



Livability For All in Brownsville

**An Age-Friendly Community Survey
of Residents Age 50-plus**



Real Possibilities

2016

Background

The World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Age-Friendly Cities and Communities project was created to help cities prepare for the rapid aging of populations and the increase in urbanization.¹ The program targets the environmental, social, and economic factors that influence the health and well-being of older adults.

The WHO has identified eight areas that influence the quality of life of those in a community, particularly older adults. The eight areas or domains are: Outdoor Spaces and Buildings, Housing, Transportation, Social Participation, Respect and Social Inclusion, Civic Participation and Employment, Communication and Information, and Community and Health Services.

AARP Research developed a survey instrument that captures the WHO eight areas of age-friendly community in order to help communities: (1) establish a baseline with regards to older adults being able to age in place, and (2) conduct a community needs assessment to identify and prioritize areas of focus.

To minimize the survey length as well as respondent burden, the AARP survey encapsulates the WHO eight areas of livability in a slightly different structure.

According to the AARP survey and for the purposes of this report, the eight domains of age-friendly community are:

1. Outdoor Spaces and Buildings
2. Housing Features
3. Transportation and Streets
4. Job Opportunities
5. Community Information
6. Volunteering and Civic Engagement
7. Social Participation, Inclusion, and Education Opportunities
8. Health and Wellness

These survey findings help policymakers, planners and others better understand the needs of an aging population in order to begin to brainstorm steps and policies that can be taken to improve livability for all.



¹ Learn more at www.agefriendlyworld.org

Executive Summary

For Brownsville residents, the most important features of an Age-Friendly Community center around street safety, public transportation, and healthcare services.

An age-friendly community provides resources that allow residents to live independently in their own homes as long as they want and fosters residents' engagement in their community's civic, economic, and social life. The **"2016 Brownsville Age Friendly Community Survey"** of adults age 50-plus living in Brownsville was commissioned to help the city's decision makers achieve the goal of an age-friendly livable community.

Survey results show that older Brownsville residents are likely to be long-time residents of the community. More than half (53%) have lived in their community for over 25 years and the vast majority intend to stay in Brownsville. More than three-fourths (77%) say their community is a good, very good or excellent place for older people to live.

Based on the eight domains of age-friendly community, survey findings also help identify the community features that are most important to Brownsville's 50-plus residents:



Many of the community features most likely to be considered important to Brownsville 50-plus residents relate to **Transportation**. Specifically, survey respondents consider it important to have streets that are well-maintained and safe for all users including pedestrians and bicyclists, easy to read traffic signs, enforced speed limits; and public transportation services that are reliable, have safe stops and well-maintained vehicles.



Health features also rank highly among important community aspects. In the health domain, Brownsville residents are most likely to say it is important to have a variety of healthcare professionals including specialists, hospital answer services that are helpful and easy to understand, and affordable home health providers.

Additional features within each one of the eight areas are considered at least somewhat important to residents in Brownsville. A summary of the most important community features by each of the eight age-friendly community domains can be found in the following pages of this report.

Executive Summary

The top reported need gaps in Brownsville for an Age-Friendly Community are concentrated in areas of Job Opportunities, Community Information, and Volunteering and Engagement.

In addition to identifying the community features that are important, unmet needs were assessed through a gap analysis. Community needs can be defined as a gap between what is and what should be. In order to identify the needs of Brownsville residents age 50-plus, survey respondents were asked about the importance of a community feature or service, and then they were asked if these features and services exist in their community. These questions were then paired together to calculate the “need gap”.

While features of Transportation and Health dominate in terms of what is important for age-friendly Brownsville, respondents say the city delivers relatively well against these needs. The largest need gaps in Brownsville are concentrated primarily in three areas of Job Opportunities, Community Information and Volunteering and Engagement.



Job Opportunities for workers age 50-plus are among the most salient unmet needs in Brownsville. The top need gap identified in survey results is job training opportunities for older adults. Job flexibility and jobs adapted to needs of the disabled are also among the top need gaps.



Large gaps are also identified regarding the dissemination of **Community Information** that is printed in large lettering, delivered in person, automated and centralized.



Volunteer and Engagement features that are considered highly important but not necessarily available concern how well Brownsville connects residents to volunteer opportunities. Top ranked need gaps are volunteer training opportunities, easy to find information on local volunteer opportunities and transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it.

More information on the community need gaps by each of the eight age-friendly community domains can be found in the following pages of this report.



Community Experience

From a simple perspective, a "livable community" is a place that allows individuals to age-in-place. A comprehensive definition of a livable community is one that is "safe and secure, has affordable and appropriate housing and transportation options, and offers supportive community features and services. Once in place, those resources enhance personal independence; allow residents to age in place; and foster residents' engagement in the community's civic, economic, and social life."

Across the nation, individuals make connections and commitments to homes, friendships, community organizations, and local social ties within their community and want to age-in-place. Brownsville residents are no different.

Community Experience

The majority of Brownsville's 50-plus are long-time residents who intend to stay. While most say the city is a good place to live as they age, there is room to improve.

