

SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY DOCUMENT

YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago*

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*In partnership with the South
Side Community Assessment
Stakeholder Group

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WHY WE DID THIS

At the YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago (the Y), our communities' goals and dreams drive what we do daily. We value opportunities to learn from each other and build understanding to ensure our services and strategies align with our partners and communities. This is why we have embarked on an intentional journey to connect with our communities, building an understanding of their experiences, and naming actions we can take in collaboration with our partners to better connect people with their purpose, potential, and each other.

The Y is working to deepen our impact and strengthen our presence in the South Side, and we knew it was vital that we take time to learn from the experiences of those working and living in the area. We also wanted to create a brave space to build meaningful partnerships that translate conversations into impactful actions. With these goals in mind, we led a community assessment of five community areas on the South Side of Chicago from September 2023 to April 2024: Hyde Park, Kenwood, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn. Throughout this report, these areas are referred to by name or as the South Side, South Side community, or South Side Community Assessment areas. To ensure inclusivity and broad representation in building understanding and recommending actions, the Y completed the assessment in partnership with the South Side YMCA in Woodlawn and the South Side Community Assessment Stakeholder Group. The Stakeholder Group included representatives from local community-based organizations and community members.

These regular meetings invited stakeholders to review data about the South Side and discuss how these data did or did not reflect what they experienced in the region. These reflections inform how this report analyzes data and the ultimate action items recommended. The Y intends to continue facilitating these stakeholder conversations, using the findings and actions outlined here to guide future efforts to support the South Side.

APPROACH

The assessment centers on the social determinants of health (SDOH) framework to understand the assets, needs, and wants of the Hyde Park, Kenwood, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn communities and identify actions that partners can take to better support those who live there. This framework critically considers the structural and social factors contributing to one's health and well-being. Research has demonstrated that only 20% of a person's health correlates to their medical care.¹ The remaining 80% is associated with the structures and climate of the community where a person lives, works, and spends their time. These structures and climates are inclusive of historical and present-day structural racism, political climate, and other systems of oppression that contribute to health disparities across axes of identity (e.g., race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender, and ability). While this report focuses on each determinant individually, it is important to note that the five domains intersect. For example, having access to quality health care improves one's odds of keeping stable employment. As a result, actions in one area may, and hopefully will, have indirect effects on the other areas. Using the SDOH framework, the assessment examines how factors like the economy, education, health care access and quality, neighborhood environment, and social context affect health outcomes in the South Side community (Figure 1). With this insight, we can collaborate to improve the well-being of all community members.

To understand how these five determinants affect a community, we used both quantitative and qualitative methods. Quantitative data included secondary community-level data from public sources like the Chicago Health Atlas. We selected 150 indicators to get a holistic view of the five communities. To understand Hyde Park, Kenwood, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn better, community stakeholders chose Lakeview and the City of Chicago

as comparison communities. Lakeview represents a well-resourced area, while the South Side is seen as under-resourced. We also used a community survey with 70 respondents, which provided valuable insights despite not being representative.

For qualitative data, we conducted four interviews with community members and agency representatives to capture strengths and needs not reflected in the quantitative data. Combining these insights, we worked with our assessment partners to understand the South Side community's health and recommend actions to support the community better.

FIGURE 1
Social Determinants of Health Domains



KEY FINDINGS



ECONOMIC STABILITY

Residents of the South Side community experience more poverty compared to Lakeview and the City of Chicago.² They also face more economic hardship.³ The percentage of the unemployed workforce in the South Side community is nearly double that of residents across the City of Chicago and almost four times as much as in Lakeview.⁴



NEIGHBORHOOD AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

South Side community residents are often more rent-burdened (paying more than 30% of their income toward rent) compared to those in Lakeview and Chicago.⁵ They also have lower homeownership rates.⁶ More South Side residents use SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) benefits, but they have less access to food than residents in Lakeview and across Chicago.^{7,8} Despite these challenges, the South Side community has many assets like green spaces, community-based organizations, and libraries.



EDUCATION ACCESS & QUALITY

South Side community residents have similar levels of educational attainment as Chicago but lower levels of higher education than Lakeview residents.⁹ Additionally, the South Side has lower preschool enrollment rates than Lakeview but higher rates than the Chicago average.¹⁰



SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

The social vulnerability index for the South Side neighborhoods is higher than in Lakeview and the average for Chicago.¹¹ Residents of the South Side also report feeling less safe and experiencing more violence in their neighborhoods compared to those in Lakeview and Chicago.¹² However, South Side residents feel just as connected to their neighborhood as the average Chicago resident.¹³



HEALTH CARE ACCESS AND QUALITY

The rate of residents in the South Side community without health insurance is higher than in Lakeview but lower than the average across Chicago.¹⁴ However, the self-reported overall health status of South Side residents is lower than Lakeview and Chicago.¹⁵ Also, even though South Side residents have lower rates of moderate or serious psychological distress, they have higher rates of unmet treatment for mental health conditions.¹⁶



ONE YEAR ACTION PLAN

By reviewing data and insights of the South Side and discussing how these findings do or do not align with their lived experiences, members of the South Side Community Assessment stakeholder group developed a series of action items they plan to take over the next year. The South Side Y and Community Assessment Stakeholder Group plan to work together to do the following:

- Design and provide resources to promote financial stability, such as financial literacy programming and job training.
- Collaborate to launch and expand food distribution programs that increase access to fresh produce and healthy options.
- Create and distribute accessible and informational resources to caregivers that outline the different resources available to youth and caregivers, especially for learners with disabilities, disengaged youth, etc.
- Partner to plan and promote community events to enhance engagement and overall sense of community belonging.
- Partner to expand and promote enrollment in behavioral health services for individuals experiencing moderate to severe psychological distress.

