students. Below is the consolidated feedback from building consensus with groups and facilitating focused conversations as well as some feedback youth provided during the initial community-building sessions on their overall feelings towards living in Brooklyn Center. Note that consensus building workshops are designed to intentionally capture all voices, thoughts, and opinions. While some findings may appear contradictory, they represent a variety of youth and their current realities and future aspirations.

Student Relationship to the City

We began the session with building community, which involves understanding how youth felt in relation to themselves and their city. This was done to level-set with each cohort while simultaneously building a relationship with them. Each group was asked these questions during their community-building circle session and encouraged to have free-flowing conversations. Below are some specific quotes from youth who contributed responses that seemed shared amongst members of their cohorts.

1. What does it feel like to be seen or heard?
 - ☑ "It makes you feel like you're something and not nothing."
 - ☑ "It's sometimes scary but when you're seen or heard, it feels validating."
 - ☑ "It feels like you actually matter to people and your opinions matter."
 - ☑ "Being seen or heard is one thing, but accountability matters."
2. What do you like about your city?
 - ☑ "I like the diversity of different people in Brooklyn Center."
 - ☑ "I like that I see people take action when change is needed."
 - ☑ "I really like the community and the people in Brooklyn Center. It feels like a tight-knit community."
 - ☑ "When one of us succeeds, it feels like we all succeed."
 - ☑ "This school (referring to the BC Early College Academy) is a great impression for what Brooklyn Center is all about. It feels like one close community."
3. What do you not like or want to see changed?
 - ☑ "I want to see people and things – like live music – happen in the streets."
 - ☑ "I don't like the crime. How do we invest in community to reduce crime rates?"
 - ☑ "Roads are crappy"
 - ☑ "There are a lot of empty spaces and lots"
 - ☑ "Everything is so far from where we want to be (when asked to clarify, they mentioned stores, entertainment, movies, sports)."

- ☑ "No spaces or activities to hang-out with friends or family"
- ☑ "We are always pit as the underdog in comparison to other youth in other cities."

4. Do you see Brooklyn Center as a place you want to stay in or have a career?

- ☑ "Yes, I can see myself living here as an adult, but I don't see myself having a career here. It's never been shown to us how we can do that."
- ☑ "Yes, my family is here and I would want to stay close to them."
- ☑ "No, I am leaving Brooklyn Center as soon as I can."
- ☑ "I don't have any attachment to this city so I don't see myself staying here as an adult."

5. What would make you stay in this city to feel like you belong?

- ☑ "More activities for youth and families."
- ☑ "Recreational and community center to play sports and do other activities."
- ☑ "Natural green spaces to study and be at peace."
- ☑ "More stuff to do inside even during winter."
- ☑ "Cultural exhibitions of the diversity in the city."
- ☑ "Festivals, live-music, community get-togethers"
- ☑ "Help students get good jobs."
- ☑ "Student-life is dominated by schools. If teachers and schools don't make personal connections or promote positive environments to their students, this will reflect on how students view their community."

Overall Strengths of Proposed Downtown Masterplan

Consensus-building and focused-conversations feedback was gathered between what youth felt were strengths of the plan and what they feel like was missing/what they want to see added.

1. Community-centered approached designed to bring people and families together.

By far the aspect of the masterplan that was identified as a strength most frequently was the community-centered design that was illustrated in the document. One phrase that often came up was that this, "will bring community together." Youth believe this will encourage community-members to engage with each other and build relationships in ways that were not available before and especially now during the ongoing COVID-19 Pandemic. We were fully transparent on the City's decision to involve community partners to engage with Brooklyn Center residents as an extension to this plan. As reflected in some of the individual answers, youth were appreciative that they were being involved as community members in helping inform direction of development.

2. Walkable and bikeable area with activities replace space that currently has no use.

Youth took notice at the intention to create larger physical spaces for people to be able to get from one place to another. They specifically cited and mentioned larger sidewalks, crosswalks, bike lanes and trails, and hubs of transportation for people to be able to access the proposed Downtown area. An attraction to them was the potential of having a circulator constantly running through the downtown area. Alongside that, students identified that this central area could boost the value of surrounding areas that include their schools. Youth in Brooklyn Center are not ignorant of the large empty lots that occupy much of the spaces in their city and think that this downtown area will make their city look better while adding some much-needed services and entertainment.

3. Emphasis on small-business development for economic growth of local business owners with the potential for job creation for youth and adults.

Youth identified the incubation and development of small businesses as a strength. They see this as an opportunity for teens and young adults to get easier access to jobs with many of them excited at the possibility of being future entrepreneurs.

4. Centralized services makes it more accessible for folks with transportation barriers and reduces financial burden attached with commuting.

Many youth that were engaged do not have a car or a license. They also recognize that Brooklyn Center has less than surrounding cities, and when they want to do something, they need to go outside the city. Youth mentioned that the added Downtown area would allow them to stay in the city if they needed certain services or wanted to hang out, and with the added transportation options, it will be easier for them to get there. One student mentioned that this will save their parents money on gas because they will no longer have to go out of the city to go to the store or see a movie.