More than half (53%) of Brownsville residents age 50-plus have lived in their current community for 25 years or more. They are even more likely to be long-time residents of Cameron county: 38% have lived in the county 45 years or more and 70% have been county residents for at least 25 years.

How would you rate Brownsville as a place for people to live as they age?



The majority of 50-plus residents consider Brownsville to be a Good (34%) or Very Good (27%) place for older people to live as they age. Another 16% rate it as Excellent. Nearly one-fourth (23%) give it an assessment of Fair or Poor.

Brownsville residents want to live independently in their own home for as long as they can.

Eight in ten (80%) say it is extremely or very important to live in their own home as they age; and half (53%) feel it is important to remain in their communities. In addition, most Brownsville residents age 50-plus expect to stay in their current home during their retirement years.

Important to live in your own home as you age

80%

Important to remain in your community as you age

53%



Few intend to move during retirement.

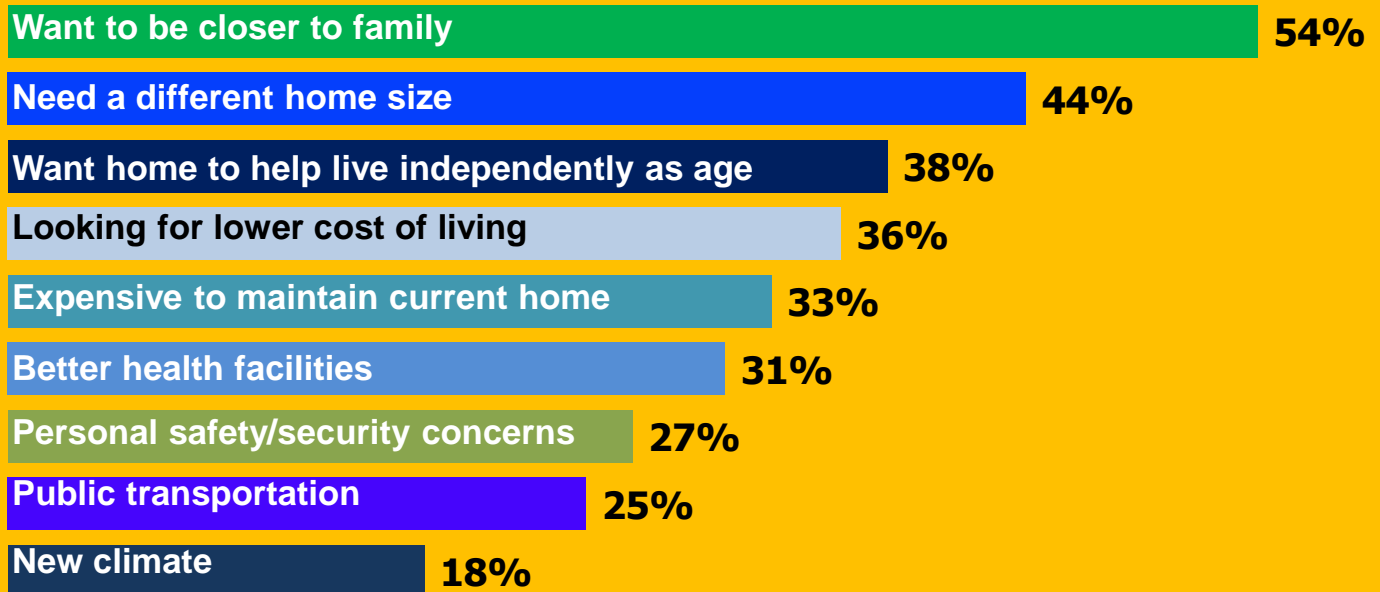
9% Likely to move to new community

9% Likely to move to new home, same community

Community Experience

Aside from family ties, housing is an influential factor for residents considering a move in retirement, including needs for age-friendly and right-sized housing and the cost of home maintenance in older age.

