City of El Paso

# COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

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Key Takeways

**2022 CNA Overview**

The Department of Community and Human development introduced the Community Needs Assessment to document and gather robust public input on what is needed to improve their communities. The Community Needs assessment (CNA) serves as the starting point in addressing community vulnerabilities. In September of 2022, at the beginning of the entitlement funding cycle, the Department of Community and Human Development (DCHD) launched the Community Needs Assessment process. The purpose of the CNA is to obtain viewpoints from community members regarding housing and community development needs and proposed activities that support identified community vulnerabilities.

This process was led by the DCHD Civic Empowerment team. The DCHD Civic Empowerment team's primary objective is to advance equity, build sustainability and improve community outcomes through equitable programming volunteerism, and education designed to empower residents and strengthen their relationship with local government. In order to provide objective findings and conclusions, members of the CNA team do not administer or oversee DCHD grants, nor do they influence annual DCHD policies or procedures.

Community Vulnerabilities are defined as groups and communities at a higher risk for poor health as a result of the barriers they experience to social, economic, political, and environmental resources, as well as limitations due to illness or disability (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health 2022).

DCHD conducted 13 one on one interviews with members of Council, civilians, and business owners. 120 individual survey responses resulting from a total of 45 submitted surveys, that pertinent data was collected.

Community stakeholders and community members were invited to participate in one of seven roundtable discussions, which resulted in a total of 96 participants. In addition to roundtable discussions, DCHD conducted one on one interviews with members of Council, community members and leaders from community organizations. Thirteen individual stakeholder interviews were conducted;

Overall, a total of nearly 500 unique factors were captured and entered into the Community Needs Assessment wheel outlining the strengths, weaknesses and improvement areas within the community.

**Communities of Excellence**

The City of El Paso creates opportunities for innovation and collaboration through strategic partnerships which have been demonstrated throughout our Communities of Excellence Initiative. Communities of Excellence (COE) is a formalized group of community organizations, across key sectors that take a systemic approach to improving overall community performance through collaboration and partnerships. The COE is an essential part of the planning process because it allows for businesses, organizations, and governments to collaborate more successfully across sectors, and align their strategic priorities more effectively. The Community Needs Assessment consisted of a combination of surveys and focus groups from organizations representing the following categories:

- Equity + Inclusion
- Housing +Homelessness
- Family Stability
- Health and Wellbeing
- Food Security

To ensure maximum participation and representation, organizations that have a vested interested in each one of the categories were also invited to participate. Below are organizations that had a representative at our Community Roundtables.

**Equity + Inclusion**
- YWCA
- Volar
- Retired and Senior Volunteer Program
- Sunrise El Paso
- Justice Leadership Council

**Housing + Homelessness**
- Amistad
- HOME
- Opportunity Center
- Coalition for the Homeless
- Salvation Army

**Family Stability**
- EP Center for Children
- Workforce Solutions Borderplex
- Philosophic Systems Institute
- United Way

**Health and Wellbeing**
- Emergence Health Network
- Paso Del Norte Health Foundation
- MCA Foundation
- Mental Health Policy Institute
- Project Vida

**Food Security**
- Desert Spoon
- UT Health
- Emergency Food and Shelter Program Board
- El Paso Community Foundation

**Government**
- EPPD
- EPISD
- YISD
- County
- DMD
- UTEP

**NGO**
- Texas Gas
- El Paso Electric

**Civil Society**
- Neighborhood Associations
- El Paso Neighborhood Coalition
- Neighborhood Leadership Academy
- Boards and Commissions

**Businesses**
- Microsoft
- LIFT Fund
- El Paso Chamber of Commerce
- Hispanic Chamber of Commerce

## Perceptions Assessment Methodology:

Civic Empowerment assessed perceptions by engaging COE Stakeholders, Neighborhood Associations and members of the public by conducting formal stakeholder input sessions. This method allowed us to capture stakeholder feedback collected in 12 different categories, ranging from leadership and strategy, health and wellbeing, infrastructure and environment, and economy and society. Participants were asked to assess whether the input is an area of strength or if it's an area of improvement.

The key tools to analyze and assess stakeholder feedback is done through a perceptions assessment tool. The perceptions assessment tool is a circular model composed of twelve drivers that represent the main outcomes that a resilient city should aim for. The perceptions assessment tool provides a set of 52 indicators and adequate metrics for measuring and assessing city's resilience.

The Perceptions Assessment Tool helps us assess the personal views of various stakeholders gathered through interviews, online surveys, focus groups, workshops, conferences and meetings. A wide range of stakeholders was approached with the aim to give voice to city groups that are usually excluded from the decision-making process. Thus, the different initiatives involved city districts' council members, city staff and elected officials, central government authorities, NGOs, neighborhood associations, homeless, senior citizens and more.

Each participant was asked a series of questions:

1. What is El Paso's greatest vulnerability?

2. What is El Paso's greatest strength?

Each of those responses were recorded as a factor of resilience. A factor is an asset, system, practice or procedure that contributes to the city's ability to prepare, recover, and adapt in the face of shocks and stresses. The objectives for the Perceptions Assessment Tool included:

- Establish a baseline of the city's resilience strengths and vulnerabilities as perceived by city stakeholders though a qualitative but systemic and inclusive process
- Surface key priorities, opportunities and issues
- Engage stakeholders in a meaningful way

Each of the factors that were recorded were then assigned a corresponding resilience driver. Resilience drivers are indicators that essentially tell us what matters most when a city faces chronic stresses or sudden shocks. Below are the 12 resilience drivers that were assigned to each one of the factors given during the roundtable sessions and surveys:

Resilience Drivers:

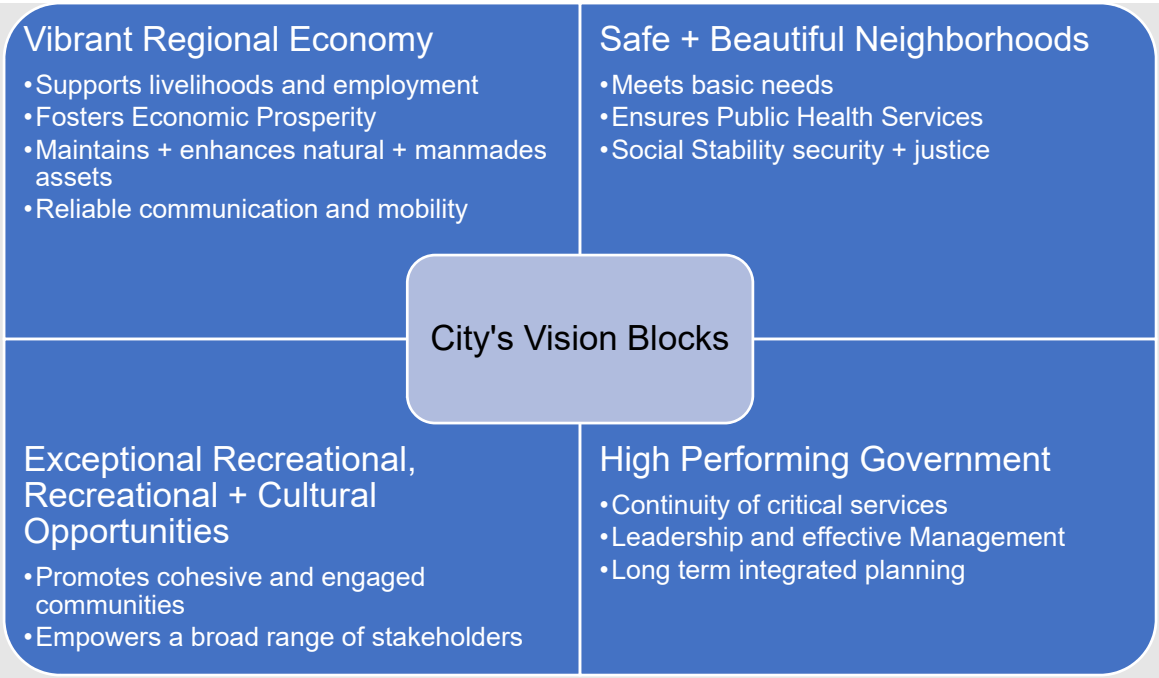
1. Meets Basic Needs
2. Supports livelihoods & employment
3. Ensures public health services
4. Promotes cohesive & engaged communities
5. Ensures social stability, security & justice
6. Fosters Economic prosperity
7. Maintains & enhances protective natural & manmade assets
8. Ensures continuity of critical services
9. Provides reliable communication & mobility
10. Promotes leadership & effective management
11. Empowers a broad range of stakeholders
12. Fosters long term integrated planning

The City of El Paso has adopted 4 Vision Blocks for the City of El Paso. These vision blocks ensure that each one of our City's strategic objective share alignment across the organization. The vision blocks can be seen below in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: City of El Paso's Strategic Vision Blocks**

To ensure that each of the resilience factors aligned with the City's vision blocks, we then categorized them within the City's 4 vision blocks. Below in Figure 2, Each of the 12 resilience factors can be categorized in our City's 4 vision blocks as seen below.

