

Community Assessment:  
Hopkins and Minnetonka  
Communities and School Districts

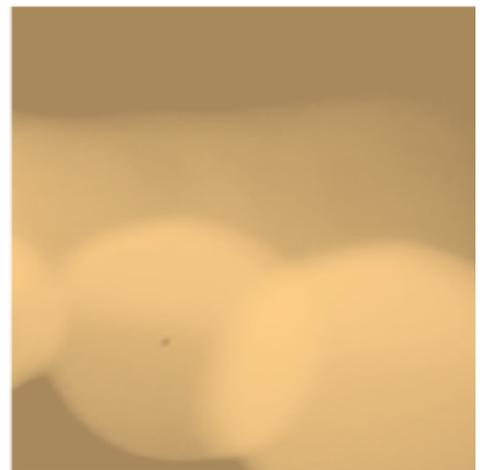
# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Prepared for

**Western Suburban Nonprofits**

by Strategic Consulting & Coaching, LLC

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## Background

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In late 2015, ResourceWest convened several community partners to discuss the rising poverty they were seeing in the western Twin City suburbs and how best to work together to address it. This discussion led to a request for funding from the Greater Twin Cities United Way and Hennepin County. The nonprofits who contributed financially are listed in the Appendix. The purpose of the funding was to conduct a community assessment to examine the issue of growing poverty, its causes, the implications and new ways of addressing the problem. As the authors of the book, *Confronting Suburban Poverty in America* state:

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*"Today, suburbs house a larger and faster-growing poor population than either cities or rural areas. More types of people and places are being touched by economic hardship than in the past, including those that may have once seemed immune to such challenges. As poverty becomes increasingly regional in its scope and reach, it challenges conventional approaches that our nation has taken when dealing with poverty in place, and it raises a number of questions. Why is poverty growing in suburbia? What are the consequences for those places and their residents? And what, if anything, should society do about it?"<sup>1</sup>*

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## Funding & Steering Committee

The funding for a community assessment was received in the early spring of 2016. A Steering Committee (see Appendix) was established with leaders from the following organizations:

- ResourceWest
- ICA Food Shelf
- Relate
- myHealth

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<sup>1</sup> Kneebone, Elizabeth and Berube, Alan, "Confronting Suburban Poverty in America," Metropolitan Policy Program at Brookings, [http://confrontingsuburbanpoverty.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Brookings\\_Toolkit\\_Executive-Summary.pdf](http://confrontingsuburbanpoverty.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/Brookings_Toolkit_Executive-Summary.pdf), page 1

- Hennepin County Human Services and Public Health Department

## Community Assessment Components

The community assessment included four main components:

1. Environmental scan of data and literature
2. Mapping of social services resources that currently are available in the area
3. Two focus groups of case managers and direct service staff, regarding what they are currently experiencing and trends they are seeing
4. Written survey of participants (clients) who sought services during three weeks in the summer months for a total of 952 surveys

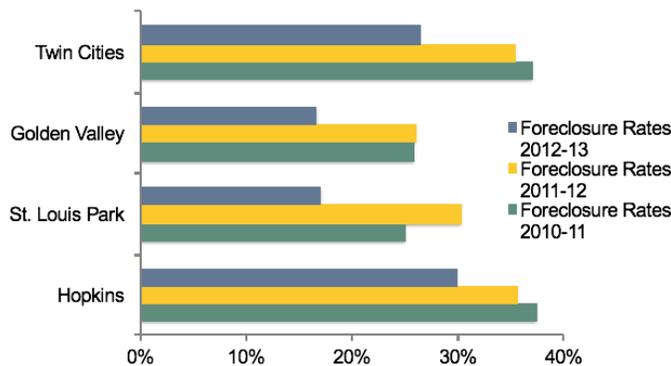
# Key Findings

## The five key findings from the steering committee’s work are:

### Housing affordability and stability is key to helping families thrive.

The housing crash of 2008 hit Hopkins harder than its neighbor, Minnetonka. Even though Hopkins has the lowest home ownership rate within the Twin Cities, the percentage of foreclosures was similar to the foreclosure rate of the Twin Cities in general (which is highly skewed by Minneapolis and St. Paul rates), but even in 2013 the city was still struggling with foreclosures. (The figures for Hopkins foreclosure rates comes from a St. Louis Park community assessment; numbers for Minnetonka were not included.)