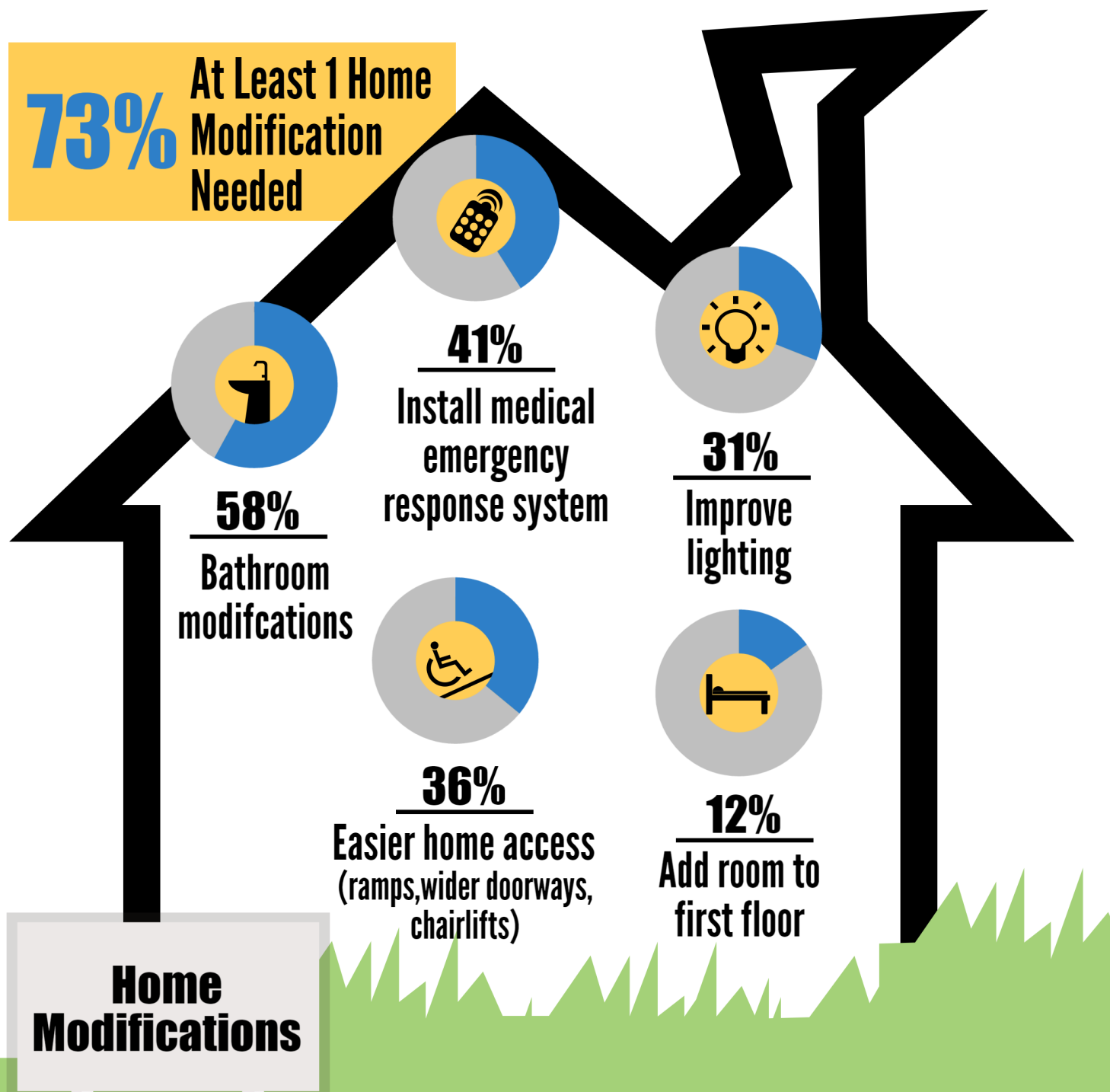
If Brownsville residents were to consider moving during retirement, half (54%) say being closer to family would be an important reason to do so. Home size would be a deciding criteria for four in ten (44%) and a home that enables independent living for 38%. Other influential community factors include looking for an area with a lower cost of living (36%), the expense of maintaining current homes (33%), better health facilities (31%), safety concerns (27%) and more access to public transportation (25%).



Most residents age 50-plus in Brownsville own their own homes. Single family homes are most common and many will need modifications to support aging-in-place preferences.

Eight in ten (83%) residents age 50-plus in Brownsville own their home. One in ten rents (10%) and 3% have some other arrangement such as living with family. Single family homes are by far the most dominant (80%). Six percent live in a mobile home and about one in ten live in some form of multi-unit structure such as an apartment (6%), townhome or duplex (3%) or condo (1%). While most say they want to age-in-place, seven in ten (73%) say they will need to make some home modification in order to stay in their current home as they age.

Many Brownsville homes will need modifications to enable aging in place.

