

Blake Road Corridor community assessment

*Phase I report for the Corridor Advisory
Collaborative*

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Collaborative*

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Executive summary

The Blake Road Corridor is a highly concentrated neighborhood located within Hopkins, Minnesota. This one mile by one-half mile area is bound by busy roadways and contains approximately 1,350 housing units (primarily rental) but few services or community facilities. In 2005, due to concerns about safety and a lack of youth programming, the Hopkins Chief of Police, the Hopkins School District, the Hennepin County Strategic Initiative and Community Engagement Department, and other community members began discussing strategies to revitalize the community. Now known as the Blake Road Corridor Stakeholders Collaborative, the group includes a wide range of representatives, including residents, business leaders, faith community leaders, and school, city, and county staff.

In 2006, the stakeholders decided to conduct a study to guide their community revitalization efforts. Upon the recommendation of the stakeholders, an Advisory Collaborative was formed and assisted to guide the assessment process. There were three goals of the assessment project: (1) gather information regarding concerns and solutions as they are reported by the community, including residents and other stakeholders; (2) identify long-term solutions that promote the livability, safety, growth and development of the community in all aspects, including but not limited to programming for youth and the safety and well-being of residents; and (3) assist with the development of a long-term plan that will address issues, encourage stakeholder engagement, and empower residents.

The assessment was designed to take place in two phases. Three primary approaches were used in Phase I of the assessment:

- Online stakeholder survey: An online survey was completed by 40 of 56 Collaborative members (71% response rate). Most stakeholders (84%) lived or worked in Hopkins, though few (16%) lived or worked in the Corridor. One-third of the respondents were city employees (34%). Other common roles included school staff (18%), youth program leaders (11%), and social service employees (11%).
- Focus groups: Five focus groups were conducted with residents and business owners. A total of 43 people participated, including Somali and Hispanic/Latino residents, renters, homeowners, and business owners/landlords.
- Review of existing information: Hopkins Police Department and Hopkins School District data were reviewed and included in the report.

The purpose of the first phase of the assessment was to explore identified stakeholders' perceptions of the Corridor, in areas such as crime, housing, schools, businesses, and services. Fund-raising is currently underway for the second phase, which will refine the neighborhood improvement plan using feedback from more residents and the results of other local and national community revitalization efforts.

Community strengths

Several positive findings emerged from Phase I of the assessment. In general, schools received positive ratings in areas such as maintenance, educational services, and ability to adequately serve a diverse group of students. Lower ratings were given to recreational programs and parent involvement at school. Stakeholders provided mixed ratings of crime and safety issues in the schools, indicating that crime has increased but that schools are still safe for students. With the exception of roads/streets, lighting, and sidewalks, most city services received positive ratings from survey respondents and focus group participants.

Survey respondents rated the Stakeholder Collaborative positively. Most said that the group represents a diverse set of community stakeholders who are committed to revitalizing the Corridor. Some respondents suggested increasing efforts to increase representation from residents and local businesses, however.

Areas of concern

Despite these positive ratings, overall, most survey respondents and focus group participants provided negative feedback about the Corridor in areas such as crime, businesses, and services. Stakeholders rated the quality of life in the Corridor as relatively poor, with many saying that quality of life had worsened and expressing dissatisfaction with the Corridor as a place to live and work.

Survey respondents and focus group participants identified the following issues as areas of most significant concern:

- Increased crime and concerns about safety in the Corridor, especially at night.
- Limited recreational programming and services for children and youth.
- The absence of an accessible, high-quality park or community center.
- Poorly maintained properties, especially rental properties, though also including single family homes and businesses.

- Limited screening and monitoring of renters, especially related to absentee landlords.
- Lack of resident and business involvement in the community.
- Poor lighting and unsafe walking areas for pedestrians.
- Need for more police presence in the Corridor, with some focus group participants also expressing dissatisfaction with their responsiveness, especially when interacting with residents of color.
- A failure of current businesses to meet community needs, with requests for additional health care facilities, restaurants, and grocery stores.

Recommendations

Survey respondents and focus group participants were also asked to provide recommendations for improving the Blake Road Corridor. The most frequent suggestions addressed their areas of greatest concerns, and included:

- Increasing the availability of programming, especially summer and school-year recreational programs for youth, but also parent support and adult education programs.
- Improving access to or quality of the local park or creating a community center.
- Increasing landlord accountability for screening and monitoring their tenants.
- Conducting more frequent and rigorous inspections of rental properties, with more enforcement of code violations.
- Improving lighting and sidewalks to make areas more pedestrian friendly.
- Increasing parental and community involvement in community improvement efforts and in the schools.
- Increasing the responsiveness and visibility of police officers, including bicycle, foot, and canine patrols.

Residents who participated in the focus groups provided a number of other suggestions. While these recommendations did not emerge in the stakeholder survey, they are worthy of consideration due to the under-representation of residents among the survey respondents. Their recommendations included providing more access to transportation services, increasing the availability of child care services within the Corridor, and providing access to more services and resources for Hispanic/Latino and Somali families.

Next steps

Consistent themes and recommendations emerged during Phase I of this community assessment. It is not possible to determine whether these areas of concern and recommendations reflect the priorities of the larger group of community residents, or simply mirror the issues that have been raised as concerns within Stakeholder Collaborative meetings. Similarly, it is not possible to prioritize the recommendations based on the likelihood that they will successfully transform the community and address underlying areas of concern. The results of Phase I will be used to guide a second phase, which will involve gathering feedback from a large, diverse group of residents, and comparing the recommendations to the results of other local and national community revitalization efforts.

Introduction

Community background

The Blake Road Corridor is a highly concentrated neighborhood located within the City of Hopkins, Minnesota. This one mile by one half mile area consists of about 1,350 housing units, virtually all of which are rental. The area is bound by busy roadways, bordered by commercial property along the Blake Road strip, Excelsior Boulevard on the south and Highway 7 on the north. The east side of the neighborhood is the boundary line of St. Louis Park, MN (Figure 1).

1. Map of the Blake Road Corridor



This secluded neighborhood contains few services or community facilities. The physical layout of this area restricts young children from easily leaving the area to access schools or city or private non-profit programming offered in other parts of the community. Transportation outside the corridor is an issue for these children, most of whom come from low-income families.

While safety is a top priority for the City of Hopkins, an increase in crime was seen in 2005, especially in the Blake Road Corridor area. The Blake Road Corridor makes up less than 4 percent of Hopkins, but is responsible for nearly 40 percent of all total city police calls. Much of the crime is reported in Cottageville Park, a small “pocket park” bordered by houses that is not visible from the street. As the only park within the Corridor, Cottageville Park has been the scene of frequent fights with teenage gangs, drug dealing, and other nuisance activity. Elementary school-age kids observe gang activity, especially when law enforcement arrives to stop fights or arrest drug dealers.

The Blake Road Corridor houses a diverse group of residents. Over the past several years, the area has seen a significant growth in the Somali and Hispanic/Latino communities as well as Russian, East Indian and other cultural groups. A total of 37 languages are spoken by students in the Hopkins schools.

Formation of the Stakeholder Group

In 2005, due to concerns about safety and a lack of supervised recreational programs for youth, the Hopkins Chief of Police turned to the community for assistance in addressing these issues. In partnership with the Hopkins School District, the Hennepin County Strategic Initiative and Community Engagement Department, and other members of the community, he convened a group of stakeholders for the purpose of organizing healthy activities for children and their families. Soon after, agencies and community members began meeting to discuss strategies to revitalize the community and formed what is now known as The Blake Road Corridor Stakeholders Collaborative. Membership of the Stakeholders Group now includes a wide range of community representatives, including residents, parents, business leaders, faith community leaders, and school, city and county staff.

The Collaborative recognized a need for better communication and interaction between residents of the Blake Road Corridor, with the goals of facilitating changes in the neighborhood and providing assistance to families while increasing their participation in their community. To combine knowledge with action and achieve social change to improve outcomes and eliminate disparities, stakeholders decided to conduct a study to guide their community revitalization efforts and build community. They believed a

process was needed to give the residents and other stakeholders a voice regarding their perceptions around quality of life issues.

Overview of the Blake Road Corridor Assessment project

In 2006, the Stakeholder Collaborative contracted with Wilder Research to conduct a community assessment. A smaller Advisory Committee, consisting of representatives of the Stakeholder Collaborative, was formed to partner with Wilder to oversee the design and implementation of this assessment. There were three goals of the assessment project:

- Gather information regarding concerns and solutions as they exist and as they are perceived by the community at large, the residents of the Corridor, and the stakeholders that interact with the residents in the target area.
- Identify long-term solutions that promote the livability, safety, growth and development of the community in all aspects, including but not limited to programming for youth and the safety and well-being of residents.
- Assist with the development of a long-term plan that will address issues, encourage stakeholder engagement, and empower residents.

Phase I data collection

The assessment was designed to take place in two phases. Two primary research approaches were used in Phase I of the assessment: an online survey with identified project stakeholders and a series of five focus groups with residents and business owners. Some additional data regarding crime and education were provided by members of the Advisory Committee and are included in this report. An upcoming Phase II of the assessment will include in-person interviews with Corridor residents.

Stakeholder survey

A survey was developed in coordination with the project's Advisory Committee. This survey was designed to explore the core areas of concern within the community, including crime and safety, schools and education, housing, businesses, and local services. The survey was administered online to members of the Corridor's Stakeholder Collaborative. To ensure that stakeholders had ample opportunity to participate, those who did not respond to the online survey and multiple reminders after several weeks were invited to complete telephone interviews with trained interviewers. Surveys and interviews were completed in March and April, 2007.

A total of 65 individuals were originally identified for the survey, although nine were subsequently considered ineligible for reasons such as leaving the area. Of the remaining 56 eligible stakeholders, 40 completed the survey (for a response rate of 71%).

While most of the stakeholders (84%) lived or worked in the City of Hopkins, relatively few (16%) lived or worked within the Blake Road Corridor (Figure 2). While most of the respondents did not live in the Blake Road Corridor, two-thirds (68%) have regular contact with Corridor residents, either informally or formally (through businesses, programs, school-related activities, etc.).

2. Percentage of stakeholders who live or work in the target area

	N	%
Do you live and/or work in the City of Hopkins?		
Yes, I live in Hopkins	1	3%
Yes, I work in Hopkins	27	71%
Yes, I both live and work in Hopkins	4	10%
No, I do not live or work in Hopkins	6	16%
Do you live and/or work in the Blake Road Corridor?		
Yes, I live in the Blake Road Corridor	1	3%
Yes, I work in the Blake Road Corridor	5	13%
Yes, I both live and work in the Blake Road Corridor	0	0%
No, I do not live or work in the Blake Road Corridor	32	84%

Stakeholders had a number of roles within the Corridor (Figure 3). One-third of the respondents (34%) were city employees. Other common roles included school staff (18%), youth program leaders (11%), and social service employees (11%).

3. Stakeholder role

Which of the following best describes your role within the Blake Road Corridor?	N	%
Other city employee	13	34%
School staff	7	18%
Youth program leader	4	11%
Social service employee	4	11%
Police officer	3	8%
County government staff	3	8%
Resident	2	5%
Clergy or faith community leader	2	5%
Elected official	1	3%
Landlord or housing manager	1	3%
Business owner	0	0%
Local business employee	0	0%
Other	7	18%

Note: Because survey respondents could select multiple roles, percentages total more than 100 percent.

Focus groups

A series of five focus groups were held in March and April 2007. Members of the Advisory Collaborative recruited participants through letters, phone calls, and in-person visits to residents and business owners in the Blake Road Corridor area. A total of 43 individuals participated in the focus groups, with between 5 and 15 individuals participating in any one group. All focus groups were held at centrally located sites in the Corridor. The five focus groups were comprised of the following groups of individuals:

- Somali residents (n=15) – length of residency in the area ranged from 4 months to 6 years
- Hispanic/Latino residents (n=6) – length of residency in the area ranged from 1.5 years to 9 years
- Renters (n=6) – length of residency in the area ranged from 1.5 years to 21 years
- Home owners (n=10) – length of residency in the area ranged from 8 months to 44 years
- Business owners/landlords (n=6) – length of ownership/management in the area ranged from 2 years to 20 years

Secondary data

In addition to survey and focus group data collected for this assessment, some existing data are also included in this report. The Hopkins Police Department provided data regarding crime committed in the Corridor to supplement the assessment data related to crime and safety. The Hopkins School District data provided information about students living in the Corridor, including their demographic background, attendance and behavior issues, and standardized test results.

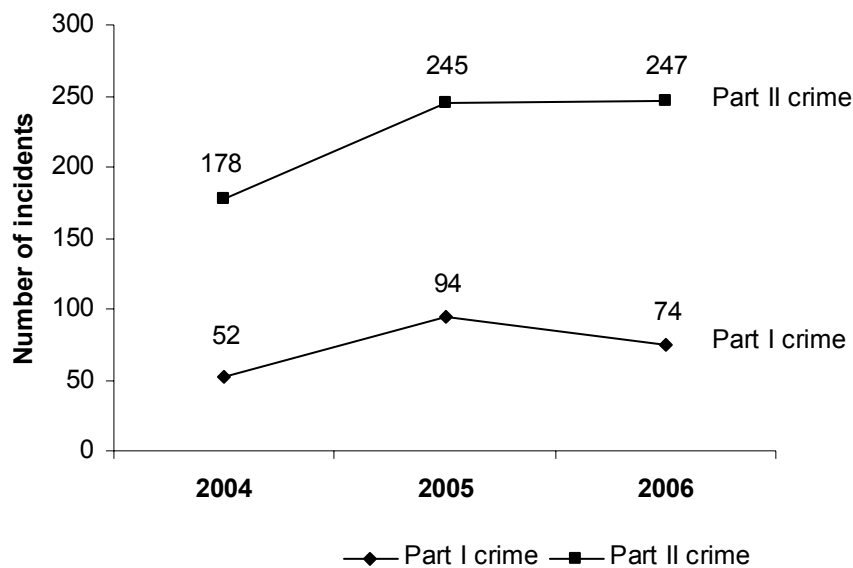
Assessment results

Crime and safety

Community crime statistics

Crime statistics show an increased number of offenses in the Corridor between 2004 and 2005. An increase in crime and concerns about public safety were strong factors contributing to the interest in conducting this assessment and identifying strategies for enhancing the community. Figure 4 provides the crime statistics within the Corridor for 2004 to 2006. Large increases were seen in the number of criminal incidents between 2004 and 2005 (from 52 to 94 for Part I crimes and from 178 to 245 for Part II crimes). While Part II crimes remained higher in 2006 (with 247 incidents), there was a decrease in Part I crimes (from 94 to 74 incidents). It is impossible to determine with certainty the reasons for the decrease, although the Hopkins Police Department did implement some targeted crime-prevention initiatives during the year.

