



**100-Day Celebration**

**LIVABILITY LAB** 4.0  
^

MUSKEGON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

**Action Teams**  
February 2024

# LIVABILITY LAB 4.0 <sup>^</sup>

## Team #1

### Language Access Plans

**Goal:** To create language access plans at all government facilities, places of business, and agencies, and to remove barriers to access.



**100-Day Challenge**



## ACHIEVEMENTS

- We facilitated a community workshop to understand & create Language Access Plans for their organizations, which took place on January 24.
- We recruited facilitator Damian Omness from Trinity Health Regional Manager Language Services to lead the workshop.

## COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- Our workshop was made possible with help from Trinity Health, Damian's expertise and experience, and insights from community organizations such as Latinos Working for the Future and the Disability Network.
- Since the beginning, we have had representation from government, non-profit, and business sectors.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Damian created a template that can be adapted for different needs, and organizations that Team 1 represents are piloting the template (City of Muskegon, Read Muskegon, United Way, Every Woman's Place).
- We are looking for a coalition that represents most of the people who would access LAPs to help review the template and implement LAPs in the community.
- To host an annual LAP workshop, we would need a champion and an organization to host the event.



TEAM #1

## Language Access Plan

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

Facilitate a workshop for the community to understand and create Language Access Plans for their organizations.

### What did we accomplish?

- Holding the workshop (1/24/24 from 9-11 am at the Career Tech Center)
- Recruited facilitator Damian Omness from Trinity Health Regional Manager Language Services.
- Damian created a template that we can all work off.
- Organizations that Team 1 represents are piloting the template (City of Muskegon, READ Muskegon, United Way, Every Woman's Place).

### What helped us succeed?

- Community assets: Trinity Health, Damian's expertise and experience. Insights from community organizations such as Latino's Working for the Future and the Disability Network.
- Cross-Sector Involvement: We have been cross sector since the beginning by having government, non-profit, business. The template Damian created will be adjustable for different sector needs.

### What are our lessons learned?

Damian shared a lot of knowledge with his creation of the LAP Template. We are not recreating the wheel, but relying on systems that are there but need to be updated by utilizing resources in the community. Learned that keeping people updated on training for LAP is important because if they don't know how to utilize the LAP they are not valuable.

### What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?

Having an organization that can host LAP workshops each year. Suggested the Community Foundation of Muskegon, or staff from different organizations that can contribute. Coalition of people that represent most of the people that would access LAP's to help organizations review and implement in the community. If we do this once a year we need a champion as an individual or an organization.

## Team #2

### Muskegon County StoreHouse

**Goal:** To bring the Grand Rapids, Michigan nonprofit called The Storehouse to Muskegon County.



## 100-Day Challenge



### ACHIEVEMENTS

Developed a plan for how to bring the Grand Rapids StoreHouse to Muskegon, including identifying building possibilities, exploring the pros and cons of each, and analyzing what it would take for us to establish a StoreHouse on our own to increase local access to donated household and school products.

### COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- Teaming up with the Grand Rapids StoreHouse provided us with many valuable documents that helped our plan to establish a custom StoreHouse in Muskegon. Visiting the Grand Rapids location was also very motivating.
- We connected with the County Treasurer and enlisted him to join our team. His access to records and the Land Bank cut our search time in half.
- Regular residents offered different insights and connections to common problems and provided “on the ground” reasoning and connections that sometimes are missed.



### WHAT'S NEXT?

- Next steps depend on the outcome of the Grand Rapids StoreHouse board. If our request is approved, Grand Rapids will take care of paid staff, but we will need funds and volunteers to adapt a building for our needs, trucks and ramps to unload to lift to move merchandise obtained, and eventually, volunteers to run the market.
- Grants will need to be obtained to cover the many costs of the project.



## TEAM #2

# Muskegon County StoreHouse

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

Our goal was to bring the Grand Rapids StoreHouse to Muskegon, making a plan to make this happen.

### What did we accomplish?

We have identified possibilities to make this happen. We have identified building possibilities, and explored the pros and cons of possible buildings. We have analyzed what it will take to succeed in this plan and what it would take to do it on our own.

### What helped us succeed?

#### What community assets did we draw on?

- Our team was our biggest asset. Due to the time of year, it was a challenge to get our whole team together for each meeting. The team that did show up was motivated and kept the project alive. Making a trip to Grand Rapids to visit the StoreHouse was very motivating.

#### How did cross-sector involvement help our efforts?

- Not only did we draw on the County Treasurer, but we enlisted him into our team. He has records and help that cut our search time in half. He also has easy access to the Land Bank. Teaming with the Grand Rapids StoreHouse has been our biggest crossover, supplying us with documents to help launch our planning to establish a custom StoreHouse for Muskegon.

#### How did engaging residents help our efforts?

- Regular residents have different insights and connections to common problems that possibly business leaders do not have. They have an “on the ground” reasoning and connections that sometimes are missed. They also are not being paid and have a burning desire to make things happen.

### What are our lessons learned?

- Our beginning goal was not going to be easy or quick. This will be an ongoing project that will take quite a while to obtain. It is obtainable with a lot of work.
- Establishing the order of things within our planning. (not putting cart before the horse)
- You get more production and involvement from the team, cross-sector and members by not doing it at the busiest time of the year.

## Team #3

### Community Farms & Gardens

**Goal:** To identify successful community gardens and farms throughout Muskegon and Muskegon Heights and create a go-to resource for the public to access.



### 100-Day Challenge



## ACHIEVEMENTS

We created an interactive web-based map (Google) reflecting information on existing community gardens and farms in Muskegon and Muskegon Heights.

## COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- We worked with community gardens, urban farms, and other organizations in Muskegon and Muskegon Heights to identify existing projects.
- We relied on knowledge and information from local food system and nonprofit organizations, including MSU Extension, Community enCompass, Kids Food Basket, Lakeshore Flavor, and Feeding West Michigan.
- Involving residents helped us understand what was important to the garden owners as we compiled and presented the information to the public.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Lakeshore Flavor and HW Farms committed to creating an incubator farm program that will teach Muskegon County residents how to establish and nurture their own farm businesses.
- This program will include three produce-generating community garden sites, two in Muskegon Heights and one in the city of Muskegon.



TEAM #3

## Community Garden Database Project

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

To identify and compile information on existing community gardens and farms in Muskegon and Muskegon Heights

### What did we accomplish?

We created an interactive web-based map (Google) reflecting information on existing community gardens and farms in Muskegon and Muskegon Heights.

### What helped us succeed?

#### What community assets did we draw on?

- Knowledge and information from local food system organizations and nonprofit organizations.
  - MSU Extension
  - Community enCompass.
  - Kids Food Basket
  - Lakeshore Flavor
  - Feeding West Michigan

#### How did cross-sector involvement help our efforts?

- Informed our understanding around gardens that were operational and challenges impacting the sustainability of community gardens in Muskegon/Muskegon Heights.

#### How did engaging residents help our efforts?

- To ensure that our information was reliable and up-to date.
- Additionally, it informed the awareness of efforts to support the continued development of community garden work within the Nelson neighborhood.
- Understanding what is important to the owners of these gardens as we planned to compile and present this information to the public.

### What are our lessons learned?

- Having multiple champions present that are passionate about the challenge (in this case it was food systems, community gardens, and access to fresh produce) is important.
- Being creative in the midst of change will ultimately benefit the team and your project.

# LIVABILITY LAB

MUSKEGON COUNTY, MICHIGAN

## Livability Lab 4.0 Team #3

### **Amplifying the Need for Support**

In this project's first phase, we illuminated the need to support our existing community gardens in the Muskegon area. These vibrant spaces are more than just food sources; they are social, educational, and cultural connection points that strengthen the bonds within our community, particularly among BIPOC residents and low-income families. By gathering data on the location, types of produce grown, and success stories, we hoped to amplify the voice of these gardens. This effort highlights the necessity for continued support and investment from local residents, businesses, and government entities, ensuring these gardens not only survive but thrive in Muskegon and Muskegon Heights.

### **The Vital Role of Community Gardens**

Community gardens hold a special place in the heart of urban neighborhoods and for diverse communities within West Michigan, particularly in Muskegon and Muskegon Heights. These gardens are not just patches of greenery; they are vibrant touch-points for community interaction, environmental stewardship, and local food production. Our 100-day challenge project underscores the importance of these gardens in the identity within the Muskegon area. Many of these gardens provide residents, especially BIPOC and low-income residents, with access to fresh, locally grown produce, a critical asset in areas facing food apartheid with limited grocery options. Beyond this, these community gardens also serve as educational grounds for food education, where local residents have learned about agriculture and nutrition. These gardens are a direct catalyst to our neighbors as they foster a sense of community ownership and responsibility towards the places where we live and bridge local connections.

### **Connecting Gardens to Local Food Systems**

Our project's second phase, focusing on compiling this data and creating a comprehensive map, showcases how community gardens are intricately linked to our local food systems in the Muskegon area. These gardens, often overlooked, are fundamental in providing fresh, affordable produce to our neighborhoods, playing an important role in addressing food insecurity, reducing food miles, and promoting sustainable local growing practices. By mapping these gardens and urban farms, we hoped to provide a visual representation of their distribution and impact, emphasizing their existing role and the opportunity for them to contribute significantly to the infrastructure of local food systems.