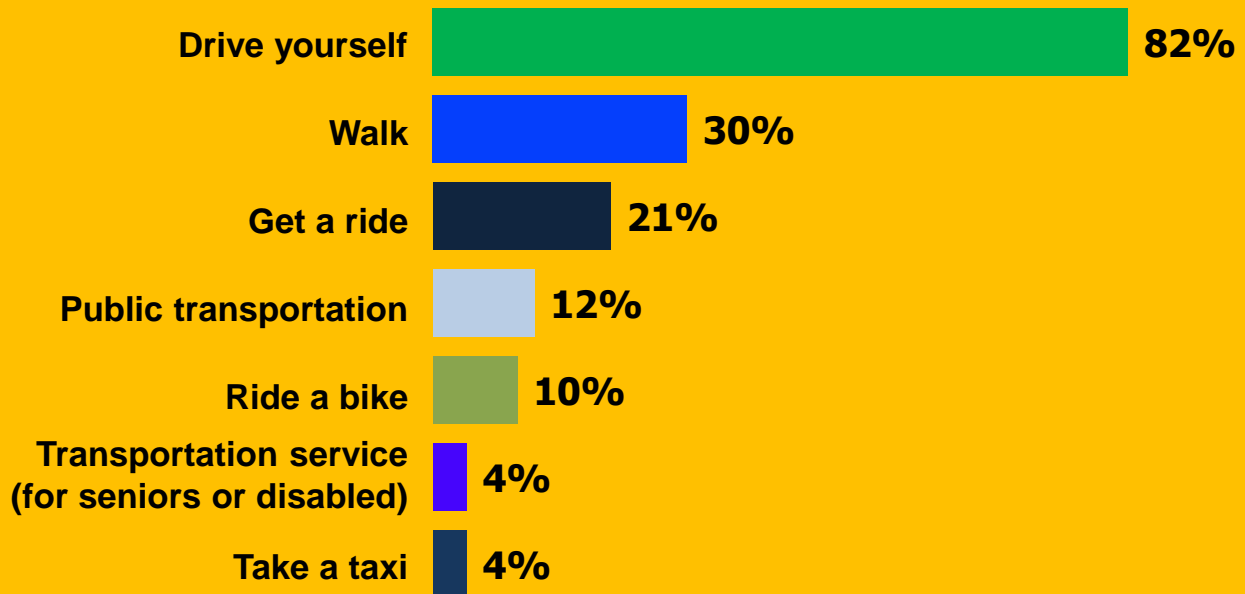


More than half of Brownsville residents age 50-plus say they will need to make bathroom modifications in order to stay in their home as they age, such as installing grab bars, handrails, high toilet seats or non-slip tile. Installing emergency response systems are a likely modification for four in ten. One in three says they will need to add things like ramps or chairlifts for easier access into and within their home or improve lighting. Just about one in ten say they will need to make structural changes like adding a bedroom or bathroom on the first floor.

Community Experience

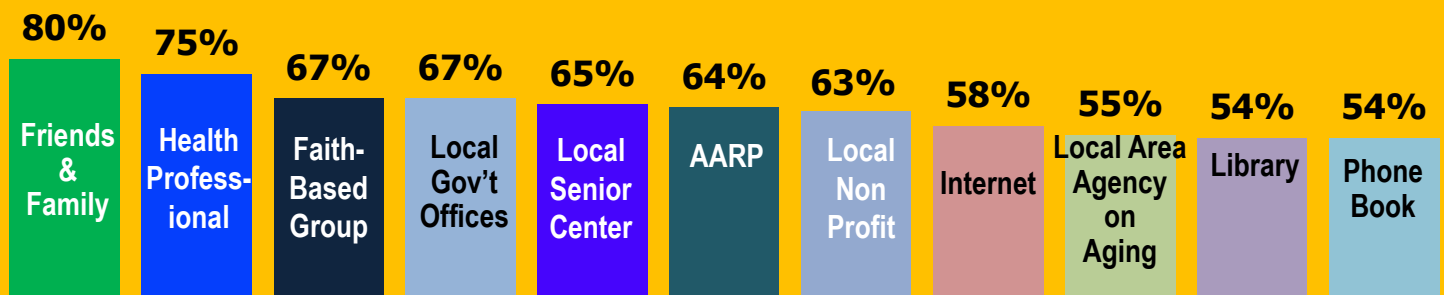
Brownsville is a driving community but one in three also walk to get where they need to.

To get around for things like shopping, visiting the doctor, or running errands, more than eight in ten (82%) drive themselves and 21% get a ride. Walking is a mode of transportation for nearly one-third (30%) of residents age 50 and over.



Brownsville residents are most likely to turn to people they know for information on services for older adults.

Eight in ten would expect friends and family to be their source of information about services for older adults such as caregiving, home delivered meals, home repair, medical transport, or social activities. Three-fourths would turn to their doctor or other health professional and about two-thirds each would seek help from faith-based organizations, local government, senior centers, AARP or another local non-profit. Just over half would go to general information resources such as the internet, library, or phone book.





Community Features

The formula for what makes a community livable isn't particularly complex. For the most part, the features are fairly simple. In a livable community, people of all ages can go for a walk, safely cross the street, ride a bike, get around without a car, live comfortably, work or volunteer, enjoy public places, socialize, spend time outdoors, be entertained, go shopping, buy healthy food, find the services they need, and make their city, town, or neighborhood a lifelong home. A community that includes all of these livable community features can be great for people of all ages.

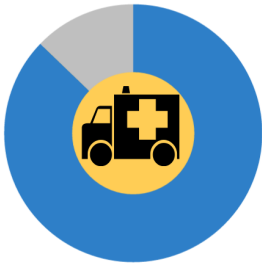
Brownsville residents rated their community on 66 characteristics across eight domains (Health and Wellness, Transportation, Housing, Outdoor Spaces, Social Participation, Volunteering and Civic Engagement, Job Opportunities, and Community Information) in order to identify important and available community features.

