

SEPTEMBER 2022

# WALK THE WALK: ASHEVILLE PUBLIC HOUSING COMMUNITY MEMBERS SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS ON A MORE EQUITABLE CITY



**REPORT PREPARED BY**

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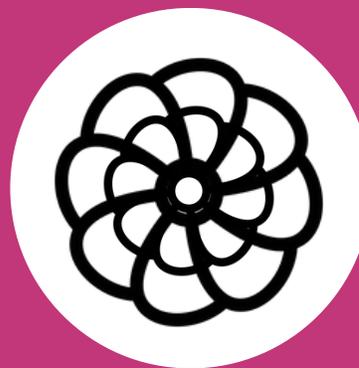
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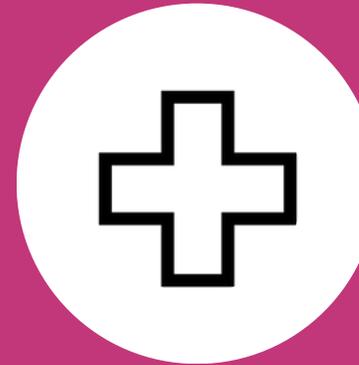
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# SUMMARY

Walk the Walk was a campaign to engage community members in a survey envisioning what an anti-racist Asheville City and Buncombe County would be like.

In the spring of 2021, RJC canvassers visited community members in four public housing communities of Asheville and asked them questions about their experiences in their communities and ideas for programs, services, and more.

The 277 interviewees whose responses are summarized and quoted in this report live in 4 Asheville communities. A majority identify as Black, about two-thirds identify as women or female, and over half were in the age group of 26-44 years.

The goal in the analysis and report was for every comment to be captured, either as part of a theme, or on its own.

The most frequently-mentioned community concerns were about kids and youth, violence, and upkeep/maintenance. Over a third of community members responded that they do not feel comfortable in their communities and the most frequently-mentioned reasons involving violence/safety and police interactions. When asked if they feel safe when interacting with police, less than half responded "yes".

Community members mentioned racism, police, tourism, and other factors related to the challenges faced by Black people and People of Color feeling safe or thriving in Asheville.

Community members are proud of the sense of community and services in their communities, and identify opportunities for more children/youth programs and many other services in their communities.

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# WALK THE WALK CAMPAIGN, CANVASSING, & INTERVIEWS

Although Asheville City and Buncombe County governments express an interest in community engagement and inclusive decision-making, their efforts to build trust and truly represent the perspectives of Black community members in policies and programming have not been successful.

Recognizing this gap between what they say and what they do, the Racial Justice Coalition (RJC) launched the Walk the Walk Campaign in 2021. Walk the Walk was a community effort to engage community members in a survey envisioning what an anti-racist Asheville City and Buncombe County would be like.



In the spring of 2021, RJC canvassers visited community members in four public housing communities of Asheville and asked them questions about their experiences in their communities and ideas for programs, services, and more. The 277 interviews were then transcribed, coded, and analyzed using a multi-step process, in partnership with and primarily conducted by UNC Asheville students and faculty and community researchers.

Our goal in the analysis and this report was for every comment to be captured, either as part of a theme, or on its own. Findings are summarized according to question asked, noting that not all people were asked all questions.

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## CANVAS & RESEARCH TEAMS



The Walk the Walk **interview team** included Kimberly Brown, Tashia (Grits) Ethridge, Guffin Hearst, Michael Westbrook, Michael Jamar Jean Francois, and Rob Thomas.

The **analysis team** included: Dr. Ameena Batada, Aryelle Jacobsen, Sophia Hackman, Molly Hackett and two **UNC Asheville** Community Health Promotion classes (see appendix for individual names), as well as **community researchers** Jensen Gelfond, Janet Hurley, and Jim Stokely.

**Special thanks** to RJC staff members Erin Barksdale, david greenson, Rob Thomas, tre williams, Phyllis Utley, Derrick Lewis, and Lauren Simms, and to Dr. Tamarie Macon for your guidance and partnership.

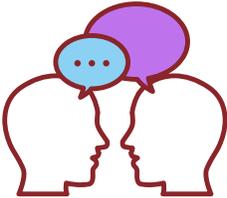
## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We acknowledge the organizational sponsors of the Racial Justice Coalition and Black Asheville Demands for ongoing support and leadership.

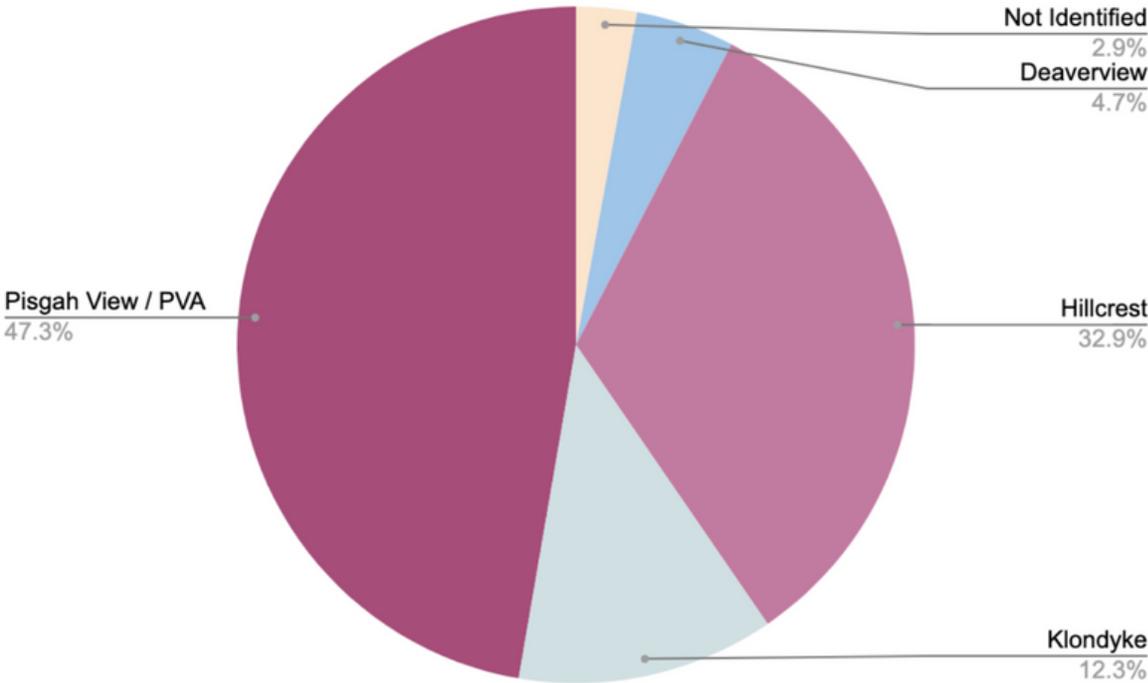
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# COMMUNITY MEMBERS CANVASSED

Over 300 community members were canvassed as part of the Walk the Walk Campaign, and 277 fully-recorded interviews were transcribed and analyzed for this report.