The accompanying one-page overviews outline anticipated longer-term action items. We expect to provide annual updates for the next few years on the status of these action items. The Y is excited to continue collaborating with our South Side partners to realize South Side community members' dreams. Any interested stakeholders are invited to reach out to Jarquetta Egerton at jegestion@ymcachicago.org to join the conversations about implementing these action plans. The more people who are aware and involved in the process, the better the odds are of implementing the action plans and improving the health and well-being of the South Side Community Assessment areas.

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

THE SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT STAKEHOLDER GROUP COMPRISES REPRESENTATIVES FROM THE ORGANIZATIONS LISTED BELOW, AS WELL AS OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS AND ORGANIZATIONS NOT LISTED. WE THANK OUR PARTNERS FOR THEIR CONTINUED ENGAGEMENT AND SUPPORT OF THE SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT PROJECT AND THE SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY OVERALL.



1 Hood, C. M., K. P. Gennuso, G. R. Swain, and B. B. Catlin. (2016). County health rankings: Relationships between determinant factors and health outcomes. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, 50(2):129-135. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amepre.2015.08.024>

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3 U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Chicago Health Atlas at <https://chicagohealthatlas.org/indicators/HDX?topic=hardship-index>

4 U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Community Data Snapshots at <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots>

5 Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. (n.d.). Community Data Snapshots. Retrieved from Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning at <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots>

6 U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Community Data Snapshots at <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots>

7 U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Community Data Snapshots at <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots>

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9 Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. (n.d.). Community Data Snapshots. Retrieved from Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning at <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots>

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13 Chicago Department of Public Health. (n.d.). Healthy Chicago Survey, 2015-2022. Retrieved from Chicago Health Atlas at <https://chicagohealthatlas.org/>

14 Chicago Department of Public Health. (n.d.). Healthy Chicago Survey, 2015-2022. Retrieved from Chicago Health Atlas at <https://chicagohealthatlas.org/>

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16 Chicago Department of Public Health. (n.d.). Healthy Chicago Survey, 2015-2022. Retrieved from Chicago Health Atlas at <https://chicagohealthatlas.org/>

SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2024



Chicago and Lakeview were explicitly chosen to assess the context of a community that has experienced disinvestment and under-resourcing (South Side community) compared to a well-resourced community (Lakeview) and the overall City of Chicago.

ECONOMIC STABILITY

Economic stability is a social determinant of health because people with steady jobs are less likely to live in poverty and more likely to be healthy.¹ Unfortunately, many people struggle to find and keep jobs, especially those with disabilities, injuries, or other conditions that may limit their ability to work. Also, many people with steady jobs still do not earn enough to afford what they need to stay healthy. By exploring experiences of economic hardship and unemployment, the stakeholder group gained a better understanding of the current situation and suggested ways to work together to improve the future.

ECONOMIC HARDSHIP

South Side community residents experience more economic hardship than Lakeview (Figure 1).² The Hardship Index measures this hardship on a scale from 0 to 100, where higher values indicate greater economic hardship. It combines factors like unemployment, age dependency, education levels, per capita income, crowded housing, and poverty into a single score, allowing for comparisons across different areas. This index is closely related to other measures of economic hardship and poor health outcomes. Survey respondents also highlighted financial challenges, with 31% indicating it as one of the top three most significant issues facing their community.

Residents of the South Side community experience poverty disproportionately compared to Lakeview and the City of Chicago (Figure 2).³ An interview participant discussed the need for financial literacy in their community and the impact it may have on wealth:

➤ **It's paramount for my community to be educated on financial literacy because [...] if our communities are educated in financial literacy, you won't see so much disparity in regards to wealth as you do now.**

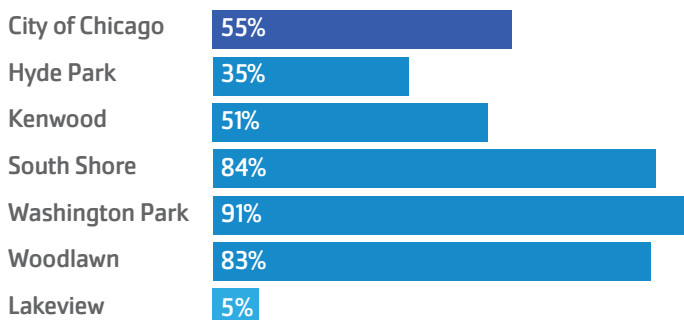
[COMMUNITY MEMBER INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT]

One way to address economic hardship is through financial literacy, or "the ability to interpret, communicate, compute, develop independent judgments, and take actions resulting from those processes to thrive in our complex financial world."⁴ Making sound financial decisions involves having access to and understanding financial products like checking and savings accounts, investment options, retirement plans, and credit cards.⁵

FIGURE 1

Hyde Park, Kenwood, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn residents face more economic hardship than Lakeview

This chart shows the hardship index by community area from 2018–2022.

