Executive Summary of the Siouxland Street Project 2.0

Interviewing people who spend their time in public spaces: 2022

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Purpose: Follow-up to 2016 study to better understand characteristics and experiences of primarily unhoused people that spend the majority of their time in Sioux City's public spaces.

Design: Semi-structured confidential interviews consisting of quantitative and open-ended questions conducted in January and February of 2022. Volunteers interviewed 97 people (unduplicated). Interviews occurred at the Warming Shelter, Gospel Mission, Bright Side Café, Wilbur Aalfs Library, and the Institute for Community Alliances office.

Findings

- Demographics: As in 2016, most interviewees were male (68%). The average age was 43.75, not that different from 2016. 45% of participants were White, a change from 2016 when 47.4% were American Indian/Alaskan Native (AIAN). This compares to 20.6% in 2016, still a significant overrepresentation, as according to the US Census, 2.2% of Sioux City's population is AIAN. *(See table on other side of page.)*
- Desire to change situation: 80.4% wanted to change their current situation, compared to 68.4% in 2016. As in 2016, primary changes desired were gaining housing, employment, a better job, or more education. Participants wanted to increase stability in their lives, improve relationships with family and friends, and get assistance with medical, mental, and dental health.
- Housing status and sleeping and daytime locations: 9 people were housed, 65 were in shelters, 3 were with family or friends, and 11 were on the street, under a bridge, or in other public spaces.
  - 51.5% were very satisfied or somewhat satisfied with where they slept, down from 74% in 2016.
  - 74% said it was easy or somewhat easy to find a place to sleep compared to 72% in 2016.
  - 25.8% (down from 36%) spent 1-6 hours looking for a place to sleep; 17.5% spent more than 6 hours looking, compared to 19.7% in 2016.
  - Warming Shelter was still considered friendly, caring, helpful, and open to all. However, because it shelters people who have been drinking alcohol or use other substances interviewees told us it could be unpredictable and unsafe (especially for women and children) when situations escalate.
  - Gospel Mission was thought to be more structured, safe, and clean, but only worked for those willing to abide by their very strict rules, including Christian programming.
  - 75.3% (up from 62%) said where they spent the day met their needs. A typical routine at time of interview was: 8 am – leave shelter, perhaps eat the then-free breakfast at Brightside Café (funded by donations), go to bus station; 9 am – Wilbur Aalfs Library; 11:30 am – lunch at Gospel Mission; afternoon – Library; 4 pm – check in at Warming Shelter. 24.7% (up from 16% in 2016) spent the day looking for work. People spent many hours searching for help and navigating social service systems.
- Services desired:

	2016	2022		2016	2022
Transportation	69.5%	73.2%	Medical/health insurance help	46.4%	51.5%
Funding deposits/financial assistance	64.9%	71.2%	Mental Health	45.8%	53.6%
Housing/rental	62.9%	73.2%	Substance abuse/addiction	36.5%	35.1%
Job training/educational advancement	59.4%	47.4%			

- <u>Work and financial status.</u> 24 were employed compared to 21 in 2016.
  - Weekly income: 27 had $0, 10 (down from 17 in 2016) had $1-50, 14 had $51-150, and 36 (up from 29) had $151+.
  - Sources of income (other than paid labor): SSI/SSDI, family and friends, SNAP and EBT benefits, recycling, tribal funds, and selling plasma. 7 (down from 10) panhandled.
  - Employment barriers: Transportation, disability (especially for people who did physical labor), being unhoused, not having identification (e.g., driver's license, Social Security card)
- <u>Mental Health/Substance Abuse Services:</u>
  - 40.2% (up from 34.4%) had a mental health diagnosis; 22.7% were involved with services; 44.3% (down from 59.8%) could adequately access services.
  - 15.5% (down from 21.6%) said substance use interfered with daily life; 75.3% were not involved with substance abuse services; 62.9% could access services. It is extremely difficult to stay sober when unhoused.
  - Respondents still desired street outreach services for both mental health and substance abuse services and support in navigating complicated systems. They repeatedly mentioned needing help in replacing personal identification documents and a place to store them securely.
- <u>Arrest experiences:</u> 74.2% (down from 85.4%) had been arrested at least one time. 5.1% (down from 19.8%) had been arrested in the last 30 days; 38.9% had not had an arrest in more than one year. 11 (down from 34) had last been arrested for public intoxication.
  - 44.3% were bothered a lot by arrest, and 23.7% (down from 38.5%) were a little or not at all.
- <u>Treatment from downtown Sioux City businesses:</u> 41.2% felt treated very well. 17.5% felt treated very badly. 17.5% said they "couldn't really say."
  - Brightside Café, the Library, thrift store, and Kum & Go, were noted as friendly.
  - As in 2016, most participants felt judged for "looking homeless" when downtown. They wanted to be treated with respect.
  - Respondents mentioned positive interactions with police officers when downtown.

Recommendations from Participants:
- Create substantially more and more affordable and accessible housing.
- Increase number of landlords who accept Section 8 vouchers.
- Improve the social service system so it is more accessible and easier to navigate.
- Respect, communicate with, and better understand unhoused and very poor people.
- Create separate shelter for families to keep children away from people who are drunk or high.
- Increase social work outreach services to people on streets and in public spaces.
- Figure out a way to help people with issues around IDs, including safe storage for them.
- Establish a housing program combined with employment assistance.
- Develop an effective transportation system that works for poor people.

SSP Participant Demographic Data 2016 & 2022

Variable	2016 n	2016 %	2022 n	2022 %
2016 Age – Mean: 43.94, ±SD 10.99, Range 18-65				
2022 Age – Mean: 43.75, ±15.75, SD 15.75, Range 21-73				
	96		97	
18-29	13	13.5%	18	18.7%
30-39	16	16.7%	26	26.9%
40-49	35	36.5%	15	15.6%
50-59	26	27.1%	21	21.7%
60-69	6	6.3%	14	14.4%
70-79	--	----	1	1.0%
Sex	97		97	
Male	69	71.1%	66	68.0%
Female	26	26.8%	28	28.9%
Transgender	1	1.0%	2	2.1%
Other	1	1.0%	--	----
Ethnicity	96		97	
American Indian/Alaskan Native	46	47.4%	20	20.6%
White/Caucasian	29	29.9%	44	45.4%
African American/Black	11	11.3%	12	12.4%
Hispanic/Latino	5	5.2%	10	10.3%
Multiracial/Other	5	5.2%	5	5.2%
Served in Military	96		97	
No	84	86.5%	83	85.6%
Yes	13	13.5%	12	12.4%