## Surveyed Community Members' Neighborhoods (n=277)



## Community Members' Racial and Ethnic Identities

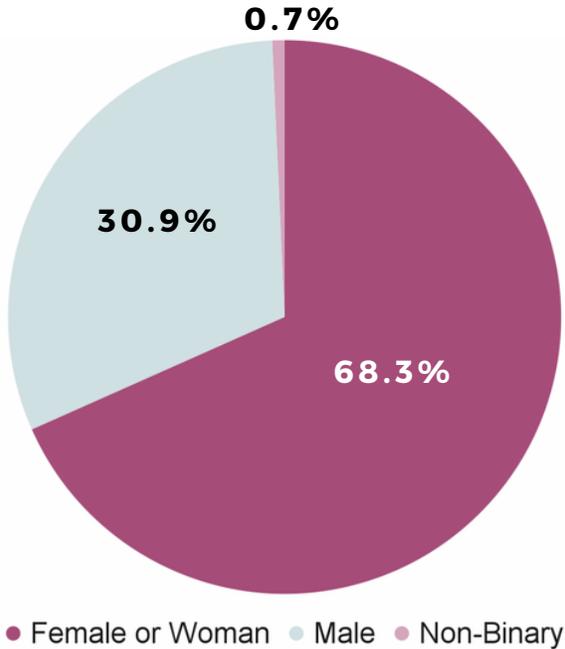
In this survey, 94 people were asked about their race, and the majority identified as Black or African American (52.2%). 26.6% identified as white and 3.2% identified as Native American/American Indian. Six people (6.4%) identified as Latinx/e/a/o or Hispanic, 4 people stated nationalities/places (Irish, American, Caribbean), two people stated that they were mixed race or biracial and two people stated that they were "human". Three people laughed or made a joke in response to the question.

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## Community Members' Gender Identities

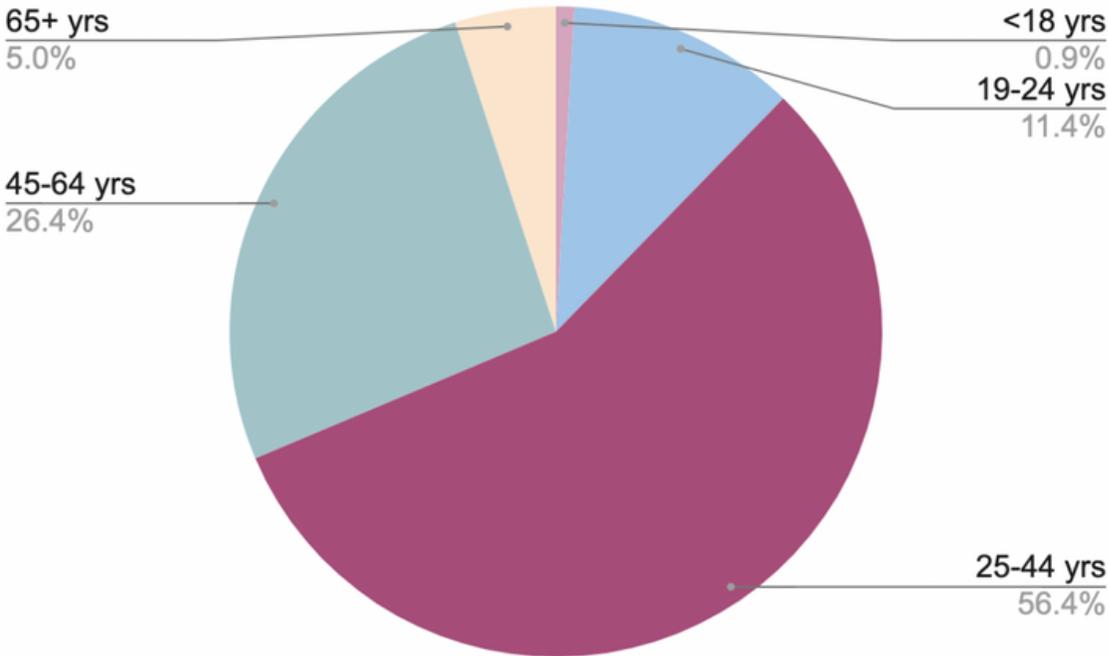
Of the 141 people who were asked about their gender, 139 provided responses. The majority identified as female or as a woman (1 person), followed by male. One person identified as non-binary.

Participants' Gender Identities (n=139)



## Community Members' Ages

Community members were between 16 years and 82 years, and the average age of the participants was 39.4 years.





# COMMUNITY CONCERNS

COMMUNITY MEMBERS WERE ASKED "WHAT CONCERNS DO YOU HAVE FOR YOUR COMMUNITY?" AND 215 RESPONSES WERE INCLUDED IN THE ANALYSIS FOR THEMES.

## Themes Related to Community Concerns (215 people)

Among the 20 themes that emerged in response to this question, concern for **youth/kids** was expressed by 38.1% of community member respondents, expressing a lack of safe community environment and high crime levels. 34.9% of community members expressed that **violence**, such as shootings and killings, were concerns. 29.8% mentioned **upkeep/housing conditions**, expressing a need for cleaner conditions in their communities, cleaner apartment upkeep, and trash pick up. 25.6% of community members voiced a concern about **drugs** in the community and that they would like for needles to be picked up in their communities. Some themes that were less common included a concern for **people outside the neighborhood**, **safety** and **police**. One person each stated concerns around: poverty, religion, race, and resources available that aren't being used.

Community Concern Themes	Percentage of People Who Mentioned...
Youth/Kids	38.1
Violence	34.9
Upkeep/Housing conditions	29.8
Drugs	25.6
People outside the neighborhood	9.8
Safety	9.3
Police	7.4
Togetherness	6.5
Racism	4.2
Access to services	4.2
Question was not asked	3.7
COVID	3.7
Nothing/no concerns	2.3
Health	2.3
Wants Peace	1.4
Justice	1.4
Bears	1.4
Specific Group	1.4
People	0.9
Voices Not Being Listened to	0.9

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT COMMUNITY CONCERNS

(Selected Quotes)

"I'm most concerned with the speed limit, and the speed bumps are so far apart, because like, it's way out here and people flying through all the time. Like I got my kids bikes but I can't even let them ride it because I don't want them crossing the street if they don't have to."

"They are infested with bed bugs. I had terminix out here yesterday for the sixth time and I've been here for two years. My son had them all over his face. I put them in a bag. I'm taking them to the CEO. I've had enough. I've had enough. And it's just one room of mine. They're coming out of the walls."

"I want to see this place cleaned up. My kids can't even walk through the park because there's so many fricking needles."

"As far as the kids, the violence in here. Not feeling safe. That's the big one there. Just not knowing when we lay our heads down at night. Is there going to be a bullet come through the walls? It's that. It's not just me. It's not. I'm white. You're black. We live here together. You know. The way I see it, we're family."