**Figure 2: Resilience Drivers Categorized by Vision Block**




**Community Roundtables:**

During the month of September 2022, the Community and Human Development department began hosting a series of roundtable events to acquire valuable responses from the community regarding housing and community development needs. The Community Needs Assessment was launched with the primary objective of improving the quality of life for residents through equity, education and empowerment. A total of seven roundtable discussions were held.

Roundtable discussions, which resulted in a total of 96 participants, were offered in a variety of platforms ranging from a hybrid model, allowing individuals in an in-person setting to collaborate with those who selected to contribute virtually. Of those 96 participants, 31 community members were graduates of the City of El Paso's Neighborhood Leadership Academy, resulting in two Advanced Neighborhood Leadership Academy sessions. Participants within these exclusive sessions are actively involved community members that share a unique perspective to include solutions, on issues facing the community.

In addition to community residents, stakeholders from various community organizations, were present to discuss key issues within the sectors of Housing and Homelessness, Health and Wellbeing, Food Security and Family Stability; subject matter experts from El Paso Coalition for the Homeless, The Opportunity Center, YWCA, Project Amistad, United Way, The El Paso Community Foundation were among the organizations represented.

In order to accurately capture the information being provided during all roundtable discussions, the Civic Empowerment team utilized the use of color coded post-it notes- pink, yellow and blue, which were provided to participants. Participants were then asked to write their comments, factors, on the specific color of post-it, which allowed the team to accurately notate areas where improvement is necessary to areas of strength; pink- need to do better, yellow- doing well, but can improve, blue- area of strength.

Below is a summary of the direct responses that were recorded as part of the Community Roundtable sessions that were hosted.

| *Method* | *Greatest Strengths/ Assets* | *Key Areas for Improvement* |
|---|---|---|
| Community Roundtables | • The people, the community always step up to help one another in time of need<br>• Opportunities for growth and development<br>• Agencies working together to address homelessness<br>• Downtown revitalization<br>• Working with UTEP to promote resources for youth<br>• Binational, bicultural community<br>• Adelante's diversion program- only one of its kind.<br>• Organizations that invest in the environment<br>• First time homeowner programs<br>• Knowledge of community<br>• Integration of community services<br>• Family values<br>• Entertainment<br>• Technology<br>• Neighborhood Leadership Academy | • Engagement between city leaders and community members<br>• Access to resources for at risk and vulnerable populations<br>• Affordable Housing<br>• Accessible Transportation<br>• Streets and Maintenance<br>• The need for more Police<br>• Need for more activities<br>• Better access to resources and organizations providing the resources<br>• Housing for Seniors and Low-Income populations<br>• Street repairs and traffic mitigation<br>• Inclusion of community members in decision making<br>• Resources for Seniors<br>• Access to Mental Health resources<br>• Low Wages<br>• Access to food<br>• Increases in taxes<br>• Disability services<br>• Economic growth<br>• Affordable Healthcare |

**Strategic Leadership Interviews**

In addition to the roundtable sessions and the survey, key informant interviews were scheduled with different agencies in the community. In order to select our panel of participants for the strategic leadership interviews, we targeted participants who held a leadership role utilizing the strategic vision blocks set forth in the City's strategic plan.

Stakeholder interviews were comprised of key strategic leadership under the City's four vision blocks.:

- Vibrant Regional Economy- Cindy Ramos Davison, El Paso Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
- Safe and Beautiful Neighborhoods- Debora Zuloaga, United Way of El Paso County
- Recreational, Cultural + Educational Opportunities- Eric Pearson, El Paso Community Foundation
- High Performing Government- City Manager Tommy Gonzalez

The objective was to have one-on-one conversations with key leadership that are especially knowledgeable and offer perspectives from their experience within the City's four vision blocks. These initial meetings targeted individuals representing a diversity of interests and organizations to explore a range of issues and needs. The individual nature of these discussions enabled participants to be more candid and in-depth than they otherwise might be in a larger roundtable community discussion. Moreover, discussions could be focused on the topics important to each individual.

Below is a summary of the direct responses that were recorded as part of the Strategic Leadership Interviews.

| *Method* | *Greatest Strengths/ Assets* | *Key Areas for Improvement* |
|---|---|---|
| Strategic Leadership Interviews | • Interventions in homelessness<br>• Integrated partnerships<br>• Small businesses<br>• Education – partnerships with UTEP and Texas Tech | • Attracting businesses downtown<br>• Handling supply chain issues/ inflationary costs<br>• Expanding partnership opportunities<br>• Youth is an untapped resource<br>• Investment in specific quality of life environments and built environment around<br>• There will always be a need for more programs |

**Council Member Interviews**

Each of the members of Council were asked to participate on a one-on-one interview. These interviews provided additional perspective from elected officials throughout the City's eight representative districts.

Below is a summary of the direct responses that were recorded as part of the Council Member interviews that were hosted.

| *Method* | *Greatest Strengths/ Assets* | *Key Areas for Improvement* |
|---|---|---|
| Council Member Interviews | • City hired an ombudsman to help expedite permitting and assist businesses<br>• The City was able to educate the community and pilot projects throughout the pandemic.<br>• The different Non-Profit agencies throughout the city | • Labor and materials shortages<br>• Opportunities to invest in low-moderate income areas<br>• Focused resources to address the needs of individual homeowners<br>• Focus resources on aging infrastructure<br>• Need a plan and buy-in for a facility addressing food security and other vulnerabilities<br>• Large gap for mental health services<br>• Satellite food distribution<br>• Need projects that benefit community as a whole |

**Resident Surveys**

In an effort to secure well-rounded data, Community Needs Assessment surveys were sent out to various community members and community groups; a total of 45 surveys were returned, capturing 120 individual responses on various needs faced by the community, including community strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement.

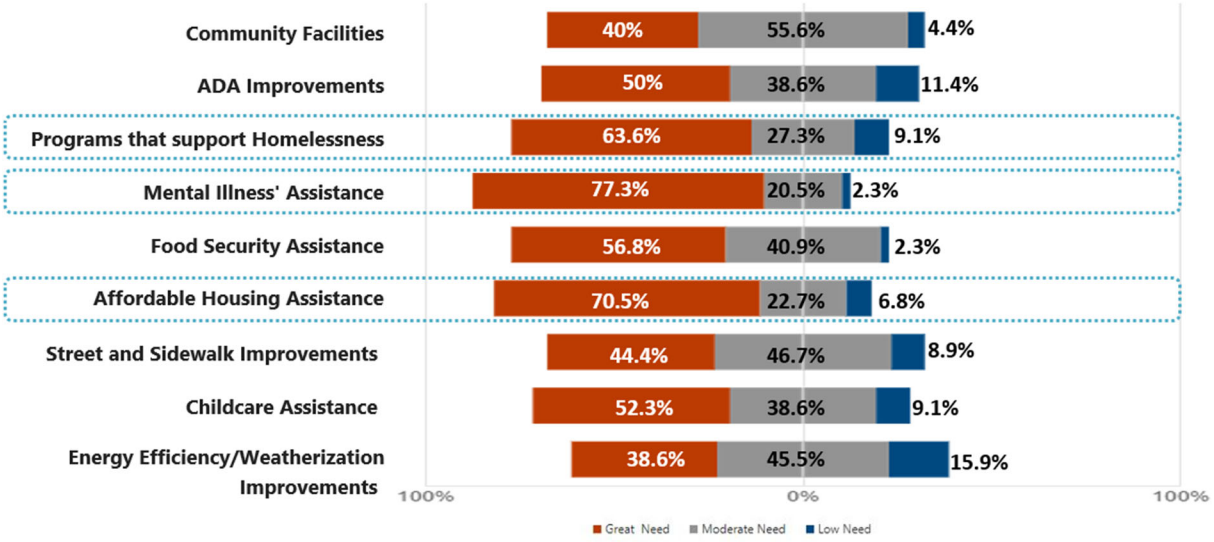
When asked the question, "What do you see as the greatest need in our community," the majority of responses stated that affordable housing was the greatest need within the community. Following the need for affordable housing, was infrastructure, which included street repairs, lighting installations, speed bumps, etc. Mental Health Accessibility, well-paying jobs, migrant assistance, resources for the unhoused, and assistance for the elderly, were also vastly noted as a great need within the community.