5. Expanded housing for affordable living.

Many youth appreciated the intentionality of the masterplan in recognizing the diverse family units and households that exists in Brooklyn Center. They liked that 30% of new housing will be allocated as affordable for any prospective family or individual.

6. Green spaces and added parks for youth and families to enjoy.

Youth were impressed and fascinated by the potential expansion of green spaces and recreational activities that would be available to them should the developers and City go forward with what has been proposed. Youth liked the idea of being able to kayak and swim outside locally. Alongside the added park benefits were the potential for winter activities for residents during the winter season. These potential features interested youth who owned pets.

Other strengths that were listed individually include the stormwater draining system, more accessibility for pet owners.

“What is missing?” from the proposed Downtown Masterplan

We recognize that some of the feedback from youth listed below may already be represented in the Downtown Masterplan but may not have been clear or may be work in other city departments. This feedback suggests that these items should be included in master plans and will ultimately impact the success of the development.

1. An intentional plan focused on the public safety of residents and their well-being.

In an age of social media, youth are fully aware of the instances of police brutality that have happened within the Twin Cities and in their City of Brooklyn Center. They want to feel seen and safe, not criminalized. They want community to be engaged in the public safety discussions. For some cohorts, we asked them, “what is the single-most important thing you would want the city and developers to consider when implementing this masterplan?” and many of them pointed to having a safer city so they could go outside and hang out with friends. Some identified the uncertain feelings of safety during the protests following the police killing of Daunte Wright in April 2021.

2. Essential businesses and spaces related to health, basic needs, and other specialized services for people from all backgrounds.

Alongside this notion of public safety is the well-being of community as a whole. They want to see clinics that focus on teen health and wellbeing. Youth specifically cited the Teen Annex Clinic as an example. Other spaces they would like to see are spaces for youth who are part of the LGBTQIA community where youth and individuals can go for support or additional resources. Youth also specifically point at the population of people who are homeless. They would like to see a shelter here in Brooklyn Center or some added supports that address root issues to the problem of homelessness.

3. Strong efforts by the city to prevent gentrification and displacement of current residents.

Many youth that we engaged with were not familiar with the terms, “displacement,” or “gentrification,” but were familiar with the impacts that Top Golf had on surrounding areas. Some youths were residents at Melrose Gates Apartments and saw rent prices increase when the adjacent Top Golf came into town. While most youth saw the intentional allotment of 30% of all housing to be affordable as a strength to the masterplan, some were also concerned with the use of area median income to exaggerate the real affordability for current Brooklyn Center residents. Youth want to see clear effort and communication by the city that shows that current residents will still have a place in Brooklyn Center when development happens near their neighborhoods.

4. Affordable recreation, entertainment, and public art.

Youth love sports and art. They want to see a community and recreation center where they can play basketball, volleyball, and other activities. This is something that isn't always available to them when the winter season comes. Alongside that, youth want to see art and they want to have access to more activities that allow them to explore their creative side. Youth would also like to see color in the streets. This may mean more public art installations that may include murals and wall-paintings. They want live music and other recreational options that are not just limited to shopping and restaurants.

5. Environmentally friendly plan that focuses on clean building, clean streets, and clean water.

Youth were receptive to the added infrastructure for intentional stormwater draining, but they want to see the city development also incorporate sustainable building practices when it comes to construction. They want added efforts to prevent littering from residents, and they especially want to see efforts to clean current water sources in Brooklyn Center such as Shingle Creek, especially if the proposed aquatic activities such as swimming and kayaking are to be implemented in the city development.

6. Development that leads to improved community education.

Youth are aware of the differences in academic experiences that they have in comparison to their peers in other cities. They hope that this new development will change that. They want to see their school district be engaged more in the direction of development. They hope that this leads to improved community education via more school funding to allow for more opportunities for young people.

Other Concerns include wondering how this will be paid for? How will this impact the physical location of our school?



CHALLENGES

MN ZEG ZOG

There were several challenges we faced in order to meet this objective. We realized that contacting 50,000 people is more than the population of Brooklyn Center. It also meant that in order to contact 50,000 people, we are targeting everyone who is not Hmong as well. As a result, we targeted our ads to reach the Hmong population in Brooklyn Center. Additionally, the lack of personnel, COVID-19 restrictions, and the cold weather played a factor in reaching our target audience. We believe that given additional resources and time, we could have made a bigger impact.

MIND

Like any other project, the organization faces some challenges in engaging the community in the survey and questionnaire. These can be categorized as follows: time, language barrier, how members and the participants should be adequately compensated, location where target population can be connected, and operational factors such as how many people can be mobilized to be part of the project and how members would be trained to approach the participants.

Time is important, and as the saying goes, time is money. The first obstacle is to find the time that would be convenient for many of our members to meet. Regular meetings are required instead of the normal monthly meetings. Since the project has to be completed within a given time, regular meetings are needed for strategic planning, proper discussion, and outstanding results. However, many of our members are working class, and most of them are professionals working different shifts at different locations.