Summary of Importance: 8 Age-Friendly Community Domains



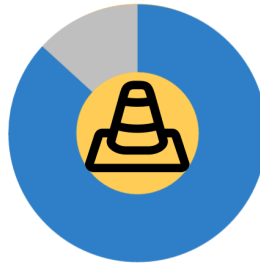
Average Importance Rating of Community Features within Each Domain
(on a 5 point scale where 5 = Extremely Important and 1 = Not At All Important)

Health and Wellness



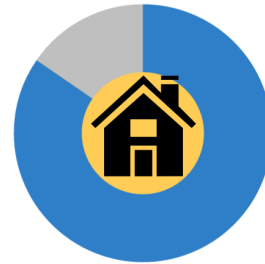
4.36

Transportation



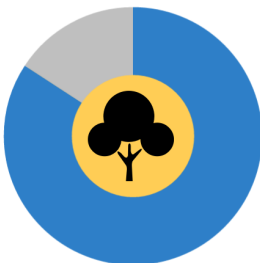
4.34

Housing



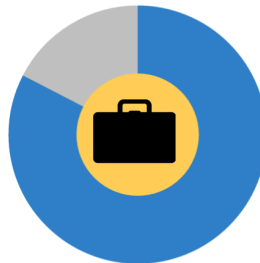
4.23

Outdoor Spaces



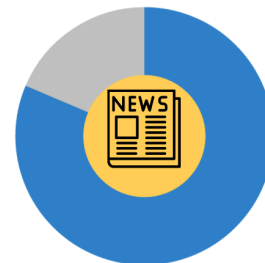
4.21

Job Opportunities



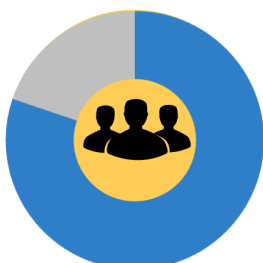
4.13

Community Info



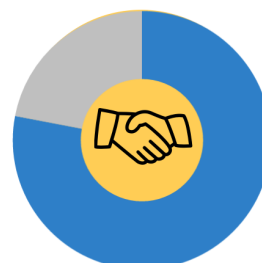
4.07

Social Participation



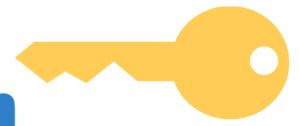
4.01

Volunteer and Civic Engagement



3.90

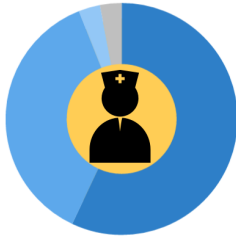
Summary of Importance: Community Features by Domain



Top Important Feature Within Each Community Domain

(% of respondents who rated the item as ■ Extremely ■ Very ■ Somewhat Important)

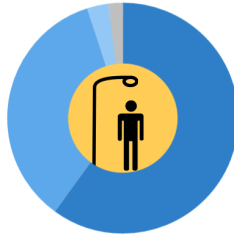
Health and Wellness



97%

Variety of healthcare professionals

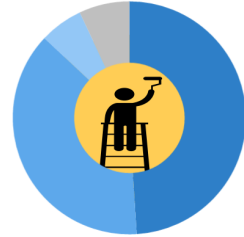
Transportation



98%

Well-lit streets and intersections safe for all users

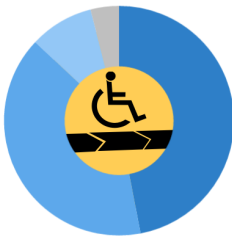
Housing



93%

Home repair service for low income and older adults

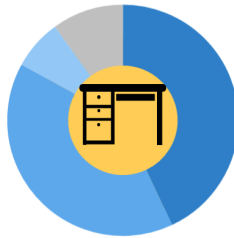
Outdoor Spaces



96%

Sidewalks in good condition, safe and accessible

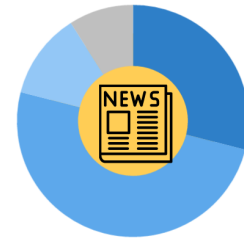
Job Opportunities



90%

Jobs adapted for people with disabilities

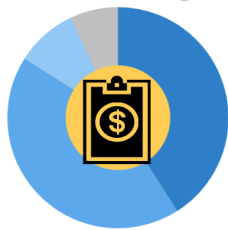
Community Info



91%

Info clearly displayed in print with large lettering

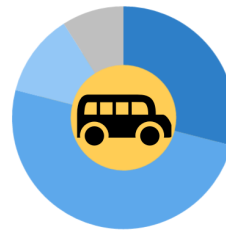
Social Participation



93%

Activities that are affordable for all

Volunteer & Civic Engagement



91%

Transportation to and from volunteer activities



Top Tier Important Community Features

The Top Tier of Important Features Among All 66 Items in 8 Domains
(percent of respondents who rated the item as Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important)

The top important community features to Brownsville residents relate to Transportation and Health & Wellness.

Top Overall Community Features	Importance	Domain
Well-lit, safe streets and intersections for all users (pedestrians, bicyclists, drivers)	98%	Transportation
Well-maintained streets	98%	Transportation
Easy to read traffic signs	97%	Transportation
Safe public transportation stops or areas	97%	Transportation
Reliable public transportation	97%	Transportation
Enforced speed limits	97%	Transportation
Well-maintained public transportation vehicles	97%	Transportation
Variety of health care professionals including specialists	97%	Health and Wellness
Easily understandable and helpful hospital answer services	97%	Health and Wellness
Affordable home health providers	97%	Health and Wellness

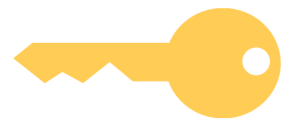


Community Needs

A need can be identified as a gap between what is and what should be. Every community has its own culture, social structure, traditions, history, and needs. A Needs Assessment is a tool to understand and identify community needs. In order to identify the needs of Brownsville residents age 50-plus, survey respondents were asked how important community features and services were to them. Then they were asked if these features and services existed in their community. These questions were then paired together to identify community needs or “gaps” between the importance of a feature or service and its existence in the community.

