

Olmsted County

Three Rivers Community Action, Inc. conducted a community needs assessment between May 2017 and August 2017. The needs assessment was designed to meet the agency's funding requirements and inform decisions about programs and services offered by Three Rivers in its service area. The needs assessment included three key activities: 1) Focus groups for clients, Head Start parents, and community partners (agency staff); 2) Surveys of clients and community partners; and 3) Review of publicly available data on needs and resources in the counties and communities served by the agency.

Needs and priorities

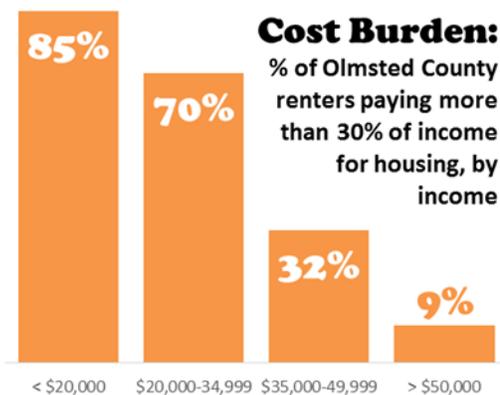
Analysis of survey responses and publicly available data on health, housing, education and other topics led to identifying five priority needs in Olmsted County. These are:



Decent & affordable housing

Housing costs in Olmsted County vary by community, but employment and household growth in Rochester drives demands for higher rents and home prices. Median rents (including utilities) across the county are \$827 per month, and beyond what is affordable at median renter income (American Community Survey). In the needs survey, residents and service agency staff both prioritized help with rent, utilities, or taxes above all other needs. Homeowners also prioritized home repairs. Providers

strongly suggested a need for new housing development and moderate support for more emergency shelter capacity. However, best practices in homeless response do not support prioritizing shelter when rapid rehousing is more effective and less costly.



Health care access

In surveys of residents and providers, access to health care was identified as a concern. Residents also noted a need for help paying medical bills while providers suggested that access to mental health care was a significant problem (ranked #2 overall). Unlike other counties, access to care in Olmsted County has more to do with income and insurance than with the number of providers. In fact, the 2016 Olmsted County Community Health Needs Assessment identified financial stress as a top five health priority for the county. In addition, a small number (6%) of Olmsted County residents do not have health insurance (American Community Survey).

Income & jobs

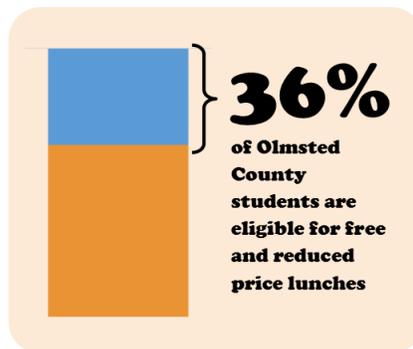
Median household income in Olmsted is \$69,308. However, 9.2% of residents (14,085 people) live in households with income below the poverty line. For a household of four, the poverty guideline is \$24,600. In the needs survey, residents and providers alike identified having enough money to meet basic needs as a top priority. Providers also identified needs for job opportunities with higher wages, while residents prioritized job skills training and education.

Reliable transportation

Survey respondents highly prioritized transportation in two different ways: Residents prioritized vehicle repair and purchase of a reliable car, while community partner agencies placed access to transit as the highest ranked transportation need. This difference points to lack of knowledge of the efficacy of public transit in Olmsted County, and is a gap to explore for solutions.

Food & nutrition

According to the University of Minnesota Extension, 21.5% of Olmsted County residents experience “low access to food stores”. In addition, 36% of students in Olmsted County qualify for free/reduced price lunches according to the Minnesota Department of Education. In the needs survey, residents highly prioritized access to good food, but partner agency staff did not rank any food or nutrition-related service as a critical need in the community, indicating a gap to evaluate. Specific needs residents prioritized were local access to healthy food and access to a food shelf. (Providers instead prioritized child care needs over food and nutrition.)



Subpopulations: Needs to note



Renters

Ranked highly the need for car repair and assistance to purchase a reliable car. In comments, the car was connected to job access.



Households with Children

Described greater need than other subgroups for financial education, local job opportunities and community activities for children, youth and families.



Persons of Color

Indicated much greater need for help paying medical bills and for affordable car repairs. Volunteer drivers were not an interest/need.



Seniors

Prioritized access to a food shelf, but indicated lower need for mental health care and access to affordable rental housing.

Who we learned from

in Olmsted County

171 Residents

from fourteen different Olmsted County cities and townships.

- 76% female
- 74% working-age adults
- 46% have children at home
- 25% are/have seniors in their home
- 21% persons of color
- 94% speak English at home
- 50% rent their homes
- 44% own homes

In comparison to Olmsted County as a whole, the respondents are more female, much more likely to rent their home, and slightly more likely to be a person of color.

100 Local Partners (agency staff)

representing over 20 types of services and programs including primary health care, homeless assistance, local government services, real estate, employment programs, senior services, and schools. Most respondents identified as white and female between ages 45 and 64.

6 Focus Groups

of residents and service providers in the Three Rivers service area.