To overcome this challenge, the executive members of the organization decided to meet online once a week prior to involving the general populace, usually in the evenings when most people are home from work. It was at these meetings that most of the decisions were made and the standard sets. An online engagement platform was used. Questionnaires were developed, and flyers were created and posted on various WhatsApp platforms specifying a date and time for the online survey. Members were paid, and every participant received a gift card.

We needed to overcome the language barrier. Apart from English, which is the official language, many of our members speak and understand other languages that are the same or similar to what many of the residents speak. Therefore, it's easy for our members and other participants to engage with the community without having to hire a third party to interpret for some segments of the society who are struggling with the English language. We addressed location and how target populations were connected.

To ensure that every segment of the society is reached, some members of the community were hired—young, old, students, professionals, and parents. Training on how to approach people and politely request them to complete the questionnaire was done, adequate monetary compensation was provided, and every participant was awarded a gift card. Members were encouraged to visit grocery stores, malls, and religious houses, preferably in the evenings and on weekends. These are the places where different people from different backgrounds, beliefs, and genders were engaged. With all the planning and arrangements in place, it was no surprise that the feedback was huge, and the project was very successful.

| Minnesota African United

Over the course of the project, we ran into some challenges. The biggest challenge was around COVID-19. When meeting in person, it was important that we all wore masks and socially distanced. This was difficult to have conversations with these barriers. We also wanted to ensure cleanliness, so having hand sanitizer on hand was crucial. Another challenge was that we originally wanted to do door-knocking after each event; however, the weather played a huge factor in this (cold weather, volunteers not having proper outside gear, etc.). A final challenge was that the dates on which we were expecting to do some of our events conflicted with dates our community already had commitments on—whether for school, religion, work, or family. We were able to overcome all of them by pivoting and doing the best we could to meet the project goals and support our community.

| Minnesota African Coalition

The biggest challenge was the COVID-19 pandemic that made it difficult for people to meet face to face. Traditionally, African immigrants like face-to-face meetings. The pandemic drastically reduced meetings in person and get-togethers for our constituents. We mitigated this by meeting residents at places such as churches and vaccination centers. We also braced the pandemic by conducting town hall meetings and focus group meetings in person, because not everyone has access to computers for online meetings.

Another issue was hesitancy by some residents who were skeptical that the engagement was a smokescreen and their opinions did not matter. We assured them that the City and the City Council were solidly behind this project. We encouraged them to sign up for updates on the Opportunity Site, reach out to EDA and the council, and attend other meetings the City will be organizing to keep the residents informed on the developments of the Site. It was also very challenging to bring together four organizations to execute a short-term project like this one. It impacted our speed and execution because we kept meeting and communicating to carry everyone along. Although it was difficult, the good side of it was a great opportunity to work together. Generally, African organizations do not bind together to execute a project like this, which we are working on to do better. We are celebrating this milestone of working successfully together.

Another challenge was COVID-19. All four group leaders were infected by the virus at some point during this engagement. Currently, one of the group leaders is down with COVID-19. We had other members helping out to get the work done.

LIBA

- ☑ Business owners were concerned that after the project is completed, big businesses will come from the outside and take over the spaces.
- ☑ Some were concerned that not enough information had been provided to the community concerning the project.
- ☑ Others were concerned that the project might displace their businesses.

Like any other community engagement, there were challenges in engaging the small and micro business community. Some of the challenges included but were not limited to the following:

- ☑ Many small and micro businesses are run by one or two persons. Those owners wear many caps in running the daily operations. Many of them did not have the time during business hours to chart or participate in surveys, although they were very interested in the process.
- ☑ The African immigrant business community is unique in that many of the owners are struggling to maintain their businesses, and many have evening or night jobs to help sustain their families and could not fully participate in focus groups meetings.
- ☑ Some of the businesses did not understand the Opportunity Site concept and needed more time to comprehend the concept. For many, it was the first time they had heard about the Opportunity Site Project in Brooklyn Center.
- ☑ The weather and COVID-19 presented some challenges in getting business owners to come to the meetings.

Brooklyn Bridge Youth Alliance

Stemming from work completed in 2019, the BBAY recognized a disconnect between what young people shared what they would like to see in future developments (such as expanded corporate retail and restaurant options), and the possible impacts of gentrification and displacement from those new additions to the city. For this iteration of engagement, we wanted to make sure that while we were sharing the proposed Masterplan, we were also teaching youth a high-level overview of the impacts that development has historically had on communities of color in Minnesota and the United States. Alongside that additional consideration was the intentional effort to create a space that promoted community-building to better understand how young people felt about the City of Brooklyn Center and their relationship to it. Important to note is the similarities that we found when engaging with youth that were reflected in this work and the work done in 2019.

To reiterate, the six major strengths on the Masterplan include:

- ☑ Community-centered approached designed to bring people and families together.
- ☑ Walkable and bikeable area with activities and space that otherwise have no use.
- ☑ Emphasis on small-business development for economic growth of local business owners with the potential for job creation for youth and adults.
- ☑ Centralized services make it more accessible for folks with transportation barriers and reduces financial burden attached with commuting.
- ☑ Expanded housing for affordable living.
- ☑ Green spaces and added parks for youth and families to enjoy

Below are the six major themes of what they felt was missing, needs clarification, or to be included:

- ☑ An intentional plan or consideration that focuses on the public safety of residents and their well-being.
- ☑ Essential businesses and spaces related to health, basic needs, and other specialized services for people from all backgrounds.
- ☑ Strong efforts by the city to prevent gentrification and displacement of current residents
- ☑ Affordable recreation, entertainment, and public art.
- ☑ Environmentally friendly plan that focuses on clean building, clean streets, and clean water.
- ☑ Development that leads to improved community education.