4. Number of Part I and Part II crimes in the Corridor: 2004 - 2006



Source: Hopkins Police Department. **Note:** Part I crimes include homicide, burglary, robbery, rape, vehicle theft, aggravated assault and larceny. Most other offenses are considered Part II crimes.

Assault, larceny/theft, and vandalism were most common. Aside from traffic-related offenses, the most common forms of crime in the Corridor over the past three years were assault, larceny/theft, and vandalism. Rates of assault have increased steadily over the past three years in the area. Rates of vandalism and larceny/theft both doubled between 2004 and 2005 (Figure 5).

5. Blake Road Corridor criminal incidents: 2004 - 2006

Type of crime	Year		
	2004	2005	2006
Part I Crimes			
Homicide	0	0	0
Rape	2	0	2
Robbery	2	8	3
Aggravated assault	5	6	9
Burglary	8	15	7
Larceny/theft	26	51	47
Auto theft	9	14	6
Arson	0	0	0
Total Part I Crimes	52	94	74
Part II Crimes			
Assault	32	36	43
Forgery/counterfeiting	1	9	5
Fraud	8	10	8
Embezzlement	0	0	0
Possess stolen property	1	2	2
Vandalism	19	48	54
Weapons	5	2	2
Prostitution	0	0	0
Criminal sexual conduct	2	0	1
Narcotics	8	17	8
Gambling	0	0	0
Family/children	0	1	2
DUI	22	26	29
Liquor violations	7	9	4
Disorderly conduct	14	17	18
Vagrancy	6	0	0
All other offenses	53	68	71
Total Part II Crimes	178	245	247
TOTAL PART I & II CRIMES	230	339	321

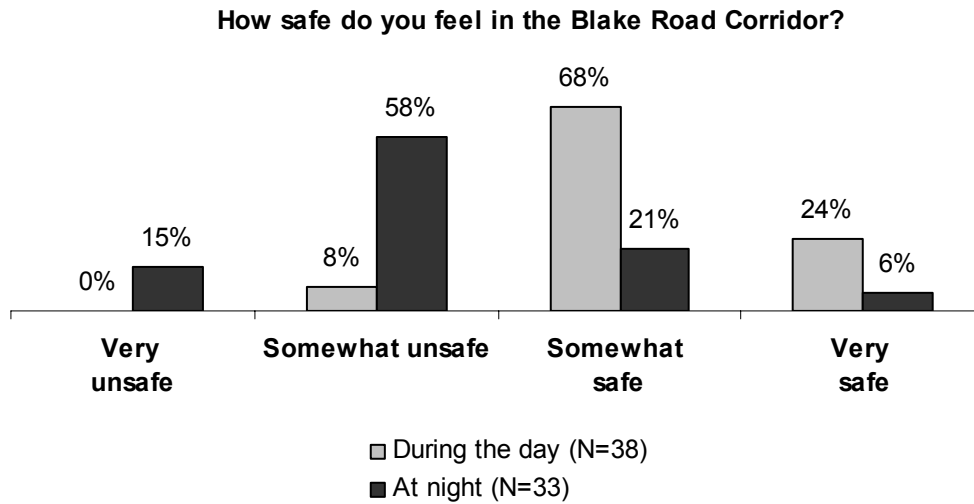
Source: Hopkins Police Department.

Stakeholder survey results

Stakeholders feel less safe in the Corridor at night than they do during the day.

Almost all stakeholders (92%) feel at least “somewhat safe” in the Corridor during the day; one in four respondents (24%) feel “very safe.” Fewer stakeholders (27%) feel at least “somewhat safe” in the Corridor at night (Figure 6).

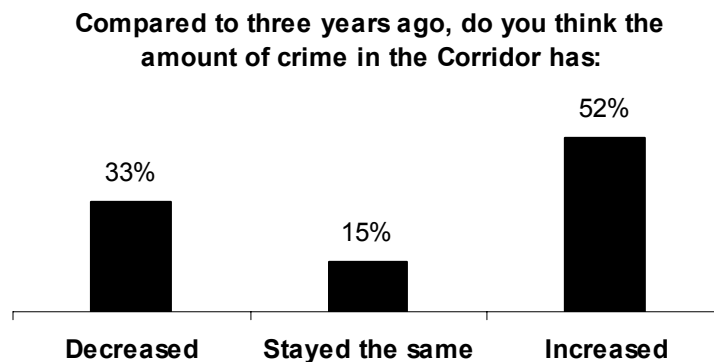
6. Level of perceived safety in the Corridor



One in two stakeholders feels that crime in the Corridor is getting worse.

Respondents were more likely to say that the amount of crime in the Blake Road Corridor has increased over the past three years (52%), rather than decreased (33%) (Figure 7).

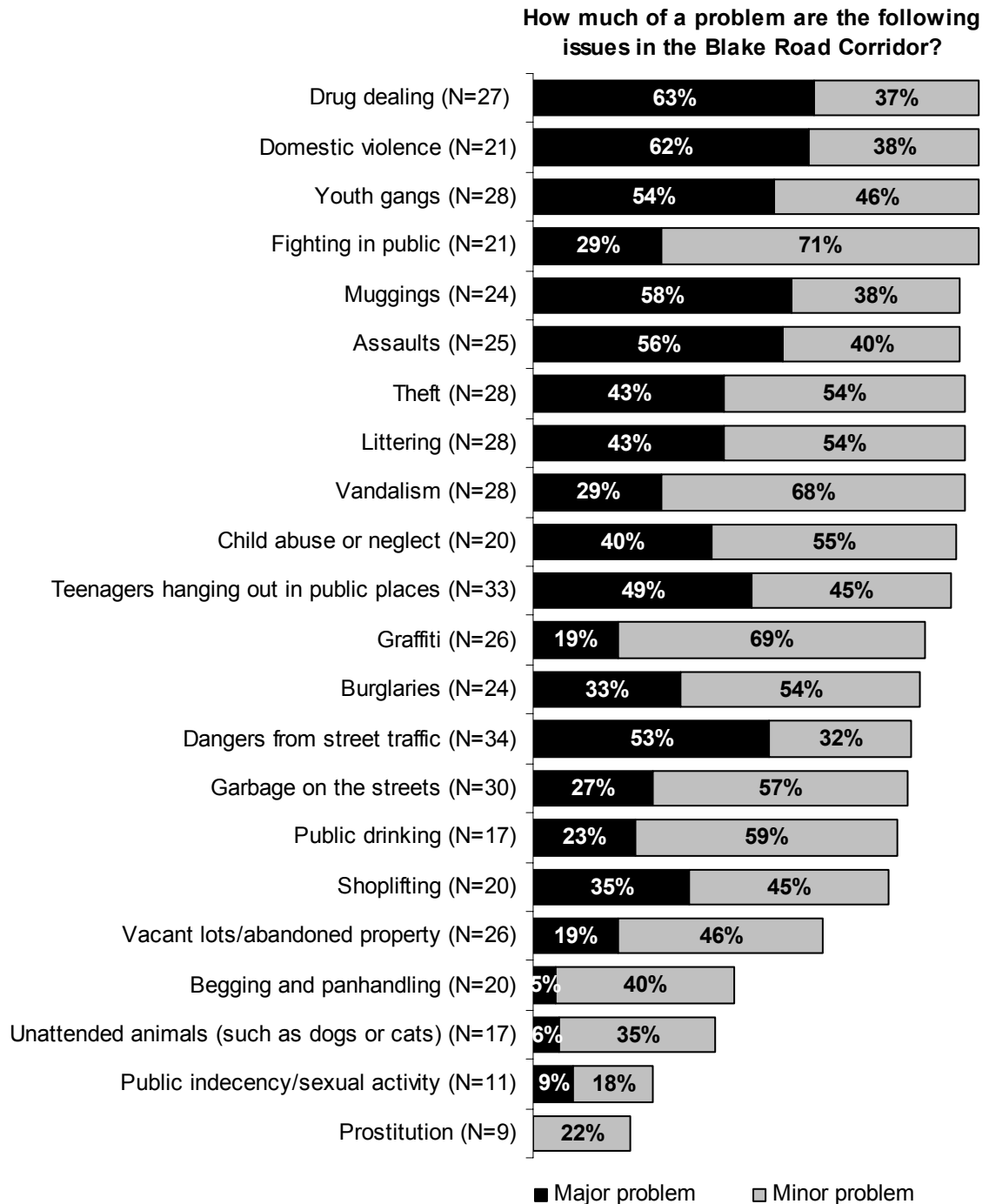
7. Perceived changes in the amount of crime (N=33)



Stakeholders identified numerous crime and safety concerns, such as drug dealing, domestic violence, gangs, and assaults. Stakeholders were asked to rate the extent to which a variety of issues are problems within the Blake Road Corridor. Many issues were rated as significant concerns. More than 9 out of 10 survey respondents rated the following issues as at least a “minor problem” in the Corridor: drug dealing (100%), fighting in public (100%), domestic violence (100%), youth gangs (100%), muggings (96%), littering (96%), vandalism (96%), theft (96%), assault (96%), child abuse or neglect (95%), and teenagers hanging out in public places (94%). More than half of the stakeholders identified the following issues as “major concerns”: drug dealing (63%), domestic violence (62%), muggings (58%), assaults (56%), youth gangs (54%), and danger from the street (53%) (Figure 8).

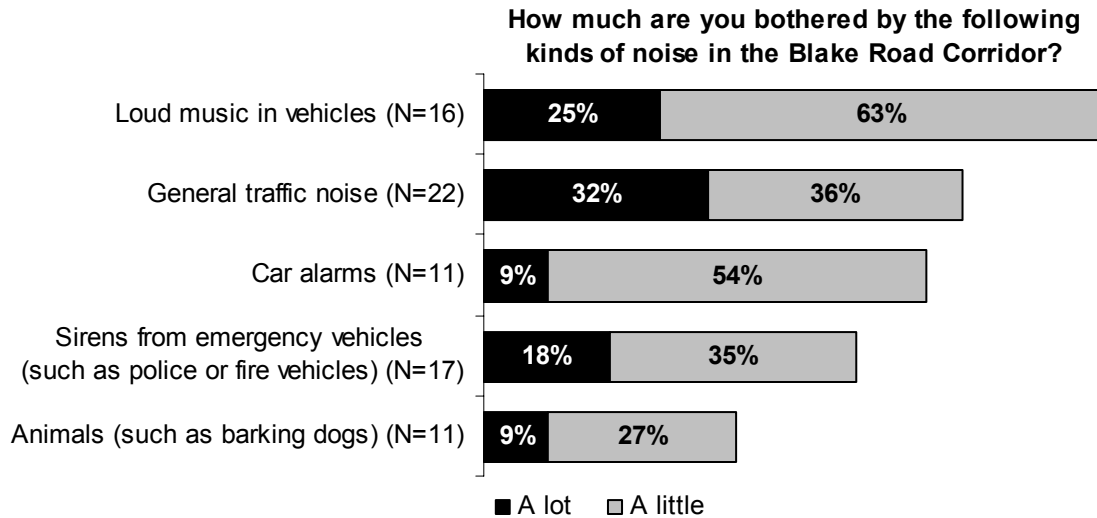
In many cases, respondents said that they did not know how much of a problem was presented by various issues. Relatively few stakeholders were able to rate several issues, including prostitution, public indecency/sexual activity, public drinking, shoplifting, begging and panhandling, and child abuse or neglect.

8. Concerns regarding crime and safety



Noise was also a concern for some stakeholders, especially loud music from vehicles. Stakeholders were also asked how much they were bothered by noise in the Corridor. Stakeholders were most likely to say that they were bothered by loud music from vehicles, though most (63%) said that they were only bothered “a little.” Two-thirds of the respondents (68%) were bothered at least “a little” by general traffic noise (Figure 9).

9. Concerns regarding noise in the Corridor



Stakeholders generally provided positive feedback regarding the police, though they felt that there is not enough police presence in the Corridor. Almost all survey respondents (90% to 97%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that police respond quickly to incidents, have a positive relationship with residents, adequately serve all residents, and respond fairly and appropriately to incidents. Ratings of police responsiveness were especially positive, with half of the respondents (50%) “strongly agreeing” that they respond quickly to incidents. Fewer survey respondents (62%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that there are enough police officers serving the Corridor (Figure 10).