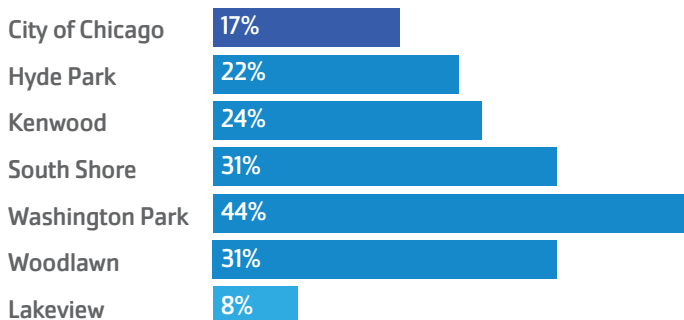


Source: Chicago Health Atlas • Created with Datawrapper
<https://datawrapperdwcdn.net/wKhjC/10/>

FIGURE 2

Hyde Park, Kenwood, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn residents experience more poverty than Lakeview and the City of Chicago residents

This chart shows the percentage of residents in poverty by community area from 2018–2022. Poverty is defined as the percentage of residents in families that are in poverty (below Federal Poverty Level [FPL]). The FPL for a family of 3 is \$19,515.



Source: Chicago Health Atlas • Created with Datawrapper
<https://datawrapperdwcdn.net/mHYXM/9/>



EMPLOYMENT

The percentage of the workforce in the South Side Community Assessment areas that are unemployed is higher than residents in Lakeview (4%) and all, but Hyde Park is higher than the average across the City of Chicago (8%).⁶ Hyde Park has an unemployment rate of 6%, Kenwood has 11%, South Shore has 17%, Washington Park has 16%, and Woodlawn has 16%. The economic opportunity in a community is influenced by income gaps and the cost of living.⁷ South Side residents have the lowest median net worth in Chicago, at \$4,439, compared to \$132,258 in Lakeview.⁸ This lower net worth can lead to reduced access to resources that support employment, like transportation and childcare. A community member discussed the challenges people in the community face getting or keeping a quality job:

► **Transportation is the number one. Childcare is number two. Those are some of the instant obstacles that no one understands. If you don't come from a stable household, if you don't come from a stable family, that is the most difficult thing that you're going to deal with, that you are faced with. Because if I have no support to get my child to and from, that's going to create an issue for me.**

[COMMUNITY MEMBER INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT]



ACTION PLAN

Economic hardship and employment indicators demonstrate that economic stability in the South Side community is low compared to both Lakeview and the average across the City of Chicago. These findings highlight the need for strong partnerships and innovations to best support the economic stability and growth of the South Side. The stakeholder group proposes the following actions to improve economic stability in the South Side Community Assessment areas:

- **Short-term (within the next year): Design and provide resources to promote financial stability,** such as financial literacy programming and job training.
- **Medium term (1 to 3 years): Create jobs and provide services that support residents in gaining and keeping higher-quality jobs** in the South Side Community Assessment areas.
- **Long-term (3+ years): Develop and implement strategies and programs that reduce the poverty rate** in the South Side Community Assessment areas, such as increasing home ownership, developing business incubations, and creating plans to make the short- and medium-term actions sustainable.

1 Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). Social determinants of health. Healthy People 2030. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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5 Sun, S., Chen, Y.C., Ansong, D., Juang, J., & Sherraden, M.S. (2022). Household financial capability and economic hardship: An empirical examination of the financial capability framework. *J Fam Econ Issues*, 43(4), 716–729. Retrieved from

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6 U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Community Data Snapshots at <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots>

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[In Chicago, Neighborhoods Have Stark Differences in Economic Opportunity | Urban Institute](https://www.urbaninstitute.org/publications/in-chicago-neighborhoods-have-stark-differences-in-economic-opportunity/)

8 U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved from Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Community Data Snapshots at <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots>

SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

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EDUCATION ACCESS AND QUALITY

Education access and quality is one of the social determinants of health because people with higher levels of education are more likely to be healthier and live longer.¹ Children from low-income families and those with disabilities are more likely to struggle in school and less likely to graduate high school or go to college. This decreases their opportunities to get safe, high-paying jobs that may mitigate the chances of developing health problems. By focusing on education from preschool to high school, the stakeholder group identified important actions to support the South Side Community.

K–12 EDUCATION

South Side community residents have similar levels of educational attainment as Chicago but lower levels of higher education than Lakeview residents (Figure 1).² Additionally, attendance rates are similar between South Side, Lakeview, and Chicago youth.³ However, the COVID-19 pandemic impacted the quality of attendance data from 2020 through 2022. Community members who took the survey indicated they wanted more programs for school-aged children to help them stay in school and off the streets.