Figure 1: Hopkins Foreclosure Rates: 2010-2013 Compared to Other Cities



[https://www.stlouispark.org/webfiles/file/community-dev/maxfield\\_slp\\_housing\\_report\\_final\\_102813.pdf](https://www.stlouispark.org/webfiles/file/community-dev/maxfield_slp_housing_report_final_102813.pdf), page 118

Meanwhile, the rents in the area keep rising. The average rent in Hopkins in August 2016 for a one bedroom was \$1,180, which is an increase of \$143 or 13.8% from January 2016.

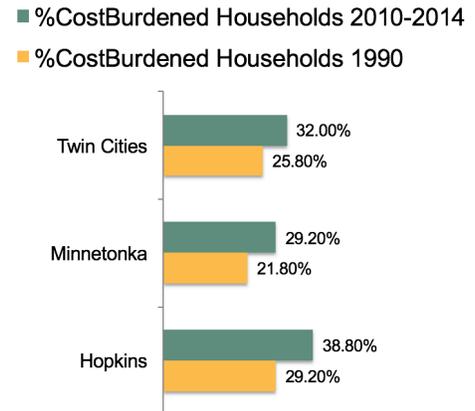
The case managers in the focus groups identified higher rents and a dwindling supply of Section 8 housing in the area as key problems for many of their participants. In addition, several affordable apartment complexes in the area are being renovated, moving renters out of the complexes and squeezing the rental market even further. The percentage of “cost-burdened households” was higher for both Hopkins and Minnetonka in 2010-14 than in 1990.

Figure 2: Cost-Burdened Households

**Definition of “cost-burdened household”:**

- Paying 30% or more of income for housing in 2010-14
- Hopkins is ranked 55 out of 60 in Twin Cities cities over 10,000 population

Source: [MNCompass.org](http://MNCompass.org) – Housing



Three of the most cited areas of immediate worry that were identified in participant surveys were:

- Finances/income (47% cited)
- Employment/work (29% cited)
- Housing (18% cited)

**Disparities among communities of color – which includes achievement gaps in education and early childhood education, lower wages and employment opportunities, and fewer housing choices – cannot be ignored by our communities.**

As both the Hopkins and Minnetonka school districts attract students from a larger number of communities, more students of color are enrolling. More than 40% of children in Hopkins schools do not identify as white/non-Hispanic. See Figure 3: Total Enrollment in Hopkins School District.

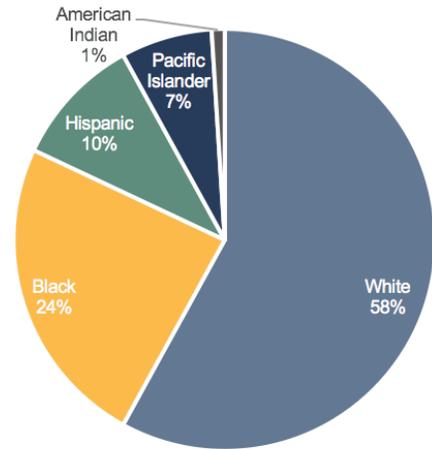
Figure 3: Total Enrollment in Hopkins School District

### Diverse population

- 46 languages are spoken



Data sources: Hopkins and Minnetonka Public Schools web sites



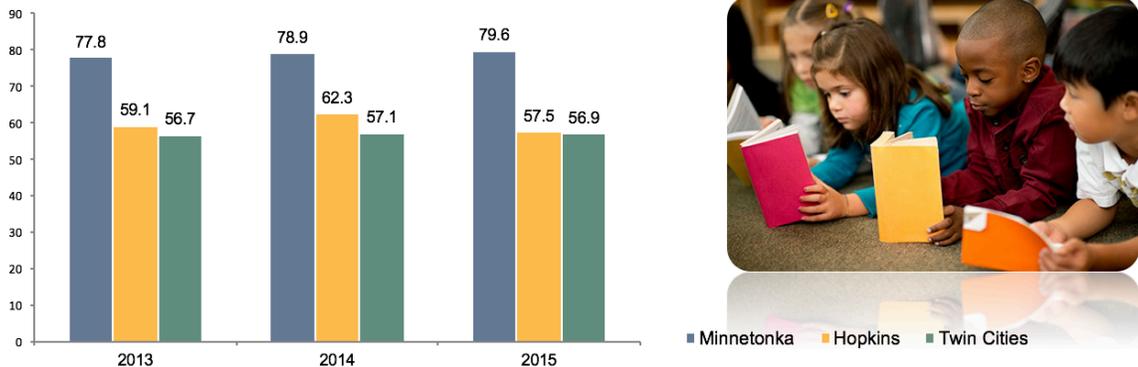
One of the key indicators of success for our children is learning how to read by third grade. In the Twin Cities overall, only 37.8% of the children of color meet reading standards in third grade compared to 69.9% of White/non-Hispanic children who meet the standard.