"Well, one of my personal friend's children just got killed not too long ago. And I remember last year, one of my friends stayed in the building down here. And nobody was even shooting outside. But they had guns in the building next to them. And they dropped the gun and she got a shot in her head."

"I want my kids to come outside and play and know when they go outside to play that they're safe and there's not a drug dealer on the corner trying to sell them something, or they're not going to get shot. They can go out here and play whether it's you sitting there and you're playing with them, I can trust you. You're going to smile and play with them. And if it is your kids, I'm going to smile and play with yours. All I want is peace and play and happy."

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT COMMUNITY CONCERNS

(Selected Quotes)

"You mean where I live around here? Well, there are some days that me my husband cannot get out and walk around, because whether, there's these people around here, we don't trust them. "

"Right now we need more police presence that's gonna actually do something, They ride through here every day, but they don't do nothing about what's going on."

"I guess, just, everyone in general, all the families, here, you know mothers. Voices not being heard."

"Umm, lots of race situations going on. There's Blacks missing all the time."

"Just justice and fairness"

"For older folks, you know. Better transportation for older folks, you know, stuff like that. Because I noticed I help people walk up and down when they got their little carts and stuff. I see em coming and I help 'em out. You know what I mean?"

"Children, the children. Yeah, I mean, we've been shot at like, all of these houses. They're all single mothers, you know, with like a bunch of kids. And we all got shot up, you know? Like, there's a bullet hole right there."



# FEELING SAFE IN THEIR COMMUNITY

NINE COMMUNITY MEMBERS WERE ASKED THIS IF THEY FEEL SAFE IN THEIR COMMUNITY.

When asked about feeling safe in their communities, four community members mentioned that they do not feel safe or have had bad experiences with **police**. Two community members shared that **racism** makes them feel unsafe in their communities, specifically commenting that less discrimination and better public safety would make them feel more safe. The other three comments focused on **children's safety, violence, and drugs**. 51.2%

## WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT FEELING SAFE IN THEIR COMMUNITY (Selected Quotes)

10%  
"Here in Hillcrest? Ah, no. Hillcrest is not a safe place because there's been shooting a lot."

5.2%  
"If there wasn't so much discrimination that would help."

15.6%  
"...you know police can come into your house and tell you whatever. But honestly, the law is not there to protect just like just any individual it's not there to protect people of color. And I meant that. I've lived it my whole life."

"Well, I mean, there's a lot of drug activities. I find a lot of drug needles on the ground and stuff where he walks and I have to kind of pick em up."

"I've had a really bad experience with them and the APD in particular, like, so it's really hard to feel safe and trust anyone as a single Black woman.. And I like sent my kid away and he hasn't come back. But sometimes I wonder if it's actually a blessing, because it's like a white tourist town, you know?"

# FEELING COMFORTABLE IN COMMUNITY

OF THE 249 RESIDENTS WHO WERE ASKED AND ANSWERED THE QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER THEY FEEL COMFORTABLE IN THEIR COMMUNITY, 45.4% SAID "YES," 17.3% SAID "NO," AND 37.3% SAID THAT "IT DEPENDS", "I DON'T KNOW", OR ANOTHER RESPONSE.

## Themes Related to Feeling Comfortable (142 people)

Among the 18 themes that community members expressed, 21.1% emphasized concern for **safety/violence** such as shootings, guns, and overall drug use. 19.7% voiced **issues with police** including experiences with racist and hostile police. Additionally, 14.1% of people emphasized **ideas about police** such as the use of tasers over firearms, and having police come into the community more consistently. 11.3% highlighted **ideas about community members** including lack of trust and wanting people to care more about the community. 9.2% expressed that **keeping to themselves** such as staying inside and not socializing makes them feel more comfortable. Other themes include **ideas about people outside the community, the importance of togetherness, youth safety, and security.**

Feeling Comfortable Themes	Percentage of People Who Mentioned...
Safety/Violence	21.1
Issues with police	19.7
Ideas about police	14.1
Ideas about community members	11.3
Keeping to self	9.2
People outside community	7.0
COVID	6.3
Ideas for Activities for kids	6.3
Placement of security cameras	6.3
Drugs	6.3
Togetherness	6.3
Physical environment	4.9
Comfortable - long time resident	4.2
Youth safety	2.8
Security	2.8
Ideas about community activities	2.1
Ideas about housing	2.1
Racism	2.1

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# FEELING COMFORTABLE IN COMMUNITY

**IN ADDITION TO THE THEMES SHARED IN THE TABLE ABOVE, COMMUNITY MEMBERS SHARED COMMENTS ON THE FOLLOWING (ONE INDIVIDUAL EACH):**

- Wants to feel comfortable while also wanting to leave
- Can't pinpoint when they feel comfortable vs. when they feel uncomfortable
- More comfortable without program that gives out clean needles, have a mobile library instead
- Ideas about crime: need private property to put cars on to prevent them from being stolen and things to prevent break ins
- Safer here than where they grew up
- Government does not support low income people
- Asheville turning tourist
- Feels uncomfortable outside neighborhood
- Depends on what season it is
- Desire for all-Black spaces
- New to the area
- Bears
- Raised in a community like this
- Current state is bad/worse
- Resources for specific groups (moms, teens, small kids)
- Lack of trust (due to bad experiences)
- Moving away due to feeling uncomfortable
- Feels safe (well lit)
- Doesn't know
- COVID

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT FEELING COMFORTABLE IN THEIR COMMUNITY

(Selected Quotes)

"I need to do something about the shootings and the stabbings and the people getting beat almost to death. yeah, it's weekly. And the drugs need to go."

"I feel like if the police weren't doing discrimination and stuff. I would probably feel more comfortable. And if Asheville was not turning into a tourist place with a bunch of rich white folk, it would be better. My honest opinion."

"What would make me feel more comfortable? Less violence, more gatherings where no fights. A community is supposed to be people who come together not just fight all the time, like some type"

"I feel comfortable in my community as far as where I live, but there should be more activities for our children to do. They have nothing for the babies."

"Keep white folks out to keep the cops away."

"what would what would make me more comfortable to see more interaction like more police coming, around not just harass people but to look around the complex, not to be bothering anybody, to be coming around every hour - 15 minutes - two hours, not just when anybody calls and then you come out and you're jumping to conclusions."

"My man right here is white. He's ok. He's a white guy. Police came and they said he have a gun in house. But they was out here, four hours with this guy. Trying to get him off the porch. He was running in and out of the house. Now that would have been me? I would have been down, 18 bullets in me. So all the officers that came was like 20 plus officers, bro, not one of them was Black."

"It's the space just like they got us living like we in jail and this is supposed to be a community for single mothers and their children because y'all get mad when they baby daddy stay right so it's for mothers and children and you got us living like we're in jail."