FIGURE 1

Over half of Hyde Park, Kenwood, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn community residents have similar levels of educational attainment as Chicago, but lower levels of higher education than Lakeview residents

This table shows the percentage of residents with levels of education ranging from less than a high school diploma to a graduate or professional degree by community area.

	< HIGH SCHOOL	HIGHSCHOOL DIPLOMA/GED	SOME COLLEGE	ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE	BACHELOR'S DEGREE	GRADUATE DEGREE
City of Chicago	14	22	17	6	24	18
Hyde Park	3	5	10	3	26	53
Kenwood	6	16	15	5	23	35
South Shore	10	25	31	9	15	11
Washington Park	17	29	30	5	12	7
Woodlawn	14	25	27	8	16	10
Lakeview	2	4	8	3	48	35

Source: Chicago Health Atlas • Created with Datawrapper • <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/uHdAc/5/>

PRESCHOOL ENROLLMENT

The South Side community (except Kenwood) has lower preschool enrollment rates than Lakeview but higher rates than the average across Chicago (Figure 2).⁴ The YMCA of Metropolitan Chicago's (the Y's) South Side Y Community Hub offers early education programming, including Early Head Start and Head Start. Various funding sources, including grants, support the Y's program, including the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), scholarships, and private pay. Additionally, the universal preschool program has significantly impacted the number of free, full-day seats available for 3- and 4-year-olds, particularly for families on the South and West Sides of Chicago.⁵ A community member shared the importance of their decision to enroll their child in preschool rather than daycare,

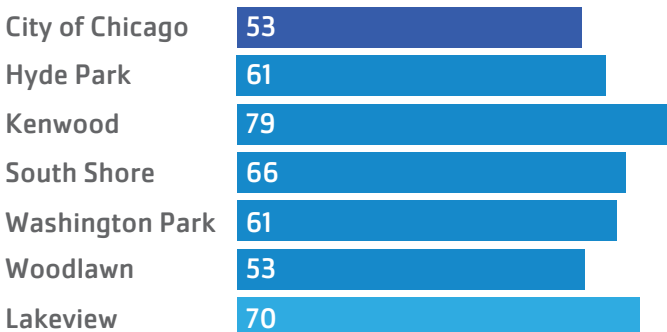
» **Socialization is key because I understand the importance of relationships and being able to navigate relationships at a young age or being exposed to relationships at a young age will only help her in the future.**

[COMMUNITY MEMBER INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT]

Socialization in early childhood impacts children's mental health and well-being, improves their social and emotional development, and provides a basis for future success.⁶

FIGURE 2
South Side Community Assessment area residents (except Kenwood) have lower preschool enrollment rates than Lakeview but higher rates than the average across Chicago

This chart shows the percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled in preschool programs in 2018-2022 by community area.



Source: Chicago Health Atlas • Created with Datawrapper

<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/6XQmA/7/>

¹ Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). Social determinants of health. Healthy People 2030. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>

² Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. (n.d.). Community Data Snapshots. Retrieved from Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning at <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots>

³ Heartland Alliance. (2023). Chicago Community Data Portal: Education. Retrieved from <https://www.heartlandalliance.org/heartland-alliance/research-and-policy/data-reports/chicago-data-dashboards/education/>

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau. (n.d.). American Community Survey 5-year estimates. Retrieved through Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Community Data Snapshots at <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/data/community-snapshots>

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⁶ Maleki, M., Mardani, A., Chehrzad, M.M., Dianatinasab, M., & Vaismoradi, M. (2019). Social skills in children at home and in preschool. Behavioral Science, 9(7), 74. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC6681026/>



ACTION PLAN

Understanding the current strengths and opportunities for education in the South Side, the stakeholder group proposes the following actions to improve education access and quality in the South Side community:

- **Short-term (within the next year): Create and distribute accessible and informational resources to caregivers** that outline the different resources available to youth and caregivers, especially for learners with disabilities, disengaged youth, etc.
- **Medium-term (1 to 3 years): Provide services that offer educational support** to residents in the South Side Community Assessment areas.
- **Long-term (3+ years): Create and implement programs that help disengaged youth** return to school in the South Side Community Assessment areas.



SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

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HEALTH CARE ACCESS AND QUALITY

Healthcare access and quality impact people's health because those who receive timely and good healthcare are more likely to stay healthy.¹ Unfortunately, around 10% of people in the U.S. do not have health insurance, so they may struggle to pay for healthcare and medicine. Also, some people miss out on necessary healthcare because they can't afford it or because they live far from healthcare providers who offer the services they need. By understanding the health care landscape in the South Side, clear action items and partnership opportunities emerged through stakeholder meetings.