Although the Minnetonka school district continues to do a good job in this area, there is room for improvement in both districts, as indicated in Figure 4: Reading Standards. The steering group identified this key measure as one that will help the next generation realize more of its potential. Whether recruiting more seniors to tutor young readers or expanding after school and summer programming, our communities need to help improve the rate of reading at the third grade level.

To underscore this issue, in our participant survey, 17% of those households with children stated their children did not have “adequate stimulation and/or supervision” during the summer.

**Figure 4: Reading Standards**

**% of 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade Students Achieving Reading Standards**



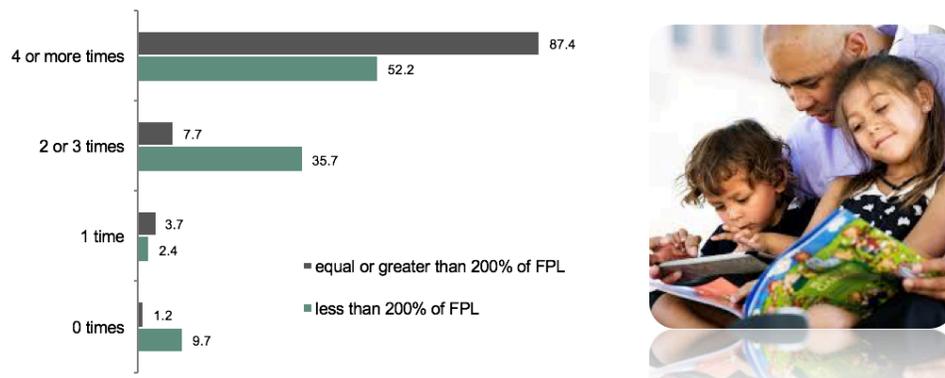
Source: [MNCompass.org](http://MNCompass.org): Youth Key Indicators

Another goal that was discussed is striving to have 100% of pre-K children be screened. In 2014, Minnetonka was able to screen 86.1%, while Hopkins screened 82%.

People of color are more likely to be in poverty than whites (21.5% compared to 9.7% in 2015 in the Twin Cities). Being in poverty or close to poverty creates burdens on households that directly impact children. For example, because of multiple jobs, lack of reliable transportation or more health issues, parents have less time to spend with their children. This shows up in a variety of measures; one critical measure is the time parents spend with their children reading or telling stories. See Figure 5: Reading to Children.

**Figure 5: Reading to Children**

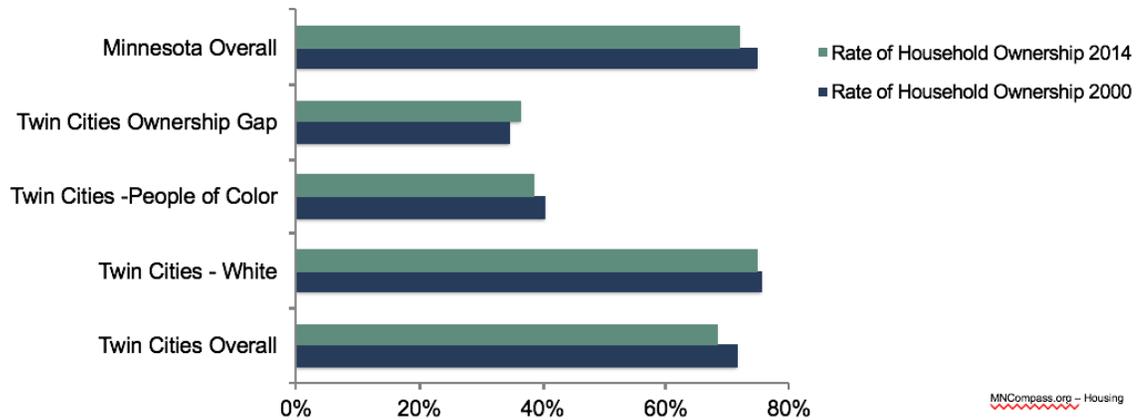
**During typical week, including weekends, how often do you tell stories or read books with the child? By Poverty Level (0 to 5 years old)**



Source: Child SHAPE 2015 – Hennepin County

The disparities gap includes employment figures, wages and home ownership rates, with homeownership rates cited below for the Twin Cities area (see Figure 6: Home Ownership Gap: People of Color - Twin Cities 7 Counties). The income disparity between whites and blacks in the Twin Cities is now \$36,673, with the gap larger than the black median income of \$30,306.

