

### What is a Vibrant Community?

A vibrant community is a healthy, supportive, resource-rich environment that inclusively taps human, economic, and natural capital to thrive and grow together. Communities are vibrant when fourteen interrelated elements of health and well-being (shown below) are contributing and robust.

The task of creating vibrant communities asks us to understand the root causes of vibrancy as well as the impact of existing systems, and to collaborate across community sectors. It requires sector knowledge, community-driven insight, and big-picture thinking. The places we live, work, and play matter to health, well-being, and thriving. Communities are vibrant for all only when they have fairly offered options for development, mobility, and autonomy, such as: (1) supportive spaces for community and individual growth, (2) a diverse array of affordable, quality foods, (3) livable, supportive, and affordable housing, (4) educational attainment, and (5) economic opportunity.

*A child born in zip code 85256 has a life expectancy of 65.8 years while a child born in the adjacent 85251 zip code has a drastically longer life expectancy of 80.89 years.*

Crucial building blocks to a vibrant community also include pivotal social elements like equity, civic engagement, social cohesion, and community safety. Furthermore, they include air, water, and community elements both inside and outside of household living spaces. When community infrastructure is planned for sustainability, social connections, and well-being, then all people living in Arizona have the opportunity to thrive.

### The Amplifying Power of COVID-19 and Racial Inequity

The COVID-19 pandemic is deeply testing Arizona's economic, housing, food, education, and health systems. Racism has been denying equitable access to such resources throughout this country's history. Both COVID-19 and the current race dialogue are shaking communities into finding more inclusive and supportive changes to the ways we live, work, learn, and play. This Town Hall topic can be a reflective and constructive tool for much needed solutions to make our communities better and stronger going forward.



The information summarized on this handout is sourced from the 113th Arizona Town Hall "Creating Vibrant Communities" Background Report. The Elements of a Healthy Community wheel was designed and produced by Vitalyst Health Foundation in collaboration with community partners. The elements are inspired by the work of the World Health Organization and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

## The Current State of Affairs in Arizona

Arizona faces many barriers to community vibrancy. While community members play a crucial role in fostering a healthy and vibrant environment, the policies and systems surrounding communities can either promote or inhibit their ability to thrive.

- Statewide, 12.4% of individuals are considered food insecure.
- A modest, one-bedroom rental requires 57 hours of minimum wage work per week.
- One in four adults in the state meet physical activity guidelines.
- Arizona is ranked as the 9th most dangerous state for pedestrians in the United States.
- Arizona is ranked 49th for public education in the United States.
- Arizona's percentage of children birth to 17 years old who have experienced two or more Adverse Childhood Experiences (recognized as having significant negative impact on health and capacity to thrive) is the highest in the nation.
- Arizona has the 10th highest poverty rate in the United States.
- Public Health Funding is almost 50% below the national average, ranking Arizona 47th in the United States.

## Some Communities are Less Vibrant than Others

When examining disparities in Arizona, communities of color, low income communities, rural and tribal populations, and other groups that have traditionally been marginalized experience increased risks, worse outcomes, and greater barriers in accessing resources.

- The American Indian/Alaska Native poverty rate is 34%, 19% for Hispanic or Latino individuals, and 19% for Black or African Americans; it is 9% for Whites.
- In 2016, the average White family had about 10 times the wealth of the average Black family, and over 7 times the wealth of the average Hispanic family.
- In 2018, rural traffic fatalities made up 44.3% of all Arizona traffic fatalities.
- Schools serving mostly non-white students receive 46% fewer dollars than mostly white schools. This is a \$7,613 difference per student.
- 8% of African Americans and Latinos have lost homes to foreclosure versus 4.5% of Whites.
- The poverty rate in rural Arizona is 26.9%, compared with 13.4% in urban areas of the state.

## How Do We Create Vibrant Communities?

1. **Shift the Paradigm.** Go beyond individual sectors and behaviors to address holistic social conditions, systems issues, and structural inequities.
2. **Change Policies, Systems, and Environments.** Transform problems by developing transformational changes both "on the ground" and at the systems level.
3. **Support Community-Driven Solutions and Build Trust.** Work *with* a community rather than *for* a community. This includes community power-building. It all starts with trust.
4. **Utilize Multi-Sector Partnerships.** Engage stakeholders from multiple sectors to improve vibrancy innovatively, efficiently, and effectively.
5. **Embed Equity.** There is no one-size-fits-all approach. The most effective solutions come through the voices of communities experiencing the largest vibrancy gaps.