While we were able to receive a lot of strong feedback for the Downtown Masterplan, we also uncovered a lot of unanticipated learnings about how youth view, engage, and interact with their city and community as they provided holistic answers that were not addressed or considered during the drafting of the Masterplan. This includes identifying some root issues that the City will need to address. Below are some of those key findings and questions for consideration.

Moving the community forward and together: It was clear to us that youth were very excited by the potential development, and they were impressed by the overall presentation of the Masterplan. From our conversations with young people, we often heard that there were no spaces in Brooklyn Center for youth to be able to gather, hangout, and be themselves. They see this potential downtown area as a remedy to this problem that is so commonly felt amongst their peers. They identified a lot of the above strengths because young people want beautiful spaces that allow for cultural, artistic, and physical expression, not empty spaces and lots that remain unused. As they received this information, we challenged them to also view it as young adults who will soon be entering adulthood. From their responses, we could see how important community was to them as they all universally felt that this new downtown development was something that could truly bring people together in ways that they have not been able to experience in their time living in Brooklyn Center.

This was significant to us, because in our initial community-building sessions, we observed a polarizing dynamic of feelings that youth had towards Brooklyn Center. Youth came off as almost jaded about living in Brooklyn Center. They had little attachment to the city itself but were warm and appreciative towards the people who lived in this city. That was where their sense of pride lay. These young people saw the diversity of people in this city as a richness but also recognized the lack of opportunities and services that existed for them.

Gap in engagement between existing city-assets and community: The feeling of having less opportunities were partly since young people were just unaware of the services that were available to them. This first came apparent as we conducted community-building sessions and later as we gathered feedback on what was missing from the overall Master plan. Youth were telling us that they want to specifically see things like skate parks, bigger parks, trails, study spaces, and jobs for young people. This was something that occurred in all cohorts, and we asked them if they were aware of what was available to them. Most had no idea that Centennial Park even existed or what BrookLynk was, and many have never even stepped foot into Brookdale Library. Aside from the feedback youth were providing, young people were showing us that there were so many gaps of engagement between youth and families and the public institutions that serve them. This subliminal message kept emerging as we learned more about what they felt was missing from the overall Masterplan, and we saw it as a reflection to all the things that youth need but have not been receiving regardless of if they already exist in the community or not.

Public safety implementation into overall Masterplan: As we look at some of what young people identified as missing from the Masterplan, the most frequent concern was regarding public safety. Young people want to be able to freely be themselves in community gathering spaces and enjoy new services that were built for them and their families. They don't want to feel criminalized or profiled. With new development, there will most certainly be areas with more foot traffic from current residents, new residents, and visitors. Youth were concerned and want to see a public safety plan that focuses and centers the community, because they also want to feel safe. Additionally, youth identified the feelings of uncertainty due to instances of police brutality in Brooklyn Center and surrounding areas. Some mentioned how unsafe they felt during the protests and law enforcement response following the police killing of Daunte Wright in April 2021.



Direct and intentional efforts to prevent inequitable impacts of development: Youth also need reassurance from their city that they and their families still have a place here when this development finishes. What they want to see more of is stronger efforts to combat potential displacement of current residents. Youth feel pride in the people that live here, and we know that the city does too. They want the focus of development and expanded housing to be in the context of Brooklyn Center and not the regional Twin Cities.

School, city, and community partnership: Youth are also focused on how this impacts their schooling. One young person saw the downtown area super-imposed on the Opportunity Site and recognized that their school (BC Early College Academy) was in the middle of that area. They asked if it was going to be torn down, and we did not have an answer for them. Students want to see more partnership between their school district and the city, and if there is partnership, they want transparency on this partnership. We explained to them that this development can have potentially positive impacts to funding for their school district through increased tax base, but beyond that youth were not sure how this specifically benefits their schools or their families. This was crucial to them and was missing from the Masterplan. Perhaps this is something to be explored during the creation of the Community-Benefits Agreement on how current residents and students are directly benefited from this development.

As important as the feedback that was provided by young people, what was just as crucial that we learned from this work is the need for a community development approach that is also intentional in the investments of human and social capital. We recognize that the creation of a Masterplan is traditionally focused on considerations for a built environment, but to our understanding, it is also a dynamic guiding document that also considers how community and residents interact with the development that ensures the growth and development of the entire community. If the Masterplan is to be fully inclusive of what community wants, then this is specifically what young have shared that they need.

As we finish this iteration of work, we strongly encourage the city and the development team to address some of the key questions that we uncovered from this work.