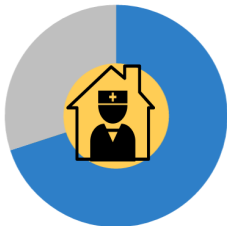
To compare these questions, respondents who said a feature or service is extremely, very, or somewhat important were aggregated and then compared to respondents who said whether or not the feature or service existed in their community.

Summary of Needs: Community Features by Domain



Top Community Need Gap Within Each Domain
(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)

Health and Wellness



70%

Affordable home
health care

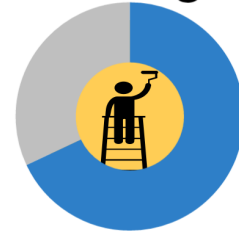
Transportation



60%

Audio/visual
pedestrian crossing

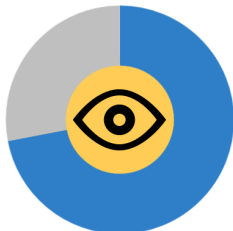
Housing



68%

Home repair service for low
income and older adults

Outdoor Spaces



72%

Neighborhood watch
programs

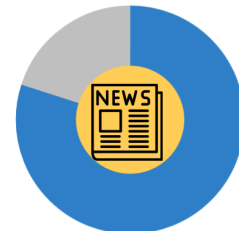
Job Opportunities



82%

Job training opportunities
for older adults

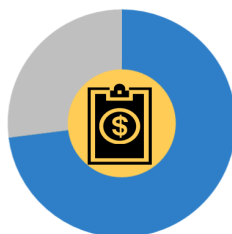
Community Info



80%

Clearly displayed printed
community information

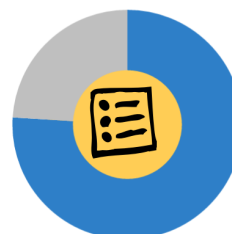
Social Participation



73%

Affordable activities

Volunteer & Civic Engagement



76%

Volunteer training
opportunities

Top Tier Community Need Gaps



The Top Need Gaps Among All 66 Features in 8 Domains

(Need Gap Is the Difference between Importance and Present:
% Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)

The largest needs in Brownsville are in the areas of Job Opportunities, Community Information and Volunteering

Top Overall Gaps	Gap	Domain
Job training opportunities for older adults	82%	Job Opportunities
Printed information that has large lettering and is clearly displayed	80%	Community Information
A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults	77%	Job Opportunities
Information delivered in person to people who have difficulty leaving their home	77%	Community Information
Jobs adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities	76%	Job Opportunities
An automated community information source	76%	Community Information
Access to information in one central location	76%	Community Information
Volunteer training opportunities	76%	Volunteering & Engagement
Easy to find information on available local volunteer opportunities	76%	Volunteering & Engagement
Transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it	75%	Volunteering & Engagement



Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

Items Ranked by Importance

Features	% Important	% Present
Sidewalks that are in good condition	96%	32%
Well-maintained public restrooms that are accessible to people of different physical abilities	95%	28%
Well-maintained public buildings that are accessible to people of different physical abilities	94%	40%
Neighborhood watch programs	94%	22%
Separate pathways for bicyclists and pedestrians	93%	38%
Well-maintained and safe public parks	91%	39%
Public parks with enough benches	89%	25%



The largest unmet need in outdoor spaces and buildings is

Neighborhood watch programs

72%

94% say it is important to have neighborhood watch programs. Only **22%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **72%**.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Housing Features

Items Ranked by Importance

Features	% Important	% Present
Home repair service for low-income and older adults that help with repairs	93%	25%
Well-maintained homes and properties	93%	51%
Home repair contractors who are trustworthy and affordable	91%	34%
Well-maintained and safe low-income housing	91%	32%
Affordable housing prices for residents of varying income levels	89%	36%
Homes that are equipped with things like a no step entrance, wider doorways, etc.	88%	32%
Seasonal services such as lawn work	87%	34%

The largest unmet need in housing features is



A repair service for low-income and older adults

68%

93% say it is important to have a repair service for low-income and older adults that helps with things like roof or window repair. Only **25%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **68%**.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Transportation and Streets

Items Ranked by Importance

Features	% Important	% Present
Well-maintained streets and roads	98%	42%
Well-lit, safe streets and intersections for all users	98%	44%
Easy to read traffic signs	97%	70%
Enforced speed limits	97%	64%
Reliable public transportation	97%	51%
Safe public transportation stops or areas	97%	49%
Well-maintained public transportation vehicles	97%	44%
Accessible and convenient public transportation	96%	60%
Special transportation services for seniors or people with disabilities	96%	53%



Transportation and Streets, cont.