### **Promoting Community Engagement and Sustainability**

This mapping tool not only makes the information about these community gardens in the Muskegon area readily accessible but also invites residents, organizations, and visitors to engage with local agriculture. The outcome of this project goes beyond data collection; it is a call to action for community members to support local growers, participate in sustainable practices, and contribute to the collective success of our community gardens. The future of this project promises to continue highlighting these success stories, inspiring more individuals, including BIPOC and low-income residents, to join this green movement and play an active role in shaping the Muskegon area's food systems and community identity.



TEAM #3

# Community Garden Database Project

**What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?**

What needs to be done next?

- Lakeshore Flavor and HW Farms have committed to creating an Incubator Farm Program here in Muskegon County. This program will focus on teaching Muskegon County residents how to establish and nurture their own farm businesses.
- HW Farms and LSF will accomplish this by developing three produce-generating community garden sites: two sites in the City of Muskegon Heights and one site located in the City of Muskegon.

Who needs to be involved in this?

- Everyone! Neighborhood association councils, faith-based institutions, community leaders, nonprofit organizations, and residents that care about food access and supporting food systems here in Muskegon County.

What support is needed?

- Printing
- Outreach support
- Web development support
- Logistic support

# Garden Team #3 - Livability Lab 4.0

FINAL - Gardens City of Muskegon/Muskegon Heights



First Congregation Community Garden



Love Community Garden



Jefferson Street Garden



McLaughlin Grows Urban Farm



Mike Miller Memorial Garden - Nelson Neighborhood Improvement Association



New Bethel Baptist Evangelistic Ministry Garden



Nims Elementary School Garden



Harbor of Grace Lutheran Church Garden



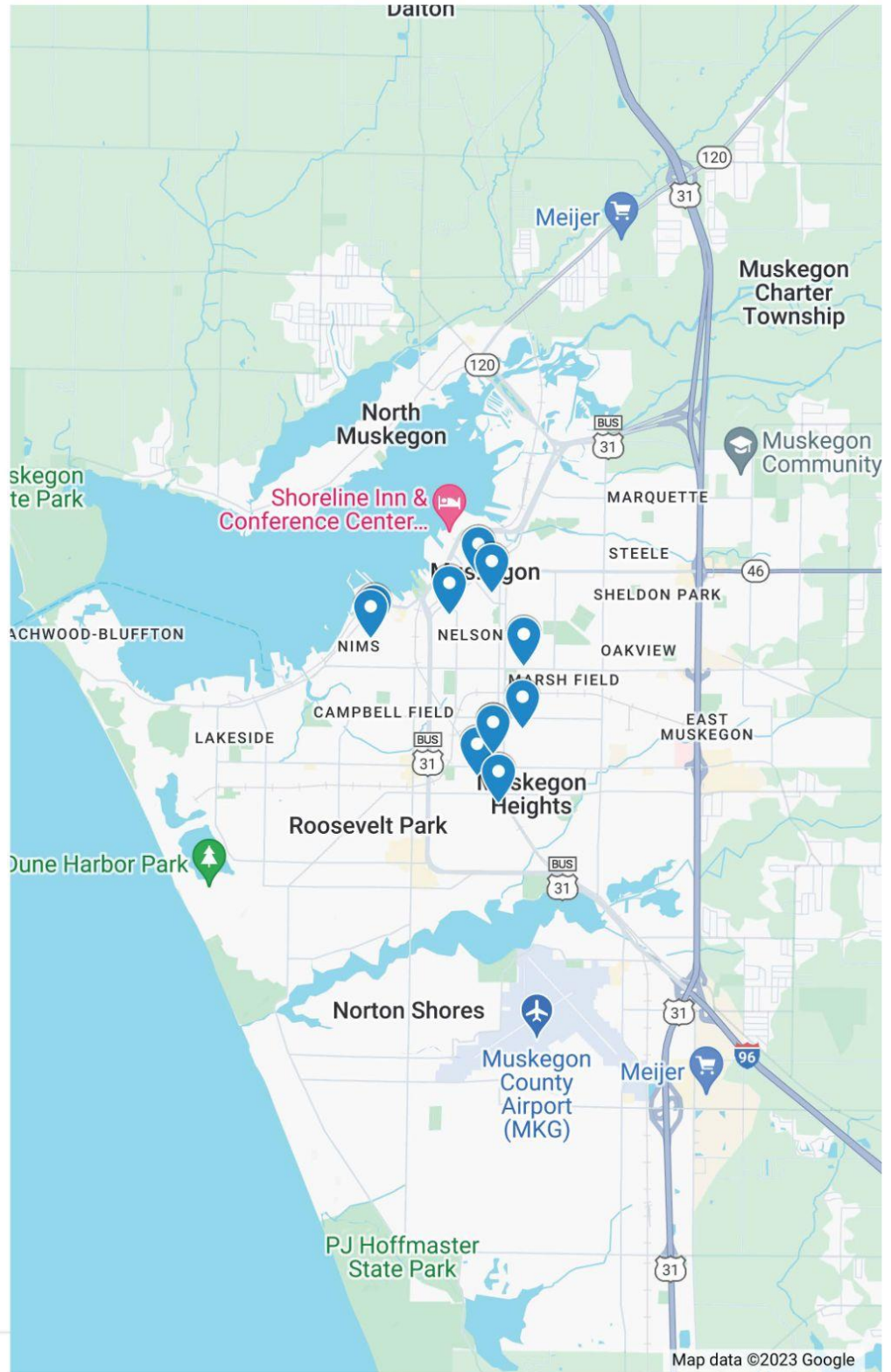
Seeds of Hope Community Garden: Coalition for Community Development Muskegon Heights



HW Farms



Jefferson St Garden



Map of compiled community gardens in the City of Muskegon and the City of Muskegon Heights.

# LIVABILITY LAB <sup>4.0</sup>

Team #4

## Medical Debt

**Goal:** To continue the work of the Livability Lab 3.0 action team to address medical debt in Muskegon County.



**100-Day Challenge**



### ACHIEVEMENTS

- Developed content for and planned a Medical Debt Community Forum, to be held on on Feb. 22.
- Collected policy and consumer information about medical debt throughout the nation with RIP Medical Debt; synthesized information from previous focus groups about root causes of medical debt experienced locally.
- Established first steps for financial assistance signage.

### COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- Coordination and connections with local nonprofits, health systems, and providers was critical for gathering information about medical debt in the community, which will be shared at forum.
- The Access Health team helped with pre-planning, framework, and check-ins; and we formed a budding relationship with Legal Aid.
- Transnational Title donated a room at the VanDyk Mortgage Convention Center for the forum.



### WHAT'S NEXT?

- Getting medical debt questions added to SIOH screening is vital.
- Review financial assistance promotion at provider offices to help residents learn about resources available to them.
- Long term: amend local and state policies about billing, medical debt, etc.



## TEAM #4

# Medical Debt

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

- Collect data regarding medical debt in Muskegon County
- Plan/host a community event regarding medical debt resources and prevention
- Compile and promote information regarding patient rights to community members

### What did we accomplish?

- Established relationships in the health system to gather information on medical debt in the community through SIOH screenings.
- Created building blocks established for a community forum regarding medical debt that will be held on Feb. 22nd.
- Synthesized information from previous focus groups about root causes of medical debt.
- Collected policy and consumer information about medical debt throughout the nation with RIP Medical Debt
- First steps established for financial assistance signage. Connections with providers/agencies and info sharing for forum

### What helped us succeed?

#### What community assets did we draw on?

- Consistent meetings and helpful coaches
- Efficient information exchange and planning, including agendas and meetings
- Thank you to the Access Health team for great pre-planning, framework, and check-ins!

#### How did cross-sector involvement help our efforts?

- Coordination with local health system
- Budding partnership with Legal Aid
- Drawing on relationships with local nonprofits for participation in forum and information sharing
- Transnational Title will be donating a room at the VanDyk Mortgage Convention Center for the forum!

#### How did engaging residents help our efforts?

- Engaged residents in last year's focus groups
- Planning to collect resident data at community forum to prepare us for Livability Lab 5.0

TEAM #4

# Medical Debt

## **What are our lessons learned?**

- We have way more resources in the community than many folks are aware of, and we need to find more efficient ways to get their messages out to the public.
- We understand that there are huge gaps in understanding of the care system and gaps in literacy that present a huge barrier to access to care and resources.

## **What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?**

### What needs to be done next?

- Getting medical debt questions added to SIOH screening will be vital in continuing this work
- Review of financial assistance promotion at provider offices will help residents be aware of resources available to them
- Long term: local and state policy regarding billing, medical debt, etc.

### Who needs to be involved in this?

- Elected officials, government entities
- Board members of providers
- For and nonprofit medical providers

### What support is needed?

- Community data
- Financial support

Feb 22nd  
3 - 6pm



# MEDICAL DEBT SOLUTIONS FORUM

Join us for an informative session where we look at how to deal with medical debt, options for care, community resource partners, understanding your rights in billing, and empowering you with knowledge. Speakers start every 30 minutes.