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT FEELING COMFORTABLE IN THEIR COMMUNITY

(Selected Quotes)

"We stay inside that's as far as we go. That's what we do. We just stay inside, that's the truth. We tell our kids too, don't go past right here."

"But in general, it needs like all the cameras they put in the yard, they need to kind of put some on our private property, like our cars and stuff. I've had my car stolen almost twice, almost three times. I've had my house broken into three times. Filed police reports on all of them."

"Just uh figuring out a way to stop...young kids got,young kids is getting a lot of guns lately."

"But it's bad for me even roaches in other people's apartments that building is not livable."

"For people to care more. Where they live and take care of what they need to take care of. It's a really beautiful place. And, like, if you stick with the right people, they're really kind people who love to help and I see families like trying to raise their kids. And I feel opportunity to be able to like, go and get a house with a place where I feel comfortable bringing my son home."

"Those are the biggest things is the drug addicts because of the needles and like, I can barely let my kids go outside and play. They are four and five and ever since we lived here. We lived here three years now. Like I found needles anywhere from me getting out of the car to me, to them trying to sit on my porch to them, being right here in the back, like trying to shoot up in front of my kids. It's the drug use."

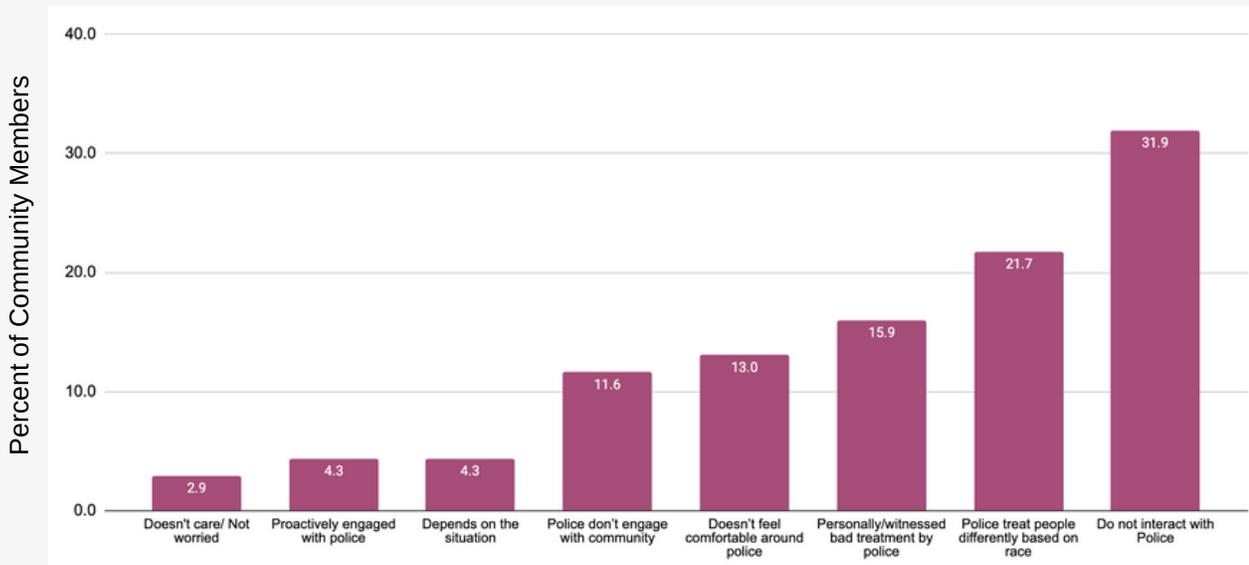
"No I don't feel comfortable and I would feel more comfortable if they cared about us as a community as a whole and not treat us according to our race."

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# INTERACTIONS WITH POLICE

OF THE 242 RESIDENTS WHO WERE ASKED AND ANSWERED THE QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER THEY FEEL SAFE WHILE INTERACTING WITH POLICE, 47.9% SAID "YES", 27.3% SAID "NO", AND 24.8% SAID THAT "IT DEPENDS", "I DON'T KNOW", OR ANOTHER RESPONSE.

## Themes Related to Interactions with Police (69 people)



31.9% of community members voiced that they **do not interact with the police**. 21.7% expressed that **police treat people differently based on race** where community members stated that they have experienced racial profiling or they feel safe because of their whiteness. 15.9% highlighted that they have **personally experienced or witnessed bad treatment by police**, including police acting aggressive towards all community members and police brutality. 13% expressed that **they do not feel comfortable around police** because of witnessing bad treatment by police and uncertainty around which officers are "trigger happy". 11.6% voiced that **police don't engage with the community** stating that they don't show up when they're needed. Other themes were: **depends on the situation, engages with police**, and **doesn't care about police**. Individuals included: **likes police in Asheville, feels safe because they know how to talk to police, environment with gun violence, feels safe with police**, and **needs to visit other methods of public safety to keep each other safe**.

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT POLICE INTERACTIONS

(Selected Quotes)

"Somewhat. I mean, their authority, but you know, you kind of have that edge. What do they think, you know, when they come towards you, you know."

"Sometimes you can call them and they won't come and mostly they're just corrupt. We'd had a lot of things happen in this community where it could've been taken care of but it wasn't."

"Well I've had my past with police officers, I let them do their job and and you know what I'm saying, stay to my business. Do I feel safe? No."

"There's a video on youtube called Corrupt Asheville Police. You can go look at that and it'll tell you why none of us are safe. "

"You know I was raped and then the police were calling me a f\*\*\*\*\*t and s\*\*\* when they thought I couldn't hear."

"Um, they just racist as hell. They come in here, like for a white person calling they just like being normal but when it's someone that has color, they come like with like aggressive."

"Very hostile, I mean they walk around with a hand on their gun, ready to shoot anyone who walks up close and I don't think it should be like that. They don't do that when they walk into white neighborhoods so why they do that when they walk in here? It's not fair."

"You know a couple years ago a guy was shot. Everybody watched. He didn't have a gun. He was unarmed. He had mental issues. They killed him right there in front of everybody, children outside and everything. They killed him. There is no way, I don't care, because he didn't pay attention to their orders or whatever. It doesn't matter. You all didn't take time to talk to him. You killed him. You killed somebody's child, somebody's father, somebody's uncle. So as far as trust, no. They stereotype everything."

# IS ASHEVILLE SAFE FOR BLACK PEOPLE AND PEOPLE OF COLOR?



OF THE 275 RESIDENTS WHO WERE ASKED AND ANSWERED THE QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER ASHEVILLE IS A SAFE PLACE FOR BLACK PEOPLE AND OTHER PEOPLE OF COLOR, 36.0% SAID "YES", 21.8% SAID "NO", AND 42.2% SAID THAT "IT DEPENDS", "I DON'T KNOW", OR ANOTHER RESPONSE.