10. Perceptions of police

How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements about police serving the Blake Road Corridor?	N	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Police respond quickly to incidents	28	0%	4%	46%	50%
Police have a positive relationship with residents	31	3%	7%	71%	19%
The Hopkins Police Department adequately serves all residents	30	0%	3%	63%	33%
There are enough police officers serving the Corridor	21	5%	33%	48%	14%
Police respond fairly and appropriately to incidents	29	0%	7%	62%	31%

Stakeholders identified a range of crime and safety concerns, especially related to limited opportunities for positive youth activities. Stakeholders were asked to identify their biggest concerns about crime and safety in the Corridor. The most frequent issue mentioned by stakeholders was the lack of positive activities for youth, coupled with the potential negative impact of crime on children in the community. As seen in Figure 11, a range of other issues also emerged from their responses, including:

- Threats to public safety, such as assaults, muggings, or other crimes
- Concerns that the Corridor will be seen as unsafe, leading to greater turn-over of residents and challenges to redevelopment
- Limited screening and monitoring of renters
- Neighborhood layout, including poor park design, lack of lighting and unsafe walking areas for pedestrians
- Businesses that were seen as unsafe and lack of business involvement in community improvement efforts

11. Open-ended comments: What are your biggest concerns (if any) about crime and safety in the Blake Road Corridor?

What are your biggest concerns (if any) about crime and safety in the Blake Road Corridor?

Limited opportunities for positive youth activities

Youth that are getting into trouble because they are bored or have no positive program choices to keep them busy.

We have had Chief Reid report on increased youth crime in the Blake Corridor (12/05). I know that with increased programming, crime figures are now down somewhat. I know there isn't a place for youth to gather or many activities.

No organized activities for the neighborhood kids in the Blake corridor.

I am concerned about children and teens not having any place to go.

Unsupervised younger children without any place to go.

Young adults with nothing to do usually find trouble.

Lack of positive programs for youth. (2 respondents)

Concerns about specific types of crime

Assaults and vandalism.

Drug activity.

The potential for gang activity.

I am concerned about drug trafficking. I am concerned about attacks and robberies in the business area. I am also concerned about domestic violence.

Roaming groups of youths harassing people. Drug dealing.

My biggest concern is for the safety of the residents and visitors of this area – so the muggings and assaults are a serious concern.

11. Open-ended comments: What are your biggest concerns (if any) about crime and safety in the Blake Road Corridor? (continued)

What are your biggest concerns (if any) about crime and safety in the Blake Road Corridor?

Negative influence of crime on area children

The children growing up in this neighborhood should be able to go outside to play and not have their parents worried about them.

My biggest concern now, as it was when the focus on this area began, is the effect the criminal element may have on the youngsters who observe the activity. They are the potential law-abiding citizens AND criminal element for the very near future.

Working at the elementary school that the children attend, I know that many of the kids are not supervised. Some of the students are out late at night. Other students are not allowed to go outside because of the amount of crime. Students come to school to talk about the stabbings and shootings they see. They also talk about who is in jail. There is also a lot of gang activity that they talk about.

There are some good people that live there with their kids. The biggest thing is that they see what is going on and are not feeling safe. Parents are afraid to leave their kids alone on non-school days.

Hearing from those who live around the corridor and work with corridor residents, I am concerned about children and youth who had to witness or watch what is going on and be impacted by negative behavior.

Absentee landlords/failure to screen tenants

The high turnover of rental properties and tenants, and proper screening of tenants has led to most of the crime in the area in the past, and I'm concerned that this will continue.

Concerned about the absent landlords who don't appear to monitor renters and the activities in the rental homes on the northern end of Blake Rd.

My biggest concerns include absentee landlords.

Rental properties with fewer than 4 units usually do not have on-site property management. These absentee landlords do not always adequately screen tenant applicants. This allows tenants with criminal backgrounds to move into these units.

Community perceptions

Crime affects neighborhoods, businesses, communities. When I "Think Hopkins" I don't want to think crime.

That it will escalate. That crime and the feeling of a lack of safety will continue to increase so that the flight of good families from the neighborhood will be more dramatic than it is now.

I am concerned about the perception of the area and the impact a negative perception has on the ability to redevelop the area and prevent further decline.

There is a perception which may or may not be based in fact that it is unsafe to walk around the Blake Corridor. As resident of Hopkins who lives on the "Avenues" I see the Blake Road Corridor as a run down area fraught with minor crime escalating to major crime. I know some trail users feel it is unsafe around Blake Road.

11. Open-ended comments: What are your biggest concerns (if any) about crime and safety in the Blake Road Corridor? (continued)

What are your biggest concerns (if any) about crime and safety in the Blake Road Corridor?

Neighborhood layout/lighting

I feel that there is a lack of sufficient lighting along the streets and on the large properties in that area.

The configuration of the park with the streets, density of individual rental property, apartments and private homes make it difficult to build a community.

My concern is that Cottageville Park will continue as a magnet for crime and personal safety issues (old playground equipment, bad lighting). Blake Road is extremely busy, but not at all pedestrian friendly.

The isolation of the neighborhoods, disconnected from public gathering spaces, shopping, viable park.

Role of businesses

Businesses don't seem to do anything about groups gathering in or on their properties which intimidate customers.

I think communication between the businesses in the community needs to be stronger.

A number of residents comment about the troubles at the Walgreens and won't go there. Other residents have told me they avoid the Knollwood Mall after dark because of police incidents.

I think the commercial properties on the corner of Blake and Lake and the high proportion of rental properties in the Blake Corridor holds back its potential for growth and development as a great "residential" neighborhood to live in.

Other comments

Don't know. (10 respondents)

The police department does not have adequate manpower to address the issues impacting the community.

The health and welfare of all the children who reside in the area. The rundown appearance of some of the duplexes in the neighborhood.

Lack of upkeep on some of the rental properties.

Continuing City Park Maintenance

How do we address the crime in the area?

Unreported crime with immigrant victims.

That it will be difficult to fix due to the high percentage of rental housing and the transient population, communication problems with ethnic groups, animosity between different ethnic groups, and a lack of resolve/interest in addressing problems on the part of the larger Hopkins citizenry.

Suggestions for improving safety in the Corridor included better monitoring of tenants, more recreational programs for youth, a renovated park, and improved lighting and sidewalks. Stakeholders were also asked for their suggestions for how to improve safety in the Corridor. Four main themes emerged from their comments, including:

- Increasing landlords’ accountability for screening and monitoring their tenants
- Offering summer and school-year recreational programs for youth, such as through a park or youth community center
- Renovating Cottageville Park to improve accessibility and amenities
- Improving lighting and sidewalks to make areas more pedestrian friendly

A few stakeholders also suggested increasing visibility of police officers, including bicycle and canine patrols. The complete list of stakeholder comments can be found in Figure 12.

12. Open-ended comments: What could be done to improve safety in the Blake Road Corridor?

What could be done to improve safety in the Blake Road Corridor?

Increase screening of renters

Landlords need to be held responsible to rent to good people without records, and evict renters who commit a crime.

Background checks on all potential renters.

Continue to make landlords more accountable.

Work with landlords to enforce livability standards and crime free neighborhoods.

Hold Landlords to higher standards.

I think trying to establish some consistency with rental property landlords in the screening of tenants by landlords.

Better screening of rental tenants, especially in the duplexes. Tougher rental ordinances making evictions for criminal activity easier.

Rental background checks.

Making the landlords responsible for their property.

More proactive rental licensing mandates to deter unwanted, troublesome renters.

Require all landlords to do criminal background checks on prospective tenants. Require landlords to include crime free lease addendums in tenant leases so that they can more easily evict tenants that engage in criminal behavior.

Monitoring of renters in the rental properties.

12. Open-ended comments: What could be done to improve safety in the Blake Road Corridor? (continued)

What could be done to improve safety in the Blake Road Corridor?

Offer recreational activities for youth

After-school, evening and summer program options for youth.

Increase programming for youth. Try to create a gathering place for positive youth activity.

The addition of wholesome, organized activities for youth and adults, if located directly in this area, could be the difference between life and death, in some cases. A neighborhood activity center could work wonders. How it's accomplished is anyone's guess.

The kids need more to do. Other than the pool in the summer and the playground, there is nothing for them to do. There is no nearby nice park for them to play in. There are no organized sports for them. Money is also an issue. The students can't get anywhere without crossing busy streets. They sometimes ride bikes to Burnes Park in Hopkins. They are not supervised there and problems occur between different groups of kids.

Youth Center.

Have someplace for the kids to be able to play and hang out. Things to do when there is no school.

Structured community activities for children living in the area.

More activities for youth during the school year and during the summer.

I would like to see positive activities in the neighborhood for children and their families (after school activities).

A place such as boys/girls club for young adults to go where they feel safe getting to and safe being there.

Positive programs for youth.

Improve public park

Improve public facilities in the area (Cottageville Park) so that more recreation programs could be offered to the children/teens in order to occupy their time.

The configuration of streets and access with an upgrade to the park are long term projects that need to continue.

Cottageville Park accessibility and renovation.

A larger neighborhood park with more amenities for kids on the east side of Blake Road would help in the long run.

Access to a park with more amenities for the community. Park & Rec staffing an improved Cottageville Park.

Clean up the neighborhood, and open up the accessibility to Cottageville Park to make it a more useful area for children to play.

Improve the park and make it more accessible.

Get rid of pocket park.

Improve parks.

Re-do park space.

12. Open-ended comments: What could be done to improve safety in the Blake Road Corridor? (continued)

What could be done to improve safety in the Blake Road Corridor?

Improve lighting/walkways

Improve crosswalks and sidewalks.

Better lighting and sidewalks.

Better/improved area lighting.

Make it more pedestrian-friendly.

Development of safe walkways and crossings across major roadways.

Improved lighting.

A city commitment to budgeting for improvements in street lighting, walking paths along both sides of Blake Road, new street lights at Blake and Lake.

Sidewalks, perhaps a walking bridge over Blake Rd to the businesses and park.

Updating the storefronts and street – make it more pedestrian friendly.

Increase police presence

More police officers directly assigned to the area. Special patrol such as bike patrol, etc.

Increase police presence. Is it possible to have a small police kiosk in the area? I know some large cities in Europe (and the USA?) have tried this with some success.

Police walking the streets with dogs is a better way to get in touch with the community.

Visible police officers.

More police presence always helps.

Other comments

Don't know. (6 respondents)

Community building for services and programs.

Enforce laws and make sure everyone understands poor behavior will not be tolerated, period.

More adult presence along with programming located in the neighborhood.

Give the residents a sense of pride.

Redevelopment of a large portion of the area. This does not necessarily mean demolition of properties. It can be a mix of rehab and new construction.

Get the residents involved in a neighborhood watch program.

I think the improvements with community communication have begun. It's important that they continue and are supported by local businesses, county, city, faith community and schools.

Cooperation from businesses to deal with the groups whether kids or adults that gather. Don't seem to call the police to remove them or report incidents as they should. Some of the problem with the businesses is that their employees encourage or are friends of these groups.

There is some commercial property up for sale and I see that as a possible area for housing and a community center. Include residents that are renting, in neighborhood associations and planning.

Focus group results

Of the various issues raised during the focus groups with residents and landlords/business owners, the most prevalent concerns related to crime and safety. In general, most participants felt that crime has increased in the Blake Road Corridor in recent years and as a result, feel less safe in the area. For example, several residents reported knowledge of incidents such as muggings and assaults in the Corridor. Due to these incidents, many residents, particularly women, said that they no longer feel comfortable walking alone in the area, especially at night.

The following safety issues emerged as the most significant to residents and landlords/business owners:

- **Poor lighting.** Almost all participants reported that areas throughout the Corridor were poorly lit, contributing to a sense of uneasiness among many residents. While many felt that the Corridor in general could benefit from increased lighting, some residents identified specific areas such as the walking path, wooded areas, and parking lots as being especially poorly lit.
- **Unsupervised teenagers.** Most residents and landlords/business owners expressed concerns about groups of teenagers loitering and drinking in areas throughout the Corridor, including in front of some businesses, outside of apartment complexes, or apartment building hallways. Participants noted the teens contributed to increased noise levels and that some engaged in fighting, leading to concerns about personal safety. Several residents and business owners reported that congregating teens were more of an issue during the summertime than winter.
- **Pedestrian safety.** Many participants described concerns about pedestrian safety, and in particular, crossing four lanes of busy traffic across Blake Road. The absence of a sidewalk along one side of Blake Road was also noted by several residents as a safety issue. A few residents also expressed concerns about vehicles speeding in the vicinity.
- **Police presence and responsiveness.** Although many residents and landlords/business owners were satisfied with police presence and responsiveness, some residents thought more police should be patrolling the Corridor area. Some also indicated a need for greater enforcement of laws by police. Residents of color in particular, including African-American, Somali, and Latino participants, felt police were not always responsive when they reported incidents.

Residents and landlords/business owners offered various solutions to these issues, including: additional lighting throughout the Corridor area; increased police enforcement for minor violations, especially curfew violations, loitering, and speeding; increased

police presence in the park and police patrolling on bicycles; and tightened security in certain apartment complexes (e.g., security cameras).

Education/schools

School data

Between September 2006 and March 2007, a total of 297 students lived in the Blake Road Corridor. No schools are physically located within the Blake Road Corridor. Students living within the Corridor attended nine schools. Almost half of the students (46%) attend Eisenhower Elementary School. Other schools commonly attended by Corridor students include Hopkins High School (26%), North Junior High (11%), and West Junior High (8%) (Figure 13).

13. Schools attended by students living in the Blake Road Corridor (N=297)

	N	%
Alice Smith Elementary	6	2%
Gatewood Elementary	2	<1%
Glen Lake Elementary	1	<1%
Eisenhower Elementary	137	46%
Katherine Curren Elementary	10	3%
L.H. Tanglen Elementary	6	2%
North Junior High	33	11%
West Junior High	24	8%
Hopkins High School	78	26%

Source: Hopkins School District. Data apply to all students from the Blake Road Corridor enrolled at any point between September 2006 and March 2007.