Location:

Transnation Title Room at the  
Vandyk Mortgage Convention Center  
460 W. Western Ave., Muskegon, MI 49440

Media  
Support by:



**Mission for Area People**  
*Providing Resources to Meet Basic Needs and Improve Quality of Life*

SPEAKERS & VENDORS  
IN ATTENDANCE:



access  
HEALTH



HACKLEY COMMUNITY CARE  
We're All In



LIVABILITY LAB 4.0



United Way  
of the Lakeshore



**\*\*Vendor Tables to be Open throughout entire forum\*\***

## Team #5

### PenPal Chat

**Goal:** To develop a peer-to-peer network that connects people to a “pen-pal” in another region of Muskegon County.



**100-Day Challenge**



## ACHIEVEMENTS

We began the process of documenting the level of loneliness and isolation in the community, using the 211 Phone Pal program as a model. We also discussed the need to find partners, housing entity, software, and funding.

## COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

Connections were made with 211 and their Phone Pal program, AgeWell Services, Hackley Library, White Lake, MADL, and Public Health to support our goal.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

We need further research to specify the scope of the concern in the target area/population. We are using our research to define the concern and create the outline of a program to address it, then find and approach existing entities for support.



### TEAM #5

## Pen Pal

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

- Assess and document the level of loneliness and isolation in the community.
- Develop and implement a program to address the identified concerns, a peer to peer network available to all residents.

### What did we accomplish?

- Found documentation on both the national and local levels that begins to specify the needs.
- Decided to use the 211 Phone Pal program as a model as it seems to fit the needs identified.

### What helped us succeed?

#### What community assets did we draw on?

- Initially at the Kick Off event there were only two participants in the effort, the Champion and one other. Before the Champion moved on, he had contacted others in the community who responded to his outreach. They become the committee.

#### How did cross-sector involvement help our efforts?

- 211 and their Phone Pal program
- AgeWell Services
- Hackley Library, White Lake, and MADL
- Public Health

### What are our lessons learned?

- Because the Champion for this program moved, the other members became the committee. However, not having a Champion to drive the program was a significant loss. This resulted in a month of lost time going into the holiday season, which did slow the process down.

### What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?

- Need to find partners, housing entity, software and funding.



## Team #6

### Birthing Justice Screening

**Goal:** To increase awareness about birth inequalities and doula services by planning and inviting participation in a community screening of the “Birthing Justice” documentary.



**100-Day Challenge**



## ACHIEVEMENTS

We planned, promoted, and hosted a community screening of “Birthing Justice” on January 9 at Hackley Library, with more events planned. This documentary captures the experiences and challenges of Black women, their families, caretakers & advocates, and examines the structures and systems that determine disparate rates of mortality.

## COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- Hackley Library was a great location: the community is familiar with it and enjoys coming to it.
- Every Woman's Place & the Doula program in Muskegon provided us with support, knowledge, and families that we needed to reach for our event.
- Overall every partnership we established helped with the success of our event.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Continuing to host events around this issue will require funding for refreshments, advertisements, and possibly for a keynote speaker to present on the subject.
- It would be helpful if we could add healthcare providers and school counselors to our committee



## TEAM #6

# Birthing Justice Screenings

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

The Birthing Justice committee set out to provide the Birthing Justice Screening and Community Resource Event. *Birthing Justice*, a feature-length documentary film, captures the experiences and challenges of Black women, their families, caretakers and advocates, and examines the structures and systems that determine disparate rates of mortality.

### What did we accomplish?

- We met every Wednesday, starting the day after the Liveability Lab kick-off.
- We partnered with many organizations to make sure we had information for the community and for longevity.
- We successfully completed two event showings.

### What helped us succeed?

#### What community assets did we draw on?

- The community assets we drew on were:
  - Hackley Library being a great location. This is a place that the community is familiar with and enjoy coming to.
  - Every Woman's Place partnership was established and excellent for our event.
  - Also working with the Doula program here in Muskegon provided the support, knowledge and families that we needed to reach for our event.

Overall every partnership we established helped with the success of our events.

#### How did cross-sector involvement help our efforts?

- The cross-sector involvement helped tremendously with our event. As we believe that all partnerships make successful events.

#### How did engaging residents help our efforts?

- We posted information on all social media platforms, we welcomed them when they came to the event, we provided beverages and snacks and we had an open conversation at the beginning of the event and at the end of the event.

TEAM #6

# Birth Justice Screenings

## **What are our lessons learned?**

We learned community building, capacity building, creating connections, resource connection and team building.

## **What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?**

### What needs to be done next?

- The committee has done a great job with preparing for the events. Continue meeting weekly as this has helped the committee stay on task and defuse any barriers that may occur.

### Who needs to be involved in this?

- Health care providers and school counselors should be added to the committee. Other than that, the committee was well rounded and had many partners.

### What support is needed?

- Funding is needed to provide refreshments, advertisements and possibly get a keynote speaker to present on the subject.

LIVABILITY LAB TEAM 6 PRESENTS:

# BIRTHING JUSTICE COMMUNITY SCREENINGS

BIRTHING JUSTICE TELLS THE STORY OF THE CRISIS FACED BY BLACK MOTHERS AND THEIR CHILDREN AND THE SOLUTIONS NEEDED TO TRANSFORM THE MATERNAL CARE SYSTEM.

THESE SCREENINGS ARE AN OPPORTUNITY TO ENGAGE AND EDUCATE THE COMMUNITY AND TO SHARE WHAT COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS ARE DOING TO MAKE NECESSARY CHANGES.

**TUESDAY JANUARY 9TH 5-7PM**  
**@ HACKLEY PUBLIC LIBRARY**

**THURSDAY JANUARY 25TH 5-7PM**  
**@ MUSKEGON HEIGHTS BRANCH OF  
MUSKEGON AREA DISTRICT LIBRARY**

REGISTER AT: [HTTPS://FORMS.GLE/2B6F86XOUBJQZKWJ9](https://forms.gle/2B6F86XOUBJQZKWJ9)  
OR SCAN THE QR CODE



Team #7

MiFam

**Goal:** To establish and open an “On the Spectrum” place for autistic adults to gather daily and hang out safely together.



100-Day Challenge



## ACHIEVEMENTS

- We began gathering information about what supports may be missing in the community for adults with autism.
- We conducted electronic and in-person interviews to discuss how adults with autism would feel better supported.

## COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- Autism Network of Muskegon regularly holds meet-ups for individuals and families of individuals with autism, and we were able to use these meet-ups to conduct interviews with adults with autism and discuss ways that they do and do not feel supported.
- We also presented at these meetups and led an open discussion about how people currently feel supported and what support they may need in the future.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- We are not sure about what support is needed to expand the network in Muskegon. Current supports are out there and not every individual feels supported in the same way.
- The next step will be to make a connection with The Momentum Center and learn about the steps that it takes to bring a support like that to Muskegon.



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TEAM #7

## MiFam

### **What did we set out to do in these 100 days?**

We wanted to gather information about what supports may be missing in the community for adults with autism.

### **What did we accomplish?**

We were able to gather information electronically and by conducting in person interviews to discuss how adults with autism would feel better supported.

### **What helped us succeed?**

#### What community assets did we draw on?

- Autism Network of Muskegon. We were able to utilize meet-ups to conduct interviews with adults with autism and discuss ways that they do and do not feel supported. Autism Network of Muskegon regularly holds meet-ups for individuals and families of individuals with autism.

#### How did cross-sector involvement help our efforts?

- For our goal it did not feel applicable as we focused on a very specific demographic of the community.

#### How did engaging residents help our efforts?

- We utilized residents to gather our information. Electronic and in person surveys were conducted. Autism Network of Muskegon holds monthly meet-ups and we were able to have a couple of individuals present at one of those meetings to have some open discussion and discuss how people currently feel supported and look for support in the future.

### **What are our lessons learned?**

We may have opportunities to expand the support in Muskegon County, but current supports are out there. Not every individual feels supported in the same way.

TEAM #7

## MiFam

**What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?**

What needs to be done next?

- Expanding our network in Muskegon.
- Continue making connections to The Momentum Center.

Who needs to be involved in this?

- Current team
- Autism Network of Muskegon

What support is needed?

- We are not sure about what support is needed. The next step will be to make that connection and learn about the steps that it takes to bring a support like that to Muskegon.



## Team #8

# Muskegon Heights Trail Connection

**Goal:** To build interest & awareness around creating a recreational trail in Muskegon Heights that will connect to the existing trails of Muskegon County.

**100-Day Challenge**



## ACHIEVEMENTS

- Mapped out a proposed trail through Muskegon Heights that links with existing trails, based on our research, which included: survey responses, information about land ownership, historical context, existing initiatives around trail development in/around the Heights and throughout the County, and about possible barriers.
- Convened a group of municipality & County-wide leaders where we outlined our reasons and plan for a trail in the Heights, and got broad support

## COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- Developed a survey for residents asking for input related to how often and where they walk, and gauged interest in designing and/or planning of a trail. We received 60 responses.
- Several team members had parks & rec and bike trail experience, and their knowledge helped us create a solid and compelling plan
- As we work to secure funding for this project, we need to show that the Muskegon Heights community wants it.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- We are working to develop a cost sheet to show each parcel of land and who owns it, but we still need more funding and stakeholders, and a lead agency to be a grant applicant.
- We are hosting a Community Resident Forum to share our idea and get feedback on what and who could support the trail.