## Themes Related to BIPOC People Feeling Safe (104 people)

13 themes were touched upon by community members, with 33.7% of community members expressing **experiences of racism** such as gentrification and discrimination as contributing to their feeling unsafe in Asheville. 22.1% of people shared that it **depends on where in Asheville** stating that there are racist neighborhoods and also good people. 16.3% voiced concern about **police treatment** such as police being racist and hostile. 15.4% expressed that the **current state is bad or worse** stating that Asheville has become a less safe and more expensive place to live. 13.5% highlighted something related to **violence**, including Black people being killed at a higher rate than white people and police brutality against Black people. Other themes mentioned are **nowhere is safe for BIPOC in America** and **Asheville is more racist** than other places.

BIPOC Feeling Safe Themes	Percentage of People Who Mentioned...
Experiences of racism	33.7
Depends on where in Asheville	22.1
Police treatment	16.3
Current state is bad or worse	15.4
Violence	13.5
Nowhere is safe	9.6
Racism compared to other places	8.7
Asheville has potential	5.8
Get out or live carefully	2.9
Depends on personal situation	2.9
Asheville is pushing people out	1.9
Does not know because they are not Black	1.9
Been in Asheville a long time	1.9

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# IS ASHEVILLE SAFE FOR BLACK PEOPLE AND PEOPLE OF COLOR?

IN ADDITION TO THE THEMES SHARED IN THE TABLE ABOVE, COMMUNITY MEMBERS SHARED COMMENTS ON THE FOLLOWING (ONE INDIVIDUAL EACH):

- There are good people and lots of madness going on
  - People need to grow up
  - Not safe for everyone
  - Importance of trust
  - People make it safe NOT place
  - Safe place to raise a family
  - Indifferent about it
  - Transportation safety would make them feel more safe
  - Asheville is too expensive
  - Pace is too slow compared to other places
- 2.6%      3.9%      5.2%      31.2%      33.7%

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## WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT ASHEVILLE BEING SAFE FOR BIPOC (Selected Quotes)

"If the government is not making it safe for us to live nowhere, and they can kill us and get away with it and it can be caught on camera, and nothing happens, then that question answers itself."

"So, I don't know how to answer that question down, you know, I really don't. Because they really are good people, but then there are a lot of craziness. Yeah, there's a lot of madness going on too."

"Because I personally have been victimized by people of the opposite race. I'm not racist, but a lot of people are racist. And there's a lot of them in Asheville. I've seen them personally driving, walking, throwing stuff at us out of cars like yesterday."

"No. I've done witnessed it, a million times, being pulled over, a million times. I worry to death about my boys."

"I just feel like there's a lot of racial tension here, with the police and with just other people who live in Asheville, I just feel like black people in Asheville are, like, stepped on a little bit."

"Yeah. Depending upon where you live, if you live in the projects, and I hope I'm being recorded, if you live in the projects, it's not safe. Because if you're black, you're already a target. When the police see you and you're a black male or a black female, you are already subject to be a target in the community, when you live, in the projects."

"Because I feel like the police target black people more. Even just like going out to shop and stuff like that we're always watched and followed more than anybody else. Just with the way they're forcing black families well, even like low income families in general out of projects, and supposedly making them into affordable housing, but most of us won't be able to afford them. It's just the lack of trying to find like section eight properties"

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## WHAT RESIDENTS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT ASHEVILLE BEING SAFE FOR BIPOC (Selected Quotes)

"I mean yeah, I'm really from California. So I came out here it's cool. But I've noticed living when I've been in the south. People are more prejudiced."

"Not with the KKK riding around. Not with all these people who are so intimidated that they call the police for nothing. No, I do not think Asheville is a safe place for black people. I don't think the United States is a safe place for black people."

"No Asheville is in the Bible Belt. To me, Asheville is one of the more racist areas in this general area. Only difference is they are a little bit nonchalant about it now that Trump ain't in office no more."

"Yeah, Yeah no because they kill more black people than white. It's not fair."

"Oh, it's... Oh man. It done gentrified enough where now it's not safe."

"Because I feel like Asheville, I feel like Asheville is pushing us out, you know, like how expensive it is to live around here. And then if you don't have education, you can't get an entry level job. It's, it's hard before so I feel like they're pushing us out and moving other people in here."

"I would say yeah, just because the simple fact that there's other communities that are a lot better than- we're just in the hood. I wouldn't even say the hood is not safe but you know I'm saying it's just because it seems like it's a hit and miss. Sometimes you know people act stupid sometimes they don't. You know it just depends. Asheville, but I love Asheville because it's so big and it has so many opportunities and whatever."

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# IS ASHEVILLE A PLACE WHERE BLACK PEOPLE AND PEOPLE OF COLOR CAN THRIVE?

14 COMMUNITY MEMBERS WERE ASKED WHETHER ASHEVILLE IS A PLACE WHERE BLACK PEOPLE AND PEOPLE OF COLOR CAN THRIVE. 3 PEOPLE SAID, "YES", 6 SAID "NO" AND 5 SAID "IT DEPENDS."

## Themes Related to Thriving in Asheville (Among 7 People Providing More Information)

Of the 7 community members who provided additional information, 3 stated that **discrimination and racism** such as not giving Black people jobs, and police brutality against queer Black people makes Asheville a place where BIPOC cannot thrive. Two mentioned that the **effects of tourism**, such as increasing prices in Asheville, creates barriers for BIPOC to thrive. Additional comments referred to: **people believing Asheville can change in the future, the reparations process, Asheville is performative, education for police officers, Asheville has changed for the worse, financial issues for everyone, and challenges due to COVID.**

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS HAVE TO SAY ABOUT ASHEVILLE AS A PLACE FOR BIPOC TO THRIVE

(Selected Quotes)

"Financially, nobody can. And this is talking this is actually not even just the Black community. Like even with the white community, like if you not, it's bread. If you don't have the bread you can't do it. Asheville, North Carolina period, is so much of a tourist trap. You know what I'm saying, they care more about the bread that's coming in, you know what I'm saying. They need to be better with that too."

"You know Asheville's the kind of town you know where owners of a place will put up a black lives matter, or you know a pride sticker or something, in their window, and cool you know the owner supports people. That leaves nothing about the people who work there or the customers or anything so you know good for the people that own the place but that doesn't really mean as much as some people think it means in my opinion and in my experience."

"The whites here have a better chance and it goes so far like their ancestors what they lived and who owns what, who knows who. I guess it's what you make it, the obstacles, the things you have to do. That's a lot.