HEALTH INSURANCE

Residents of the South Side community are more likely to be uninsured than residents of Lakeview (3.7%) but have a higher rate of health insurance than the average across Chicago (10%).² In Hyde Park, 4% of residents are uninsured, 7% in Kenwood, 8% in South Shore, 7% in Washington Park, and 9% in Woodlawn. An interview participant shared that their partner's employer does not offer health insurance, causing a burden to their family due to the need to pay for their healthcare out of pocket. They shared that they go to places with a sliding scale but that it would be great if there were more resources, such as a national checkup day for preventative screening.

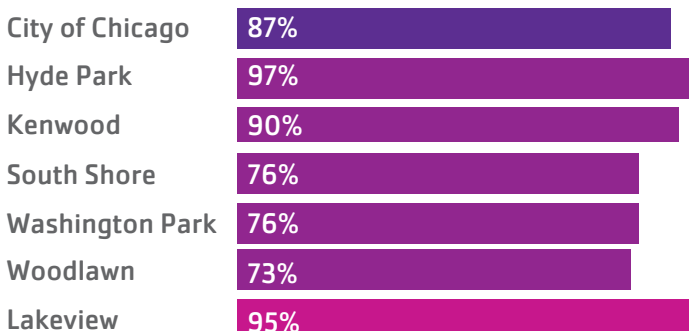
HEALTH STATUS

Residents of the South Side report varying levels of overall health (Figure 1).³ Data show higher rates of hypertension and worse cardiovascular health among South Side residents compared to other parts of the city.⁴ Interviews with community members highlighted issues such as poor healthcare quality, limited access to healthy food, low wages, and inadequate places for physical activity, all of which affect health in the South Side. Accessible, high-quality healthcare is crucial for improving the overall health of communities.⁵

FIGURE 1

Hyde Park, Kenwood, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn residents report varying levels of overall health

This chart shows the percentage of adult residents who self-reported their health as excellent, very good, or good in 2022 by community area.



Source: Chicago Health Atlas • Created with Datawrapper
<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/IsdF2/7/>

MENTAL HEALTH

Although South Side residents have lower rates of moderate or serious psychological distress, they have higher rates of unmet treatment for mental health conditions (Figure 2).⁶ Survey participants indicated they want more mental health services offered in their community. The community health needs assessment conducted by the University of Chicago Medical Center found mental health to be one of seven priority health areas for the South Side to build trauma resiliency to mitigate the effects of community violence.⁷

FIGURE 2
South Side Community Assessment area residents (except Washington Park) have lower rates of psychological distress but higher rates of unmet treatment for mental health conditions (except Woodlawn) than residents in Lakeview and across the City of Chicago

This table shows the percentage of adults in 2022 with moderate or serious psychological distress and of those adults the percentage of whom have unmet mental health treatment needs. Moderate or serious psychological distress is defined as an estimated percent of adults who were classified as having any psychological distress based on how often they felt nervous, hopeless, restless or fidgety, depressed, worthless, or that everything was an effort in the past 30 days. Unmet mental health treatment is defined as the estimated percent of adults who were classified as having moderate or serious psychological distress and reported that they are not currently taking medicine or receiving treatment from a doctor or other health professional for any mental health condition or emotional problem.

	PSYCHOLOGICAL DISTRESS	UNMET MENTAL HEALTH TREATMENT NEEDS
City of Chicago	48%	72%
Hyde Park	43%	76%
Kenwood	24%	77%
South Shore	44%	85%
Washington Park	51%	82%
Woodlawn	44%	57%
Lakeview	50%	60%

Source: Chicago Health Atlas • Created with Datawrapper

<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/Dsdy/5/>



ACTION PLAN

Residents in the South Side Community Assessment areas have lower rates of health insurance and poorer overall health than residents in Lakeview and across Chicago. Furthermore, South Side residents have lower rates of moderate or serious psychological distress but higher rates of unmet mental health treatment. Based on these findings, the stakeholder group proposes the following action items:

- Short-term (within the next year): **Partner to expand and promote enrollment in behavioral health services** for individuals experiencing moderate to severe psychological distress.
- Medium-term (1 to 3 years): **Develop and implement strategies to reduce barriers to health care** (physical and behavioral) in the South Side Community Assessment areas.
- Long-term (3+ years): **Advocate for, create, and implement policies and programs that increase health insurance rates and access to healthcare overall** for South Side residents.

1 Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). Social determinants of health. Healthy People 2030. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

2 Chicago Department of Public Health. (n.d.). Healthy Chicago Survey, 2015–2022. Retrieved from Chicago Health Atlas at <https://chicagohealthatlas.org/>

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5 Ibid.

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NEIGHBORHOOD AND BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Neighborhood and built environment constitute a social determinant of health because the neighborhoods people live or work in significantly impact their health and well-being.¹ Many people, particularly people of color, reside in areas where they face heightened risks such as high rates of violence and exposure to unsafe air and water, which are detrimental to health. Through discussions on housing, food access, and community assets, the stakeholder group gained a broad understanding of the current strengths and opportunities of the South Side. They also identified steps to leverage these assets effectively for maximum impact.