## TEAM #8

# Heights Trail Connection

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

Build interest and awareness around the development of a recreational trail in Muskegon Heights that will connect to the existing trails of Muskegon County..

### What did we accomplish?

- We mapped out a proposed trail through Muskegon Heights that links with existing trails in the County.
- We learned about existing initiatives around trail development in/around Muskegon Heights and throughout the County. Some of the initiatives (e.g. Broadway infrastructure plan) came to light even during 100 day challenge.
- We learned some of the easier on-roads to having something marked as trail (shared trails, signage).
- We learned from MDOT re: ownership of land, got historical context (reasons for barriers and what are hard/soft stop barriers).
- We convened a group of municipality and county-wide leaders and got broad support for the proposed trail in Muskegon Heights.
- We brought awareness to our group and to the municipalities about what's possible (and what direction not to go). Helped people make the connection between the trail and jobs, shopping, hospital, recreation.
- We got commitment from WMSRDC to convene meetings with key stakeholders going forward. Created excitement and momentum for future possibilities.
- We developed and facilitated a survey to community residents asking for input related to how often they walk, what their current walking path looks like, and if they'd participate in the designing and/or planning of a trail. We received 60 responses.

### What helped us succeed?

#### What community assets did we draw on?

- Feedback from neighborhood residents via the survey.
- Connections of our Liv Lab team members
- The project itself has a "cool" factor, which helped us build energy in the community.

## TEAM #8

# Heights Trail Connection

### **What helped us succeed?**

#### How did cross-sector involvement help our efforts?

- Several of our team members were specialists related to Parks and Rec and the development of Bike Trails. Their knowledge helped us create a solid and compelling plan to bring to MDOT and the municipality leaders.

#### How did engaging residents help our efforts?

- Built awareness.
- As we look forward to identifying future catalyst/convener and funders for this project, we need to show that the Muskegon Heights community wants it.
- Residents input gives the project "voice" going forward. They will continue to help give the project shape and story.

### **What are our lessons learned?**

We need stakeholders at the table to push it forward. Infrastructure is a long process. Have to find ways to find small wins along the way. Even if the project stalls, it's not failed. This is a project that needs to continue after 100 days. The catalytic effort of our team helped to spark it, but others will need to continue to fan the flame. We are excited that WMSRDC has agreed to continue to convene the meetings and keep the conversation stoked.

### **What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?**

#### What needs to be done next?

- Feb 7th we will host a Community Resident Forum to share the proposed trail and get feedback on what could support the trail. Identify who will run with this (WMSRDC, as the convener of meetings. City of Muskegon Heights, as applicant for future grant applications. GMED, as support for the City of Muskegon Heights for implementation). Get engineered renderings of the proposed trail, so that there are nice pictures for the public to see.
- Develop a cost sheet to show each parcel of land and who owns it.

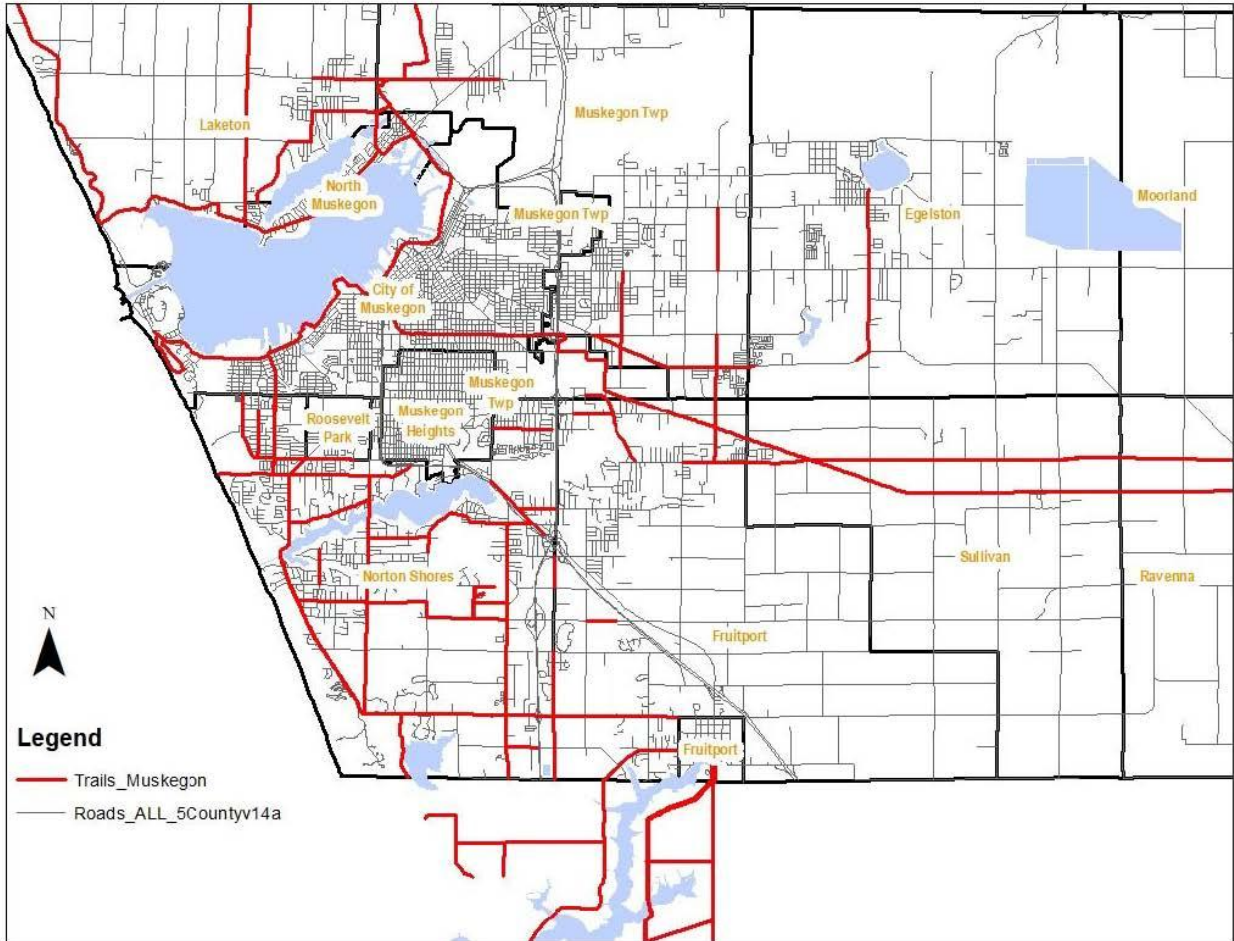
#### Who needs to be involved in this?

- WMSRDC as lead and building on partnerships already created. MDOT, GMED, City of Muskegon Heights City Manager and Public Works Director, Muskegon Township, Representative Will Synder's Office, Muskegon County Bicycling Coalition, City of Muskegon, WMSRDC, Muskegon County, Public Health, CVB/County Parks, Muskegon Heights Neighborhood Council. Additionally, the City of Fruitport needs to be engaged, because some of the trail goes through Fruitport.

#### What support is needed?

- In order for this to happen, a lead agency needs to step up to be the applicant for grants. The City of Muskegon Heights has indicated they would do that, with the support of the larger community. Our group would like to see GMED play a significant supportive role.

# Map of Existing Muskegon County Trails





Exploring New Trails



# SCAN HERE

MUSKEGON HEIGHTS TRAIL CONNECTION



# Exploring New Trails in Muskegon Heights

## Muskegon Heights Trail Connection

We are excited to invite you to participate in an important survey to gauge your opinions and preferences regarding the potential introduction of a new walk and bike trail in our community. Your input is invaluable, and we aim to create a trail that enhances the quality of life for everyone.

The purpose of this survey is to gather insights from our community in regard to how often you walk, what your current walking path looks like (where are you walking to daily), and if you'd like to actively participate in the designing and or planning of the trail.

Your feedback will guide the planning and development of this project. We want to understand your preferences, concerns, and suggestions to ensure that the trail aligns with our community's needs and values.

We value your contribution and thank you for being an integral part of this important decision. Let's work together to create a walk and bike trail that benefits us all.

\* 1. How often do you walk or bike to get to the store or work? w

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Not Often

Never

\* 2. Would you be interested in joining in a mock trial walk of a proposed new trail in Muskegon Heights? <sup>w</sup>

Yes

No

\* 3. Where does your current walk path take you? <sup>w</sup>

\* 4. Would you be interested in more information/ involvement? <sup>w</sup>

Yes

No

5. If your answer to questions number 4 was yes: Please enter your email address below and you will be entered into a drawing for a \$30 Meijer gift card. <sup>w</sup>

Done

Powered by



SurveyMonkey®

See how easy it is to [create a survey](#).

Team #9

## Middle School Tutoring Project

**Goal:** Our goal was to reach out to 2 middle schools to help with tutoring students 6th-8th grade who struggle in reading.