Regarding what makes the community most vulnerable, low wages, access to resources for underserved populations, immigration, homelessness, access to affordable housing, and the lack of attracting large scale businesses, were among the most notable responses.

Included in the survey, individuals were asked to rate the level of need for the following, Community Facilities, ADA Improvements, Programs that Support Homelessness, Mental Illness Assistance, Food Security Assistance, Affordable Housing Assistance, Street and Sidewalk Improvements, Childcare Assistance, and Energy Efficiency/Weatherization Improvements. Individuals classified the level of need by selecting "Great Need," Moderate Need," or "Low Need."

**Figure 3: Resident Survey Results**

*"Please rate the level of need of each of the following by selecting "Great Need" "Moderate Need' or Low Need"*




Community Facilities were viewed as a Moderate Need, with nearly 56 percent of the responses classifying it as such. Half of the responses, rated ADA Improvements as a Great Need. Programs that Support Homelessness were also seen as a Great Need at almost 64 percent of responses. Mental Illness Assistance was selected as a Great Need by 34, (or 77 percent) of the 45 individuals who submitted a survey. Food Security Assistance and Affordable Housing, and Childcare Assistance were also identified as a Great Need within the community. Street and Sidewalk Improvements in addition to Energy Efficiency/Weatherization Improvements, were noted as Moderate Needs.

Figure 3 was based on 9 categories of focus; *Community Facilities, ADA Improvement, Programs the Support Homelessness, Mental Illness' Assistance, Food Security Assistance, Affordable Housing Assistance, Street and Sidewalk Improvements, Childcare Assistance and Energy Efficiency/Weatherization Improvement*. Participants were asked to rank priorities based on a scale of low need, moderate need and great need. The following are the results that were recorded:

- **3 Greatest Need Categories**
  - Mental Illness' Assistance 77.3%
  - Affordable Housing Assistance 70.5%
  - Programs that Support Homelessness 63.6%
- **3 Moderate Need Categories**
  - Community Facilities 55.6%
  - Street and Sidewalk Improvements 46.7%

    - Energy Efficiency/Weatherization Improvements 45.5. %
- **3 Lowest Need Categories**
    - Energy Efficiency/Weatherization 15.9%
    - ADA Improvements 11.4%
    - Programs that Support Homelessness/ Childcare Assistance 9.1%

**Senior Recognition Survey**

During the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP) celebration of 48 years of service to the community, RSVP held its recognition event on October 1st, 2022, at the Chamizal Recreation center. We Volunteers and guests were invited to a breakfast event to collect their recognition items. Volunteer and attendees also took the time to participate in submitting a community needs assessment survey. The surveys were both in English and in Spanish. Forty (40) surveys were collected from Seniors who participated in the event.

**Boards and Commissions**

Four City Boards and Commissions were selected to participate in the Community Need Assessment:

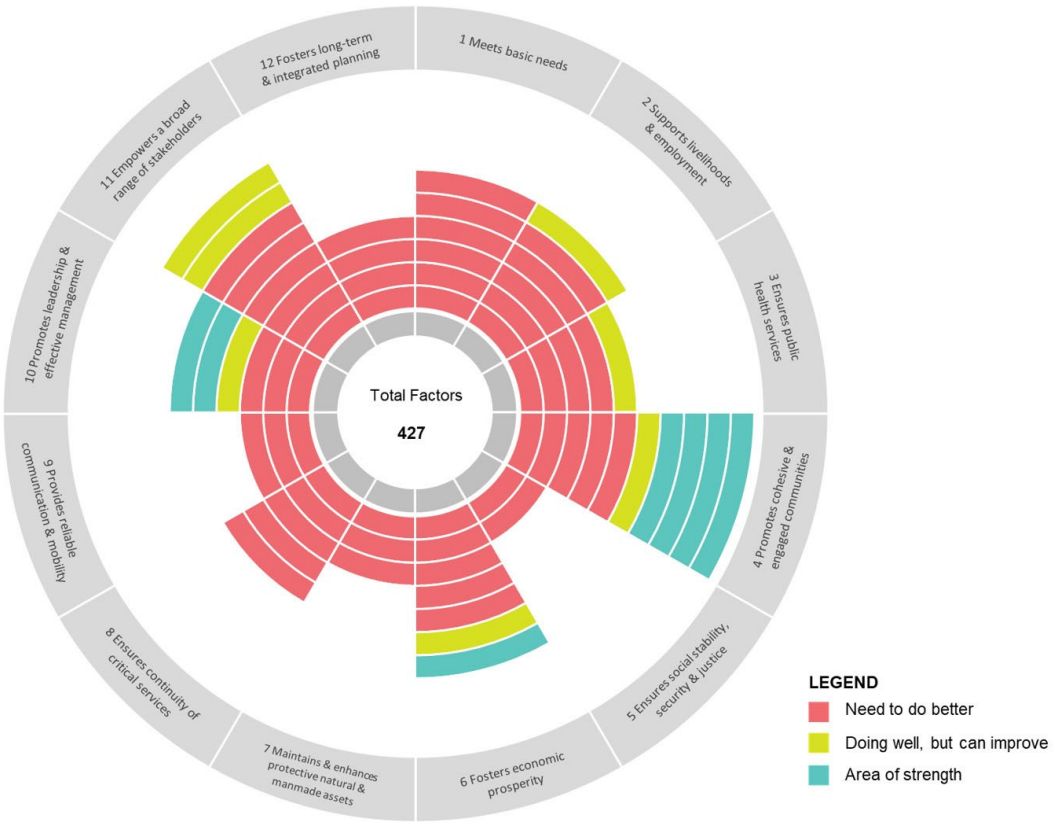
- **Accessibility Advisory Committee –** Addresses Accessibility concerns and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.
- **AmeriCorps Seniors Advisory Council -** Advisory Council of the Retired and Senior Volunteer Program, and the Foster Grandparent Program.
- **Fair Housing Task Force-** Identifies impediments to housing and fair housing choice
- **Veterans Affairs Advisory Council-** Advisory Council related to resources available to Veterans

These boards and commissions were selected because each of the boards represent a vulnerable or underrepresented population. Capturing the voices of those who represent these populations was essential to the perceptions assessment process to ensure a wide range of perceptions were collected. A presentation to the board was conducted at each meeting and staff would record board member's feedback. Additionally, a survey was sent to each of the board members where the board member would take time to provide additional feedback based on their role as a board member and the populations they represent.

**Perceptions Assessment Results**

Over 420 different factors were entered into the perceptions assessment tool. According to Figure 4, you'll see that driver 4- *Promotes cohesive and engaged communities*, 6- *Fosters Economic Prosperity*, and 11- *Empowers a broad range of stakeholders* have the most perceptions associated to them. Driver 4- *Promotes cohesive & engaged communities* has the highest number of associations, with an even split of perceptions with ratings on 'need to do better' and an 'area of strength'.