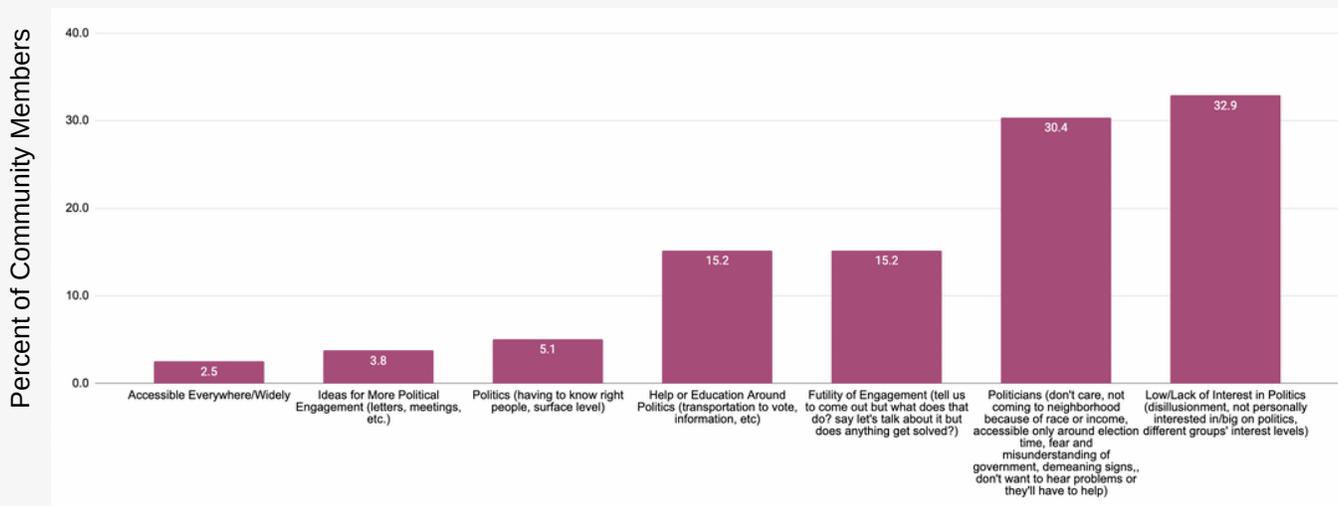
It's a lot but as far as they, I think you can have it everywhere but they have it. Some places have a little bit more obstacles and hurdles you have to jump to get it opposed to. I mean I have a white friend that helps me, I use my white friend. I use them to my benefit. They go to stores. They aren't looking at me, they're looking at you."

# ACCESS TO LOCAL POLITICS



OF THE 249 RESIDENTS WHO WERE ASKED AND ANSWERED THE QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER THEY HAVE ACCESS TO LOCAL POLITICS, 33.7% SAID "YES", 30.5% SAID "NO", AND 35.5% SAID THAT "IT DEPENDS", "I DON'T KNOW", OR ANOTHER RESPONSE.

## Themes Related to Access to Local Politics (79 people)



77 people elaborated, allowing us to better understand their responses. **Level of interest in politics** came up the most often, with 32.9% of people commenting about their or own others' lack of interest in politics. **Politicians** were also mentioned often, by 30.4% people. People commented that politicians don't care, only visit neighborhoods of more wealth or that are white, and they don't want to hear about problems because they would then have to fix them. 15.2% talked about the **futility of engagement** and an equal number mentioned some type of help or education related to local politics, such as receiving candidate information or transportation to vote. Other themes that were less common included the **politics** of local politics, **ideas for more engagement** with local politics, such as letter-writing and meetings, and a couple of comments about how **politics are widely accessible**.

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT ACCESS TO LOCAL POLITICS

(Selected Quotes)

"It's accessible, but like I said, from what I'm seeing most of the younger generation, does not really care too much about politics. And I don't think they realize how much it directly correlates to what they do on an everyday basis."

"I ain't never seen em, I ain't ever seen none of them come out here in none of the projects you feel me. You know coming out here and show their faces you understand y'know might probably make a difference, but until then, that's not gonna happen."

"They're accessible but they're not really doing anything for us. Reparations and things, we're not hearing a word about it. And I've been here all my life, so reparations need to come forth."

"Not so much here, maybe because it's more of low income and they don't really worry about low income very much. They worry about the other parts more."

"They're all crooked .. 85% of them, you got your 15% who want for the community, want for the people .. It starts at the top. .. They don't have any elections, it's either until they die or retire. They still have bitter racist white people for like fifty years, still stuck in the 60s."

"Local? Yes. Okay. There's a lot of people that. As a matter of fact, Asheville is a white city. But it's white folks that care about black folks. So you know, I can't discriminate against them because like you're saying some of them got on to where you just, like when you know, they stand for the right thing. And like you say, that black March, with seeing all of them the first time and all the white folks were standing with us like back in the Martin Luther King Day, that shocked me. So you know."

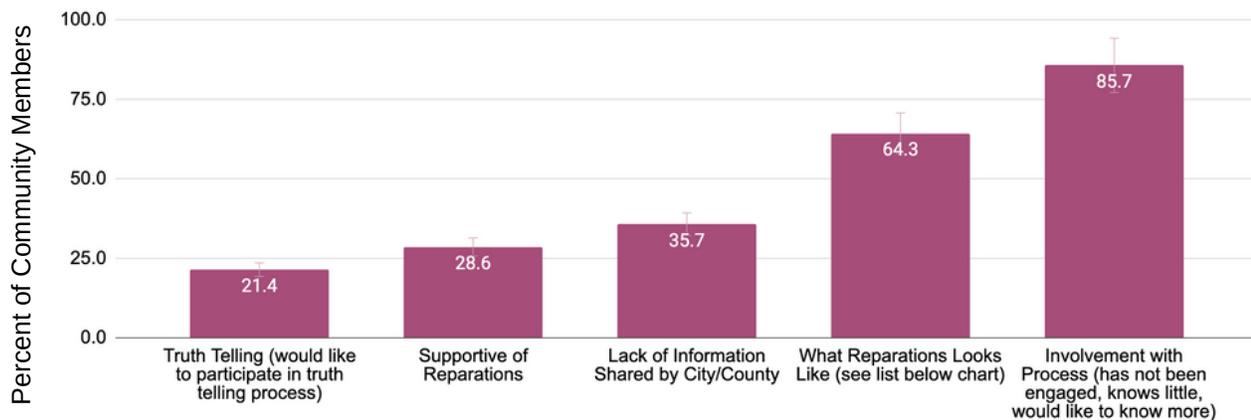
"But politics is not in these communities, none that I've been to. And I've been to all of these complexes, there's no politicians, there's no offices, there's no way to get in contact with politicians, because they don't visit the neighborhoods. They visit the white neighborhoods down in Biltmore and shit like that, but they don't come here. So yeah, you know what I'm saying, black people don't have no accessible politics at all."

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# THOUGHTS ON REPARATIONS

EIGHTEEN COMMUNITY MEMBERS WERE ASKED A QUESTION ABOUT REPARATIONS. PHRASING OF THE QUESTION VARIED, WITH MOST PEOPLE ASKED THE QUESTION OF WHETHER THEY HAD HEARD ABOUT REPARATIONS.