**100-Day Challenge**



### ACHIEVEMENTS

Holton Schools have committed to being a part of the program and we have recruited volunteers to tutor middle schoolers in reading, who are awaiting training.

### COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

We gathered support for the project through local volunteers, Holton School district, MAISD, Muskegon Library, United Way Volunteers, and the Holton Community Center.



### WHAT'S NEXT?

- There needs to be completed training with volunteers to teach a strategy for reading, the program needs marketing on social media, flyers to churches in the area, and we need to utilize United Way.
- We are also working to engage with an additional middle school.



TEAM #9

## Middle School Tutoring Project

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

Our goal was to reach out to 2 middle schools to help with tutoring 6th-8th grade students who struggle in reading.

### What did we accomplish?

Holton Schools have committed to being a part of the program. We have recruited volunteers to tutor middle schoolers in reading, who are awaiting training.

### What helped us succeed?

#### What community assets did we draw on?

- We gathered support for the project through local volunteers, Holton School District, MAISD, Muskegon Library, United Way Volunteers, and the Holton Community Center.

#### How did cross-sector involvement help our efforts?

- Amazing ideas, survey for volunteers and students, rewards when complete

#### How did engaging residents help our efforts?

- Engaging residents was easy as they took the initiative to join any way they could!

### What are our lessons learned?

- We need to find ways to disguise the tutor program - change the title from tutoring to reading buddies, or book club.
- Make the student feel comfortable and not ashamed.
- Ask parents to be involved, sign permission slips.

### What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?

- There needs to be completed training with volunteers to teach a strategy for reading.
- The program needs marketing on social media, flyers to churches in the area, and we need to utilize United Way. Volunteers will need background check
- We are also working to engage with an additional middle school.



## Team #10 and Team #14 Student Loan Debt

**Goal:** To educate past, present, and future students on student loan debt forgiveness and financial literacy, and to provide access to resources like scholarships and workforce training options.



**100-Day Challenge**



### ACHIEVEMENTS

We hosted a lunch and learn event on December 7, dedicated to providing information to individuals interested in learning more about student loan repayment programs.

### COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- We utilized local organizations as well as our local community college to host, promote, and facilitate the lunch and learn event.
- There is a significant amount of cross-sector relationships when student loans are involved, as student loans have a broad impact on our community.
- We did not engage residents as residents, but rather as community members who have been impacted or would be impacted by student loans. Word of mouth was the best way to engage residents.



### WHAT'S NEXT?

We are meeting with Access Health to further discuss how companies can provide student loan payments directly for employees or pay for an employee's education directly. This presents a significant but underutilized opportunity for local employers to attract and retain talent.



TEAM #10 & TEAM #14

## Student Loan Education Event

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

We set out to host a lunch and learn event dedicated to providing information to individuals interested in learning more about student loan repayment programs.

### What did we accomplish?

We hosted a lunch and learn event dedicated to providing information to individuals interested in learning more about student loan repayment programs.

### What helped us succeed?

#### What community assets did we draw on?

- We utilized local organizations as well as our local community college to host, promote, and facilitate the lunch and learn event.

#### How did cross-sector involvement help our efforts?

- This is an area we could have utilized more of if we had more time to grow. There is a significant amount of cross-sector relationships when student loans are involved, as student loans have such a broad impact on our community.

#### How did engaging residents help our efforts?

- We did not engage residents as residents, but rather community members that have been impacted or would be impacted by student loans. Word of mouth is the best way residents could be engaged by this action team.

### What are our lessons learned?

The issues facing our community members are broad and each person's situation is different – even if they have a similar student loan balance. Repayment strategies should have been a bigger focus after outlining the various repayment options available for those with student loans. There is the immediate picture, which is paying a monthly payment, and the big picture of whether a dent is able to be made in the total balance due.

TEAM #10 & TEAM #14

## **Student Loan Education Event**

**What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?**

What needs to be done next?

- We will be meeting with Access Health staff to further discuss a relevant aspect of this presentation related to how companies can provide student loan payments directly for an employee or pay for an employee's education directly tax-free up to \$5,250 respectively. This presents a significant opportunity for employers to attract and retain talent and is underutilized.

Who needs to be involved in this?

- The business community as a whole – whether through the Chamber or GMED.

## Team #11

### Transportation Millage

**Goal:** To adopt a transportation millage to provide access to transportation for Muskegon County.



**100-Day Challenge**



#### ACHIEVEMENTS

- Created a survey for residents to share their experiences with Muskegon County public transportation.
- Brought attention to the need for public transportation in Muskegon County by educating the public and local municipalities.
- Team members presented with others from Read Muskegon at various local governmental meetings/voting sessions, and all 5 municipalities (City of Muskegon, Muskegon Heights, Muskegon Township, Roosevelt Park, Norton Shores) passed the resolution to adopt the regional transit authority group.

#### COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- We partnered with Read Muskegon and Women's Resource Center, bringing with them stories and data they had already been working on collecting.
- Engaging with residents was crucial in the creation of talking points about public transportation to present to the meetings.



#### WHAT'S NEXT?

- Create a community forum and/or online network to keep interested folks updated and involved.
- Continue to advocate for increased participation from citizens at council meetings and worksessions.
- Develop a campaign celebrating public transportation & increased access to public transit, including radio, social media, video.



TEAM #11

## Transportation

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

- Bring attention to the need for public transportation in Muskegon County by educating the public and local municipalities.
- Gather stories from community members on their experiences with public transportation and access to transportation.
- Partner with agencies/organizations who are also doing work in increasing access to transportation in Muskegon County.
- Increase public knowledge on available forms of transportation in Muskegon County and grow community awareness on how a countywide transportation millage would positively affect our community.
- Invite residents who are utilizing public transportation to our team.
- Present and speak at municipal worksessions and voting sessions with the goal of them passing a resolution to adopt the regional transit authority group.

### What did we accomplish?

- Representatives from our team, READ Muskegon's Literacy Collaborative transportation group, and the regional transit authority group presented and/or spoke at 5 city and township worksessions and/or voting sessions.
- All five of these municipalities (City of Muskegon, Muskegon Heights, Muskegon Township, Roosevelt Park, and Norton Shores) passed a resolution in support of adopting the regional transit authority. These presentations not only increased the citizenship of our team members and residents, but also introduced members of the public to the process of local government.
- Our team created a transportation survey (both digital and on paper) for residents to share their experiences with Muskegon County public transportation.
- Our team created a talking points document to distribute to community members and elected officials. There are different versions of this document - a general talking points version, a version that stresses the importance of a transportation millage, and a version that stresses the importance of investing in public transit.
- We successfully partnered with the Women's Resource Center and the READ Muskegon Literacy Collaborative on the work they were previously doing in the area of public transportation access.
- We also partnered with members of the regional transit authority group and supported them with their presentations to county municipalities.

# Transportation

## What did we accomplish? (continued)

- We successfully recruited new members to our team, more than doubling its size since the Livability Lab kick off.
- Members of our team presented to the leadership and staff at West Michigan Works.

## What helped us succeed?

### What community assets did we draw on?

- We utilized resources from MATS - bus schedules, their website and newsletter, information available at bus stops (maps, QR codes), and a breakdown in how their funding works.
- We drew on the knowledge and expertise of individuals working towards creating the regional transit authority - LeighAnn Mikesell from the City of Muskegon, and Bob Lukens from Muskegon County.
- We drew on data and stories previously collected by the READ Muskegon Literacy Collaborative and Women's Resource Center transportation group.

### How did cross-sector involvement help our efforts?

- We engaged heavily with two other non-profits: READ Muskegon and Women's Resource Center. They provided essential partnership to our team, bringing with them stories and data they had already been working on collecting.
- We engaged with five county municipalities and their leadership/elected officials through presenting or speaking during public comment at their council work sessions and voting sessions. These presentations were well received and gave our team members more insight into public perception on public transportation.
- Members of our team presented to West Michigan Works - giving them the experience to speak on how increased access to public transportation will benefit employers county-wide.

### How did engaging residents help our efforts?

- Engaging with residents was crucial in the creation of our talking points document. The document contains real quotes from residents on their experience(s) with public transit in our community.
- We were able to increase our team size by inviting residents to join our team and speak on their own experiences in their neighborhoods with public transportation. Our team created a template residents could use when speaking during public comment times at city/township council meetings.
- Residents who attended or spoke at municipality meetings were able to report back to our team with how the transportation presentations were received, both by the elected officials/council members and by the community members in attendance.

## What are our lessons learned?

- We learned the process of how local government operates and how we as citizens can be more active participants.
- Patience - change on this level is a heavy lift and takes time. We are grateful to have positively moved the needle in some small way during our 100-day challenge and are prepared to be patient while the work continues.

# Transportation

## What are our lessons learned? (continued)

- We learned as a team on how to navigate the bus system.
- We learned more about how millage funding works, the current state of transportation funding in our county, and the importance of leveraging dollars through federal and state grants and funding opportunities.
- We learned the difference between public vs. mass transit and the importance of educating the public on our specific public transportation system.
- We discovered important truths surrounding accessibility and walkability in our different municipalities. With that, we have asked ourselves "What can we do as citizens to make positive change?"
- The largest barrier in accessible public transportation is financing, which brought us back to our original goal of a county-wide transportation millage.