Items Ranked by Importance

Features	% Important	% Present
Audio/visual pedestrian crossings	96%	36%
Affordable public transportation	95%	56%
Public parking lots and areas to park	93%	50%
Driver education/ refresher course	93%	35%
Affordable public parking	92%	44%

The largest unmet need in transportation features is

60%

Audio/visual pedestrian crossings



96% say it is important to have audio and visual pedestrian crossings. Only **36%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **60%**.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Job Opportunities

Items Ranked by Importance

Features	% Important	% Present
Job training opportunities for older adults	91%	9%
Jobs that are adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities	90%	14%
A range of flexible job opportunities for older adults	88%	11%



The largest unmet need in employment features is



Job training opportunities for older adults

82%

91% say it is important to have job training opportunities for older adults who want to learn new job skills within their job or get training in a different field of work. Only **9%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **82%**.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Community Information

Items Ranked by Importance

Features	% Important	% Present
Printed information that has large lettering and is clearly displayed	91%	11%
Free access to computers and the internet in public places	90%	49%
Access to information in one central location	89%	13%
Information delivered in person to people who have difficulty leaving their home	89%	12%
Information that is available in different languages	88%	26%
An automated community information source	87%	11%



The largest unmet need in communication and information is

Printed information that has large lettering and is clearly displayed

80%

91% say it is important to have printed information that has large lettering and is clearly displayed. Only **11%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **80%**.

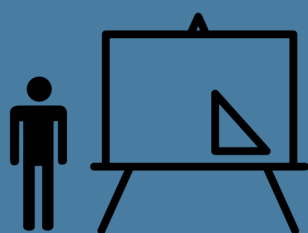
(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Volunteering and Civic Engagement

Items Ranked by Importance

Features	% Important	% Present
Opportunities for older adults to participate in decision making bodies such as community councils	91%	17%
Transportation to and from volunteer activities for those who need it	91%	16%
Volunteer training opportunities to help better perform volunteer role	91%	15%
A range of volunteer activities to choose from	90%	22%
Easy to find information on available local volunteer opportunities	90%	14%



The largest unmet need in volunteering and civic engagement is

Volunteer training opportunities to help better perform volunteer role

76%

91% say it is important to have volunteer training opportunities to help better perform volunteer role. Only **15%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **76%**.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Social Participation, Inclusion, and Education Opportunities

Items Ranked by Importance

Features	% Important	% Present
Activities that involve both younger and older people	93%	23%
Activities that are affordable to all residents	93%	20%
Activities specifically geared towards older adults	92%	25%
Activities that offer senior discounts	92%	25%
Widely publicized reliable information about activities	91%	18%
Continuing education classes	88%	36%
Conveniently located venues for entertainment	88%	35%
A variety of cultural activities for diverse populations	88%	20%
Social clubs such as book, gardening, craft or hobby	87%	26%
Local schools that involve older adults in events and activities	87%	20%

The largest unmet need in social participation, inclusion, and education opportunities is



Activities that are affordable to all residents

73%

93% say it is important to have activities that are affordable to all residents. Only **20%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **73%**.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)



Health and Wellness

Items Ranked by Importance

Features	% Important	% Present
A variety of health care professionals	97%	55%
Easily understandable and helpful hospital answering services	97%	50%
Affordable home health care providers	97%	27%
Respectful and helpful hospital and clinic staff	96%	66%
Well-maintained hospitals and health care facilities	96%	61%
Home care services including health, personal care, and housekeeping	95%	52%
Conveniently located emergency care centers	95%	50%
Health and wellness programs and classes	95%	38%
Well-trained certified home health care providers	95%	36%



Health and Wellness, cont.

Items Ranked by Importance

Features	% Important	% Present
Conveniently located health and social services	94%	39%
Easy to find information on local health and supportive services	94%	31%
A service that helps seniors find and access health services	94%	29%
Fitness activities specifically geared towards older adults	93%	30%
Health care professionals who speak different languages	92%	58%

The largest unmet need in health services is



**Affordable home health
care providers**

70%

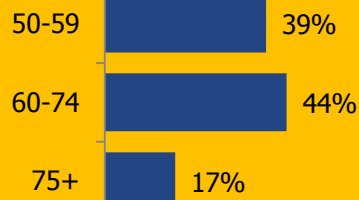
97% say it is important to have affordable home health care. Only **27%** say this is present in their community; resulting in a gap of **70%**.

(Need Gap = % Extremely/Very/Somewhat Important - % Present)

