

## Survey :

# University Area Residents Want Better Housing, Jobs And Food Choices

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In the next three years, residents living in the University Area community want to see more jobs, better food security, and more affordable housing options in their neighborhood.

And that's just the beginning of the changes they say are necessary to improve their quality of life, according to the results of a survey recently released by University Area Community Development Corporation.

The survey, conducted over several weeks earlier this year, asked residents more than 50 questions in the areas of housing, well-being, employment, education, among others. About 600 surveys were completed.

Collecting that information is critical to implementing programs and establishing partnerships that can address those needs, said **Sarah Combs**, Chief Executive Officer of the University Area CDC.

"Conducting a semi-annual community survey not only gives us the opportunity to hear first-hand from



**SARAH COMBS**  
...Chief Executive Officer

residents on the needs that are most critical to them, it's also an important measure of our accountability in the area we serve," she said in a press release.

The newest survey is a continuing practice of gathering input from residents to identify areas of concern and new initiatives. A similar survey last was conducted in 2017.

Some of the 2019 survey high-

lights include: 26% face challenges regarding education, including prohibitive cost, transportation issues, and lack of a high school diploma or GED. 65% work outside of the University Area community, and 31 percent site lack of reliable transportation, poor health, and lack of education or certification prevent them from acquiring 45% report an income under \$15,000.

Turning those challenges into opportunity isn't too far-fetched, University Area CDC officials say.

At a community meeting in May, Chief Operating Officer **Josie Rocco** said the University Area CDC is looking at implementing training programs for certified nursing assistant, green landscaping, and janitorial technician – all areas that are growing and require brief training.

"Our goal is that within six weeks, you have a job," she said. "We will then help find you a job."

Residents at the meeting said offering more paths to employment is just part of the solution; the other is working with public transportation systems to improve access to jobs.

Suggestions included more bus routes on 22<sup>nd</sup> Street, a shuttle route to cover areas no longer served by bus, and lower fares.

Affordable housing is another issue on which the University Area CDC has focused lately. In the past months, it's hosted community forums on the topic, inviting affordable housing developers and community leaders to discuss solutions.

It's a topic that needs much attention. According to the survey, just nine percent of survey participants are homeowners while 72% are renters.

Barriers to homeownership include poor credit, cost of housing, and unstable income. Solutions floated at the community meeting included partnering with Habitat for Humanity to build single family homes.

University Area resident **Velma Simpson** said she's optimistic that some of the solutions presented will come to pass.

"I know it's going to take time to make it happen, I know that," she said.