HOUSING

Over half of South Side community residents spend more than 30% of their income on rent, which makes them rent-burdened. In comparison, a little over a third of Lakeview residents and 46% of Chicago residents face similar challenges (Figure 1).² The rate of homeownership in the South Side community (26% of homes) is lower than the rate in Lakeview (37%) and across Chicago (46%) (Figure 1).³ Regardless of ownership status, communities need accessible resources. One community member shared in an interview:

» **As my grandfather used to say of whether people own or rent, we still need sidewalks. We still need grocery stores. We still need certain things in the neighborhood.**

[COMMUNITY MEMBER INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT]

Lower rates of home ownership in the South Side have direct consequences on financial investments in the community. We know that in areas of Chicago where at least 80% of the population is Black,⁴ home equity increased by 61% from 2000 to 2020, whereas in the majority white areas of Chicago, home equity increased by 92.2% during that same time.⁵ This means that home values in predominately white neighborhoods have increased much quicker than home values in predominately Black neighborhoods, resulting in less investment in predominately Black neighborhoods to fund services from property taxes.

FIGURE 1

Over half of Hyde Park, Kenwood, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn residents are rent-burdened, and these residents are also less likely to own homes than residents in Lakeview or across Chicago

This table shows the percentage of households that are rent-burdened and the percentage of household that are owner-occupied by community area in 2018–2022. Rent burden is defined as households spending more than 30% of income on rent. Rent costs do not include utilities, insurance, or building fees.

	RENT-BURDENED	OWNER OCCUPIED
City of Chicago	45%	45%
Hyde Park	55%	35%
Kenwood	51%	37%
South Shore	54%	23%
Washington Park	57%	14%
Woodlawn	56%	24%
Lakeview	36%	37%

Source: Chicago Health Atlas • Created with Datawrapper

<https://datawrapperdwcdn.net/xbP7L/10/>

FOOD ACCESS

Households in the South Side community use the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) (31%) at one and half times the rate as residents across Chicago (20%) and seven and a half times the rate as residents in Lakeview (4%).⁶ Although South Side residents have SNAP benefits at a higher rate than residents in other parts of the city, their access to food is lower than residents in Lakeview (Figure 2).⁷ In response to mitigating challenges residents face in maintaining their health, a community member shared that many children are getting the bulk of their diet from food at corner stores and the systematic reasons as to why food apartheid, or “a system of segregation that divides those with access to an abundance of nutritious food and those who have been denied that access due to systemic injustice,”⁸ exists in their community.

» **Who buys food? The adults. But then they give ‘em [their children] this money, and they go to this corner store, and they get these chips and soda. So, [we] got to try to change that. [...] It does not help just to have a cooking class. It has to come with education. [...] I think that food education is the most important thing to me, because if you don’t have your health, you really don’t have much of anything. But also helping to change some of the reasons why we don’t**

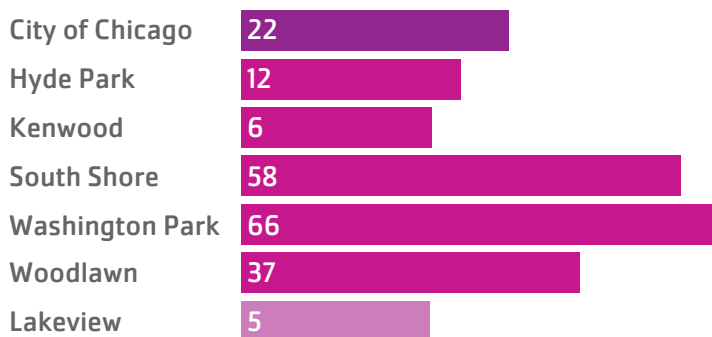
have things. [...] There's a systematic reason why we don't have things. So, in order to change that, you have to get involved in civics.

[COMMUNITY MEMBER INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT]

Furthermore, nearly a quarter of Chicagoans (23%) facing food insecurity have an income above 185% of the poverty line, meaning they are not eligible for SNAP or other federally funded food programs.⁹ Many in this group work low-wage jobs without benefits, creating further barriers to food security that must be addressed. Food prices, particularly healthy food prices, pose a significant barrier for many people who are trying to balance good nutrition with affordability.¹⁰ Additionally, many low-income households have adults who are working one or two jobs, limiting the amount of time they have to grocery shop, prepare, and cook healthy meals.¹¹ Energy-dense sweets and fats are tasty, cheap, readily available, and convenient, making them a more efficient food source for many low-income households.¹²

FIGURE 2
Hyde Park, Kenwood, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn residents have lower food access than Lakeview residents

This chart shows the percentage of residents in 2019 with low access to food by community area. Low food access is defined solely by distance: further than 1/2 mile from the nearest supermarket in an urban area, or further than 10 miles in a rural area.