- ☑ Young people want to feel confident, safe, seen, and respected. What are ways the city can see this feedback as an opportunity to address public safety concerns that were expressed by young people now and how can this be implemented in the overall development later?
- ☑ How can we as public institutions change how we engage with each other and our families to ensure that they are aware that these parks, services, and career development supports exist for them and how do we make sure that these efforts are maintained when new services arise from development?
- ☑ Lastly, we want to express the importance in putting current residents first. As development is planned and implemented, how can we make sure that our current residents stay engaged, seen, cared for, so that they stay in the city and further enrich our community with their talents?

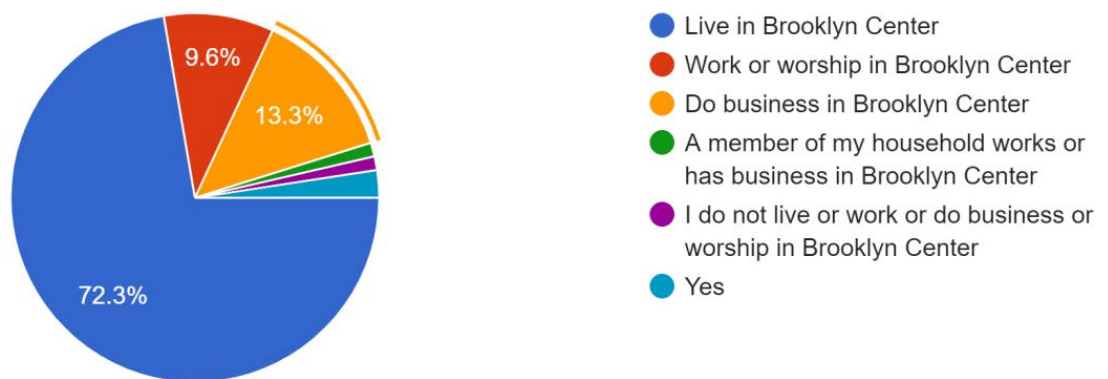
APPENDIX

MAC Engagement Online Survey Report

In the final report, 85 people filled out the survey. At the beginning of the survey, we asked only those who are connected to the City to fill out the survey.

Do you live or work or do business in Brooklyn Center?

83 responses



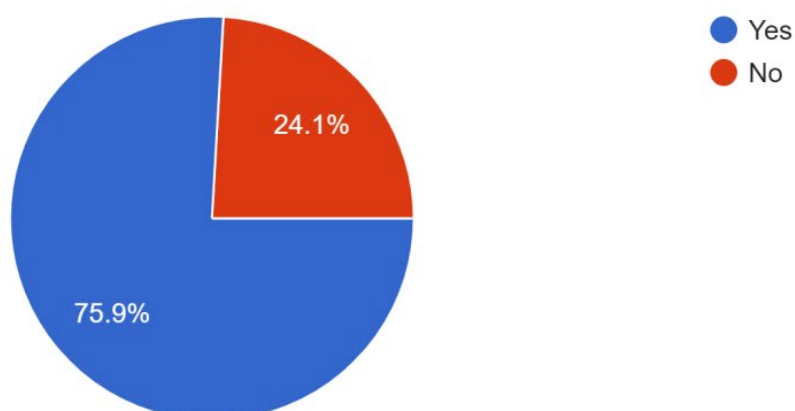
Only one person who did not live, work, or do business in Brooklyn Center filled out the form, which was excellent sampling.

More Outreach Needed to Inform All Residents about Opportunity Site Development

Based on the sample of those who filled out the survey, the results show that a quarter of them have not even heard about the Opportunity Site.

Have you heard about Brooklyn Center Opportunity Site?

83 responses



Engagement Enthusiasm Scale

We asked the respondents if they would attend Town Hall meetings.

- ✓ 41% said yes
- ✓ 22% said maybe
- ✓ 35% said no

We got similar results when we asked if they would participate in a focus group meeting.

That shows the high level of enthusiasm of the sample of residents we asked to participate in the Opportunity Site discussion.

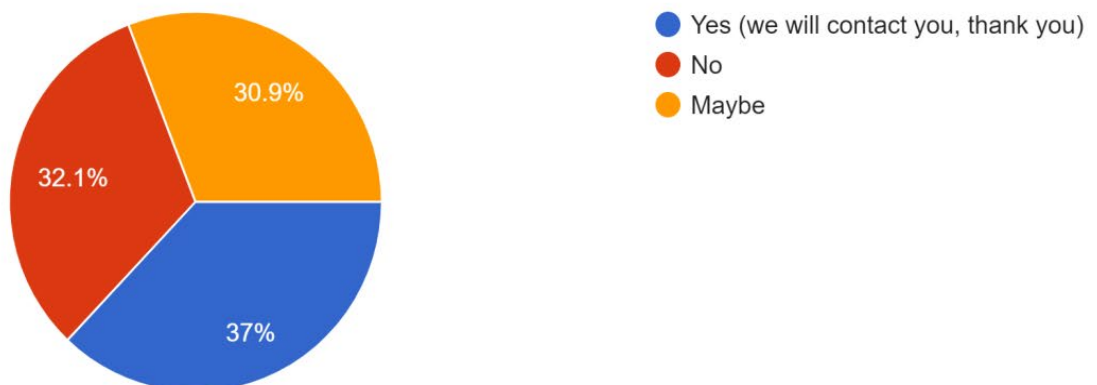
Do you want to attend Town Hall meeting to learn more about the Opportunity Site?