Students in the Corridor represent a diverse range of backgrounds. Approximately two-thirds of the students (66%) were Black; other students were Hispanic (22%), White (8%), Asian (2%), and American Indian (2%). Four in 10 students (39%) speak English as a second language. Four in five students receive either free (69%) or reduced price (10%) lunches. Fourteen percent of the students had Individualized Education Plans. In contrast, students in the overall district were much more likely to be White (73%). Few students across the district (5%) speak English as a second language, in comparison to students in the Corridor. Students across the district are also less likely to receive either free (16%) or reduced price (5%) lunches. A comparable number of students in the district (12%) had Individualized Education Plans (Figure 14).

14. Background of students living in the Blake Road Corridor

	Students living in Corridor (N=297)		All district students (N=7,960)	
	N	%	N	%
Gender				
Male	135	45%	4,082	51%
Female	162	55%	3,878	49%
Race				
American Indian	5	2%	40	<1%
Asian	7	2%	377	5%
Hispanic	64	22%	440	6%
Black	196	66%	1,332	17%
White	25	8%	5,771	73%
Lunch				
Free	206	69%	1,295	16%
Reduced price	30	10%	398	5%
None	61	21%	6,267	79%
Special education status				
Student has an Individualized Education Plan (IEP)	42	14%	946	12%
None	255	86%	7,014	88%
English as a Second Language (ESL)				
Yes	117	39%	385	5%
No	180	61%	7,575	95%

Source: Hopkins School District. Data apply to all students from the Blake Road Corridor enrolled at any point between September 2006 and March 2007.

On average, students living in the Corridor exhibited more than nine absences and nine tardy arrivals each between September 2006 and March 2007. One-third of the students exhibited at least one behavior incident during this period that resulted in an official behavior report being entered into their student records. In comparison, students in the overall district had a similar number of tardy arrivals but somewhat fewer absences (over seven). Students across the district were also less likely to exhibit at least one behavior incident, with about one in ten students (12%) doing so (Figures 15-16).

15. Attendance issues for students living in the Blake Road Corridor

	Students living in Corridor (N=297)	All district students (N=7,960)
Average number of absences per student	9.3	7.6
Average number of tardies per student	9.6	9.3

Source: Hopkins School District. Data apply to all students from the Blake Road Corridor enrolled at any point between September 2006 and March 2007. All absences and tardies between these dates were counted.

16. Behavior incidents for students living in the Blake Road Corridor

	Students living in Corridor (N=297)		All district students (N=7,960)	
	N	%	N	%
0	204	69%	7,026	88%
1	38	13%	462	6%
2	23	8%	151	2%
3	12	4%	83	1%
More than 3	21	7%	238	3%

Source: Hopkins School District. Data apply to all students from the Blake Road Corridor enrolled at any point between September 2006 and March 2007. All behavior events between these dates were counted. A behavior event is counted when an incident results in office involvement, with an official behavior report entered into the student's record. During this period, students exhibited an average of 1.0 behavior events each.

Many students in the Corridor did not pass the MCA test, especially in math. Fifty-five percent of the Corridor students who took the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment in 2006 passed the reading test (i.e., received a score of 3 or 4). Only one in five students (22%) had a passing score on the math test, however. In contrast, students across the overall district were more likely to have passed both the reading test (82%) and the math test (67%) (Figure 17).

17. Minnesota Comprehensive Assessment (MCA II) results for students living in the Blake Road Corridor

	Students living in Corridor		All district students	
	N	%	N	%
Math level	(N=98)		(N=3,711)	
I	48	49%	544	15%
II	28	29%	660	18%
III	18	18%	1,459	39%
IV	4	4%	1,048	28%
Reading level	(N=62)		(N=3,588)	
I	12	19%	215	6%
II	16	26%	421	12%
III	24	39%	1,120	31%
IV	10	16%	1,832	51%

Source: Hopkins School District. A level of 3 or 4 is considered passing. MCAs were completed in April 2006.

Stakeholder survey results

Stakeholders were asked several questions about the local schools. Because no schools are located within the Corridor, survey respondents were asked to consider the schools that serve the children who live in the Blake Road Corridor.

Stakeholders provided mixed ratings related to crime and safety in the schools.

Most survey respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that crime (75%) and student behavior problems (96%) have increased in the schools over the past three years. Despite these perceptions, almost all respondents either “agreed” (63%) or “strongly agreed” (34%) that schools are safe for students (Figure 18).

Survey respondents generally rated the educational experience provided by the schools as positive.

Stakeholders also provided positive ratings to a number of other questions about the schools. Almost all respondents (97%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that school buildings and properties are well-maintained. At least four in five respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the schools provide students with a good educational experience, schools have high academic expectations for students, and there are opportunities for businesses and other community groups to be involved with the schools. Most survey respondents also felt that the schools do a relatively good job serving a diverse population, with approximately four in five stakeholders “agreeing” or “strongly agreeing” that the

schools adequately serve students of all cultural/racial backgrounds (79%) and adequately serve language-minority students (82%) (Figure 18).

Respondents gave less positive ratings of parent and youth involvement in the schools and opportunities for recreational programs. Several items received lower ratings from stakeholders. Almost half of the respondents (48%) “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that the schools provide students with a sufficient number and variety of after-school activities. Most respondents also “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed” that students (50%) and parents (72%) are actively involved in their children’s schools (Figure 18).

18. Ratings of schools serving the children/youth who live in the Corridor

How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements about the schools that serve the children/youth who live in the Blake Road Corridor?	N	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Schools are safe for students	32	0%	3%	63%	34%
Crime has increased in the schools over the past three years	24	17%	8%	63%	12%
Student behavior problems have increased in the schools over the past three years	27	0%	4%	78%	18%
School buildings and property are well-maintained	33	0%	3%	67%	30%
The schools provide students with a good educational experience	33	0%	12%	52%	36%
The schools have high academic expectations for their students	33	3%	9%	61%	27%
The schools provide students with a sufficient number and variety of after-school activities	25	8%	40%	48%	4%
Students are actively involved in their schools	24	8%	42%	46%	4%
Parents are actively involved in their children’s schools	25	16%	56%	28%	0%
The schools adequately serve students of all cultural/racial backgrounds	29	7%	14%	65%	14%
The schools adequately serve language-minority students	28	4%	14%	64%	18%
There are opportunities for businesses and other community groups to be involved with the schools	28	7%	7%	68%	18%

Similar concerns were expressed by stakeholders when they were asked to identify their biggest concerns with schools serving children/youth who live in the Corridor. Respondents were most likely to mention the lack of academic and recreational activities for students and the lack of family involvement. Some stakeholders also expressed concerns with student behavior, while others felt that the community needs to be mobilized to address student concerns. A full list of respondents’ comments can be found in Figure 19.

19. Open-ended comments: What are your biggest concerns (if any) about the schools serving children/youth who live in the Blake Road Corridor?

What are your biggest concerns (if any) about the schools serving children/youth who live in the Blake Road Corridor?

Lack of student activities and transportation

All out of school enrichment is run as tuition based with no transportation home after, both of these are a barrier to these families.

After school activities.

Because of lack of transportation, student who need additional academic help before or after school do not have transportation.

It was difficult answering the last group of questions. I think the Hopkins Schools do a wonderful job, but have experienced many challenges in the past few years with decreasing funds and resources. As a community member who interacts with a large number of school age children after school hours I can safely say there are NOT enough activities for students with limited financial resources. Parents who are working numerous jobs or single parents trying to raise kids have limited amounts of time and resources as do parents from other cultures who don't have strong support systems in place. All of these problems contribute to students have too much free time on their hands without any place to go and are sometime not even allowed to go home until a parent returns home.

I am concerned about after-school care, activities, and homework assistance.

The distance to their schools and activities.

Summer activities. Evening supervision.

Youth in this area don't have easy access to activities because of the major highway corridors that divide up the neighborhood.

Lack of family involvement with the schools

Lack of family involvement.

The schools are working hard to find ways to connect with all children and families. The students/families from the Blake Corridor need ways to get to school and encouragement to become involved. While the schools have put some pieces in place (Spanish and Somali Communication Specialist, Bi-lingual parenting classes) there is definitely more need than there are resources.

The difficulties they have with communication with some parents due to the fact that the parents are either too busy with work or do not take the time to be actively involved with their children's education.

Constantly moving families.

My biggest concern is trying to involve the parents, especially of the new Americans. Also parents of students who live outside the school district.

Concerns about student behavior

There is only so much the schools can do. Often when these students are involved in after school activities they are not successful. Usually it is the students' behavior that gets them in trouble.

Too much is ignored. Behavior especially-disrespect to each other. There seems to be a "dumbing down" especially in these areas. Even loudness is a problem. It is very disrupting to walk into the schools at any time (elementary) and see pushing, shoving, yelling, screaming even if it just fooling around type of thing. No manners either. Hopkins does well in what they have academically, however, due to the distractions of those listed above it's hard for the students to listen, learn and retain. Too much attention and expectations put on academics when I believe behavior and attitudes could make a world of difference. This really is for all students in all schools.

19. Open-ended comments: What are your biggest concerns (if any) about the schools serving children/youth who live in the Blake Road Corridor? (continued)

What are your biggest concerns (if any) about the schools serving children/youth who live in the Blake Road Corridor?

Concerns about student behavior (continued)

I have witnessed when mainstream parents complain about student negative behavior. I am afraid that mainstream parents may pool out their kids and school that serve kids in the Blake Road Corridor end up like schools in the Minneapolis inner city. I am afraid that Hopkins may lose the diversity it has. I am afraid that the students of color may not challenge as much.

Too much pressure on schools to address issues/need for more community involvement

Expecting "the schools" to provide something that only "people" can provide: nurturing and caring for the young people. Schools are not people. We have to learn a new vocabulary.

The schools can't do it all. Schools are stretched as it is – this is a community issue.

Teachers and other staff are forced to be social workers instead of educators. This is a general educational problem – not specific to the Blake area schools. Too much time has to be spent on other issues (self esteem, diversity, and other "feel good" programs that should be handled by the families, faith organizations, etc.).

Other comments

State funding has not kept up with the mandates set by law, so the class sizes are increasing, as well as "extra" services such as counselors and social workers are getting cut.

Generally, I think the challenges for all schools are similar either in or outside the Blake Corridor: student, teacher and parent apathy, bullying, disrespectful behavior between teachers and students. Parental denial about their own kids. These aren't necessarily Blake Corridor concerns, but they still do trickle through the neighborhood in the form of disrespect for property, personal safety, general concern and respect in the neighborhood.

A need for more Somali, African American, and Hispanic staff in the schools.

I have no direct concerns about the schools.

The school does not get involved once the kids walk out the door. Teachers don't care about these kids emotional, or physical safety.

Safety on the bus.

Eisenhower has too high of a concentration of minority students, while schools like Glen Lake are almost all white. It is my understanding that with the redistricting, Eisenhower will gain more minority students. It feels like our schools are becoming segregated.

More inclusion.

That with the population growing, students will receive less one on one attention that they may need.

No school building in the corridor

Don't know. (12 respondents)

To improve schools, stakeholders most often suggested adding programming for youth. When asked what could be done to improve the schools serving youth from the Corridor, the most common response was to provide academic and recreational programs for youth. Other suggestions included increasing parental and community involvement and ensuring that the schools receive adequate funding (Figure 20).

20. Open-ended comments: What could be done to improve the schools serving these children/youth?

What could be done to improve the schools serving these children/youth?

Provide activities and transportation for students

Offer more after-school programs and school-release day activities.

Offer free, drop in type of enrichment during out of school time.

We need more resources to extend the learning time for these students including after-school and summer enrichment opportunities.

After school activities should be focused on providing opportunities for involvement to students, as opposed to simply "specialized" training in specific organizational groups (sports, music, etc.), that require an investment beyond just the child's presence and willingness to participate.

Finding activities for students is being addressed by the schools. This is a long term goal that needs to be continued.

Additional activities could be programmed for students after-school with grant funds and a bus.

It would be so helpful to have a Youth Community Center in Hopkins where students could play recreational sports, get homework help, have access to computers and a safe place to burn off energy. There need to be more scholarships and more transportation provided to students so they can fully participate in school and community activities.

Schools could find ways to get these kids involve in after school activity. All the focus tends to be on activities that isolate kids of lower socioeconomic standards. How are they to get to and from activity when the district cut the transportation?

Homework support programs for all children. Structured after-school sports programs which provide transportation to and from apartment buildings.

Provide transportation for the youth to gain access to the activities.

The schools should provide busing for those kids with no one to pick them up.

Longer summer programs at reduced cost.

Increase parent/family involvement

Increased presence of cultural liaisons to build relationships with residents and interpret school material. On-site conferences?

Continue to work on building connections with parents of children who live in the Blake Road Corridor. If parents feel that schools are a trusted partner, the education of their children will improve.

More parent involvement with the school.

Well integrated parent engagement activities, empower parents of students of color to be proactive in their kids school and community.

20. Open-ended comments: What could be done to improve the schools serving these children/youth? (continued)

What could be done to improve the schools serving these children/youth?

Increase involvement with the community

Bring the school resources to the neighborhood – school could be actively involved with the Neighborhood Watch Program and any other activities which take place in the neighborhood.

Community involvement.

Get other community organizations involved and get their support.

Local community opportunities.

Provide adequate financing

Increase state funding so class sizes can be smaller, and counselors and social workers can work with all students who need their services, not just the special education students.

Adequately finance them at the community and state level.

Perhaps the elementary schools can no longer be given equal resources and that money should be allocated based on need.

Adequate staff and funding

Other comments

Offer more programs that are culturally appropriate to these children.

More emphasis on core learning. More emphasis on class discipline rather than excusing or rationalizing student misbehaviors. More emphasis on parental responsibilities. It should not be the schools' responsibility to be babysitters.

Good question-that would take some major decision and action on the administration's part and teachers.