**Figure 4: Overall Perceptions Assessment**




**Government Perceptions Assessment**

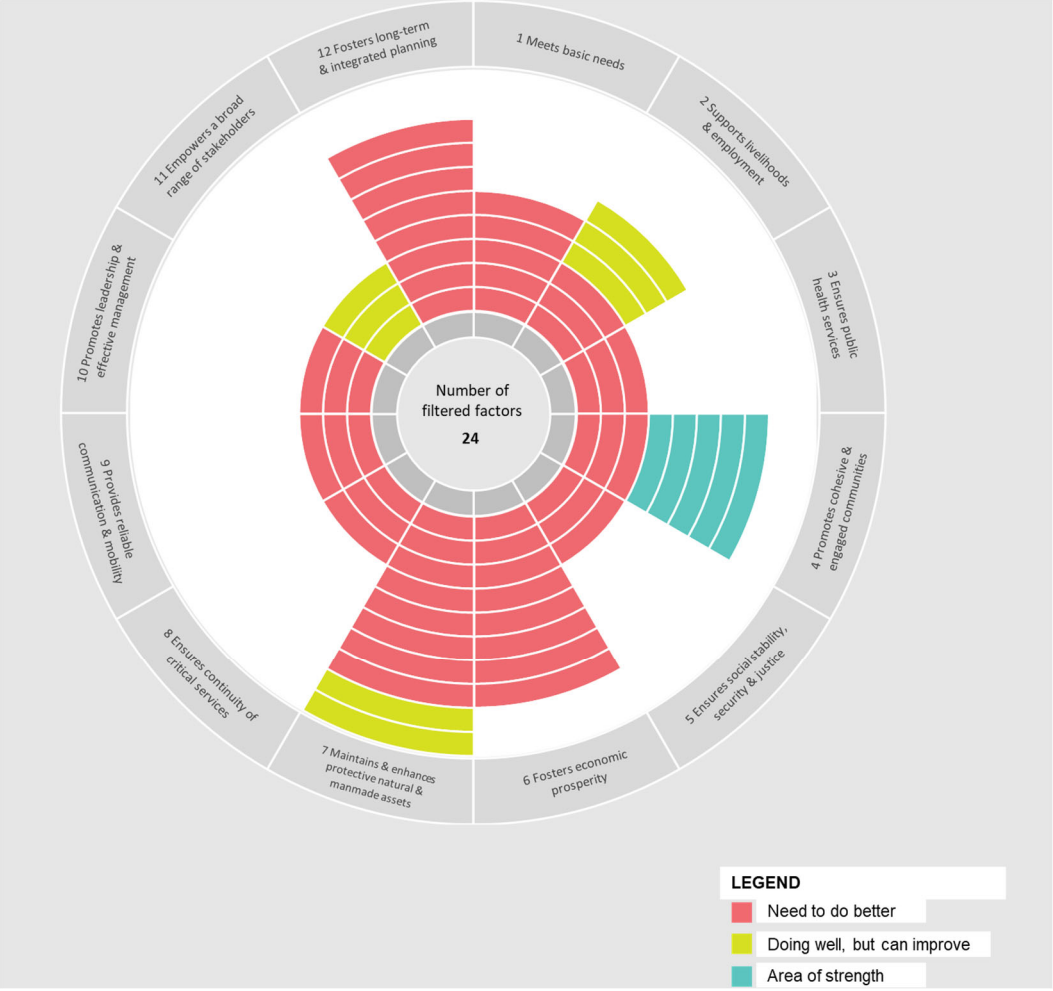
Most respondents in the government field overwhelmingly responded that *fostering long-term & integrated planning* needs to do better, followed by *supporting livelihoods and employment*. Government officials actively operate based on strategic plans that guide day-to-day operations and based on these responses, feel that the monitoring and integration of those plans needs to improve. Long-term mapping can be seen to fall short based on changes that the originally drafted standards and procedures didn't take into consideration. The correlation between the two drivers of fostering long-term & integrated planning and supporting livelihoods and employment demonstrates the need for change on how the City intends on amending labor policy, improving residents' access to living wages, and proactively stimulating business development. Although, based on the level of "doing well but can improve" responses in the *supports livelihoods and employment* category, if the City can ameliorate its continuous planning efforts and adopt long-term, but tangible solutions, then there may be an opportunity to shift the *supports livelihoods and employment* category into an area of strength.

**Figure 5: Government Assessment**

**Business Perceptions Assessment**

*Maintaining and enhancing protective natural and manmade assets* was the top factor in which the business community responded that needs improvement, with both *fosters long-term and integrated planning* and *fostering economic prosperity* immediately following. These two categories go hand-in-hand with local business development, inward investments, and subcategories that directly impact small businesses and large corporations. The business sector also provided a clear consensus in claiming that *promoting cohesive and engaged communities* is an area of strength for El Paso. This is an area of opportunity that can potentially be leveraged by continuing to engage with our community to then explore implementing environmental policy and/or safeguarding existing infrastructure, resulting in the advancement of how the City *maintains and enhances protective natural and manmade assets* to then become an area of strength. It's also important to note that driver 2 – *supports livelihoods and employment* and driver 11 – *empowers a broad range of stakeholders* received a high percentage of "doing well but can improve" from the business community.

**Figure 6: Business Perceptions Assessment**




**Civil Society Perceptions Assessment**

The Civil Society participants made up approximately 70% of the filtered factors, with a high 50/50 split of *promoting cohesive and engaged communities* needing to improve and standing as an area of strength. In reference to Figure 7 below, the area of opportunity lies in the connection between how the City galvanizes community participation and how we *empower a broad range of stakeholders*. The City has an opportunity to drive its evident influence in promoting social connectivity to strengthen its investment in educating its residents, share best practices, and diversify its stakeholders, with the intent of converting future CNA responses on driver 11 – *empowers a broad range of stakeholders* into a category that community sees as an area that the City excels in. The Civic Society assessment also demonstrated the highest percentage of feedback on needing to improve driver 2 – meets basic needs, overwhelmingly in the area of housing; nearly 90%.

**Figure 7: Civil Society Assessment**

**Academia Perceptions Assessment**

With just over 30 filtered factors from stakeholders in academia, the input provides a clear picture that the City needs to do better in supporting livelihoods and employment. Similar to other assessments though, our community's culture and manner in which it collectively unites in times of need were traits that were praised about El Paso. These stakeholders addressed concerns about food and economic insecurities that create a cycle of poverty among those who need resources the most. This wheel demonstrates yet another opportunity that entails leveraging the community's strong participation and sense of family cohesion to become more responsive to our residents' needs and insecurities by increasing their access to financial gain, skills training, and a more secure qualify of life.

**Figure 8: Academia Assessment**

**Key Takeaways- Priorities Emerging From the CNA**

The Community Needs Assessment included interviews from key stakeholders, community roundtables and surveys. We listened carefully and noted that there were many linkages and convergences on many of the discussions and responses. The following are top priorities and takeaways from the CNA.

1. ***Meeting Basic Needs***

One of the key takeaways from our analysis is that the ability to meet basic needs such as food and housing is directly connected to fostering economic prosperity. Many of the participants stressed that the community needs support in meeting basic needs such as food, housing, utilities, transportation. We also heard that even access to broadband should be considered a basic need. Many of the conversations stressed the need for supporting people experiencing homelessness with wrap around services like mental health and food support. The hardships caused by the pandemic has been widespread, and in many cases, it exacerbated challenges that households were already facing such as food insecurity or housing affordability. Thus, continuing to support a family's ability to meet basic needs is still necessary in order to achieve economic prosperity at the household level.

2. ***Empowering Communities***

For business owners, government officials, and our neighborhood associations, there were a number of conversations about being grateful for being invited to participate, and the desire to want to *continue* to be a part of future discussions. What we heard overwhelmingly is that community and business owners alike, want to contribute to the decision-making and planning processes. The analysis also showed that there are also perception interdependencies by empowering a broad range of stakeholders, you promote cohesive and engaged communities. Meaning, stakeholder empowerment increases the ability and confidence of the issues relating to each individual. While engagement significantly increases participation, empowerment aims to enable people to take control of the actions that affects their livelihoods.

Interview and survey responses revealed a need for enhanced collaboration to advance local and reginal planning. We saw a desire for long-term integrated planning within each of our perception assessments. Government officials, academia, and civil society all shared the same sentiments in the *Fosters long term integrated Planning* category. Integrated planning was particularly important when speaking to neighborhood leaders in the Advanced Neighborhood Leadership sessions. Participants often highlighted the need to have open dialogues during all phases of future planning process to ensure information is equitable shared and shaped by all stakeholders. However, there was a strong expression by some neighborhood leaders that they are being asked for input and collaboration, but their input often hasn't translated into actionable change. Communities of Excellence can be the springboard for this type of planning with members of the community, organizations can collectively deploy resources based off the community needs identified in this assessment and in turn continue to collaborate.

3. ***Homelessness: Mental Health and Housing Affordability***

The causes of homelessness are extremely diverse and complex. The individual complexities that contribute to homelessness increases the difficulty of creating universal solutions to address homelessness. Our key takeaways from the Resident Survey results, showed us that community members see a higher need in addressing mental health, housing affordability and homelessness. These 3 causes arguably are linked to one another. Mental illness and substance abuse were often brought up on the topic of homelessness. Similarly, the discussions around rising costs and housing affordability were also discussed when the topic of homelessness was also raised. While some participants applauded the City's effort to prioritizing homelessness, the survey responses indicated a need to do more.