83 responses



Do you want to attend Focus Group meeting for high value discussions on the Opportunity Site?

81 responses

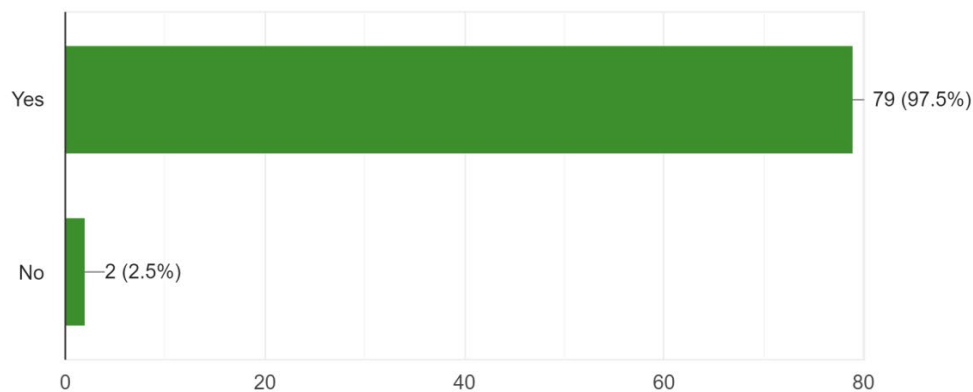


The Value of the Community Center to the Residents

To measure the residents' interest on the community center and how valuable it is to them, we asked them, and 98% said it is valuable to them.

Is the community center valuable to you?

81 responses



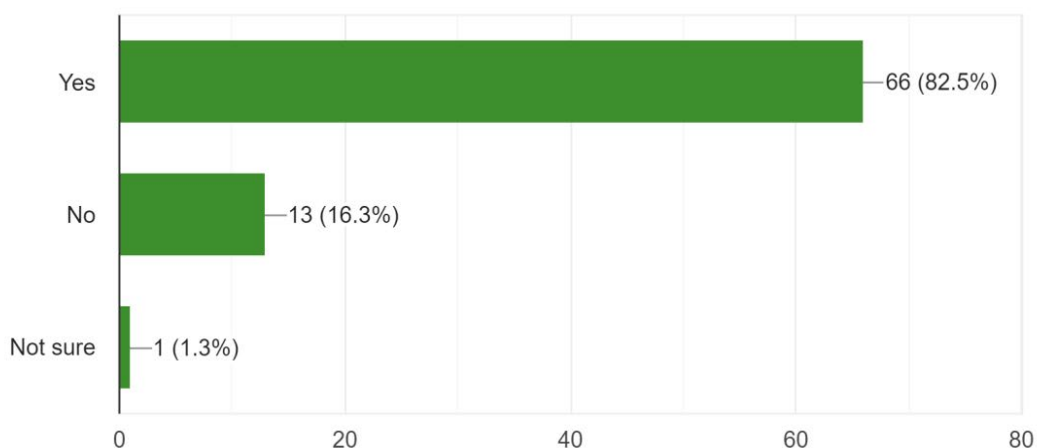
Resident's Desire to Own a Piece of the Opportunity Site

A strong theme that emerged throughout our engagement efforts with residents was property ownership. We decided to test this in our online survey, and below is the result. This is important information for the stakeholders in the Opportunity Site planning to consider.

- ⊙ Explore ownership models that are feasible for those who are interested in participating.
- ⊙ EDA, the City Council, and community-based organizations should intensify efforts to build a sustainable support system in order for residents to acquire resources to actively compete in the ownership piece of the Opportunity Site since this is a long-term development.
- ⊙ It is noteworthy that 22% of the respondents had white European roots, yet they voted for the BIPOC ownership of the event center.

Do you want BIPOC community to own the proposed community center?