Don't know. (13 respondents)

Focus group results

Other than some of the Somali residents, very few of the focus group participants were parents of school-age children. As a result, many participants did not have specific feedback about the schools serving children in the Blake Road Corridor area. Those who were at least somewhat familiar with the Hopkins School District said that in general, they felt that the schools were good.

Somali parents expressed high satisfaction with their children's teachers, school safety, and their children's education overall. Some reported that their children were involved in after-school activities, although this was primarily true of boys only as it is traditionally not acceptable for girls to participate in such activities. Somali parents also reported getting involved in their children's schooling by participating in parent-teacher conferences, open houses, and end of the year meetings. The only suggestion for improvement related

to having a Somali speaker present in the schools to explain food choices to Somali children, who cannot eat pork or pork products, and will sometimes forego lunch because they do not know the content of the food served.

Housing/property

Stakeholder survey results

Stakeholders generally agreed that housing was affordable, though some were concerned about maintenance. Most stakeholders “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that affordable housing options are available (86%). Fewer respondents (59% to 60%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that apartment buildings or single family homes are well-maintained (Figure 21).

21. Ratings of housing in the Corridor

How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements about housing in the Blake Road Corridor?	N	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Apartment buildings are generally well-maintained	29	7%	34%	52%	7%
Single-family homes are generally well-maintained	30	7%	33%	50%	10%
Affordable housing options are available	29	0%	14%	76%	10%

Related to housing, stakeholders were most concerned about absentee landlords and property maintenance. When asked to identify their biggest concerns about housing in the Corridor, the most common concerns related to the impact of absentee landlords, especially related to poor screening and limited monitoring of tenants. Other concerns reflected poorly maintained properties, the high percentage of rental properties, and the high turnover rates of residents (Figure 22).

22. Open-ended comments: What are your biggest concerns (if any) about housing in the Blake Road Corridor?

What are your biggest concerns (if any) about housing in the Blake Road Corridor?

Absentee landlords/poor management

Most landlords do not live in the area.

Absentee landlords. (3 respondents)

Apartment complex management in the Westside Apartments could be better. Rental property owners (homes) need to be held accountable for their tenants.

I hear from residents and police officers that there is a concern about absent landlords who rent to people who are creating an unsafe community in the northern area.

Landlords from all over.

My biggest concern is with individual rental homes and double bungalows that are owned by out of town landlords, in terms of tenant selections and upkeep of the property.

Large apartment complexes are pretty well managed. Absentee owners of duplexes are the biggest problem.

Absentee and inexperienced property managers.

With rental housing, the out of state owners are not aware of problems at their units.

Often with a homeowner (landlord) living on one side of their rental property the property is in better condition. Absentee landlords often take less pride in their property as it does not directly affect them or their quality of life.

Property upkeep/maintenance

Badly maintained double bungalows. Renters tend not to be as connected to their environment and neighborhood as homeowners, especially when those properties are not well maintained. Oxford and Cambridge streets are fast moving toward blight.

Poor maintenance of the residential area.

Maintenance of property. Some duplexes look great and others look terrible.

Cleanliness.

Poorly maintained housing perpetuates a lack of respect for the neighborhood and it's residents.

Properties are not properly maintained up to community standards.

The maintenance of the rental duplexes in the Blake Corridor has a tendency to go in waves of rehabilitation and neglect. A concern is quality, caring tenants and landlords who take pride in their home and neighborhood. This is reflected in the housing stock.

Blight. Not a great entrance into the community.

22. Open-ended comments: What are your biggest concerns (if any) about housing in the Blake Road Corridor? (continued)

What are your biggest concerns (if any) about housing in the Blake Road Corridor?

Too much rental property in Corridor

Rental property – too much.

Way too many rental properties.

Too much rental property in Hopkins not just the Blake Road Corridor.

I believe this is one of the biggest issues. The high percentage of single-family houses that are rented has caused much of the problems in this area.

All the rental properties.

Too high a percentage of rental housing.

Residences converting to rentals.

High turnover rate of residents

Too many landlords in such a small area – no continuity when it comes to renters.

Families moving from one dwelling to another in the same area.

Turn over rate of rental.

Homeowners being pushed out by problems – and losing the investment in their homes.

Transient populations.

Screening/oversight of tenants

Screening of potential residents is poor.

Lack of tenant screening.

Not enough oversight by landlords.

Need for affordable housing

Affordability.

I am concerned that there is no adequate affordable housing.

Other

Rental duplexes.

Concentrations of populations.

Over crowding.

Don't know. (10 respondents)

The lack of a park or gathering spot for youth. Also, the area is intersected by busy Blake Road which physically isolates the area.

The configuration of the park with the streets, density of individual rental property, apartments and private homes make it difficult to build a community.

Property inspections and increased landlord accountability were recommended in order to improve housing. Stakeholders provided two main recommendations for improving housing in the Corridor. First, survey respondents suggested that more frequent and rigorous inspections of rental properties be conducted, with more enforcement of code violations and funding available to help owners make improvements. Second, stakeholders suggested efforts to work more closely with landlords and hold them more accountable for screening tenants and maintaining properties. Stakeholders also provided a range of recommendations for neighborhood redevelopment. A full list of comments can be found in Figure 23.

23. Open-ended comments: What could be done to improve housing in the Blake Road Corridor?

What could be done to improve housing in the Blake Road Corridor?

Conduct more frequent/rigorous inspections

I agree with beefing up inspections.

More frequent housing inspections to be sure duplexes are being maintained properly.

Some higher standards by the city for inspections and have loans or grants available to homeowners to assist with needed renovations.

More inspection of properties.

Inspect the "less than 4-unit "rental properties on a more frequent schedule. Better maintained properties will attract better tenants. Better tenants will have more pride in keeping the neighborhood safe and well-maintained.

Increase the city's inspection activity of those properties that have code violations.

More enforcement of rental codes.

Rental licensing revisions.

More frequent rental property inspections.

Stronger rental licensing restrictions and inspections.

Partner with landlords/Hold landlords more accountable

Hold absentee landlords accountable for keeping their rentals repaired and updated.

More cooperation from rental property owners.

Make landlords accountable for their property.

Strengthen statutes that deal with absentee landlords.

Stricter rental ordinance requiring background checks on all rental properties.

Landlords need to take responsibility for their properties – do the proper screening. Community needs to enforce these standards – everywhere in the community. Poor behavior will not be tolerated in Hopkins.

Require the property owner to live within a certain distance of their property and/or monitor on a regular basis.

Require management to participate in service activities.

Make more demands on property owners to screen tenants, improve properties, or sell those properties for redevelopment.

Require tenant screening. Require adoption of the crime free addendum to all lease agreements.

23. Open-ended comments: What could be done to improve housing in the Blake Road Corridor? (continued)

What could be done to improve housing in the Blake Road Corridor?

Redevelop community

The configuration of streets and access with an upgrade to the park along with community building activities.

Tear down all the rental units and start over.

Curb building any more rental property in Hopkins.

Redevelop the Atlas Cold storage site to help improve property values and desirability of area with the hope of attracting those interested in homestead property, city fund to provide no interest loans to landlords/homeowners for improvements.

It would be nice to be able to start with a clean slate and redesign the area to incorporate public spaces, pedestrian-friendly design, trails, and a mixture of high and mid-density housing.

Market the area to redevelopers, realizing it's not that simple.

Redevelopment.

Other

City Ordinances regarding noise, juvenile curfews, etc.

Less dark areas, improve lighting all along Blake and areas of the bike trail.

Make it more attractive, keep it clean by changing carpets and re-painting periodically.

Remove the rental duplexes.

Increase number of units.

More affordable housing.

Need local representation for these rental homes so they can be more involved.

Don't know. (13 respondents)

Focus group results

Focus group participants had mixed responses with regard to housing in the Blake Road Corridor area. Homeowners generally felt that they and other homeowners in the neighborhood did maintain their properties, but that many renters failed to upkeep their residences. Renters' opinions varied, with some expressing satisfaction with the maintenance of their apartment buildings, and others feeling that the upkeep and cleanliness of their buildings was quite poor.

Among those with concerns about housing in the Corridor area, the following issues emerged as most significant:

- **Excessive trash.** Almost all residents noted that trash and litter was very prevalent throughout the Corridor on streets and in certain residential areas. Some reported

trash issues along the creek and individuals pulling up in cars and disposing of garbage along the street.

- **Lack of screening by landlords.** Some residents expressed significant concern about the lack of screening of tenants by landlords. As a result, residents felt that individuals with criminal or other problematic histories are accepted as tenants and contribute to various problems in the Corridor (i.e., crime, trash, noise, etc.). Some landlords acknowledged this occurs and identified it as a problem as well. At least one landlord felt landlords could do a better job of screening but high vacancy rates sometimes prevented them from being more thorough.
- **Overcrowded duplexes and lack of parking.** Some participants identified duplexes in the Corridor areas as problematic. Due to the installation of egress windows in basements, duplexes can house more residents in a limited space. As a result, several residents reported that streets are overcrowded with vehicles, sometimes even in the middle of streets, limiting parking and impeding traffic. Some residents also felt that the high number of residents in the duplexes also contributed to the trash problem.

Residents and landlords/business owners offered several suggestions for improvement with regard to these issues, including: enforcement of policies around trash disposal; improved screening of tenants by landlords or fines for landlords who do not properly screen; and establishing a dialogue between landlords so information can be exchanged (e.g., about contractors, rent prices).

Businesses

Stakeholder survey results

Stakeholders feel safer using businesses during the day than at night. Most stakeholders (92%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they feel safe entering local businesses during the day. In contrast, only 53 percent “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that they feel safe entering local businesses at night. Three-quarters of the stakeholders (76%) “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that businesses are clean and well-maintained (Figure 24).

Almost half of the stakeholders disagreed that Corridor businesses meet the needs of residents. Half of the respondents (50%) “agreed” that businesses meet the needs of Corridor residents; another 5 percent “strongly agreed” (Figure 24). When asked what businesses are needed to better serve Corridor residents, stakeholders provided a variety of suggestions, such as health care, restaurants, and grocery stores (Figure 25).

24. Ratings of Blake Road Corridor businesses

How much do you agree/disagree with the following statements about businesses in the Blake Road Corridor?	N	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Businesses are clean and well-maintained	37	0%	24%	65%	11%
I feel safe entering local businesses during the day	38	0%	8%	76%	16%
I feel safe entering local businesses at night	32	9%	38%	50%	3%
The businesses in the Corridor meet the needs of residents	22	5%	41%	50%	5%

25. Open-ended comments: What businesses (if any) are needed to better serve residents of the Blake Road Corridor?

What businesses (if any) are needed to better serve residents of the Blake Road Corridor?

Community Centers, Mosques.

Doctor, dentist, cafe with healthy food (not fast food), mental health provider.

Grocery stores, not convenience stores. Restaurants, not fast food places.

It would be nice if there could be a grocery store on the south side of Hwy 7 so that those who don't drive could more easily & safely shop.

Something open all night long so residents have a place to go.

I can't think of any.

I think there is a good mix of businesses.

Need diverse businesses that reflect the community in the Blake Road Corridor.

More neighborhood involvement; allow local managers decision control.

Don't know. (30 respondents)

Stakeholders identified several concerns about businesses in the Corridor, such as limited community involvement, poor maintenance, and safety concerns. When asked to identify their biggest concerns about businesses in the Blake Road Corridor, stakeholders identified several issues. The most common concerns highlighted: (1) the lack of business involvement in the neighborhood; (2) poorly maintained businesses and litter; and (3) safety concerns, such as groups gathering outside businesses and poor lighting. Several stakeholders also expressed concern that businesses will leave the area, due to concerns about crime and safety (Figure 26).

26. Open-ended comments: What are your biggest concerns (if any) about businesses in the Blake Road Corridor?

What are your biggest concerns (if any) about businesses in the Blake Road Corridor?

Lack of business involvement in community

Businesses should cooperate with the city/police to address issues in the area.

Potential apathy toward the neighborhood. Are those businesses interested in improving the quality of life in the neighborhood? Or are they ambivalent?

Lack of investment.

Lack of civic involvement.

Run-down/poorly maintained areas

Blake Road looks very shoddy. It doesn't look inviting. The entries and exits into businesses are confusing. The whole area needs updating. I can't imagine going over there unless I had a very specific errand.

Run-down look and feel.

Litter and picking up their carts from the neighborhood.

Minnehaha creek needs to be better maintained. I am concerned also about overdevelopment and too much trash and garbage filling up the parks and wetland areas.

Crime and safety issues

Especially at night, businesses that are open seem to allow groups to gather and this is intimidating to some customers. Part of this could be because the groups are friends of the employees.

The employment service on Blake & Excelsior (Command?) serves a level of clientele that makes me question if I know any of them to be registered sex offenders. The Market & Deli across the street from the Westside Apts. on Excelsior attracts a lot of residents from Westside apartments, but doesn't have a good pedestrian crossing path. Though residents are choosing not to safely cross, I still think it's a safety concern.

Parking lots are dark and intimidating to people during the evening hours.

I am concerned that they have criminal activity in their parking lots, and we need better lighting in the parking lots.

Fear that businesses will leave area

Crime will drive them away.

Safety of those who work there. Businesses move out because of safety concerns and loss of business.

As the community changes, business owners may move out like North Minneapolis.

Other comments

See above.

None, no concerns.

Don't know. (23 respondents)

To improve businesses, stakeholders made several suggestions. To address these concerns related to businesses, stakeholders provided several suggestions for improving businesses. These recommendations included: (1) improving the appearance and cleanliness of businesses, (2) redeveloping the area; (3) improving security, by adding lights or cameras; and (4) improving pedestrian walkways (Figure 27).