## Themes Related to Reparations (14 people)



Community members discussed various aspects of reparations in their responses to this question. The most common theme, mentioned by over 85% of people who talked about reparations, was related to **not being engaged, knowing little, or wanting to know more** about the reparations process. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents discussed **what reparation looks like, including:** cash, land, affordable housing, truth-telling, infrastructure investments, public health resources, policing, community investments, and financial education. Over a third discussed the **lack of information shared by city and county officials**, nearly a quarter explicitly mentioned they were **supportive of reparations** even though the question did not ask about their level of support. Three people mentioned that they **would like to participate in truth-telling processes**. One person commented **positively** on the process and current representatives in office.

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT REPARATIONS

(Selected Quotes)

"Um just how you all are doing it, coming out and telling us about it. I mean a lot of people don't look at tv so if you are announcing it on Tv, we won't know about it."

"Something like, one of them cities, got like, like a cash payment, fifteen hundred, that's what I would like."

"I heard something about it last year. City council said something about it. Trying to do something about it."

"Yeah, they need to turn over land, they turn to turn over money, they need to turn over royalties. I can keep going. (Laughs) I can keep going."

"Money and land- Absolutely, Asheville gets grants all the time but they only put it in places like Biltmore or places they can make money off of. Never back into our communities...It's enough money for everyone out there. But they are just keeping it and putting it where it accommodates them. They're not putting it where it's needed cus if they did these places would have been remodeled. They have been here for years and when you look at them, you can tell they are old."

"I mean, it's long due for it, cause like, honestly with the Black community, we need that. We most definitely need that. Most definitely."

"I'm sure that they're aware of it by word of mouth, because it's something that's being talked about a lot. And with the representatives that we have in office right now, they've made it crystal clear."

# IDEAS FOR PROGRAMS & SERVICES



## 256 COMMUNITY MEMBERS TALKED ABOUT THEIR IDEAS FOR COMMUNITY PROGRAMS OR SERVICES.

Over half of community members (57.4%) mentioned **programming for children and youth**, such as safe playgrounds/parks, afterschool, art, teen-specific programs, and sexual health programming. 15.4% mentioned **community processes**, such as meetings, involvement, community watch, and relationship-building, and 14.1% mentioned **programming for non-children groups**, such as people who are homeless, single parents, mothers, elders, and teachers. Desired **education resources** included GED, financial, computer, and preschool resources. **Community infrastructure** included clean-up, fixing streets, wifi, and **medical assistance** included ABCCM, drug addiction assistance, and general medical support. Within the **housing** theme, people mentioned section 8, smoother processes, and availability. One person each also mentioned: emergency funds, laundromat or convenience store, programs to reunify mothers with their children, and communication from the government.

## Suggested Programs and Services (256 people)

Programs and Services	Percentage of People Who Mentioned...
Children/Youth programming	57.4
Community processes	15.2
Services/Activities for specific groups - not children	14.1
Education programs	11.7
Community Infrastructure	7.0
Food assistance	6.6
Medical assistance	5.1
Recreation & community centers	4.3
Housing	3.9
Stated that they did not know	2.0
Churches	2.0
Already resourced	2.0
Cleaner/Maintained facilities	1.6
More police security/interaction	1.6
Opportunities	1.6
Violence prevention/reduction	1.6
Transportation	1.2
Helping finding living wage jobs	1.2
Community garden	1.2
Political engagement	1.2

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT NEEDED PROGRAMS & SERVICES (Selected Quotes)

"Like put them...have a shelter for them after we go through with this cold weather. Like how it is and not just give them limits on them beds in them shelters".

"I don't know that like neighborhood Watch is still a thing... just more people just looking out for each other, really just coming together, instead of like tearing each other apart you know and tearing each other down. "

"A lot of these single parents need help. People not coming in and taking over their apartments. So a lot of them don't want to have it because it's embarrassing, but they do need help with their kid."

"I think just helping people find sustainable, like living wage jobs would be really important."

"And maybe the garden and stuff back over here that they used to have before."

"I would like to see more programs for like the older kids... like maybe the 13 to 17 year olds because there's not really much for them to do after school and then they get into trouble doing other stuff, trying to fill the boredom. I have kids in that age range too. So I'm like, you know, very worried about failing."

"I mean it would be nice to see law enforcement in here more. At one point you know we did see them here. They were here, they were interacting with the kids. They were playing ball with them. It was like...you know they tried. And then it's like, all of a sudden it just stopped, you know and like, why? It's like it's like, they tried, you know, and when I say they tried, they would come in here, and they would get on foot, and they would walk, and interact, and they would say, "How are you doing today?" and "Hey how are you?"

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT NEEDED PROGRAMS & SERVICES

(Selected Quotes)

"Not being so much of a food desert, like set up one of the smaller buses to actually take people to Ingles. So, people aren't having to take the bus, because you don't buy everything you need when you gotta take the bus, so doing something about, yeah we've got groceries everywhere, but if you don't get to them, you can't get 'em. I own that car and there's a couple neighbors I drive couple of times a month."

"Stricter gun laws, because like I said, we can be sitting here and right outside my, our window right here, they can be shooting them off up in the air or wherever. And I don't...I just don't...whether it's white people or other people, you know, like Indians or Native Americans is still not safe for us here. So we're working on moving."

"Show these children that they can be young entrepreneurs, get them jobs, college degrees... Don't be a slave by us staying in the community as, like this right here. Growth. Growth and development."

"I feel like Asheville help out a lot better because I'm from California and I've been to other cities in between. I feel like Asheville will help you out a lot faster than any Other places I've been to. Asheville is good on helping try to try to help people. I noticed they try to help you out more if they see you trying to help yourself. For real"

"Honestly I think these complaints and these surveys and this stuff needs to be taken to whoever is investing because somebody is paying for this. And if they're paying for it and knowing what like, what if I was to call WLOS out here and show them what the fuck I just got out of my son's bed and show them his skin because I can go and get a record to show every time they've been down here because I signed a work order every time."

# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE PROUD OF IN THEIR COMMUNITY

OF THE 269 RESIDENTS WHO WERE ASKED WHAT THEY WERE PROUD OF IN THEIR COMMUNITY, AND WHAT WOULD MAKE THEM MORE PROUD, AND 259 RESPONSES WERE ANALYZED FOR THEMES.

## Themes Related to What Community Members are Proud of in Community (252 people)

Community members' comments reflected at least 13 different themes. The most frequent theme was **sense of community**, with 32.5% of people sharing that they're proud of how people look out for each other and how their neighborhoods feel united. 31% of community members stated something related to how they were proud of **existing programs and services** in their community, such as food distribution of educational programs. 26.6% of community members expressed that they were proud of **changes over time** such as less racism and crime. 17.5% of people stated that they were proud of **nothing** in their community. 12.3% of community members expressed pride in the **physical environments** of their communities, such as people having a place to stay and neighborhood upkeep. Other themes include **less violence, police presence, quietness, and people doing the best they can**.