Poverty and homelessness exacerbate mental illness, and COVID-19 and the measures put in place to control the spread of the virus exacerbated metal health concerns for much of the community. Addressing this issue by identifying those in need of services and making those services accessible beyond the hours of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm will be important to meet the needs of this especially vulnerable population.

4. ***Prioritizing Multi-beneficial Projects***

Funding limitations and agency capacity is always a challenge that all sectors face. Because of this, there is a need to identify projects that include multiple benefits across sectors that achieve multiple planning goals at one time. An example of this would to be to situate programming or facilities with multiple benefits that can help address multiple vulnerabilities, such as mental health, housing and homelessness. Addressing multi-benefits like mental health and homelessness under one roof can provide supportive individualized services to community members and enables better outcomes as a result. This model can be used with all vulnerable populations because of the complex nature of their situations. Another population that comes to mind is opportunity youth, which often struggle with both education and employment. So tailoring solutions that address multiple vulnerabilities ensures that steps are being taken to find solutions to root causes and not symptoms.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

Despite information sharing and reaching across diverse sectors, we were challenged by interviewing subjects with lived experience, particularly those who are experiencing homelessness. In future needs assessments, we think a key component of our stakeholder interviews will be to ensure that voices of lived experiences are captured.

Another recommended population to capture in the future would be to ensure that the voice of our youth is represented. Particularly those within the 16–24-year-olds age range will be vital for future iterations of this assessment.

**2023 CNA Overview**

The Department of Community and Human development introduced the Community Needs Assessment to document and gather robust public input on what is needed to improve their communities. The Community Needs assessment (CNA) serves as the starting point in addressing community vulnerabilities. In September of 2023, the Department of Community and Human Development (DCHD) launched the Community Needs Assessment process to ensure consistent community input and to track any possible changes in feedback. The purpose of the CNA is to obtain viewpoints from community members regarding housing and community development needs and proposed activities that support identified community vulnerabilities.

This process was led by the DCHD Civic Empowerment team. The DCHD Civic Empowerment team's primary objective is to advance equity, build sustainability and improve community outcomes through equitable programming volunteerism, and education designed to empower residents and strengthen their relationship with local government. In order to provide objective findings and conclusions, members of the CNA team do not administer or oversee DCHD grants, nor do they influence annual DCHD policies or procedures.

Community Vulnerabilities are defined as groups and communities at a higher risk for poor health as a result of the barriers they experience to social, economic, political, and environmental resources, as well as limitations due to illness or disability (National Collaborating Centre for Determinants of Health 2022).

DCHD collected pertinent data from 60 individual survey responses.

Community stakeholders and community members were invited to participate in one of seven roundtable discussions, which resulted in a total of 96 participants. In addition to roundtable discussions, DCHD conducted one on one interviews with members of Council, community members and leaders from community organizations. Thirteen individual stakeholder interviews were conducted;

Overall, a total of 165 unique factors were captured and entered into the Community Needs Assessment wheel outlining the strengths, weaknesses and improvement areas within the community.

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The City of El Paso creates opportunities for innovation and collaboration through strategic partnerships which have been demonstrated throughout our Communities of Excellence Initiative. Communities of Excellence (COE) is a formalized group of community organizations, across key sectors that take a systemic approach to improving overall community performance through collaboration and partnerships. The COE is an essential part of the planning process because it allows for businesses, organizations, and governments to collaborate more successfully across sectors, and align their strategic priorities more effectively. The Community Needs Assessment consisted of a combination of surveys and focus groups from organizations representing the following categories:

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To ensure maximum participation and representation, organizations that have a vested interested in each one of the categories were also invited to participate. Below are organizations that had a representative at our Community Roundtables.

**Perceptions Assessment Methodology:**

Civic Empowerment assessed perceptions by engaging COE Stakeholders, Neighborhood Associations, Senior volunteers, and members of the public through a bilingual Community Needs Assessment survey made available both electronically and physically. This method allowed us to capture stakeholder feedback collected in 12 different categories, ranging from leadership and strategy, health and wellbeing, infrastructure and environment, and economy and society. Participants were asked to assess whether the input is an area of strength or if it's an area of improvement.

The key tools to analyze and assess stakeholder feedback is done through a perceptions assessment tool. The perceptions assessment tool is a circular model composed of twelve drivers that represent the main outcomes that a resilient city should aim for. The perceptions assessment tool provides a set of 52 indicators and adequate metrics for measuring and assessing city's resilience.

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Each participant was asked a series of questions:

1. What is El Paso's greatest vulnerability?

2. What is El Paso's greatest strength?

Each of those responses were recorded as a factor of resilience. A factor is an asset, system, practice or procedure that contributes to the city's ability to prepare, recover, and adapt in the face of shocks and stresses. The objectives for the Perceptions Assessment Tool included:

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Each of the factors that were recorded were then assigned a corresponding resilience driver. Resilience drivers are indicators that essentially tell us what matters most when a city faces chronic stresses or sudden shocks. Below are the 12 resilience drivers that were assigned to each one of the factors given during the roundtable sessions and surveys:

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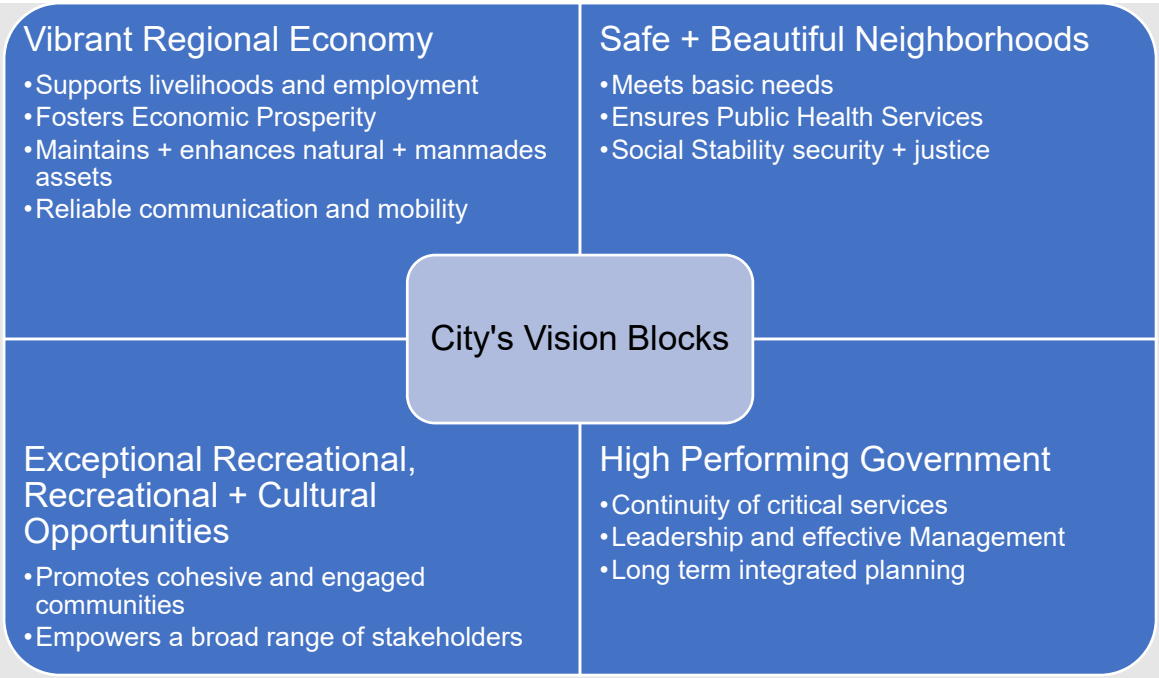
1. Meets Basic Needs
2. Supports livelihoods & employment
3. Ensures public health services
4. Promotes cohesive & engaged communities
5. Ensures social stability, security & justice
6. Fosters Economic prosperity
7. Maintains & enhances protective natural & manmade assets
8. Ensures continuity of critical services
9. Provides reliable communication & mobility
10. Promotes leadership & effective management
11. Empowers a broad range of stakeholders
12. Fosters long term integrated planning

The City of El Paso has adopted 4 Vision Blocks for the City of El Paso. These vision blocks ensure that each one of our City's strategic objective share alignment across the organization. The vision blocks can be seen below in Figure 1.

**Figure 1: City of El Paso's Strategic Vision Blocks**

To ensure that each of the resilience factors aligned with the City's vision blocks, we then categorized them within the City's 4 vision blocks. Below in Figure 2, Each of the 12 resilience factors can be categorized in our City's 4 vision blocks as seen below.