27. Open-ended comments: What could be done to improve businesses in the Blake Road Corridor?

What could be done to improve businesses in the Blake Road Corridor?

Improve cleanliness/appearance of businesses

Work with the city on updating the look of the businesses and the traffic flow.

Clean up the corridor. Make it safe and clean, and businesses will improve. New investment will follow. And with Cargill coming – this needs to happen, as many employees will be entering Hopkins from the east.

They need to take more pride in their property to eliminate the litter problem. I'm not sure what can influence that. Fines for litter?

Increase the frequency of property maintenance inspections of commercial properties.

Redevelop area

Create a better layout, eminent domain.

Upgrade the area around the creek.

I believe this area is going to see a great deal of redevelopment over the next 10 years including the addition of light rail transit. Many businesses will benefit from this while others will be eliminated or moved. Planning needs to assure that neighborhood service businesses remain.

Redevelopment of shopping area.

Improve security (e.g., lighting/surveillance)

Add lights and cameras in the parking lots.

Installation of good camera surveillance systems.

More lighting. More security by businesses including the need for high quality security cameras.

Improve pedestrian walkways

Safer crosswalks, sidewalks to get from east side of Blake to the businesses on the west side of Blake.

Make the area more pedestrian friendly so residents can walk down Blake Road to Knollwood Mall or Target.

Adequate street crossing to avoid fatalities.

Other comments

Don't know (23 respondents)

Better management at night and cooperation with the police. They should not allow groups to gather.

Businesses need to appoint/send liaisons to work with the police dept. and the neighborhood groups.

Businesses seem to be functioning properly.

Open businesses that reflect the community's diversity, hire people from the community.

Focus group results

Participants had varied opinions about the condition of businesses in the Blake Road Corridor and their ability to serve the needs of residents. Although some residents felt that businesses in the area were well-maintained, others disagreed and expressed concerns about safety. Additionally, while many of the residents were satisfied with the availability of businesses and stores in the area, a few residents identified specific needs that were unmet.

Business and property owners felt that many business owners in the area neglected the upkeep of their properties. Several described the commercial area of Blake Road Corridor as generally not well-maintained and that the lack of upkeep contributed to the perception that Hopkins is a “bad area.” At least one owner described how she directs patrons to her business via Excelsior Boulevard because she feels that street is cleaner.

Among those with concerns about businesses in the Corridor area, the following issues emerged as most significant:

- **Upkeep of businesses/excessive trash.** Some residents and most business and property owners felt that businesses in the Corridor area were not well-maintained and generally “not clean.” Business owners also noted that trash was a significant issue. Owners reported people disposing of large items in front of their businesses and at least one owner has requested additional receptacles from the city to manage the amount of trash. Business owners then incur the cost of removing large items and adding receptacles.
- **Loitering and a sense of safety.** Although some residents felt businesses in the area were safe, including Knollwood Mall, several identified specific businesses within the Corridor in front of which people loiter and/or businesses that feel unsafe to enter, especially at night. These businesses included Walgreen’s, the 24 hour Laundromat, the tobacco store, the pawn shop, and at least one resident who did not feel Knollwood Mall was safe.
- **Need for additional businesses.** Somali residents identified the need for Halaal meat (Kosher) grocery stores in the area. Some residents also felt that they would like to see breakfast restaurants (e.g., Perkins or Denny’s) in the Corridor.

Residents and landlords/business owners offered several suggestions for improvement with regard to these issues, including: enforcement of policies on trash disposal; establishing Kosher grocery stores and breakfast-type restaurants in the area; working with businesses to decrease crime, including curbing hours for some 24-hour establishments; and continue or increase police patrolling around businesses.

Services/programming

Stakeholder survey results

Respondents rated both the quality and availability of services/programs for residents. In answering these questions, they were asked to consider all of the services or programs that are used most often by people who live or work in the Corridor, even if these services are not all be located within the Corridor's boundaries.

Many community services were seen as lacking in availability and quality, especially community centers and recreational programs. Almost three-quarters of the stakeholders (73% to 74%) rated the availability of stores and restaurants as “good” or “very good;” while almost two-thirds (63%) rated the availability of religious or spiritual opportunities as at least “good.” Nearly half of the respondents (46%) rated the availability of adult programs as at least “good.” Lower ratings of availability were given to other services. Approximately one-third of the survey respondents (30% to 37%) rated the availability of the following services as at least “good”: social service agencies, health clinics/medical centers, community events (such as festivals or celebrations), child care services, programs/facilities for the elderly, and arts and cultural opportunities.

Survey respondents were least likely to say that a community center was available, with more than nine in ten stakeholders (94%) rating availability as “poor” or “very poor.” Youth programs were also generally seen as unavailable, including after-school programs/activities for teens (80% rating availability as “poor” or “very poor”) and recreational programs for young children (74% rating availability as “poor” or “very poor”) (Figure 28).

28. Availability of services/programs for residents

How would you rate the <u>availability</u> of the following services/programs for Blake Road Corridor residents?	N	Very poor	Poor	Good	Very good
Stores	33	0%	27%	55%	18%
Restaurants	34	3%	23%	59%	15%
Health clinics/medical centers	25	32%	32%	28%	8%
Child care services	19	37%	32%	32%	0%
Social service agencies	22	36%	27%	32%	5%
Food shelves/soup kitchens	25	36%	36%	28%	0%
Community events (such as festivals or celebrations)	30	27%	40%	27%	6%
Parks	35	37%	37%	20%	6%
Community center	32	63%	31%	3%	3%
Recreational programs for young children	31	29%	45%	26%	0%
After-school programs/activities for teens	29	28%	52%	20%	0%
Programs/facilities for the elderly	19	42%	26%	26%	5%
Adult programs, including adult education	24	25%	29%	29%	17%
Arts and cultural opportunities	27	33%	37%	19%	11%
Religious or spiritual opportunities	27	15%	22%	52%	11%

Ratings of service quality also varied, though fewer stakeholders answered these questions. Social service agencies, restaurants, religious or spiritual activities, stores, and health clinics/medical centers received the highest ratings, with 82 to 91 percent of stakeholders rating their quality as “good” or “very good.” Approximately two-thirds to three-quarters of the stakeholders (64% to 76%) rated the quality of the following services as at least “good”: adult programs (including adult education), arts and cultural opportunities, food shelves/soup kitchens, community events (such as festivals or celebrations), programs/facilities for the elderly, and child care services.

The lowest quality ratings emerged for youth programs and community centers/parks. Approximately one-third of the stakeholders (30% to 33%) said that the quality of parks and community centers were at least “good.” Forty-four percent rated the quality of recreational programs for young children as at least “good,” compared to only 28 percent for after-school programs/activities for teens (Figure 29).

29. Quality of services/programs for residents

How would you rate the <u>quality</u> of the following services/programs for Blake Road Corridor residents?	N	Very poor	Poor	Good	Very good
Stores	30	0%	17%	70%	13%
Restaurants	31	0%	13%	81%	6%
Health clinics/medical centers	11	0%	18%	73%	9%
Child care services	11	0%	36%	64%	0%
Social service agencies	11	0%	9%	73%	18%
Food shelves/soup kitchens	10	10%	20%	70%	0%
Community events (such as festivals or celebrations)	15	7%	27%	60%	7%
Parks	30	33%	33%	30%	3%
Community center	10	30%	40%	20%	10%
Recreational programs for young children	23	30%	26%	35%	9%
After-school programs/activities for teens	18	39%	33%	22%	6%
Programs/facilities for the elderly	9	22%	11%	56%	11%
Adult programs, including adult education	17	18%	6%	53%	23%
Arts and cultural opportunities	14	21%	7%	50%	21%
Religious or spiritual opportunities	21	10%	5%	76%	9%

With the exception of sidewalks, streets, and lighting, city services generally received positive ratings. Ratings of city services were generally positive. All stakeholders rated fire protection, police/law enforcement, and emergency medical services/ambulance as at least “good;” more than half rated them as “very good.” Eighty-seven to 90 percent of the stakeholders rated garbage collection, snow removal, and animal control services as either “good” or “very good.”

Fewer stakeholders gave ratings of at least “good” to roads/streets (62%) and street lighting (52%). The lowest ratings emerged for sidewalks, with only 10 percent of the stakeholders rating them as at least “good” (Figure 30).

30. Ratings of city services in the Corridor

How would you rate the following city services in the Blake Road Corridor?	N	Very poor	Poor	Good	Very good
Fire protection	31	0%	0%	48%	52%
Police/law enforcement	32	0%	0%	47%	53%
Emergency medical services/ambulance	27	0%	0%	48%	52%
Animal control services	14	7%	7%	43%	43%
Garbage collection	21	0%	10%	33%	57%
Roads/streets	29	10%	28%	41%	21%
Public transportation	26	4%	23%	62%	11%
Street lighting	25	8%	40%	48%	4%
Snow removal	23	4%	9%	70%	17%
Sidewalks/pedestrian safety	30	50%	40%	3%	7%

Recreational programming for youth and a park/community center were the most common recommendations for better serving youth in the Corridor. When asked what programs or services are needed to better serve children or youth who live in the Corridor, most stakeholders mentioned recreational or academic programming or requested an improved community center or park. Their requests included both school-year and summer programming. Other stakeholders highlighted the need for transportation to programs outside the Corridor and recommended strategies to increase parental involvement (Figure 31).

31. Open-ended comments: What programs or services are needed to better serve children or youth who live in the Blake Road Corridor?

What programs or services are needed to better serve children or youth who live in the Blake Road Corridor?

Accessible recreational and/or academic programming, community center or park

YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, Campfire. There needs to be a strong presence of youth-serving agencies bringing programming on-site and keeping kids busy!

After-school programs, summer programs.

Our kids need a good park on the east side of Blake with a recreation center and lots of drop in enrichment programming. Many of the kids love basketball, so a full court is really needed.

More programs to extend learning time for children and youth (after school and summer) along with some type of gathering place (improved park or community center).

Local community center in the neighborhood (walkable) with a gym, coffee shop, play area.

After school and summer activities.

A park/community center within walking distance that has playground equipment, play spaces, hoops and a soccer field. Bike riding path and sidewalks along Blake Rd.

Programs that offer academic as well as social entertainment in a safe environment.

31. Open-ended comments: What programs or services are needed to better serve children or youth who live in the Blake Road Corridor? (continued)

What programs or services are needed to better serve children or youth who live in the Blake Road Corridor?

Accessible recreational and/or academic programming, community center or park (continued)

Organized activities like crafts or sports. Homework help. A good park.

If the children and youth are hooked up with school and recreational activities due to a proactive teacher or parent they have access to many more services than a child who is coming home everyday to their apartment in the Blake Road Corridor. There very few services for those kids. Hopkins needs a recreation center and free transportation to the recreation center.

More summer programs and after school programs for children and youth to keep them engaged and out of trouble.

Cottageville park needs to be updated and more accessible.

Organized activity that involves their community.

In particular, many children living in this area do not have any swimming skills. Also, many children roam the halls of apartment buildings with nothing to do. Structured extra-curriculars and additional homework support are vital for the success of these children.

What was done last summer is as good as it can be without neglecting other areas of the city.

Local after-school programs.

Make the changes to the existing parks.

Better and more varied activities/equipment in Cottageville Park.

After school programs/summer programs that are not out of reach cost wise or location and transportation. Enhanced park-safety, equipment, accessibility, etc.

More inclusive park and recreation programs.

Outreach to teenagers. After school programs promoting education for younger children.

Need after-school programs in the neighborhood, parks and recreation activities.

Improvements/expansion of Cottageville park.

More after school and summer programs available.

Community building with daily programs for youth/drop in center.

Transportation to programs

Transportation to programs needed.

Access. Programs are available – encouraging parents to enroll their children. Transportation is an issue – how would they get to these programs?

Community activities which provide transportation.

Create some light rail transit for youth (and others) to get around.

Programs are there – transportation is the issue.

Better transportation access to activities in other parts of the city.

Busing for after school programs so more children can attend.

31. Open-ended comments: What programs or services are needed to better serve children or youth who live in the Blake Road Corridor?

What programs or services are needed to better serve children or youth who live in the Blake Road Corridor?

Parent involvement

Culture – many different cultures in neighborhood, but reminding parents that it's not safe or responsible to leave children alone. Responsible parenting.

Many parents do not know how to access pre-school programs. It would be so helpful to have someone in the community to recruit these families and walk them through the registration process.

More parental involvement.

Other

The city cannot be all things to all people. People cannot expect to have everything given to them simply because they are poor or immigrants.

I answered "I don't know" to most of the last set of questions because I think it is very hard to know what services or programs people who live in the Blake Corridor are using. So much of it depends on transportation and resources.

Safe sidewalks.

Strong enforcement of the curfew.

Don't know (9 respondents)

A range of programs or services were recommended for adults in the Corridor.

When asked what programs or services are needed to better serve adults who live in the Corridor, stakeholders provided a range of suggestions. Their recommendations included: transportation to available services; support for parents, including parenting classes and child care; adult education programs, including ELL and literacy programs; neighborhood/community building opportunities; social services (including a food shelf); culturally-based services; and a community center (Figure 32).

32. Open-ended comments: What programs or services are needed to better serve adults who live in the Blake Road Corridor?

What programs or services are needed to better serve adults who live in the Blake Road Corridor?

Transportation

Better transportation to Eisenhower Community Center for adult ESL and GED classes.

Better public transportation so they can get to work and to the services they need.

Better understanding of transportation availability. (Bus, Hop-a-Ride). New options for transportation?

Programs are there – transportation is the issue.

Again, improving the transportation system and encouraging participation in school activities.

Adults need better public transportation and more access to services within the Corridor.

Parenting education/parent support/child care

Parenting classes

Child care.

Parents and child involvement programs.

Free day care.

Adult education

Adult Ed/ELL classes and ECFC classes on-site.