33.7%

Proud of in Community Themes	Percentage of People Who Mentioned...
Sense of community	32.5
Existing services and programs	31.0
Changes over time	26.6
Stated nothing	17.5
Physical environment	12.3
Stated that they don't know	5.6
Managing Covid	3.6
Less violence	2.8
This survey	2.4
Police presence	2.0
Education	1.2
It's quiet	1.2
People doing the best they can	0.8

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE PROUD OF IN THEIR COMMUNITY

Additional aspects of their community that make them proud (mentioned by one person each) include:

- Warm weather
- No violence right now
- The schooling system
- People have hope
- People survive
- Safety for others healingStick to yourself and stay out of other people's business

3.9%

5.2%

"Yeah the community center, they help kids with their homework on computers, they let them go, if they need some help, they help them and that's pretty good to me."

"DC coming into this community, this orchard over here, they offered to have an orchard over here. And this spring, we're going over there and we're going to help revive that orchard. There's things this community center up here is amazing. Absolutely amazing. The daycare and the headstart right up here. My little girl went there. And she did awesome."

"We come together. And I like that. I don't care what it is, or whatever, something happens or goes up. Everybody flops together, and they look out for each other and I'm proud of that. We are a united community? So yeah, I'm proud of that. Even though you don't know each other, you hear about something going on, you just, everybody just, go to that meeting. You know? Yeah, I'm proud of that. And we have small little things, you know, when people are looking out to help people and stuff like that, but we come together. I'm proud of that. Do you hear about this person having a problem or that person have a problem? You don't have to know 'em. But you look at them as yourself. And we unite. We just come together."

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT WHAT THEY ARE PROUD OF & WHAT WOULD MAKE THEM MORE PROUD

(Selected Quotes)

"Feeding the kids their school lunches and how they've been so routine with that. They've been doing good with that so I'm proud of that"

"I say the Christmas program, because I could barely get my sons something for Christmas, but the Asheville DC people came and walked around here. And they gave out a lot of gifts. "

"The single moms out here, the single parents that band together when stuff is real and we got to come together, we do as a community, which is good, so ok I'm not going to complain about that part, but it's a lot of other changes that can be made."

"They offer affordable living for those that live in low income standards. That's basically what I see."

"That people unite and helping each other out and being kind to each other and it's a little less violence than it was."

"They remember faces, even if they don't know names, they know you live, they know you live here and it's hey, what can I do for you and, like seeing me get my groceries out of the car and carrying them up to the porch for me. I mean little little stuff like that. And then, when they do the food pantry every month, I appreciate that because...but yesterday I got a box of vegetables on my porch. And even if I don't use them all, I know other people that will. That part of the neighborhood just kind of makes you feel good."

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# WHAT COMMUNITY MEMBERS SAY ABOUT WHAT THEY ARE PROUD OF & WHAT WOULD MAKE THEM MORE PROUD

(Selected Quotes)

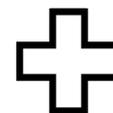
"My kids were able to see a psychiatrist who they could just talk to and be open with and they get extra help with schoolwork and stuff like teachers and all the administration and stuff like, they go above and beyond for the students here. In other places they don't. They give up. If you don't get it, we'll pass you anyway. They'll send you on."

"Really nothing. To be honest it's just getting worse. All the shootings are getting way worse. There was two behind our building last night."

"I've seen a lot of Black Lives Matter. Even when them haters and the police and the KKK and the racist people come try to destroy it. They ain't let them? I seen that, and I respect it."

"It would take a lot to just sit back and think, you know what could happen here. You know, because a lot of us just go we're here, we're forgotten, no one really gives a shit. It's like, when law enforcement is called, it takes them, excuse my language, it takes them fuckin' forever to get here. What? Do we not matter? What? Because we do not live here we do not matter? And I'm sorry to say it, we just don't matter. I'm sorry to say that but it's just how we feel."

"I mean, they try to look out as far as like, whenever the Corona shit was going on, and they would bring like, bus, this that would have like bags of vegetables, or, you know, like bread, milk, eggs, shit like that. And then they would have like, I mean, they have a tooth person that comes up in parks at the top, like in the middle. It's free, I'm not sure. But then they even have like a blood bank that comes out and parks out there too. And I mean, as far as everything with the corona, whatever they really looked out for people who don't have access to groceries who don't have a way to get what they need, you know what I mean? They have looked out for that. I mean, they drive by all the time, they just don't drive by at the right time."



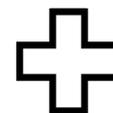
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## CONCLUSION & NEXT STEPS

The Walk the Walk campaign offers important data and serves as proof of the undeniable value of community engagement. The Racial Justice coalition along with other community partners will distribute this findings amongst the community and will provide them to government entities.

With Walk the Walk as the foundation, Racial Justice Coalition of Asheville has launched the Every Black Voice Campaign. Using the responses to the Walk the Walk survey and additional community input gathered, the Every Black voice Survey is an extension of Walk the Walk with an additional emphasis on reparations.

In the summer of 2020, Buncombe County and the City of Asheville passed reparations resolutions acknowledging past harm done to the Black community and stating their intention to repair the harm. The Every Black Voice campaign has a goal of reaching and surveying 7,000 Black community members.



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# APPENDIX: COMMUNITY HEALTH STUDENT RESEARCHERS

THE FOLLOWING UNCA STUDENTS IN A COURSE ON COMMUNITY HEALTH PROMOTION: THEORY AND PRACTICE WORKED WITH THE RJC TO DEVELOP CODING STRUCTURE FOR ANALYSIS OF THE INTERVIEWS.

Abby Jacobs		Gryphon Ridings	
Aino Tanaka		Imani Moore	33.7%
Akin Williams		Jackie Atkins	
Lexi Federico		Julia Weber	
Anna Skryd		Julie Webb	
Aryelle Jacobsen		Karlee Fish	
Ava Nikadi		Justin Rosario	
Barrett Eidson	15.6%	Katherine Bernhardt	
Baye Samodal		Katherine Magley	
Baylee Evans		Lane Carroll	
Bobby Houston	5.2%	Lauren Dunne	
Bree Moore	2.6%	Lindsay Roeder	
Bryce Fisher		Maggie Martin	
Bryson Riddick		McCartney Towe	
Chris Banks		Meredith Bunting	
Colin Taylor		Michael Thomas	
Courtney O'Malley		Molly Hackett	
Dawson Salter		Morgan Hjelsand	
Delaney Sinclair		Olivia Lenderman	
Dominic Freeberger		Olivia Peters	
Drew Bristow		Oriana Cromeens	
Emma McGann		Seth Barton	
Erin Cunningham		Sophia Hackman	
Ethan Jones		Sydney Lane	
Grace Squires		Uriel Castro	
		Vanessa Kelley	

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# APPENDIX: REPORT IMAGES

THE COVER PAGE MAP IS FROM [HTTPS://WWW.ASHEVILLENC.GOV/NEWS/ASHEVILLE-LAUNCHES-INTERACTIVE-NEIGHBORHOOD-MAP/](https://www.ashevillenc.gov/news/asheville-launches-interactive-neighborhood-map/).  
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