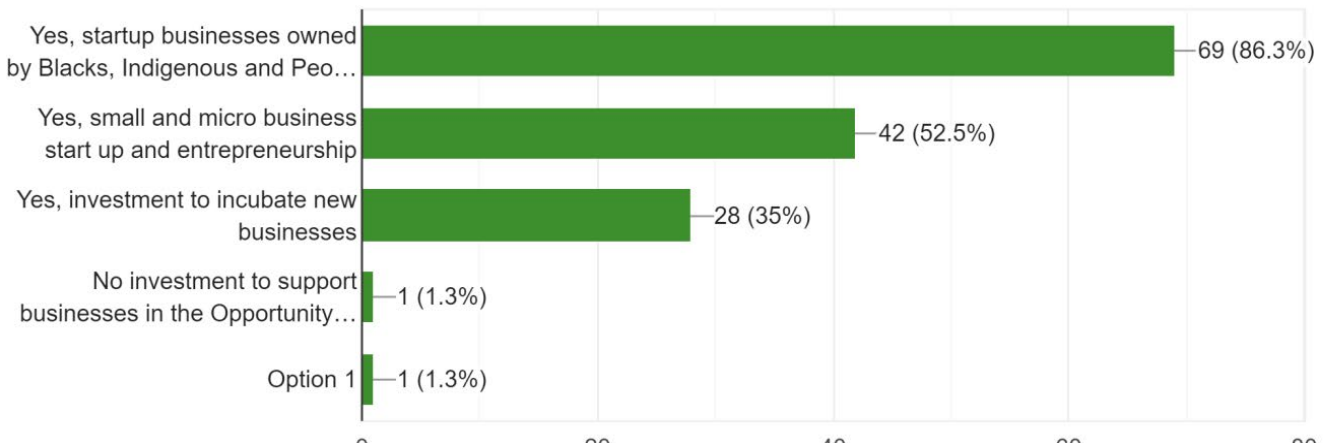
80 responses



About 99% of the respondents wanted the Opportunity Site to support the economic development of the City of Brooklyn Center. Only one voted no. Below is the result.

Do you want the Opportunity Site to support Economic Development of Brooklyn Center? Check as many as you want

80 responses

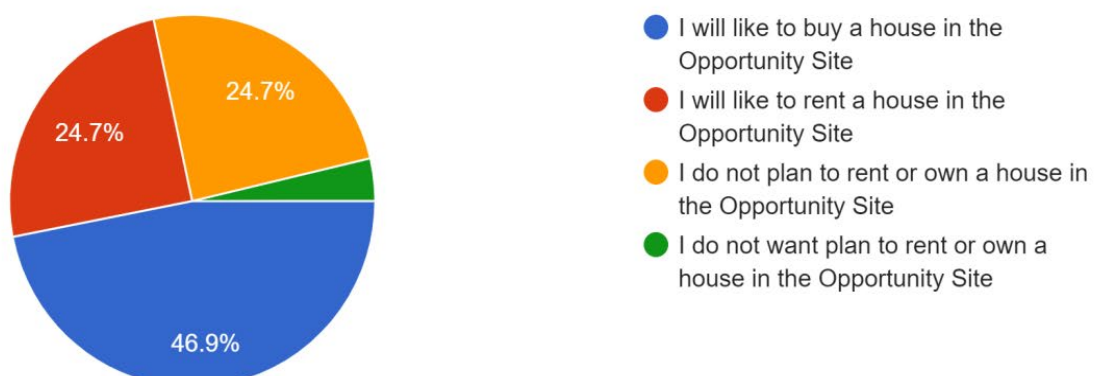


Property Ownership and the City's Resiliency

We gauged the interest of sampled residents in buying or renting in the Opportunity Site, and 47% indicated an interest to buy, 25% indicated an interest to rent, and 28% have no interest to buy or rent. That indicates a strong interest by the participants in continuing to call Brooklyn Center home.

Housing Opportunities in the Opportunity Site, choose the one you prefer in the dropdown box

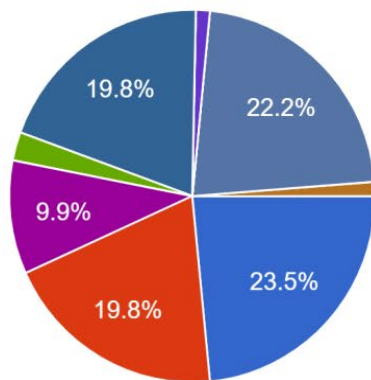
81 responses



Distribution of Races Who Responded

- ✓ African Americans – 24%
- ✓ White Europeans – 22%
- ✓ African Immigrants – 20%
- ✓ Liberians – 20%
- ✓ Blacks – 9%
- ✓ Kenyans – 2.5%

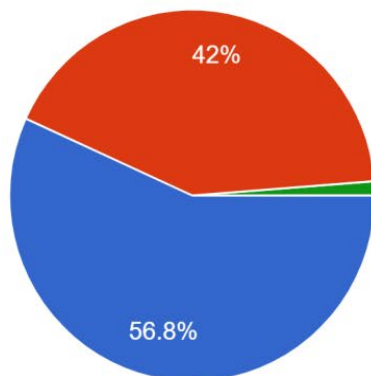
Race: please check the boxes that describe you
81 responses



- African American
 - African Immigrant
 - American Indian or Alaskan Native
 - Asian or Pacific Islander
 - Black
 - Central American excluding Mexican
 - Hmong
 - Kenyan
- ▲ 1/3 ▼

Gender breakdown of those who took the survey.

Gender
81 responses



- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to say
- Others

OPPORTUNITY SITE MEETING



**Date - November 6th
and 20th**

Time - 2PM



Hello residents!

MAU (Minnesota Africans United) is partnering with the City of Brooklyn Center in bettering our community with your help!

We invite you to a virtual meeting via Zoom on both Saturday, November 6th and 20th, 2021 to share special inputs, ideas, requests, etc. in regards to the construction of Brooklyn Center's Opportunity Site! Don't forget to spread the word, the more the merrier!

Email Us!

Bajuo@mnafricansunited.org

SandraSeeka1@gmail.com

For more info!