**Figure 2: Resilience Drivers Categorized by Vision Block**




**Resident Surveys**

In an effort to secure well-rounded data, Community Needs Assessment surveys were sent out to various community members and community groups; a total of 60 surveys were returned, capturing 165individual responses on various needs faced by the community, including community strengths, weaknesses, and areas of improvement.

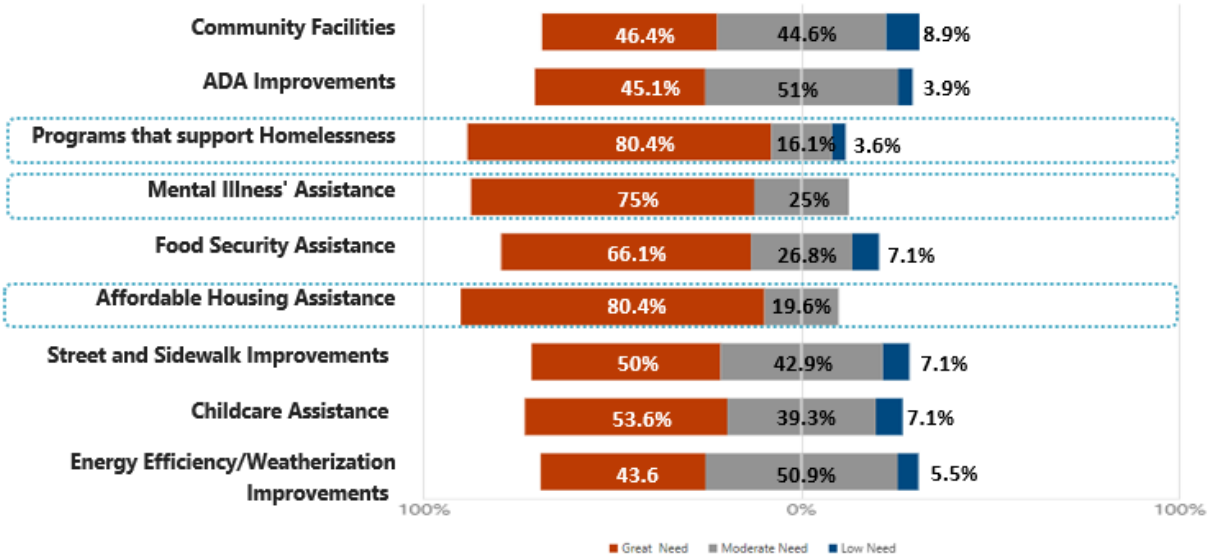
When asked the question, “What do you see as the greatest need in our community,” the majority of responses stated that affordable housing was the greatest need within the community, which is a direct reflection of the CNA responses in 2022.Following the need for affordable housing, included supporting livelihoods and employment, policing to promote safety and security, and ensuring the continuity of critical services as it pertains to migrants and low income populations.

Regarding what makes the community most vulnerable, low wages, access to resources for underserved populations, immigration, homelessness, access to affordable housing, and the lack of attracting large scale businesses, were among the most notable responses.

Included in the survey, individuals were asked to rate the level of need for the following, Community Facilities, ADA Improvements, Programs that Support Homelessness, Mental Illness Assistance, Food Security Assistance, Affordable Housing Assistance, Street and Sidewalk Improvements, Childcare Assistance, and Energy Efficiency/Weatherization Improvements.  Individuals classified the level of need by selecting “Great Need,” Moderate Need,” or “Low Need.”

**Figure 3: Resident Survey Results**

*“Please rate the level of need of each of the following by selecting “Great Need” “Moderate Need’ or Low Need”*




Affordable Housing Assistance and Mental Illness Assistance were both overwhelmingly classified as a Great Need with over 75 to 80 percent of responses. The category that demonstrated the largest increase from 2022 to 2023 in being labeled as a Great Need is that of Programs that support Homelessness going from 64 percent to 80 percent of the total responses. Community Facilities, ADA Improvements, Street and Sidewalk Improvements, and Energy Efficiency/Weatherization Improvements were noted as Moderate Needs.

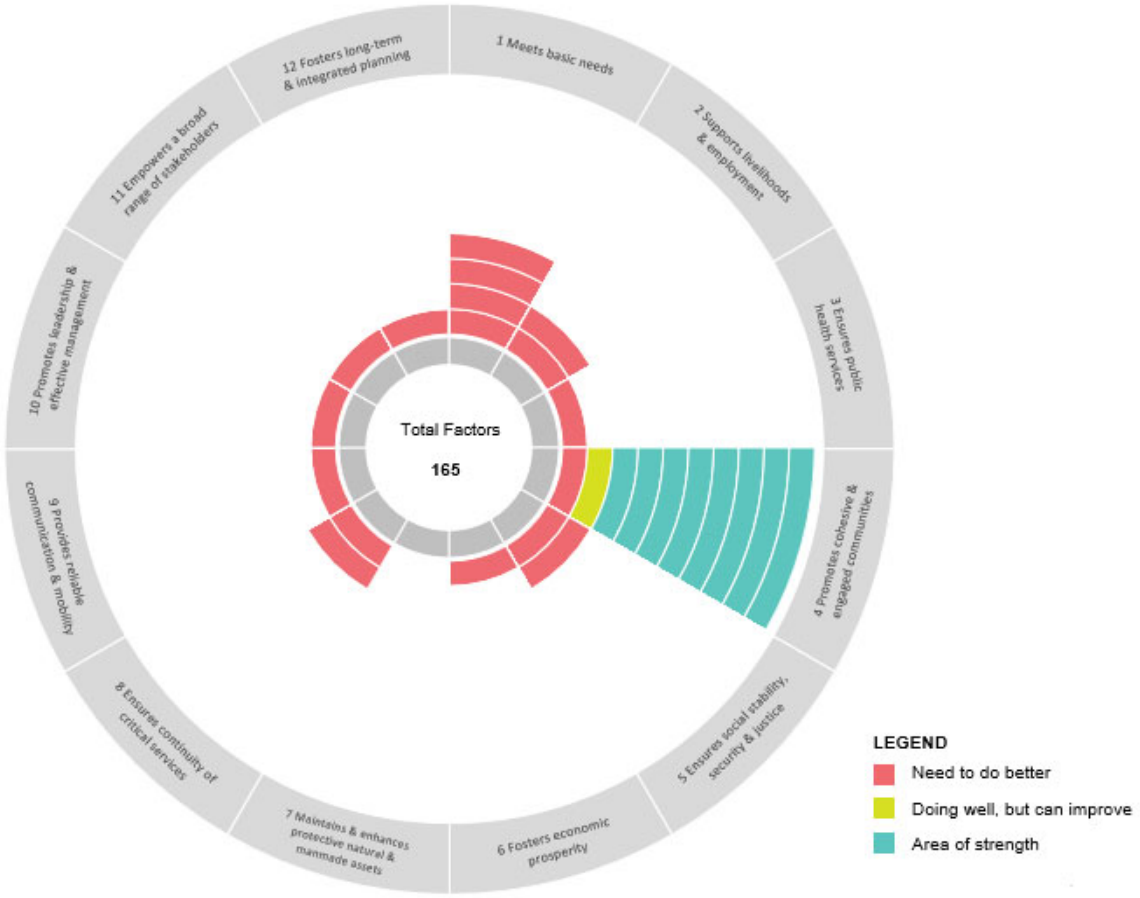
Figure 3 was based on 9 categories of focus; *Community Facilities, ADA Improvement, Programs the Support Homelessness, Mental Illness' Assistance, Food Security Assistance, Affordable Housing Assistance, Street and Sidewalk Improvements, Childcare Assistance and Energy Efficiency/Weatherization Improvement*. Participants were asked to rank priorities based on a scale of low need, moderate need and great need. The following are the results that were recorded:

- **3 Greatest Need Categories**
  - Affordable Housing Assistance 80.4%
  - Programs that Support Homelessness 80.4%
  - Mental Illness' Assistance 75%
- **3 Moderate Need Categories**
  - ADA Improvements 51%
  - Energy Efficiency/Weatherization Improvements 50.9%
  - Community Facilities 44.6%
- **3 Lowest Need Categories**
  - Community Facilities 8.9%
  - Street and Sidewalk Improvements 7.1%
  - Food Security Assistance/Childcare Assistance 7.1%

**Perceptions Assessment Results**

Over 165 different factors were entered into the perceptions assessment tool. According to Figure 4, you'll see that driver 4- *Promotes cohesive and engaged communities*, 6- *Fosters Economic Prosperity*, and 11- *Empowers a broad range of stakeholders* have the most perceptions associated to them. Driver 4- *Promotes cohesive & engaged communities* has the highest number of associations, with an even split of perceptions with ratings on 'need to do better' and an 'area of strength'.