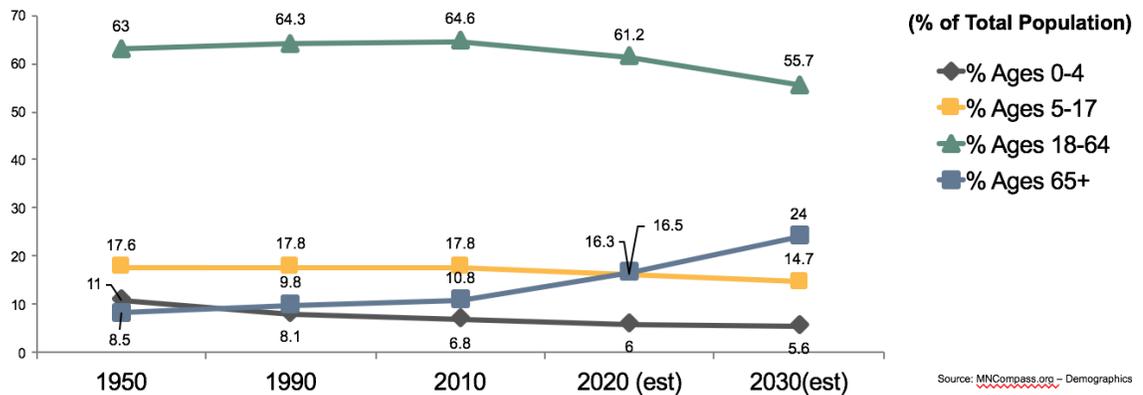
**Figure 6: Home Ownership Gap: People of Color - Twin Cities 7 Counties**



### Seniors will need more services and attention as the area’s population ages.

The retirement of the baby boomer generation is beginning to swell the ranks of seniors in Hopkins and Minnetonka. From 2010 to 2030, it is projected that seniors will more than double as a percent of the total Twin Cities population. This will create more need for services as they age, as Figure 7 below shows.

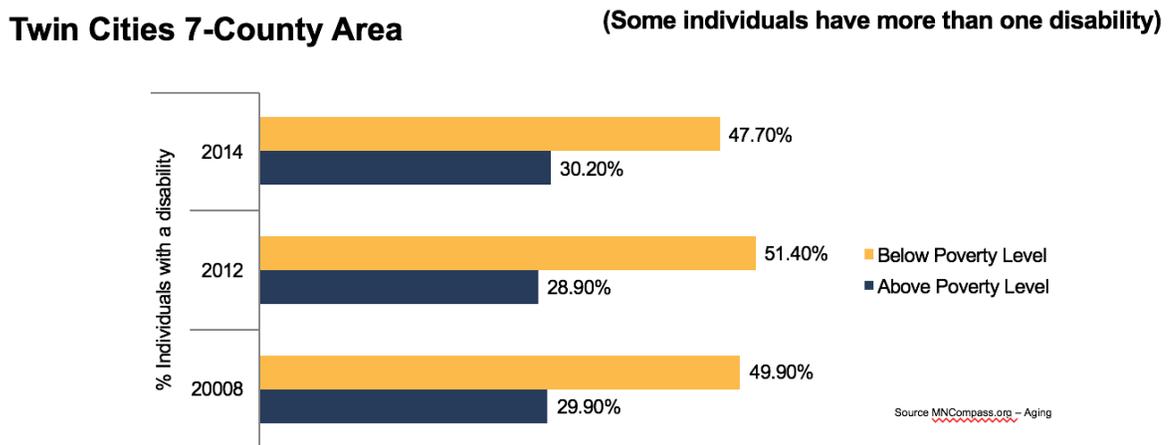
**Figure 7: Twin Cities 7-County Population Trends by Age Group**



Seniors over 65 in the Twin Cities have the highest volunteer rate (37.2%) of any of the major U.S. metropolitan areas. This group will be helpful to the community as we plan for future collaborations.

Conversely, seniors that face poverty are more likely to be disabled, making it especially difficult for them and their caregivers (see Figure 8: Individuals 65+ with a Disability by Poverty Status). During our focus groups, case managers identified seniors as a growing service area. They are especially concerned about those in the 55-65 age-range who are being laid off and can't find new employment. They also reported seeing more multi-generational living situations and are worried that seniors are not planning for their long-term health care needs.