## What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?

### What needs to be done next?

- Public campaign celebrating the positives of public transportation and increased access to public transit - including radio, social media, video content. This could be an excellent opportunity to partner with some of the youth members of the Livability Lab youth transportation group. This could also tie into an educational campaign specifically to be used by the regional transit authority.
- Continue to advocate for increased participation from citizens at council meetings and worksessions.
- Community forum and/or an online network to keep interested folks updated and involved.
- Gather support from more Muskegon County municipalities (ex: Fruitport, North Muskegon) outside of the five that are already showing support.
- Engage other groups/individuals in the work, such as faith groups, Goodwill, local agencies, municipal staff, etc.
- Continue to collect stories utilizing the survey we created, with responses going to the literacy collaborative.
- Possibly schedule another team meeting before the Lab celebration to discuss logistics of how the group will move forward with team members who have elected to continue.

## What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?

### Who needs to be involved in this?

- Team members from the transportation team who want to continue with the work.
- Leadership from the regional transit authority group.
- Members of the READ Muskegon Literacy Collaborative and Women's Resource Center.
- Council members and leadership from county municipalities, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Employer's Association.
- Possibly include connections from the group that helped pass the senior millage - Bob Scolnik, Nancy McCarthy, Pat Shafer, Senior Resources.
- Member of other Livability Lab teams whose work corresponds with the need for increased access to public transportation.

TEAM #11

## Transportation

### What support is needed?

- We will need to coordinate with the regional transit authority group, READ Muskegon, and Women's Resource Center on who will be their point of contact for team members who want to continue.
- Funding in a "savings account" that can be utilized for future marketing materials, possible compensation to content creators, and food/stipends for meetings.



# Public Transportation in Muskegon County

## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Earlier this year, a program facilitated by the **Women's Resource Center** and **Read Muskegon** in the Muskegon County Jail, began collecting **stories** from female inmates about their experiences with **public transportation**, as a **civic literacy and advocacy** project. The women decided to use their **collective voice** to **advocate** for an **improved public transportation** system in the county.

The **Read Muskegon Literacy Collaborative (RMLC)** supported this civic literacy project by supporting story writing and connecting participants to other agencies and local government officials to **make sure their message was heard**.

**Livability Lab 4.0** produced a workgroup focused on **advocating for the transportation millage**. The goal of this group is to **bring attention to the transportation need** in Muskegon County, by educating the public and local municipalities.

Together, these groups continue to **provide opportunities** for community members across Muskegon County to **voice their needs regarding public transportation**.

This document is a compilation of these **opinions and stories**.

## CURRENT SYSTEM

### WHAT'S WORKING

### GAPS/LIMITATIONS

#### MATS (FIXED ROUTES)

- MyBus App
- Reduced fare options for seniors and those with disabilities

- Service hours
- No weekend service
- Some stops are unsafe due to inadequate lighting and shelter
- No township routes
- Extensive eligibility process for reduced fare

#### MATS GO2

- Works well for scheduling rides outside of fixed routes
- Extended service hours
- Reduced fare options for seniors and those with disabilities

- Requires credit card or debit card
- Requires smart phone
- Requires phone service or wifi
- \$4 per ride, \$8 to Muskegon Heights
- Extensive eligibility process for reduced fare
- Medical appointments rarely end on time, resulting in missed rides

#### MEDICAID/MEDICARE

- Available for appointments far in advance

- Limited to only medical appointments - not trips to pharmacy or other essential needs
- Unavailable for unforeseen medical issues - including trips to urgent care or emergency

#### SENIOR MILLAGE (AGEWELL, DISABILITY NETWORK, PIONEER RESOURCES)

- Available for medical appointments

- Only available for people ages 62 +
- Overbooked, not enough to meet the need
- Personal rides need to provide proof of insurance to be reimbursed

## DID YOU KNOW

During a job interview, if a resident says their mode of transportation is the MATS bus, many employers do NOT consider it reliable transportation - so **they are denied the job**.





# STORIES

“Our goal in sharing our stories is to make the busing system a little easier for those who need it”

-Female Inmates at Muskegon County Jail

“I am a single mother of three young children ages 11, 7, and 5. I am 33 years old and have lived up and down Apple Avenue, most of my life. My **children** attend Oakridge **schools**. The local bus system does not favor my situation, the times, and the routes.”

“I was attending Baker **College** for culinary science. My classes were in different locations. The bus schedule as it is meant I would be late going from one **class** to another. I had to quit **school** until I could figure out other transportation. Several classes, I’ve had to take over. Transportation is so important to secure my **future**.”

“The bus times don’t match with the shift **work** schedules (6 am-2 pm, 2 pm – 10pm, 10 pm – 6 am.) Because of this I was late to work, then laid off.”

“The QR codes at the stops are awesome!”

“When I don’t have transportation I have to hitchhike. I used to use the GoBus but it became too expensive. There are times I can’t go to **grocery stores** or doctor’s **appointments** and sometimes I can’t go to **work**. One time to get to work I had to walk 6 miles. I get frustrated when I can’t get rides. I can’t get the **medication** that I need for my **mental health**. I need a bus system that has more hours. I work 3rd shift.”

"I use the busing system every day to get to **work**. I make it work for me but after work I have to catch a ride because the bus doesn't run after 5 PM."

“I didn’t know about the QR codes! If I would have known I would have ridden the bus more.”

“When I don’t have access to transportation I cannot comply with required **probation guidelines**; attend required appointments, such as Health West, doctor appointments, and **drug testing**, or report to my probation officer and required **court dates**. “

"While it's colder weather out and with children it takes a long time for the next bus to come. No cover from the snow or rain. Kids and I get wet and cold while waiting for the bus after having to walk sometimes up to 6-10 blocks to the nearest bus stop"

“The app makes it easy to plan a route but it only works with a connection.”

"I would use the bus but I can't understand the routes with the numbers and it confuses me so I just walk."

## A TRANSPORTATION MILLAGE COULD SUPPORT...

### MORE SERVICE



- Longer service hours to accommodate all work shifts
- Expanded service to certain employers at certain times
- Service on weekends
- Expanded service to townships/rural areas
- Increased availability of GO2 vehicles

### SAFETY



- Shelters at bus stops
- More lighting at bus stops
- Shorter distances between stops

### ACCESSIBILITY



- Public education about services, routes, and app features to increase ridership
- More/simplified reduced fare options
- Equal fare regardless of destination



## Team #12

### Behavioral Health Urgent Care

**Goal:** To bring together resources to open a behavioral health urgent care in Muskegon County.



**100-Day Challenge**



#### ACHIEVEMENTS

- Developed the framework for the project by identifying potential partners, drafting a letter for potential partners, and creating the resolution
- Brought the group's institutional knowledge to bear on the identified problem and ensured that all population's perspectives will be honored

#### COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- One of the major strengths of the group was the bringing together of multiple perspectives from the different agencies on the team
- Members brought experience with real people that contributed to the telling the story of the need for our project
- Data and statistics were pulled from agencies from clients with lived experiences



#### WHAT'S NEXT?

Present the project to the Diversion Council with the ask of the Council to carry the project forward



TEAM # 12

## Behavioral Health Urgent Care

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

Laying the framework for the project: identifying potential partners, creating letter for potential partners, and creating the resolution

### What did we accomplish?

- We brought the group's institutional knowledge to bear on the identified problem.
- We have a group identified to carry the project forward. We have taken care to ensure all populations' perspectives will be honored.

### What helped us succeed?

#### What community assets did we draw on?

- The expertise and experience of the group members
- The commitment of the champions to see this happens
- The dedication of the group to see the end-product created

#### How did cross-sector involvement help our efforts?

- One of the major strengths of the group was the bringing together of multiple perspectives from the different agencies on the team
- Some of the major stakeholders for the future success of our project were at the table
- Our champions sit at tables in the community that provide data, ideas, and possible involvement of others

#### How did engaging residents help our efforts?

- Our committee members bring experience with real people that contributed to the telling the story of the need for our project
- Data and statistics were pulled from agencies from clients with lived experiences

TEAM # 12

## Behavioral Health Urgent Care

### **What are our lessons learned?**

Our work confirmed:

- Staffing and financial resources barriers for the future implementation of the project
- No end to the level of need in the project area

When you have the right people, a group can take a large problem and make progress by taking smaller steps. The Livability Lab process provided a follow-up structure that followed the “big rally” day excitement.

### **What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?**

#### What needs to be done next?

- Present the project to the Diversion Council with the ask of the Council to carry the project forward

#### Who needs to be involved in this?

- Heather will invite the Team 12 members to be involved at a level that is appropriate

#### What support is needed?

- This group would appreciate an “accountability check-in” on a periodic basis (30 days, 60 days, etc.)

**[Community Partner Name]:**

At the 2023 Livability Lab, a dynamic, community-driven initiative that encourages active participation from all corners of Muskegon County, Team 12 came together to address an identified need to help support mental health in our community. In our work, we have seen this need first hand:

An elderly man with dementia, along with mental health issues, has violent tendencies when he does not take his medication on a regular basis. Although he has not physically hurt his wife yet, there is a concern that he will at some point. She is suffering emotionally, exhausted from the constant fear of something happening to her at her husband's hand. When an incident happens, she calls 911. Often, the response is to take him to the Emergency Room, but by the time he is observed/tested, he has calmed down. He is released home with no follow up plan to help with the behavior, so the cycle of 911 calls begins again.

