



6. SENSE OF COMMUNITY

Direction for community connections, equity and inclusiveness, and culture and identity.

INTRODUCTION

The concept of a sense of community is both abstract, and very relevant. It is abstract because it relates to interactions between individuals, and the perceptions of these individuals regarding how they relate to the community as a whole. This is often difficult to measure and track, although the City has made efforts to do so. At the same time, it is very relevant to planning for the future. It relates to how people interact with the community, how they are involved in community events, who is making decisions on behalf of the community, and what groups or individuals are being excluded from full participation in society through inequitable treatment.

TRENDS AND CHALLENGES

RACIAL/ETHNIC DISPARITIES



Despite efforts to the contrary, historic disparities in outcomes for different racial and ethnic groups have persisted over time. Many of these are rooted in past patterns of discriminatory policy and behavior, as well as unintended impacts of some modern policies. While there have been some improvements, there are still disparities in a number of areas, including income, poverty, homeownership, health care, and unemployment. A number of people also report present day discrimination based on their race or ethnicity. At times, this will require deliberate and targeted action to address.

CHANGES IN TECHNOLOGY THAT IMPACT HOW PEOPLE RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER



As evidenced most clearly among school children, the spread of smartphones and other online technology has contributed to major differences in how and where people connect with others. There are both risks and opportunities inherent in this change. On the positive side, this provides a way to communicate on a broad scale more quickly, easily, and inexpensively than in the past. On the negative side, there is less control of messaging online due to the mass amount of information, and new social patterns associated with media use may leave some feeling isolated or bullied.

BUSY LIFESTYLES NEED CONVENIENCE AND ACCESS



In addition to technological change, modern life is busier and fuller than ever – with multiple demands on everyone’s time. Survey data show that one of the biggest barriers to more participation in activities is simply lacking the time to do so. While it is not possible for the City to simplify modern life, there are opportunities to design and implement services with attention to convenience, accessibility, and flexibility.

MAJOR FACTORS

Major factors to consider while planning for sense of community in Hopkins include:

- **Strong foundation for sense of community.** A solid majority of people living in Hopkins believe that there is a fairly strong sense of community, where people are helpful and can be trusted. The concept of “home town feel” has resonated with many people who live in Hopkins. People feel connected to Hopkins, particularly at the neighborhood level. That is not true for all, but it provides a starting point for making improvements.
- **Diversity matters.** Hopkins is becoming more diverse, and that is having impacts on community in a variety of ways. Experience with discriminatory treatment in Hopkins varies greatly by a person’s background, and the same location or experience that one person finds welcoming someone else may find to be the opposite. This emphasizes the importance of hearing multiple perspective and opinions when addressing community issues.
- **Change isn’t slowing down.** Changes in the population in Hopkins continues, particularly in a population with higher-than-average turnover in residents due to the fact that the majority of housing is rental. Finding a way to connect people who are new to a community (and possibly even to the country) adds challenge, but also presents opportunity to incorporate new insights, cultures, and perspectives into the Hopkins culture.



GOAL 1

Support a strong, connected, inclusive vision of community that provides opportunities for everyone to participate in public events and processes.

GOALS AND POLICIES

Community Connections

The level of social connectedness in a community has significant implications for the future of Hopkins. Well connected residents participate in public events and activities, volunteer, vote in elections, and have their voice heard by decision makers. This builds community pride and a sense of ownership in the current and future state of the community. The City of Hopkins prioritizes connecting with people as a key element in meeting overall goals for community and quality of life.

Policies:

- Support a local community context where people have opportunities to connect with others through a variety of means, to strengthen a sense of community and enhance people's lives.
- Facilitate inclusive civic engagement through the empowerment of all community members to participate in local decision-making.
- Maintain a system of public places and facilities which strengthen community livability and support social interaction and recreation.

Equity and Inclusiveness

As demonstrated by community surveys and demographic data, both perceptions and realities of peoples' experiences in Hopkins vary significantly by their race and ethnicity. While the City has taken proactive steps to address this in recent years, there is more to be done. This may mean intentionally inclusive policies and programs, where the City will "take it to them" instead of waiting for people to ask to be included. This includes all dimensions of diversity in the community, including people with special needs and requirements for services and accessibility.

Policies:

- Celebrate, respect, and represent the diverse social and cultural backgrounds of the community and its members.
- Seek to address any disparities in outcomes through dedicated resources, partnerships, ongoing evaluation, and continuous improvement.
- Systematically and collaboratively address racial equity in evaluating public and private investments at multiple decision points, transparently report results, and make adjustments accordingly.
- Identify and help support the needs of youth, seniors, people with disabilities, and other populations with special needs.
- Address and engage renters in public processes.

Culture and Identity

Along with other aspects of the community, the culture and identity of Hopkins is an evolving concept. The history of the development of the community (from the time of indigenous peoples to present) should be recognized and preserved, as it is important to what Hopkins is today. However, the community should also seek to recognize and highlight a range of artistic and cultural contributions, including those that have come to Hopkins more recently. Community events and public spaces provide opportunities to recognize and celebrate these contributions.

Policies:

- Provide a broad range of cultural resources, events and activities that encourage community member participation, creative self-expression, and community revitalization.
- Preserve important elements of Hopkins' history and culture for future generations through preservation, restoration, and interpretation.
- Seek to identify and recognize underrepresented elements of Hopkins history and culture, including that of newer residents and groups.

GOAL 2

Proactively support the development and maintenance of an equitable and inclusive community.

GOAL 3

Recognize, promote, and preserve important elements of the city's history, culture, and arts.



GOAL 4

Promote arts and culture as tools for community and economic development.

Arts and the Creative Economy

Art can be used to define unique places, enhance community pride, and interpret local history and culture. More interactive styles can be used to reach out to the community in non-traditional ways, encouraging interaction and enhancing quality of life. Furthermore, consistent with the concept of creative economy, artists and other creative people bring energy and vibrancy to the community where they live and work. This has been proven in many communities to translate to economic gain, as it attracts people and investment to the value of a unique place.

The City of Hopkins has already made a significant investment in supporting the arts in the community. Hopkins Center for the Arts, with its prominent location and regular programming, is the most visible symbol of this. The Art Street program in downtown, which showcases a rotating variety of public art pieces, is another highlight. Other recent actions include the completion of a market study for affordable artist housing, the establishment of an arts advisory committee, inclusion of artists in the comprehensive plan engagement process, and ongoing investigation into a variety of opportunities to involve the arts and artists in the community.

Policies:

- Include public art as an element of public realm improvements, including major infrastructure projects.
- Encourage private developments to include public art or other culturally distinctive elements as part of their development plan.
- Collaborate with community-based arts organizations to support arts-related exhibits, events, and initiatives within the city.

- Encourage the location of new arts organizations and creative industries within Hopkins, particularly in the Downtown area.
- Continue to involve representatives of the arts and creative economy in Hopkins in discussions about how the city can continue to foster a supportive environment.
- Pursue initiatives and opportunities to direct more resources including: financial, staff, and in-kind – towards arts organizations and arts-related activities.
- Investigate strategies to establish dedicated and ongoing resources for public art.
- Support the Hopkins Center for the Arts, and expand its reach beyond its walls.
- Involve artists in community engagement and business development.
- Curate and maintain an active and engaging art component on the Artery.
- Explore opportunities for development of affordable artist housing as part of the City’s broader approach to affordable housing, with a focus on promoting diversity of residents of this housing.
- Encourage public and private projects to incorporate art wherever possible.