**Figure 8: Individuals 65+ with a Disability by Poverty Status**

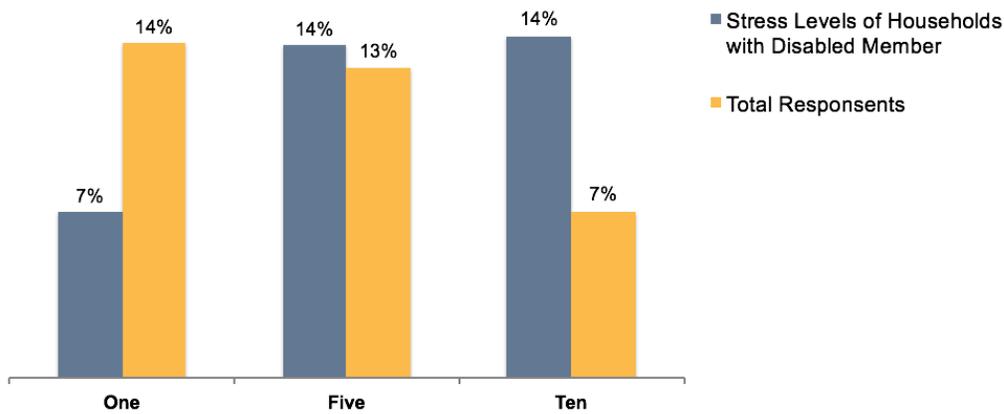


**Caregivers for household members with disabilities report more stress and worries, which are often overshadowed by other household problems.**

In the participant survey we asked if the household had a disabled member. We asked the age of the person, but not the type of disability. Twenty-eight percent of the households had a disabled member. These households reported more worries than the total respondent group (4.18 compared to 3.11), and they also reported higher stress levels than the total respondent population. In Figure 9: Comparison of Key Stress Level Points Between Households with Disabled Member Compared to Total Respondents, the stress level of “1” is the least stressful and the stress level of “10” is the most stressful.

The Hopkins and Minnetonka school districts report the proportion of special education students they have as 13% and 11% respectively.

**Figure 9: Comparison of Key Stress Level Points Between Households with Disabled Member Compared to Total Respondents**



Wilder Research recently did a study on caregivers and found:

**Figure 10: Wilder Study on Caregivers**

- **Lack of awareness of services** available to caregivers and hard to find useful information
- **Lack of culturally appropriate support** resources in Hmong, Somali and Latino groups
- Some **resistance to use In-Home services** because of concern about quality and having unfamiliar people come into their homes
- **Transportation** to out-of-home respite care not always available
- Concern over **costs of care**
- Failure to recognize that help is needed – **burnout of caregivers**



Source Lindberg, C., Owen, G., Ullstad, K., "Caregivers to Older Adults, June 2013, Wilder Research

It is important for social service agencies to remember to work with caregivers and support their needs. Many caregivers work full-time and also have children they need to care about (some of the children are also disabled). Trying to balance all of these needs tends to add to the stress and worries of the household. As the senior population grows, along with increases in problems such as autism in children, the problems associated with caregiving will also increase.

**Working together to create long-term change and service improvements has worked for our communities and should not only be continued but expanded.**

The steering committee recognized that recent collaborations among member organizations have been successful and additional collaborations should be instigated.

Three efforts were especially noted:

- Blake Road Corridor project that worked successfully over a six year period to improve the safety and community connectedness of the neighborhood
- ICA and Relate 6 month pilot project
- myHealth and Relate services into schools in both districts

During the focus groups, case managers networked among themselves and welcomed visits and tours of other social service agencies in order to learn more about each other. They also recognized that they are seeing problems and situations that are more complex than in prior years. They need adequate training and referrals to help in these situations, and they also mentioned the difficulty of keeping up on changes and service offerings. The participants in the survey also noted the importance of communication about service offerings.

## Next Steps: Creating an Action Plan to Address Needs

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- Hopkins and Minnetonka both have strengths, resources and established community responses to needs that create a strong foundation for future efforts
- Community engagement from different parts of the communities is essential in order to create an action plan that also helps to inform current and future service needs
- Agreement on priorities, service gaps and plans to address priorities is critical as we move forward
- Desire a comprehensive/collaborative plan of responses to priorities, including funding
- Steering committee members and each participant at the collaborative can share findings

## Appendix

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### Nonprofits who contributed to this project

- Community Action Partners of Suburban Hennepin
- Hennepin County
- ICA
- Jewish Family and Community Services
- MoveFwd
- MyHealth
- Open Hands Foundation
- Relate Counseling
- United Way

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