Source: Chicago Health Atlas • Created with Datawrapper

<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/BpZJD/6/>

1 Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). Social determinants of health. Healthy People 2030. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

<https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>

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8 Project Regeneration. (n.d.) Food Apartheid. Retrieved from <https://regeneration.org/nexus/food-apartheid>

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Retrieved from CityRoadmap.pdf (chicagosfoodbank.org)

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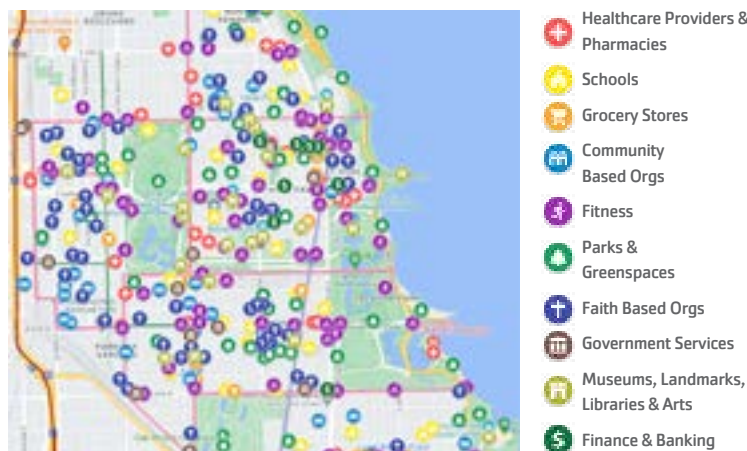
11 Ibid.

12 Ibid.

COMMUNITY ASSETS

The South Side community is full of exceptional organizations and agencies working to provide support and services to community members where they are. As part of the community assessment process, an [asset map](#) was developed to visualize these organizations' locations and include other critical assets such as grocery stores and parks (Figure 3). The South Side stakeholder group shared their favorite parts of their community, including the culture, kindness of the residents, access to green spaces, unique style, food, and endless possibilities.

FIGURE 3
South Side Community Area Asset Map



More detail is available via the [online version](#) of the asset map, also available by scanning the QR code.



ACTION PLAN

Despite housing and food security challenges, the South Side has valuable assets like parks, healthcare providers, schools, places of worship, and community groups. These strengths suggest potential for growth through new partnerships and services. Proposed actions aim to enhance the neighborhood and built environment in South Side Community Assessment areas:

- **Short-term (within the next year): Collaborate to implement and expand food distribution programs that increase access to fresh produce and healthy options.**
- **Medium-term (1 to 3 years): Advocate for sustainable protections and housing affordability for renters and homeowners in the South Side Community Assessment areas.**
- **Long-term (3+ years): Create and implement a strategy to increase the number of grocery stores providing fresh produce and healthy food options.**

SOUTH SIDE COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT

JUNE 2024



Chicago and Lakeview were explicitly chosen to assess the context of a community that has experienced disinvestment and under-resourcing (South Side community) compared to a well-resourced community (Lakeview) and the overall City of Chicago.

SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY CONTEXT

Social and community context is a social determinant of health because people's relationships with family, friends, coworkers, and community members impact their health.¹ Many people encounter challenges like unsafe neighborhoods, discrimination, or financial difficulties that harm their health. However, supportive relationships can help lessen these negative effects. By understanding these facets of life through both publicly available data and lived experiences, we can better grasp the strengths and opportunities in South Side communities.

SOCIAL CONTEXT

The social vulnerability index for the South Side Community Assessment neighborhoods ranges from the 52nd in Hyde Park to 88th percentile in Washington Park compared to the 17th in Lakeview and 62nd across the City of Chicago (Figure 1).² The Social Vulnerability Index (SVI) was created to help public health officials and emergency response planners identify and map the communities that will most likely need support before, during, and after a hazardous event. SVI indicates relative vulnerability by ranking places on 15 social factors, including unemployment, minority status, and disability, and combining the rankings into a single scale from the 0th percentile (lowest vulnerability) to 100th percentile (highest vulnerability). One interview participant shared that they see a lack of structure for children in the community today. They expressed worry about the impact of the lack of structure on children when they reach adulthood. They also talked about their experiences in the community during their childhood and how they hope to see an increase in community spaces where children have people in the community providing positive direction:

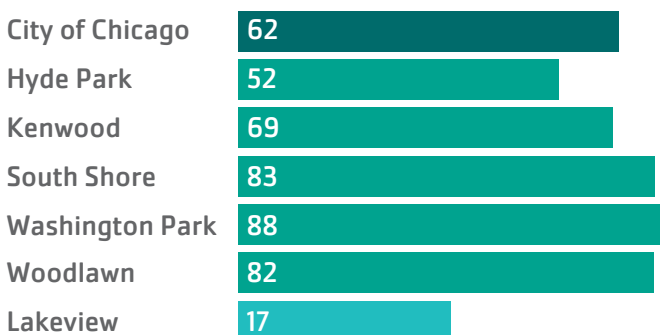
» [We] used to have all these programs where these kids would come to after school because both parents were working, and you had more structure at school. So, it was like if teacher told the parent that something was going on with the kid, the kid would know, okay, I'm going to get it from both sides now. [...] When I was younger, you had that community that helps. Now, I don't think you have that much of a community that's involved.