More connections to the resources offered by Hopkins School District – Family Resource Center, Adult Options for Education, Adult Enrichment, etc.

Greater access to adult/family literacy programs.

Neighborhood/community building

Neighborhood building.

Crime prevention. Organized neighborhood groups that provide some socialization, resident input in safety and crime.

Community building with evening programs/educational/cultural.

Social services

On site social services.

Access to food shelf.

Social service access, food shelf help.

Culturally-based services/outreach to immigrant population

English & "living in America" classes for the immigrants in the neighborhood.

Cultural adjustment, system navigation training programs would be helpful for people who are new to the country and people of color.

32. Open-ended comments: What programs or services are needed to better serve adults who live in the Blake Road Corridor? (continued)

What programs or services are needed to better serve adults who live in the Blake Road Corridor?

Community center

The community center concept could serve both.

Community center that has program for kids and adults.

Other comments

See above.

Safe sidewalks.

Good relations with police so they see police as a resource and not a threat – this especially true for people from other cultures.

Don't know. (21 respondents)

Focus group results

Residents' satisfaction with available services in the Blake Road Corridor area was somewhat mixed. While some residents felt there were sufficient services and programming available, a number of residents identified areas in which services were lacking. Several residents also indicated that available services were not sufficiently publicized, while Latino residents indicated a need for this information in Spanish.

In terms of the services or programs available to residents in the Corridor, the following emerged as the most common needs:

- **Additional programming, especially for children/youth.** Many residents and landlords/business owners felt that the Corridor needed additional programs that targeted children and youth, especially during the summer months. A few individuals noted that by engaging children and youth in more activities, the crime rate might also be reduced. Some residents felt that there was sufficient programming in the area but it was not well advertised. A few residents indicated a need for programs for adults and the elderly as well.

- **Parks and recreational areas.** In addition to programming for children and youth, many residents felt that more play areas for children were needed. Some residents cited the need for basketball courts, while many Somali residents expressed the need for a playground during the daytime as the one onsite at Westside Village is used by the child care program until 6:00pm. Several residents noted the lack of a functional park program or facility in general, and at least one resident noted that Hopkins Park

and Rec is affiliated with Minnetonka but funding and services consistently get channeled to Minnetonka rather than Hopkins. A few residents indicated concerns about safety in Cottageville Park, noting the poor lighting (which contributes to the theft of property from homeowners near the park) and drug dealing that occurs. As one resident expressed, “Nine years ago, I allowed my kids to go and play at the park; now it is too dangerous for them and myself.”

- **Community center or rooms.** Although community facilities are available in downtown Hopkins, several residents noted the need for a community center or somewhere to gather locally in the Corridor area as transportation is an issue for many residents.
- **Child care.** Although some residents reported that child care was available, several residents, particularly in the Latino and Somali communities, saw a need for more affordable child care and programs like Head Start. At least one resident noted that child care was only available downtown, not in the Corridor, while another wanted services available for longer periods of time.
- **Medical centers/health clinics.** Several of the Latino residents felt that an affordable clinic within the Blake Road Corridor that served Spanish-speaking residents was necessary. Accessing services outside of the Corridor due to the lack of transportation was difficult and costly.

In terms of city services, most residents and landlords/business owners identified the need for improved street lighting and trash collection, as identified earlier, while a few wanted recycling opportunities made available in their apartment complexes. Some residents also felt that snow removal was not timely or efficient. Other residents, particularly those in the Somali community, saw a need to extend public transportation hours for those working late hours or night shifts, while a small bus station was identified by Latino residents as a need.

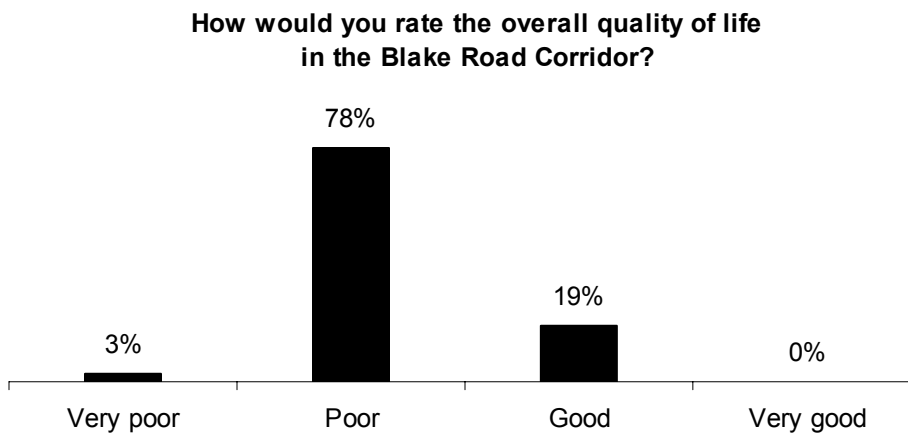
Residents and landlords/business owners offered several suggestions for improvement with regard to these issues, including: establish affordable programs for children and youth, especially in the summer, that are located in the Corridor area and publicize these programs; build a community center or identify rooms that can be used for community gatherings in the Corridor area; renovate parks/green areas and establish additional parks or recreational areas; hire staff for upkeep of park facilities; create a centrally located information center that notifies residents of events, services, or other changes in the community; recruit adults and high school students to serve as volunteers to organize community/social activities; and open affordable medical clinics in the Corridor area.

Overall neighborhood/community

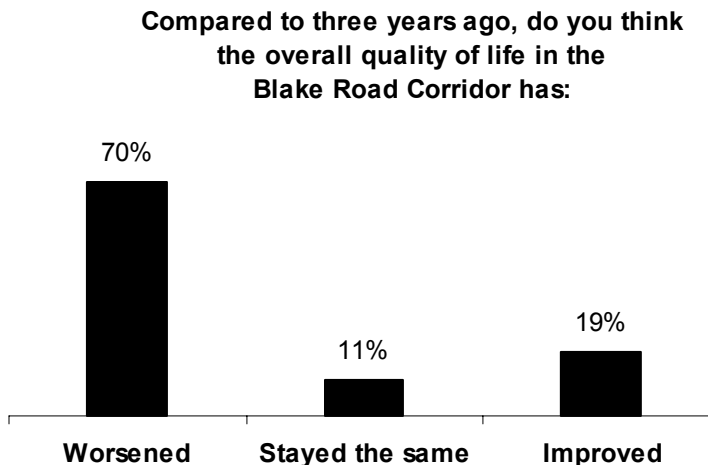
Stakeholder survey results

Overall quality of life in the Corridor was seen as relatively poor. More than three-quarters of the stakeholders rated the quality of life in the Corridor as “poor” (78%). Only one in five survey respondents rated the quality of life as “good.” No stakeholders described the quality of life as “very good” (Figure 33). Seven in 10 respondents (70%) felt that the quality of life had worsened over the past three years (Figure 34).

33. Overall quality of life in the Corridor (N=32)

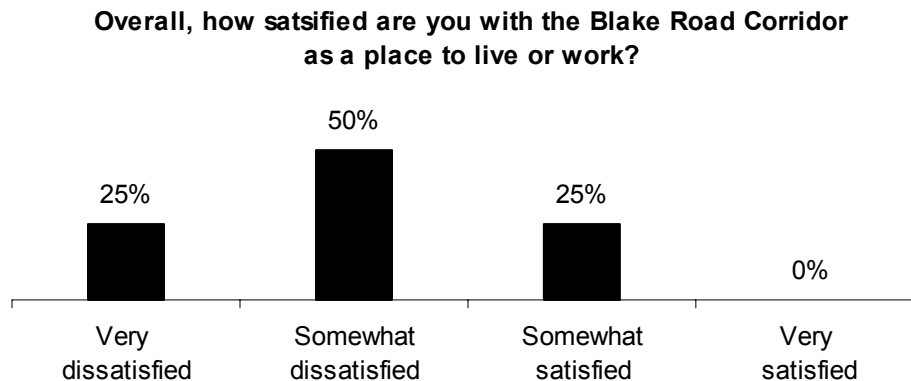


34. Changes in overall quality of life in the Corridor (N=27)



Stakeholders were generally dissatisfied with the Corridor as a place to live or work. Three-quarters of the survey respondents were either “somewhat dissatisfied” (50%) or “very dissatisfied” (25%) with the Corridor as a place to live or work. While one in four stakeholders was “somewhat satisfied,” none indicated that they were “very satisfied” (Figure 35).

35. Satisfaction with the Blake Road Corridor as a place to live or work (N=28)



Opportunities for resident involvement in the community generally received negative ratings. Almost all stakeholders (96%) rated the sense of community among residents as either “poor” or “very poor.” Most of the stakeholders gave ratings of “poor” or “very poor” to economic opportunities for residents (79%), opportunities for residents to be involved in the community (63%), and block clubs or resident groups, such as Neighborhood Watch (55%) (Figure 36).

36. Opportunities for resident involvement in the community

How would you rate the Blake Road Corridor in the following areas?	N	Very poor	Poor	Good	Very good
A sense of community among residents	27	33%	63%	4%	0%
Block clubs or resident groups, such as Neighborhood Watch	27	7%	48%	37%	7%
Opportunities for residents to be involved in the community	27	22%	41%	33%	4%
Economic opportunities for residents	23	22%	57%	17%	4%

Concerns about crime, youth programs, housing, and resident involvement were seen as the greatest needs in the Corridor. When asked to identify the most important issues or needs in the Blake Road Corridor, stakeholders were most likely to mention:

- Concerns about crime and safety
- The lack of programming and services for children and youth
- The lack of an accessible and quality park or community center
- Concerns about the quality and cost of housing
- Lack of resident involvement in the community

Other issues raised by stakeholders included the appearance of the neighborhood, pedestrian safety and walkways, and a lack of transportation. A complete list of comments can be found in Figure 37.

37. Open-ended comments: In your opinion, what are the three most important issues or needs in the Blake Road Corridor?

In your opinion, what are the three most important issues or needs in the Blake Road Corridor?

Crime prevention/reduction

Crime. (3 respondents)

Criminal element moving into the area.

Safety. (2 respondents)

Safety for both adults and children.

Decreasing crime. (2 respondents)

Understanding that poor behavior will not be tolerated in Hopkins.

Crime prevention. (2 respondents)

Unacceptable activity/behavior by youths.

Drug control.

Lowering crime.

Reduced criminal activity.

37. Open-ended comments: In your opinion, what are the three most important issues or needs in the Blake Road Corridor? (continued)

In your opinion, what are the three most important issues or needs in the Blake Road Corridor?

Recreational programs for children/youth

Programming for young people.

Opportunities for children's activities within the neighborhood.

Access to extra-curricular activities and homework support. (Keep kids busy outside of school and build their skills.)

Safe and consistent activities for youth.

What are the children, young and teens doing with their time, following school and during the summer?

Children programs.

Programs for any child after school/summer to attend without worrying about money or transportation.

Positive programs for youth.

Recreational opportunities.

Lack of activities for youth.

Activities for children.

More opportunities for children to learn/interact with other children.

Community center/park

A community center.

Park facilities need to be improved. Accessibility to park facilities need to be improved.

Tiny park with no programs for the kids.

No gathering place for youth – inadequate park, no community center.

On site activity center.

Community Center.

Community Center (that offers after school programs, enrichment activities for children and adults).

Safe place for kids to go during the summer and after school.

Viable park.

Housing concerns

Absentee landlords need to be held accountable for the condition of their property and who they rent to.

Rental Licensing/Code Enforcement.

Improve housing.

Maintenance of property.

Better rental tenant screening.

Rent control.

Rental and multi-family housing issues.

Affordable housing.

37. Open-ended comments: In your opinion, what are the three most important issues or needs in the Blake Road Corridor? (continued)

In your opinion, what are the three most important issues or needs in the Blake Road Corridor?

Housing concerns (continued)

Inadequate housing.

Better housing.

Safe housing.

Quality rental units.

Need for responsible landlords.

Resident and community involvement

Business owners getting more involved in community.

Blake Road intersects area – difficult to create a sense of community.

Continued neighborhood involvement by Police.

Community building activities with an upgrade of community facilities.

Families communicating with each other.

Organized resident input.

To provide residents opportunities to be involved in their community in ways that interest them, not those planning the programs and activities.

Neighborhood appearance

Neighborhood clean up.

Improve the overall appearance of Blake Road. It looks like nobody cares about this area of Hopkins.

Physical deterioration.

Neighborhood blight.

Pedestrian walkways/safety

Safe street crossing.

Pedestrian safety.

Poor pedestrian design.

Sidewalks and bike path, bridge over Blake Rd. to businesses.

Transportation

Lack of good public transportation.

Transportation to/from services.

Transportation. (2 respondents)

37. Open-ended comments: In your opinion, what are the three most important issues or needs in the Blake Road Corridor? (continued)

In your opinion, what are the three most important issues or needs in the Blake Road Corridor?

Other comments

Reluctance of immigrants to assimilate into the culture here.

Cultural issues.

Infrastructure needs.

Redevelopment.

Lack of accessible activities in walkable distance.

Parent Education.

Pre-school recruitment.

Jobs.

Don't know. (9 respondents)

Community stakeholders were also asked for their top suggestions for improving the Blake Road Corridor. As seen in Figure 38, their recommendations addressed the issues that had been identified as their greatest needs. Their most common suggestions included:

- Improving access to or quality of the local park or creating a community center
- Providing opportunities to engage residents in community improvement efforts
- Expanding programs or services, especially opportunities for children and youth
- Improving the management of rental properties, including tenant screening and property maintenance
- Improving sidewalks or walkways for pedestrians
- Increasing the police presence in the neighborhood
- Making other physical improvements, including facility upgrades, improved lighting, property redevelopment, and road enhancements

38. Open-ended comments: Overall, what are your top suggestions for improving the Blake Road Corridor, in the short-term and long-term?