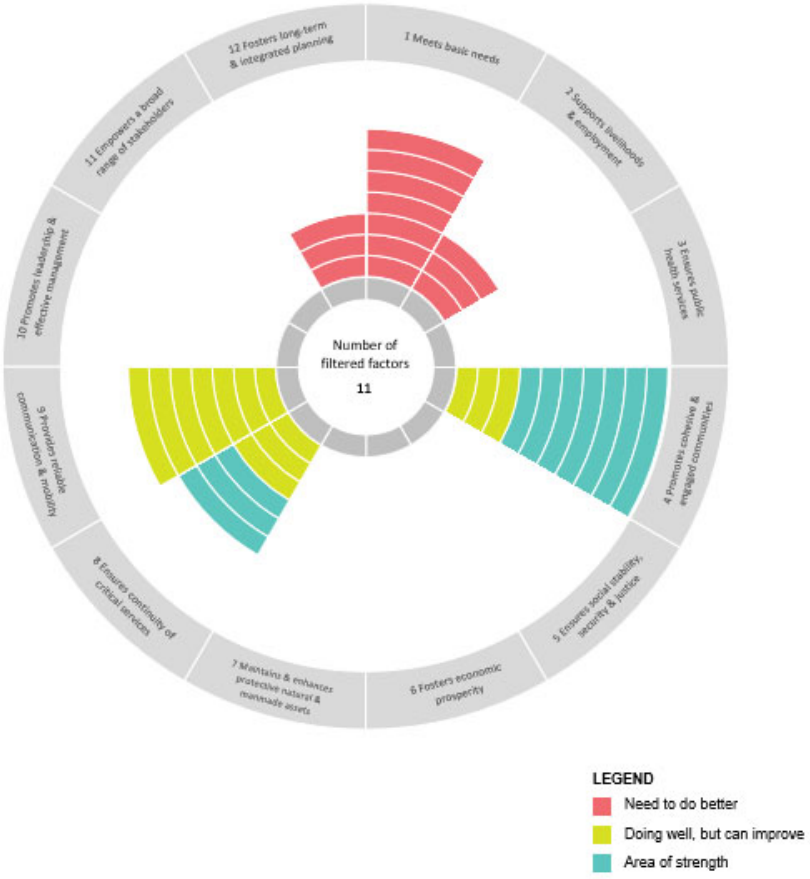
**Figure 4: Overall Perceptions Assessment**




**Government Perceptions Assessment**

Most respondents in the government field overwhelmingly responded that *provides reliable communication & mobility* is doing well, but can improve, with *ensures continuity of critical services* as an even split between standing as an area of strength and being categorized as a strength with opportunities to improve. Government officials actively operate based on strategic plans that guide day-to-day operations in regards to public transportation, emergency information systems, and/or communications technology and based on these responses, feel that the efforts and existing infrastructure is providing the necessary services, but can certainly be enhanced. The correlation between the two drivers of *provides reliable communication & mobility* and with *ensures continuity of critical services* demonstrates the opportunity for the City to ameliorate its continuous planning efforts and adopt tangible solutions to bridge the optimization of vital resources and the communications/accessibility to those same resources, then there may be an opportunity to shift both of these categories into areas of strength.

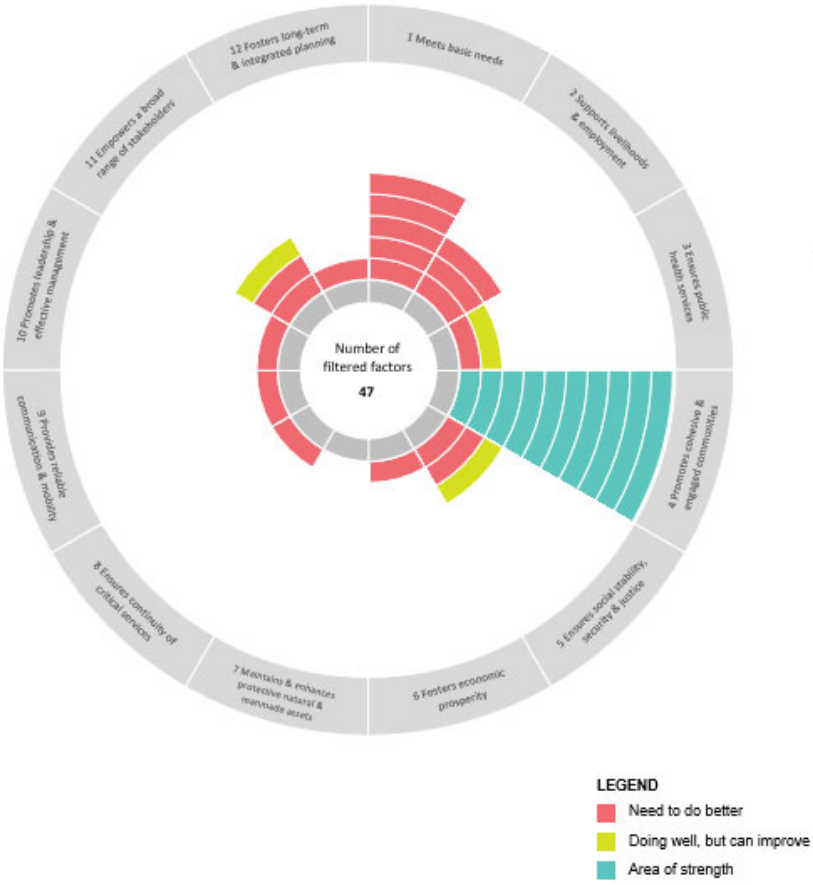
**Figure 5: Government Assessment**




**Business Perceptions Assessment**

*Supports livelihoods & employment* was the top factor in which the business community responded that needs improvement, with *Meets basic needs* immediately following. These two categories go hand-in-hand with increasing the community's access to finance and everyday necessities and opportunities to gain skills and workforce training, that directly impact small businesses and large corporations. The business sector also provided a clear consensus in claiming that *promoting cohesive and engaged communities* is an area of strength for El Paso. This is an area of opportunity that can potentially be leveraged by continuing to strengthen the engagement between government and our community, including but not limited to knowledge transfer and best practice sharing, resulting in the advancement of how the City *Empowers a broad range of stakeholders* to then become an area of strength.

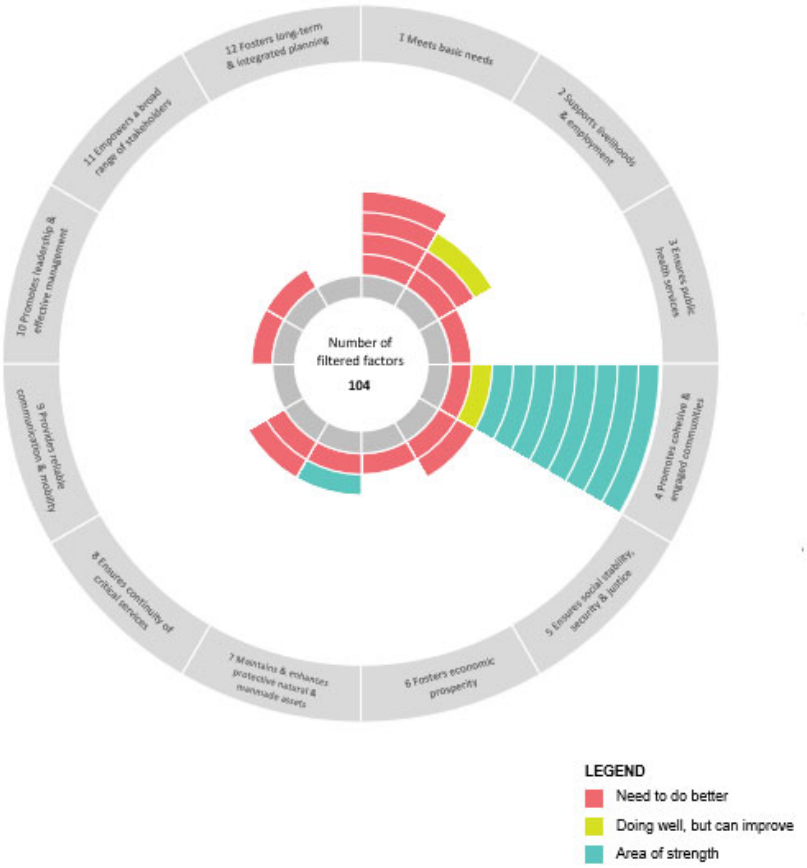
**Figure 6: Business Perceptions Assessment**