[COMMUNITY MEMBER INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT]

FIGURE 1

Hyde Park, Kenwood, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn residents are more socially vulnerable than Lakeview residents

This chart shows the social vulnerability index as a percentile in 2020 by community area



Source: Chicago Health Atlas • Created with Datawrapper
<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/ZYAS1/8/>

COMMUNITY BELONGING

Residents feel varying degrees of belonging across the South Side Community Assessment areas. There are discrepancies across neighborhoods, ranging from 29% in Washington Park to 65% in Kenwood. The citywide average in Chicago is 43% (Figure 2).³ Across Chicago, most adults like where they live, but almost half do not feel they belong in their neighborhood.⁴ An interview participant shared their experiences struggling to find a community for mothers:

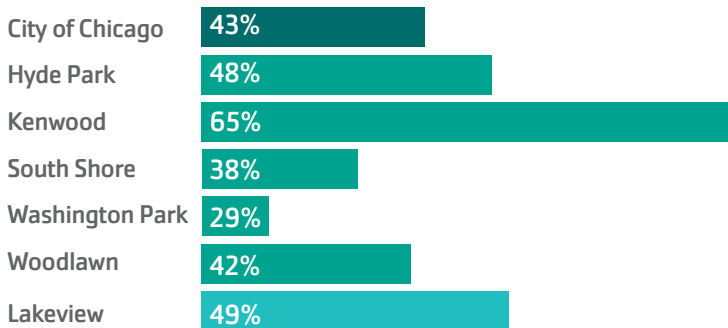
» I've talked to a couple of people who are having a hard time with motherhood and let them know none of us know what we are doing. We are just winging it. And we're winging it in our own different way. And you don't have to wing it the way I wing it. You know, talking about your problems, fixes problems. [...] The community used to have things for women having a hard time with motherhood, used to be counseling, but that was during the day. [...] But now none of that is accessible anymore. So, we have mothers out here being mothers, you give birth to this child and then, they're like, go take care of y'all. Go take care of this baby.

[COMMUNITY MEMBER INTERVIEW PARTICIPANT]

FIGURE 2

Over half of Hyde Park, Kenwood, South Shore, Washington Park, and Woodlawn residents have varying rates of belonging

This chart shows the percentage of adults by community area who reported they strongly agree or agree that they really feel part of their neighborhood in 2021–2022.



Source: Chicago Health Atlas • Created with Datawrapper
<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/Til0V/6/>

COMMUNITY SAFETY

Adults who feel safer in their neighborhoods tend to be healthier.⁵ South Side Community Assessment area residents reported feeling safe all or most of the time less often than Lakeview residents (Figure 3). Additionally, South Side residents experience more neighborhood violence daily or weekly than Lakeview residents (Figure 3).⁶ Over half of the survey participants (56%) identified community violence as one of the top three challenges in their community. Factors like concentrated poverty, educational disparities, limited access to healthcare, high incarceration rates, policing methods, and generational trauma contribute to community violence.⁷

FIGURE 3

South Side Community Assessment area residents feel more unsafe and report more violence compared to Lakeview residents

This table shows the percentage of adults in 2022 by community area who reported that they feel safe in their neighborhood “all of the time” or “most of the time” and the percentage of adults in 2022 by community area who reported violence occurs in their neighborhood “every day” or “at least every week.”

	NEIGHBORHOOD VIOLENCE RATE	NEIGHBORHOOD SAFETY RATE
City of Chicago	45%	45%
Hyde Park	55%	35%
Kenwood	51%	37%
South Shore	54%	23%
Washington Park	57%	14%
Woodlawn	56%	24%
Lakeview	36%	37%

Source: Chicago Health Atlas • Created with Datawrapper
<https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/DVUGM/6/>



ACTION PLAN

South Side community residents are more socially vulnerable than residents in Lakeview and the City of Chicago overall. Nonetheless, South Side residents feel a similar sense of belonging in their neighborhood as Lakeview and Chicago residents. Based on the strengths and opportunities found by the stakeholder group, the following action items are proposed:

- Short-term (within the next year): **Partner to plan and promote community events** to enhance engagement and overall sense of community belonging.
- Medium-term (1 to 3 years): **Collaborate to connect community members to services and programs** using community navigators or other positions knowledgeable about community resources.
- Long-term (3+ years): **Develop and implement community violence prevention and intervention strategies** to increase neighborhood safety and reduce violence rates.

1 Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. (n.d.). Social determinants of health. Healthy People 2030. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/objectives-and-data/social-determinants-health>
2 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry / Geospatial Research, Analysis, and Services Program). (2020). Social Vulnerability Index. Retrieved from <https://chicagohealthatlas.org/indicators/SVI?topic=social-vulnerability-index>
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4 Healthy Chicago 2025. (2020). Closing our life expectancy gap 2020–2025. Chicago Department of Public Health. Retrieved from https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/statistics_and_reports/HC2025_917_FINAL.pdf
5 Healthy Chicago 2025. (2020). Closing our life expectancy gap 2020–2025. Chicago Department of Public Health. Retrieved from https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/statistics_and_reports/HC2025_917_FINAL.pdf
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7 Healthy Chicago 2025. (2020). Closing our life expectancy gap 2020–2025. Chicago Department of Public Health. Retrieved from https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/cdph/statistics_and_reports/HC2025_917_FINAL.pdf