Overall, what are your top suggestions for improving the Blake Road Corridor, in the short-term and long-term?

Improve park/recreation center

Improve park facility and accessibility to create a more inviting community space.

Good park with a recreation center and drop in enrichment programs.

Upgrade to the park.

Some type of improvement to pocket park.

Improved access to Cottageville Park.

Long-term: neighborhood community center.

Better access to the Cottageville park – maybe the city could buy the two (or one) houses facing Blake Rd and turn one into a community center and/or cop shop.

Long-term – improve/expand Cottageville Park.

Build a community building.

Make the park more user-friendly.

The building of a Community Activity Center within the area.

Community Center for adults, seniors, kids, teen – everyone!!

Opportunities for resident/community engagement

Community involvement.

Short-term: assess social organizational relationship to residents – effectiveness. Long-term: outreach – relationship building – with more resident ownership in the process.

Weekly nightly neighborhood patrol and litter clean up by the residents and/or in conjunction with the City.

My suggestions is to build strong partnership between business, faith based, schools, city and county and other agencies in Hopkins to improve the quality of life for all and especially for people in the Blake Road Corridor area. When part of the city get affected, it should be everyone's concern.

Community engagement and empowerment. Create resiliency among the community members to become involved and improve their community.

Involve community members.

In the short-term, more emphasis in the block clubs and neighborhood groups.

Short-term – continue outreach efforts.

Continue efforts to develop a sense of community among residents. Last year, a great start was made – continue efforts.

38. Open-ended comments: Overall, what are your top suggestions for improving the Blake Road Corridor, in the short-term and long-term? (continued)

Overall, what are your top suggestions for improving the Blake Road Corridor, in the short-term and long-term?

Expand programs/services

Keep up the great work in offering summer programming. Work with the schools in creating homework support for all children. Work with the schools in creating access of sports teams and other extra-curriculars.

Neighborhood gatherings with activities for young and old. After School Care for young and teens. Teen Club (life skills taught, job training or search, speakers, help them get excited and look forward to something positive in their future).

Develop positive programs in the corridor.

For the long term, have programs and services that meet the changing need of the community. Be flexible to meet the changing needs.

Short-term – keep developing programs and services in response to resident requests.

Short-term – summer programs affordable for children and transportation.

Long-term program strategies – i.e., Meadowbrook model with an Outreach Coordinator on-site at the Apartment Complex (Westside) that provides a resource link to residents and greater community/schools.

Continue to work on activities for children and adults.

Work together to provide better coordination of enrichment activities for youth. Figure out a way to have one registration form versus having families fill out lots of forms.

Improve management of rental properties

In the short term, changes in ordinances for landlords in screening tenants and property maintenance.

Pressure on landlords to responsibly care for their properties.

Landlord training of expectations, and penalties for not keeping rentals updated and for renting to people who commit crimes.

Require background checks on all prospective renters and more housing inspections to insure rental properties are being maintained.

Tougher rental ordinance/lease requirements/inspections.

"Beefed-up" rental licensing program.

Improve rental enforcement.

Improving sidewalks/pedestrian walkways

Creating safe zones for pedestrian traffic.

In the long term, a better integration into the rest of Hopkins. There are not enough street crossings and connections to the rest of Hopkins.

Sidewalks and bike path, bridge over Blake Rd. to businesses.

Creating pedestrian friendly environment.

38. Open-ended comments: Overall, what are your top suggestions for improving the Blake Road Corridor, in the short-term and long-term? (continued)

Overall, what are your top suggestions for improving the Blake Road Corridor, in the short-term and long-term?

Improving sidewalks/pedestrian walkways (continued)

Full-sized sidewalk from Excelsior to highway 7 on the East side of Blake Road.

Long-term – street crossing sign with flashing light for pedestrians crossing Westside to the other side of road.

Increase police presence

Police presence.

Greater police presence.

Police kiosk.

Increased police presence in the area.

Street patrols or walking patrols by the police.

Neighborhood improvements/redevelopment

Community building activities with an upgrade of community facilities. The configuration of streets and access are long term projects that need to continue.

Improved lighting/equipment.

Long-term – major redevelopment.

Add lighting and cameras to parking lots.

Housing redevelopment, removal of blighted properties, repaving roads, refacing the fronts of commercial properties, installing street lights.

Other comments

Combination of good public transportation – bus, taxi, light rail, etc.

Enforce minimum community standards at a higher level.

Don't know. (11 respondents)

Focus group results

Some residents expressed feeling a sense of community in their neighborhood, although this was primarily true of homeowners. Many renters did not report a similar sense of community, feeling as though they did not know their neighbors and generally were not involved in community events. Some residents did want opportunities to become more involved in the community; events such as casino nights, block parties, and soup dinners were identified as activities that might increase connections among residents. In addition, having a community center or other gathering place within the Corridor might also serve to increase the sense of community.

Residents and landlords/business owners noted several challenges in creating a sense of community within the Corridor, however, including the high number of short-term renters and the diversity of languages and cultures in the area, which can make it difficult for residents to communicate and discuss issues.

Stakeholder Collaborative

Stakeholder survey results

The final set of questions on the stakeholder survey assessed respondents’ perceptions of the Blake Road Corridor Stakeholder Collaborative that has been convened to oversee the assessment process and the development of recommendations for community enhancement. Despite the fact that only members of the Collaborative were invited to participate in the online survey, only 74 percent of the survey respondents said that they were currently participating in the group. Those individuals who were participating were asked to rate their perceptions of the group’s functioning and status.

Survey respondents rated the Stakeholder Collaborative positively. Ninety-three to 100 percent of the survey respondents “agreed” or “strongly agreed” that the group is targeting the right issues, is made up of the right individuals, has strong leadership, and considers input from all stakeholders. They also “agreed” that they receive enough information from the group and that participants know about the issues facing the Corridor (Figure 39).

39. Perceptions of the Corridor’s Stakeholder Collaborative

Please rate how much you agree/disagree with the following statements?	N	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The Stakeholder Group is targeting the right issues in the Blake Road Corridor.	28	0%	4%	71%	25%
The Stakeholder Group is made up of the right individuals from across the community.	28	0%	7%	64%	29%
I receive enough information from the Stakeholder Group.	28	0%	4%	68%	29%
The participating stakeholders know about the issues facing the Blake Road Corridor.	28	0%	0%	75%	25%
Input from all stakeholders is considered by the group.	28	0%	4%	68%	29%
The Stakeholder Group has strong leadership	28	0%	4%	54%	43%

Participant diversity, member commitment, and leadership were seen as strengths of the Collaborative. Those stakeholders who were familiar with the group were asked to identify its strengths. Three main strengths emerged from their comments. First, many respondents commented on the diversity of the participants, saying that the group reflects the wide range of community members. Second, Stakeholder Group members were seen as being genuinely interested in the process and committed to improving the Corridor. Third, several stakeholders said that the group has strong leadership, with a few specifically mentioning the contribution of the Hopkins Police Chief (Figure 40).

40. Open-ended comments: What do you see as the strengths of the Stakeholder Group?

What do you see as the strengths of the Stakeholder Group?

Diversity of participants

There are a lot of people coming from a lot of different walks of life involved in the group.

Wide community support.

Representation.

Diversity in membership.

Diversity, experience.

Racial/cultural diversity. School District involvement.

The stakeholder group is very much involved and made aware about the progress. It has a good group of people that guide the study process.

Multiple voices.

I think the diversity of renters and home owners, along with a mix of business people and county staff.

Many different community members are included.

Diversity.

It is diverse.

Neighborhood involvement.

Large group that encompasses all social service agencies in SLP/Hopkins area.

Cross section of all parts of community (city, school, congregation, neighborhood, etc.).

A wide variety of interested parties.

Cross section of community members.

Commitment to process/concern for the Corridor

Strong commitment from the group leaders to change the current situation.

Commitment to improving the learning and after-school activities.

Personal and professional concern for the corridor, commitment to improve it, commitment to participate.

The people involved are very committed to making a change.

Commitment of individuals.

40. Open-ended comments: What do you see as the strengths of the Stakeholder Group? (continued)

What do you see as the strengths of the Stakeholder Group?

Commitment to process/concern for the Corridor (continued)

People who really care about the problems that exist.

Concern about the area from every stakeholder. A desire to make life better for the residents.

Engagement and commitment of the individuals.

The people in the group have a strong desire to see the area improve.

Good energy.

Genuine interest in families/children.

Strong investment, addressing issues.

Commitment.

Leadership

Strong leadership.

The strength of this group is the energy and intellect of the Hopkins Chief of Police. He and his department should be supported at all costs to create a safer and more manageable community.

Chief Reid is approaching the problem well. It is a community issue and will only improve when Hopkins gives Blake Road the same attention that was given to downtown Hopkins.

Leadership.

Other

Also, the group has worked hard to make sure that families and youth have something to do during the summer when there is no school. This survey was also a good idea. You need to find out what the people in the area think.

Don't know (2 respondents)

Respondents suggested increased efforts to include residents and other community members in the Stakeholder Collaborative. Survey respondents were also asked for recommendations to make the Stakeholder Collaborative more effective. Many stakeholders said either that they did not know how to make the group more effective, or that the group was effective as it is. Some participants suggested strategies for increasing community involvement, especially from residents. Several other comments were provided, though no other themes emerged (Figure 41).

41. Open-ended comments: What recommendations, if any, do you have to help the Stakeholder Group be more effective?

What recommendations, if any, do you have to help the Stakeholder Group be more effective?

Increase community involvement

Too many members who seem to be of an honorary status, rather than involved and working.

Somehow bring the group to the renter population and get them involved in taking pride in their community.

Create more of a city-wide awareness and interest in improving the Blake Road corridor.

Residents participation (did try).

Involve all participants of the group, don't let a few dominate the informational meetings.

More involvement from the residents and property owners.

More neighborhood organization development to improve participation.

More neighborhood resident participation.

Get more community members involved.

There needs to be more one on one discussion with residents and businesses of people in the area. We are out door knocking and just talk with people.

Other comments

Improve communications.

Don't know. (10 respondents)

Meet more regularly – form small committees that work on specific issues.

Expect the city and school district to step up – our taxes should be used to serve the areas of greatest need. Search for large grants to really make a difference for all in this area (ex., new park with recreation center).

Keep the same leadership and continue focus.

Keep updating the stakeholders. Perhaps smaller breakout groups for specific issues.

None at this time. (2 stakeholders)

Speed up the time lines.

Create a fund raising task force to complete the study and also to be used to implement the study recommendation.

Focus group results

Because the focus group participants were not drawn from the Stakeholder Group, and many are not aware of the Group's activities, they were not asked questions about the Group's functioning or success.

Conclusions and recommendations

This report summarizes the findings of the first phase of a two-part assessment of the Blake Road Corridor. A review of existing community data, along with an online survey of community stakeholders and a series of focus groups, yield the following conclusions.

Conclusions

Community strengths

Several areas emerged as strengths within the Blake Road Corridor. Schools were perceived as relatively safe, able to serve a diverse group of residents, and able to provide a high-quality educational experience. With a few exceptions, City services (such as fire services, ambulances, etc.) were rated positively. The Stakeholder Collaborative itself was also rated positively, described as including a broad group of stakeholders who are committed to improving the quality of life in the Corridor.

Areas of concern

While there were some areas of strength identified, overall, stakeholders described the Corridor as a relatively negative place to live or work. Significant concerns emerged related to crime and safety, housing, businesses, and services. Overall, the following issues were identified as areas of most significant concern:

- Increased crime and concerns about safety in the Corridor, especially at night.
- Limited recreational programming and services for children and youth.
- The absence of an accessible, high-quality park or community center.
- Poorly maintained properties, especially rental properties, though also including single family homes and businesses.
- Limited screening and monitoring of renters, especially related to absentee landlords.
- Lack of resident and business involvement in the community.
- Poor lighting and unsafe walking areas for pedestrians.
- Need for more police presence in the Corridor, with some focus group participants also expressing dissatisfaction with their responsiveness, especially when interacting with residents of color.

- A failure of current businesses to meet community needs, with requests for additional health care facilities, restaurants, and grocery stores.

Recommendations

Survey respondents and focus group participants were also asked to provide recommendations for improving the Blake Road Corridor. The most frequent suggestions addressed their areas of greatest concerns, and included:

- Increasing the availability of programming, especially summer and school-year recreational programs for youth, but also parent support and adult education programs.
- Improving access to or quality of the local park or creating a community center.
- Increasing landlord accountability for screening and monitoring their tenants.
- Conducting more frequent and rigorous inspections of rental properties, with more enforcement of code violations.
- Improving lighting and sidewalks to make areas more pedestrian friendly.
- Increasing parental and community involvement in community improvement efforts and in the schools.
- Increasing the responsiveness and visibility of police officers, including bicycle, foot, and canine patrols.

Residents who participated in the focus groups provided a number of other suggestions. While these recommendations did not emerge in the stakeholder survey, they are worthy of consideration due to the under-representation of residents among the survey respondents. Their recommendations included providing more access to transportation services, increasing the availability of child care services within the Corridor, and providing access to more services and resources for Hispanic/Latino and Somali families.

Next steps

Consistent themes and recommendations emerged during Phase I of this community assessment. It is not possible to determine whether these areas of concern and recommendation reflect the priorities of the larger group of community residents, or simply mirror the issues that have been raised as concerns within Stakeholder Group meetings. Similarly, it is not possible to prioritize the recommendations based on the likelihood that they will successfully transform the community and address underlying areas of concern. The results of Phase I will be used to guide a second phase, which will involve gathering feedback from a large, diverse group of residents, and comparing the recommendations to the results of other local and national community revitalization efforts.