A middle aged man attended a public forum meeting in a distressed state. During public comments he informed the audience that his experience at the emergency room the night before was not helpful. He felt that they turned him away when he was in crisis. The following day his suicidal thinking was still present and he didn't know where to go.

Our dedicated emergency room staff is constantly juggling a multitude of cases from routine medical to severe trauma. While they understand the need for a caring and compassionate response to mental health crises, they feel ill-equipped to handle both in-the-moment care and to ensure follow-up care is provided. This non-stop stress leads to staff burnout and turnover.

A young teen is frequently seen in the ER (4-5 times a month), with her parents seeking inpatient hospitalization for mental health. She is treated within acute-care ER protocols with each visit which could delay needed mental health interventions. In this case the hospital is being used as a crisis respite resource.

Community feedback gathered from over 500 residents of Muskegon County as part of the Livability Lab process also highlights this need:

My community is missing:

- "Mental Health care and compassion."
- "Mental health is still so prevalent - need more help."
- "Mental health access!"
- "More mental health support for kids."

The following data, gathered from community partners, supports this anecdotal feedback:

- In 2023, 3,201 referrals were made to HealthWest from local Law Enforcement agencies.
  - Of these referrals, a patient was transported to the ER 1,223 times.
- Roughly 267 behavioral health referrals are received from law enforcement per month.

- HealthWest's mobile response team receives an average of 70 crisis calls per month (2.3 per day).
- HealthWest receives over 1,000 calls to the 722-HELP (4357) line per month asking for mental health assistance.

We need your help! The attached resolution both identifies the need and outlines the beginning steps toward the development of a Behavioral Crisis Stabilization Unit (BCSU) for Muskegon County to ensure that individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis are connected to the right resource for care and intervention at the time of need.

You and your organization have been identified as a key partner as we begin this important work to fill an identified need in our community. Muskegon County has a long history of coming together to support all of our neighbors, especially those in crisis. Please consider joining us.

Thank you!



**Behavioral Crisis Stabilization Unit for Muskegon County**  
**An alternative psychiatric unit for assessment and disposition**

**Resolution November 2023**

WHEREAS, Muskegon Central Dispatch 9-1-1 & public safety experience calls from persons experiencing a behavioral health crisis;

WHEREAS, Behavioral Health related calls received by Muskegon Central Dispatch 9-1-1 and designated a MED3 call fall under the Public Health Code, Act 368 of 1978, and oversight of the Muskegon County Medical Control Authority and currently require medical intervention including transport to the local assessment center that receives ambulances;

WHEREAS, the patients arriving at the Emergency Department of Trinity Health in Muskegon County often experience excessive wait times;

WHEREAS, law enforcement officers have experienced excessive wait times while assisting someone in a crisis, so are not available to the community while waiting at the Emergency Department;

WHEREAS, Muskegon County lacks sufficient capacity for acute behavioral health incidents;

WHEREAS, some Muskegon County residents do not feel the current options are accessible, affordable and/or trustworthy;

WHEREAS, some Muskegon County residents experience inadequate coordination across systems to address behavioral health needs;

WHEREAS, the County lacks an appropriate facility for acute behavioral health incidents (dementia, mental health/substance use disorders), that provides culturally competent care regardless of gender, race, and/or age.

NOW, THEREFORE, LET IT BE RESOLVED, THAT the undersigned strategic partners do hereby support the development of a Behavioral Crisis Stabilization Unit (BCSU) for Muskegon County to ensure that individuals experiencing a behavioral health crisis are connected to the right resource for care and intervention at the time of need.

This strategic partnership group will:

- Create an outline of what each strategic partner will bring to the development of the BCSU.
- Review data and information provided by the Livability Lab Team to help further inform the development of the BCSU.
- Define desired outcomes of the BCSU to ensure that they answer the community need for this service.
- Explore sustainable funding opportunities and determine how to secure funding.

Team #13

## Confronting Gentrification

**Goal:** To host a community educational event focused confronting gentrification in Muskegon County.



100-Day Challenge



### ACHIEVEMENTS

- We successfully planned an event called the Housing Resource Fair, which included identifying vendors and speakers.
- The Housing Resource Fair will be held at the Frauenthal Center on March 9th, 2024.

### COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- We worked with Muskegon County residents with professional involvement ranging from clergy, entrepreneurs, government, and human service providers. These relationships were key in identifying resources for the event.
- We partnered with the nonprofit organization, Thredz, which had previously done community assessments to understand the need of the residents, and we used this information in the development of the event.



### WHAT'S NEXT?

We still need more support for the event, including volunteers, marketing, and publicity.



TEAM #13

## Confronting Gentrification

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

Host a community educational event focused confronting gentrification

### What did we accomplish?

- Expanded understanding of the need for accessibility of resources to marginalized communities
- Date and venue have been secured
  - **Housing Resource Fair at the Frauenthal Center on March 9th, 2024.**
- Identifying vendors and speakers

### What helped us succeed?

#### What community assets did we draw on?

- Referrals from team members and employers were key to identifying resources for the event.

#### How did cross-sector involvement help our efforts?

- Working with Muskegon County residents with professional involvements ranging from clergy, entrepreneurs, government, and human service providers, the team readily identified community resources to aid in the event.

#### How did engaging residents help our efforts?

- Thredz organization has done community assessments to understand the need of the residents. This information is used in the development of the event.

### What are our lessons learned?

The larger the scope of the event, the more time and resources needed.

TEAM #13

# Confronting Gentrification

**What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?**

What needs to be done next?

- Mapping of setup and run of show.
- Future meetings to secure vendors, volunteers, and other event needs.

Who needs to be involved in this?

- Threadz
- Newly identified team members
- Community organizations focused on community development

What support is needed?

- Finances
- Volunteers

## Team #15

### Filipino Tradition & Culture Exhibit

**Goal:** To identify a place for a Filipino exhibit to showcase Filipino culture and traditions.



**100-Day Challenge**



## ACHIEVEMENTS

- We held the Filipino culture showcase on December 16, 2023, at the Muskegon Township Branch of Muskegon Area District Library, with 90 guests in attendance. The event revealed a significantly larger Filipino population in Muskegon than we had anticipated.
- In our presentation, we addressed the issue of misinformation surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic in Filipino culture, and distributed 50 COVID-19 self-testing kits to ensure accessibility and proactive health measures.

## COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- One key factor contributing to our team's success was the valuable partnership with MADL, which provided a free venue for our event.
- We collaborated with two local catering services to ensure an authentic Filipino culinary experience for our attendees, fostering positive connections with the local community.
- Cross-sector collaboration helped us reach a broader audience more quickly, amplifying the impact of our work.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- A larger Filipino culture event at Hackley Park, drawing inspiration from successful models such as the Hispanic Festival. This would require a special planning committee and collaboration with local government.
- To conduct research on the negative impact of COVID-19 on Filipino culture.



TEAM # 15

## Filipino Seminar/Exhibit

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

In the span of these 100 days, our team embarked on a mission to address the void in understanding Filipino culture within Muskegon. Recognizing a deficiency in education, awareness, and support, we were determined to bridge this gap. To achieve this, our champion conceived the idea of establishing a dedicated space that celebrates Filipino culture through the exploration of its rich history, diverse cuisine, captivating dances, and soulful singing. Our objective was to bring a vibrant Filipino presentation and exhibit to Muskegon County.

### What did we accomplish?

- We successfully brought this presentation/exhibit to Muskegon by meticulously planning and executing all the necessary steps and goals as a team. This involved detailed event planning, securing finances, and conducting follow-up meetings to ensure a seamless execution.
- To our surprise, the actual event revealed a significantly larger Filipino population in Muskegon than we had initially anticipated. Many attendees had no previous connections with other Filipinos in the area, and our event played a pivotal role in forging those connections.
- Despite expecting only 35 guests, our turnout exceeded expectations, with over 90 attendees, a testament to the unexpected impact and resonance of our initiative. Some attendees were referred to take English lessons as a second language at READ Muskegon.
- Recognizing the prevalence of misinformation surrounding Filipino culture during the COVID-19 pandemic, included in our presentation we addressed this issue and shed light on the adverse impacts experienced. As part of our initiative, we distributed 50 COVID-19 self-testing kits, aligning with our projected number of attendees to ensure widespread accessibility and proactive health measures.

### What helped us succeed?

- One key factor contributing to our team's success was the valuable partnership with MADL. Their support enabled us to secure a free venue for our event, significantly contributing to its success.
- Additionally, we collaborated with two local catering services to ensure an authentic Filipino culinary experience for our attendees. This partnership not only enhanced the quality of our event but also fostered positive connections with the local community.

## Filipino Seminar/Exhibit

### What helped us succeed?

- Collaborating with community partners and organizations was crucial for us. By forging these alliances, we accelerated the spread of our message and initiatives. This collaborative effort allowed us to reach a broader audience more quickly, amplifying the impact of our work.