Demographics

n= 296

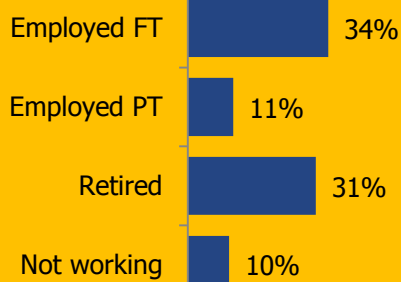
AGE



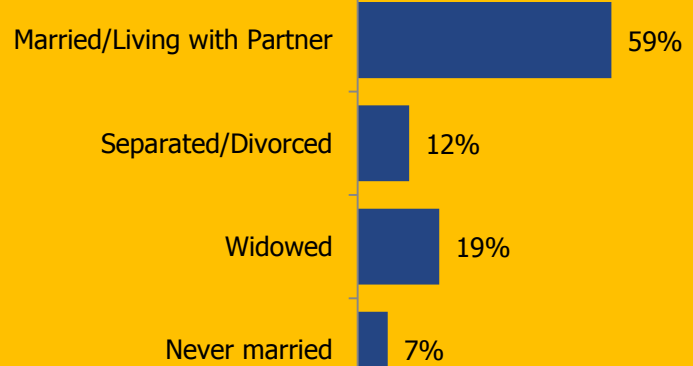
GENDER



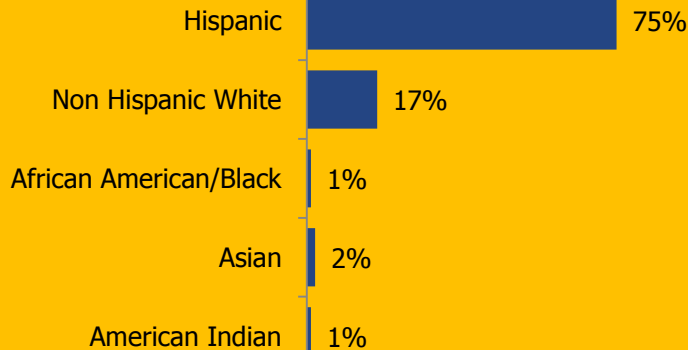
WORK STATUS



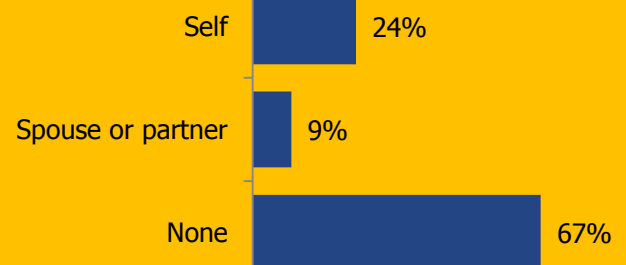
MARITAL STATUS



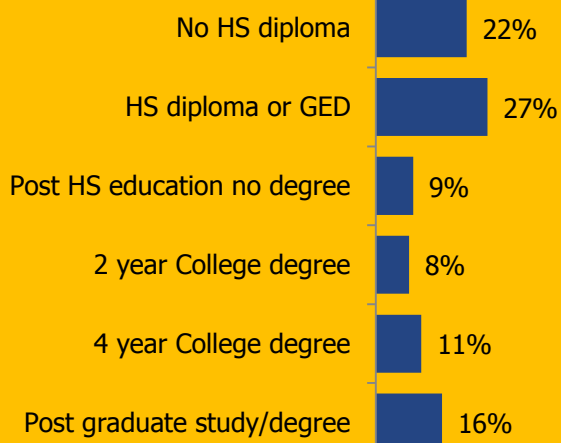
RACE/ETHNICITY



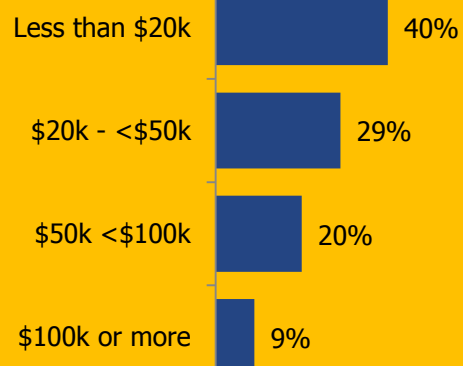
DISABILITY



EDUCATION



INCOME



Survey Methodology

This report is based on data from a mail survey of Brownsville residents age 50-plus. Resident addresses were provided by Survey Sampling International's (SSI) proprietary database.

The survey was mailed to 3,000 resident households in Brownsville. Out of the total mailing, 296 completed surveys were returned by the cut-off date for a response rate of 9.9 percent. The sample has a margin of error of +/- 5.7 percent.

Surveys were fielded from August 17, 2015 through September 28, 2015. Each resident sampled was contacted four times receiving the following pieces of mail: 1) Pre-notification postcard; 2) survey; 3) reminder postcard; and 4) second survey copy. Mail sent to 141 addresses were returned as undeliverable.

All mail pieces were printed in English and Spanish. Survey envelopes contained an English and Spanish copy of the questionnaire and respondents could select their language of their preference. Out of the total 296 completed and returned surveys, 83 were in Spanish and 213 were in English.

Vupoint Research was commissioned to enter and tabulate the data from returned surveys.

The sample was weighted by age, gender and AARP membership. Two sources were used for the weighting: the AARP membership database and Nielsen Pop Facts Advanced demographic data, 2015. Age was imputed for those who did not indicate their age on the survey. Any respondent with an initial weight of zero received a weighting of 1.0. A fully annotated questionnaire and addendum data tables are available upon request. Percentages may not add up to 100 percent due to rounding. Also due to rounding, the percentages in the text may vary slightly from those in the annotation or in graphs.

Acknowledgments

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Photos courtesy of the City of Brownsville and AARP Texas

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Real Possibilities

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