<https://opportunitysite-bmi.hub.arcgis.com>



FRIDAY
NOV 12
6PM

**ARE YOU AN ENTREPRENEUR,
SMALL BUSINESS OWNER,
A RESIDENT OF BROOKLYN CENTER,
OR HAVE CHILDREN THAT LOVE ARTS?**

Join the **BROOKLYN CENTER
OPPORTUNITY SITE DISCUSSION**

**City of Brooklyn Center,
Minnesota Africans United
& Triumphgraphics**

**BROOKLYN CENTER COMMUNITY CENTER
6301 SHINGLE CREEK PKWY, BROOKLYN CENTER, MN 55430**

**Contact:
612-465-9626**

Peace Global Health Foundation & Off The Blue Couch in partnership with Minnesota Africans United Presents...

Brooklyn Center Opportunity Site Informational

It is open to ALL who Live, Work, Worship, & Play in Brooklyn Center



Join Us!

November 11th on Facebook Live from 6-7 pm

on the Peace Global Health Foundation Facebook Page



Made with PosterMyWall.com

ARE YOU AN ENTREPRENEUR, SMALL BUSINESS OWNER, A RESIDENT OF BROOKLYN CENTER, OR HAVE CHILDREN THAT LOVE ARTS?

..... PLEASE JOIN

**CITY OF BROOKLYN CENTER
MINNESOTA AFRICANS UNITED & TRIUMPHGRAPHICS**

BROOKLYN CENTER OPPORTUNITY SITE DISCUSSION

BROOKLYN CENTER COMMUNITY CENTER, ROOM 221,
6301 SHINGLE CREEK PKWY, BROOKLYN CENTER, MN 55430

**FIRST 15
PERSONS
GETS A \$20
GIFTCARD**



REGISTER AT
MNAFRICANSUNITED.ORG/CBC

**WEDNESDAY
OCT 27, 2021
4PM-5PM**



CONTACT 612-465-9626



AFRICAN COMMUNITY meeting

NOVEMBER 13TH, 2021 2 PM - 4 PM

Topic Of Discussion:
Opportunity Site
Brooklyn Center, MN



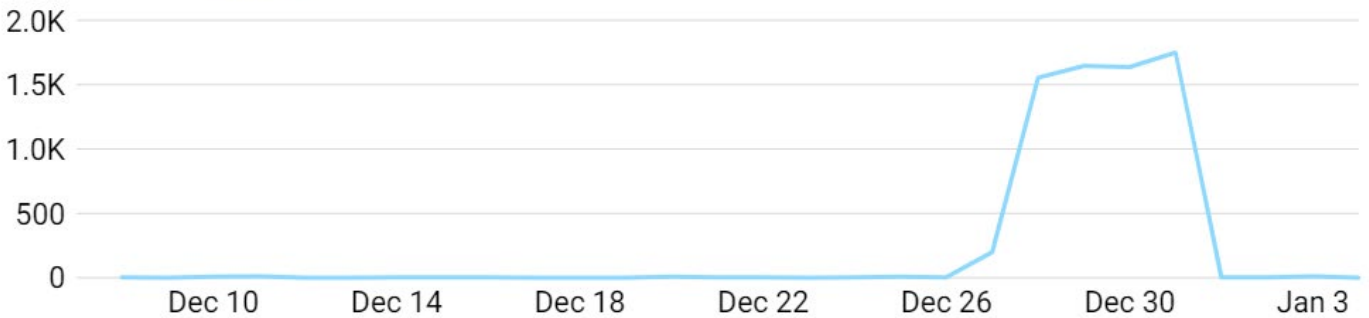
ZOOM MEETING ID: 862 1083 4985
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86210834985>

Results

Facebook Page

Reach

5,904 ↑ 15.0K%

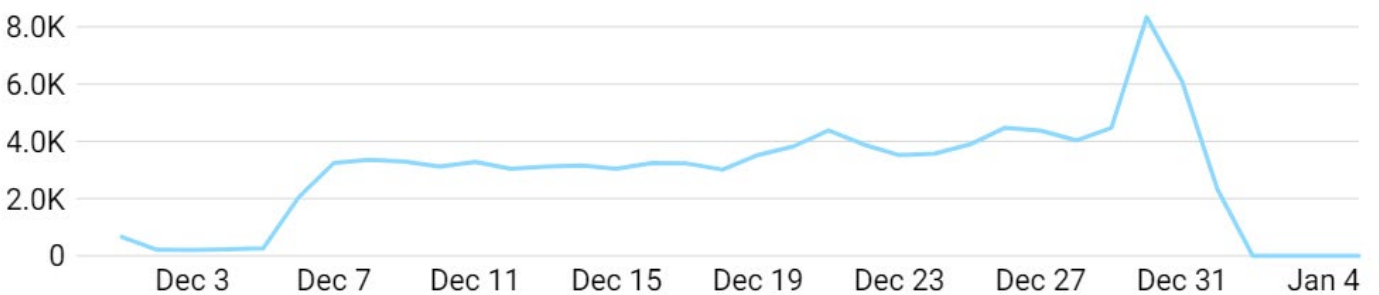


Results

Facebook Page

Reach

52,742 ↑ 2.7K%



Instagram

Reach

5,181 ↑ 1.0K%