**Civil Society Perceptions Assessment**

The Civil Society participants made up approximately 63% of the filtered factors, with a near direct reflection of the overall perceptions assessment figure seen in Figure 4. *Promoting cohesive and engaged communities* is seen as a clear area of strength for the City, followed by Maintains & enhances protective natural & manmade assets. This comes as a result of the recent success in getting Castner Range designated as a national monument. In reference to Figure 7 below, the area of opportunity lies in the connection between how the City galvanizes community participation and how we *Support livelihoods & employment*. The City has an opportunity to drive its evident influence in promoting social connectivity to strengthen its investment in local business development and innovation and increasing the public's access to finance, skills, and workforce training, with the intent of converting future CNA responses on driver 2 – *Support livelihoods & employment* into a category that community sees as an area that the City excels in. The Civic Society assessment also demonstrated the highest percentage of feedback on needing to improve driver 2 – meets basic needs, overwhelmingly in the area of housing; nearly 90%.

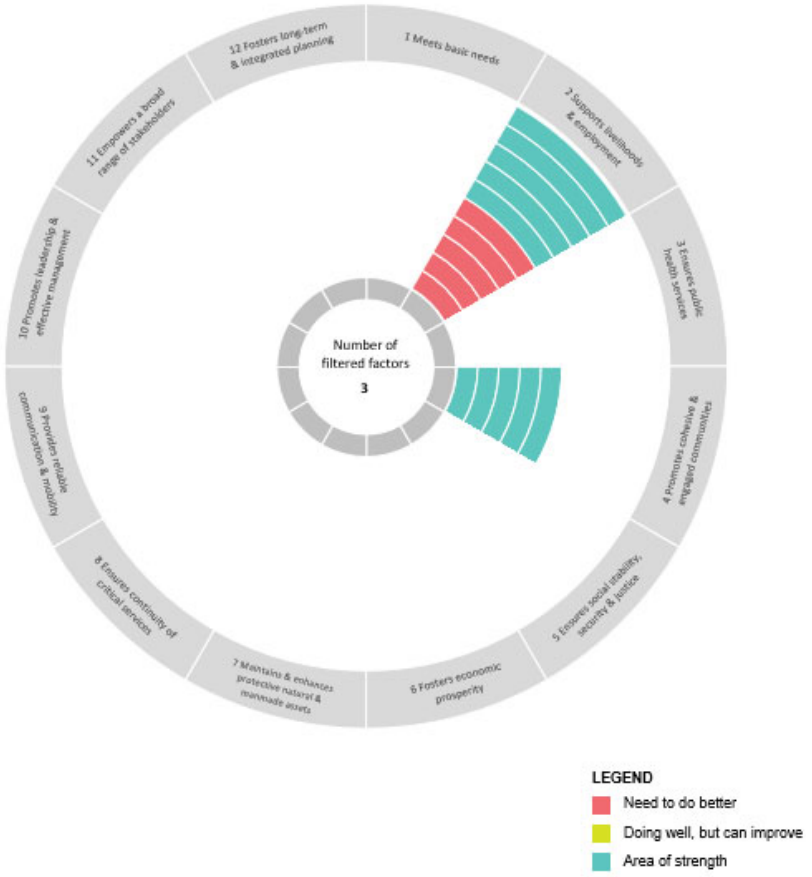
**Figure 7: Civil Society Assessment**




**Academia Perceptions Assessment**

With just 3 filtered factors from stakeholders in academia, the input provides a 50/50 response in supporting livelihoods and employment, both as an area of strength and area of vulnerability. Similar to other assessments though, our community's culture and manner in which it collectively unites in times of need were traits that were praised about El Paso. This wheel demonstrates yet another opportunity that entails leveraging the community's strong participation and sense of family cohesion to become more responsive to our residents' needs and insecurities by increasing their access to financial gain, skills training, and a more secure qualify of life.

**Figure 8: Academia Assessment**




**Key Takeaways- Priorities Emerging From the CNA**

In reviewing the 2023 Community Needs Assessment survey results carefully, it is clear that the perceptions regarding El Paso's vulnerabilities have remained the same. The following continue to be the top priorities and takeaways from the CNA.

1. ***Meeting Basic Needs***

One of the key takeaways from our analysis is that the ability to meet basic needs such as food and housing is directly connected to fostering economic prosperity. Many of the participants stressed that the community needs support in meeting basic needs such as food, housing, utilities, transportation. Many of the conversations stressed the need for supporting people experiencing homelessness with wrap around services like mental health and food support. The hardships caused by the pandemic has been widespread, and in many cases, it exacerbated challenges that households were already facing such as food insecurity or housing affordability. Thus, continuing to support a family's ability to meet basic needs is still necessary in order to achieve economic prosperity at the household level.

2. ***Empowering Communities***

For business owners, government officials, and our neighborhood associations, there were a number of conversations about being grateful for being invited to participate, and the desire to want to *continue* to be a part of future discussions. What we heard overwhelmingly is that community and business owners alike, want to contribute to the decision-making and planning processes. The analysis also showed that there are also perception interdependencies by empowering a broad range of stakeholders, you promote cohesive and engaged communities. Meaning, stakeholder empowerment increases the ability and confidence of the issues relating to each individual. While engagement significantly increases

participation, empowerment aims to enable people to take control of the actions that affects their livelihoods.

Interview and survey responses revealed a need for enhanced collaboration to advance local and reginal planning. We saw a desire for long-term integrated planning within each of our perception assessments. Government officials, academia, and civil society all shared the same sentiments in the *Fosters long term integrated Planning* category. Integrated planning was particularly important when speaking to neighborhood leaders in the Advanced Neighborhood Leadership sessions. Participants often highlighted the need to have open dialogues during all phases of future planning process to ensure information is equitable shared and shaped by all stakeholders. However, there was a strong expression by some neighborhood leaders that they are being asked for input and collaboration, but their input often hasn't translated into actionable change. Communities of Excellence can be the springboard for this type of planning with members of the community, organizations can collectively deploy resources based off the community needs identified in this assessment and in turn continue to collaborate.

3. ***Homelessness: Mental Health and Housing Affordability***

The causes of homelessness are extremely diverse and complex. The individual complexities that contribute to homelessness increases the difficulty of creating universal solutions to address homelessness. Our key takeaways from the Resident Survey results, showed us that community members see a higher need in addressing mental health, housing affordability and homelessness. These 3 causes arguably are linked to one another. Mental illness and substance abuse were often brought up on the topic of homelessness. Similarly, the discussions around rising costs and housing affordability were also discussed when the topic of homelessness was also raised. While some participants applauded the City's effort to prioritizing homelessness, the survey responses indicated a need to do more.

Poverty and homelessness exacerbate mental illness, and COVID-19 and the measures put in place to control the spread of the virus exacerbated metal health concerns for much of the community. Addressing this issue by identifying those in need of services and making those services accessible beyond the hours of 8:00 am to 5:00 pm will be important to meet the needs of this especially vulnerable population.

4. ***Prioritizing Multi-beneficial Projects***

Funding limitations and agency capacity is always a challenge that all sectors face. Because of this, there is a need to identify projects that include multiple benefits across sectors that achieve multiple planning goals at one time. An example of this would to be to situate programming or facilities with multiple benefits that can help address multiple vulnerabilities, such as mental health, housing and homelessness. Addressing multi-benefits like mental health and homelessness under one roof can provide supportive individualized services to community members and enables better outcomes as a result. This model can be used with all vulnerable populations because of the complex nature of their situations. Another population that comes to mind is opportunity youth, which often struggle with both education and employment. So tailoring solutions that address multiple vulnerabilities ensures that steps are being taken to find solutions to root causes and not symptoms.

**Opportunities for Improvement**

Despite information sharing and reaching across diverse sectors, we were challenged by interviewing subjects with lived experience, particularly those who are experiencing homelessness. In future needs assessments, we think a key component of our stakeholder interviews will be to ensure that voices of lived experiences are captured.

Another recommended population to capture in the future would be to ensure that the voice of our youth is represented. Particularly those within the 16–24-year-olds age range will be vital for future iterations of this assessment.