### What are our lessons learned?

- We encountered significant challenges in organizing this event, primarily stemming from miscommunications regarding finances. This issue led to the necessity of postponing the original event date. Moving forward, we recognize the importance of ensuring alignment among all involved organizations from the outset. Clear and open communication about financial matters at the early stages of planning will be a priority to mitigate such challenges in the future.

### What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?

- Our champion aspires to host a future Filipino event at Hackley Park downtown, reflecting a broader outreach and engagement with the community. Additionally, she is interested in conducting research on the negative impact of COVID-19 on Filipino culture. This dual approach, combining community events and research, showcases a comprehensive commitment to both celebration and understanding, contributing to the broader cultural awareness and resilience in the face of challenges.
- Advancing this initiative will require the formation of a special committee dedicated to planning the Filipino event, drawing inspiration from successful models such as the Hispanic Festival. Learning from the best practices of similar events can provide valuable insights. Additionally, collaboration with local government is essential for securing special event permits and liquor permits.
- A well-curated lineup of vendors will play a pivotal role in enhancing the event's appeal. Involving diverse vendors offering authentic Filipino experiences, from food to crafts, can contribute to the overall success and cultural richness of the gathering. Coordination, communication, and strategic planning among committee members will be key to ensuring a seamless and successful event.
- To ensure the success of the Filipino event at Hackley Park, garnering support from community organizations and seeking funds through grants will be crucial. Engage with local community groups, cultural organizations, and businesses that share an interest in promoting diversity and cultural awareness. Forming partnerships can bring in additional resources, volunteers, and promotional support.
- Simultaneously, explore grant opportunities from foundations, cultural exchange programs, or organizations supporting community events. Develop a compelling proposal outlining the cultural significance of the event, its potential impact on the community, and how the funds will be utilized. Building a strong case for the event's importance can increase the likelihood of securing financial support from grants.

## Team #16

### Detox Center

**Goal:** To create a roadmap for opening a detox center in Muskegon.



### 100-Day Challenge



## ACHIEVEMENTS

- We began the research and gathered the information needed to create a roadmap to help people who want to detox take advantage of the existing community resources to help.
- We learned that opening a detox center in 100 days was not feasible due to many variables, including funding, licensing, staffing and ownership.

## COMMUNITY & CONNECTION

- We were able to leverage information from established resources and subject experts, including Lakeshore Regional Entity, Public Health and Life Align Inc.
- Connecting with residents and collaborating with community partners prevented us from duplicating work and helped us learn what has and has not worked in the past.



## WHAT'S NEXT?

- We need a team to compile all the useful information into an easy-to-read document(s), and volunteers and funds to help with printing and distribution services once the document(s) have been created.
- We may need to have more than one roadmap, or include subcategories for individuals, loved ones, and support personnel. The resources an individual seeking treatment needs are different from what a loved one or a support person attempting to help an addict needs.





TEAM # 16

## Detox Center

### What did we set out to do in these 100 days?

Originally, our champion wanted to open a detox center. We reframed to: create a roadmap for a reference document to opening a detox center, or for someone that is seeking treatment or wants to help a loved one find treatment.

### What did we accomplish?

- Learned that opening a detox center in 100 days was not feasible at this time due to too many variables that needed to be addressed such as funding, licensing, staffing and ownership.
- Discussed alternative ways to help our residents that may be seeking out a detox center and decided to create resources/roadmaps that could help lead them to the resources already available in the community.

### What helped us succeed?

Community assets: Leveraging information from already established resources and subject experts, like Lakeshore Regional Entity, Public Health and Life Align Inc.

Cross-Sector Involvement: We didn't have to reinvent the wheel and were able to learn what has and hasn't worked in the past.

### What are our lessons learned?

This is a heavy lift and will require more hands to be successful. If we are not going to have a detox center in Muskegon County we really need to provide clear communication on what other resources are available and how individuals can access that help, because this is a time sensitive treatment plan that requires connection as soon as the individual is ready.

Funding is another huge barrier as there are generally costs that prevent individuals from seeking treatment or limits the type of treatment they can receive and they end up going back to the substance that caused them to need the treatment in the first place.

TEAM #16

## Detox Center

### **What are our recommendations for the next phase of this work?**

- A team to compile all the useful information into an easy to read/follow document(s), as well as, printing and distribution services once the document(s) have been created. There may be subcategories too.
- The reference document for an individual seeking treatment is likely different from the one for a loved one that's attempting to help an addict.
- There could be yet another document for agencies that wish to partner with those in the community providing this type of service or for individuals that would like to establish a center to help those struggling with addiction.

### 3 Youth Teams

**Goal:** To engage youth in the Livability Lab process



#### TRANSPORTATION

**GOAL:** To determine how to make riding the bus more advantageous for young adult riders

The team's hope was to support increased routes specifically to North Muskegon and Fruitport, reducing the stigma around public transportation, and educating the younger population about the transit system. Members gained a greater understanding and challenged themselves to learn the transit system with transfers attempting to travel to mental health supportive services in the community. The team made a video of their experience that they plan to use to support advertising and advocacy of a proposed millage spearheaded by the Livability Lab Transportation Millage Team (#11).

#### GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

**GOAL:** To create a youth-driven action plan to reduce gun violence in Muskegon County

Working within the structure of the pre-existing Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center's "Youth Advisory Board," the team used the Livability Lab process to explore root causes of gun violence and interactive activities to develop goals for future work. These goals include: attending training about gun violence, assessing community risk factors, collaborating with groups already doing prevention work, implementing prevention strategies, and creating a tight-knit group with a strong presence in the community to have a big impact.

#### SUBSTANCE ABUSE

**GOAL:** To bring awareness about how substance abuse affects high school students

This group focused on the data in Muskegon County by location, which shows various rates of high school student substance abuse activity rates. The team is working on getting students to complete substance abuse surveys at local high schools, then will collect the information to have an in-depth look at which schools have high substance abuse rates. After collecting the data, they plan to host a substance abuse information session during the lunch hour for high school students, teachers, and staff.

100-Day Celebration

**LIVABILITY LAB** 4.0  
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TEAM #1, #2, #3

## Youth Teams

### Gun Prevention Team

The youth gun violence prevention team decided to work within the structure of the pre-existing Michigan Youth Violence Prevention Center's "Youth Advisory Board" (YAB.) The goal of this team was to create a youth-driven action plan to reduce gun violence in Muskegon County. This team used the livability lab process to explore root causes to gun violence and interactive activities to develop goals and strategies for the work ahead. Below are some highlights of our plan:

#### **GOAL 1: LEARN MORE ABOUT GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

Trainings to include: Youth Adult Partnerships, Public Health + Prevention Series, Trauma Informed Care, Leadership and Advocacy

#### **GOAL 2: ASSESS THE COMMUNITY FOR RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS**

Review data and statistics. Choose and implement an assessment framework. Share out results of community assessment

#### **GOAL 3: COLLABORATE WITH OTHER YOUTH AND ADULTS DOING PREVENTION WORK**

Participate in a Learning Exchange in Washington, DC with youth doing similar work and create a shared project. Help facilitate Community Advisory Circles to get feedback from partners. Attend community meetings and events

#### **GOAL 4: IMPLEMENT GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION STRATEGIES**

Prevention campaign, host community forums, community service projects, We will continue to add to this list as we learn more prevention strategies!

#### **GOAL 5: CREATE A TIGHT-KNIT GROUP WITH STRONG PRESENCE IN THE COMMUNITY TO HAVE A BIG IMPACT**

Undergo group naming and branding process. Raise awareness in the community through flyers/posters, social media, events. Group outings and team-building activities to build relationships.

TEAM #1, #2, #3

## Youth Teams

### **Youth Transportation**

The youth transportation Livability Lab set out to determine how to make riding the bus more advantageous for young adult riders. The hope was to support increased routes specifically to North Muskegon and Fruitport, reducing the stigma around public transportation, and educating the younger population about the transit system.

During this experience there were some changes in membership and collaboration; however, a partnership with the adult Livability Lab Team #11 did occur.

The young adults that participated in this venture are hopeful in supporting advocacy for using public transportation, increasing routes around outlying Muskegon County areas, and a greater understanding of how to use Muskegon's bus system.

The young adults challenged themselves to learn the transit system with transfers attempting to travel to mental health supportive services in the community while making a video of their experience that they plan to utilize to support advertising and advocacy of a proposed millage spearheaded by the adult Livability Lab Team #11.

The vision moving forward is to create platforms for young adults to become involved in using their voice to support a millage to increase the efficacy of public transportation through social media, local radio, and collective forms for continued brainstorming and youth driven events to support the use of public transportation.

### **Substance Abuse Team**

The Livability Youth Substance Team focuses on how substance abuse affects high school students in Muskegon County. This group focuses on the data in Muskegon County by location. It shows various rates of students who have partaken in substance abuse activities in their high school years.

They set out to have students' complete substance abuse surveys at their local high school. Then to collect the information to have an in-depth look at which schools had a high substance rate. The students had a hard meeting together due to work and sports schedules which limited time to meet as one group.

Next, they plan for an information session for high school students, teachers, and staff on substance abuse during lunches.