

Kid Link Riverside

An Initiative of Sioux Falls Thrive



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Executive Summary

This report summarizes research conducted to inform the development of Sioux Falls Thrive's Kid Link Riverside Initiative, which is intended to support children attending Laura B. Anderson Elementary (LBA).

Sioux Falls Thrive is a collective impact organization whose mission is to unite business, government, and nonprofit sectors in initiatives that ensure all children in the Sioux Falls area have the resources they need to achieve their optimal educational and career potential.

Thrive supports three action teams dedicated to aligning community resources and resolving gaps related to housing, food security, and out-of-school time. Kid Link brings their efforts together to focus on a single neighborhood in the city in an effort to move the needle on student outcomes, swiftly and measurably.

Purpose of This Report

This report brings together available demographic data about the Riverside area and LBA. It also summarizes findings from interviews conducted with neighborhood residents and community stakeholders about their thoughts on neighborhood strengths and needs as well as how best to engage neighbors in the Kid Link project.

The report is the result of research conducted alongside early work developing the Kid Link Initiative. Thrive's Kid Link initiative was announced in the summer of 2019, and the community around LBA was chosen as the first Kid Link site in December of that year. Roundtables in January and February of 2020 convened community members to share their reflections on LBA and the Riverside community. These meetings were followed by the first of ARI's stakeholder interviews for this report, which began in March, just as the COVID-19 pandemic became a reality for the Sioux Falls community.

Throughout the summer of 2020, Kid Link Riverside events were held outdoors, and task teams began meeting to work on targeted areas of organizing and implementing Kid Link. In August 2020, ARI began interviewing neighbors and families of LBA students for this report.

By October, Feeding South Dakota had announced they would shift food distribution to neighborhood-based strategy, including a monthly distribution at LBA, and Kid Link adjusted event timing to coincide with that distribution. In November, as colder weather set in and people became familiar with necessary public health precautions, Kid Link Riverside events moved indoors, and data collection for this report concluded soon after.

This report's findings are presented in order to help organizers understand community strengths, needs, and preferences as they continue to develop Kid Link Riverside.

The Neighborhood

The Laura B. Anderson Elementary (LBA) attendance area is made up of distinct residential neighborhoods: the Froehlich Addition and Norton Tracks to the north and Riverside to the south. They differ in important ways from other parts of the city and from one another.

Demographically, the Riverside neighborhood is older than the Norton/Froehlich areas and home to more Hispanic or Latino residents as well as more foreign-born residents. The Riverside area also has a

relatively higher proportion of limited English-speaking households than Norton / Froehlich and the city as a whole—around 8% of households. The Norton/Froehlich areas have more American Indian residents.

Compared to the rest of Sioux Falls, these neighborhoods have lower average levels of adult educational attainment and fewer workers in management, business, science, and arts occupations. They also have lower median incomes, higher rates of families with children below or near the poverty level, and higher rates of households receiving SNAP benefits. Across these areas, the rate of people without health insurance is similar to the rest of the city, but lower among children, likely due to participation in the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP). These areas have higher rates of public insurance coverage than the rest of the city.

But like Sioux Falls as a whole, these areas have high rates of working parents: around 80 to 90% of school-age children have all their parents in the labor force. Despite lower income, the neighborhoods appear stable: both Norton/Froehlich and Riverside areas have a large proportion of households who have been in the same home for a decade or longer. In turn, the housing stock is older, especially in Riverside where three quarters of the housing was built before 1980.

Home values in both areas are lower than the rest of the city. But one positive side of this is that even considering lower income levels, homes are more affordable. Affordability is more evident for homeowners than renters, especially in the Norton/Froehlich area where rent is similar to citywide averages. Both areas have a higher proportion of mobile homes than the rest of the city, though Riverside has more homeowners and single-family homes compared to Sioux Falls as a whole, whereas Norton/Froehlich has more renters and more housing units located in large apartment buildings.

Compared to Sioux Falls as a whole, these areas have higher rates of households with no computer, no Internet access, or only a phone—in Riverside for example, about 31% of households have no Internet subscription and another 13% have only cell phone data. Transportation access in these areas is similar to the rest of the city, though still around 2 in 5 households have no vehicle or only one vehicle.

The School

On average, LBA has smaller classes than the average Sioux Falls elementary school and a lower student to teacher ratio.

LBA has a higher mobility rate than the district as a whole but also has a higher proportion of fifth grade students who have been enrolled in the school since kindergarten. The school also has a slightly lower attendance rate and higher rate of chronic absenteeism than the district as a whole.

Compared to other Sioux Falls elementary schools, LBA has a smaller proportion of White students and relatively more Hispanic students. About one-third of students at LBA are enrolled in the English Learner (EL) program.

LBA has a higher proportion of students who are eligible for free or reduced-price meals, relative to the elementary school districtwide average.

Compared to districtwide averages on statewide performance assessments, lower proportions of LBA students met or exceeded expectations in English language arts, mathematics, and science.

Stakeholder Perspectives

Community stakeholders believe that Riverside is a relatively stable, tight-knit, multigenerational community whose members take pride in the neighborhood and school. Volunteers and school staff who live outside the neighborhood see themselves as outsiders who have little familiarity with the neighborhood and its residents outside of what they experience within the school.

In stakeholders' views, the neighborhood is composed of hardworking families, often working long hours to support their families. Their efforts to support their families at work trade off with family time at home; it can also make communication difficult because parents are not always available during daytime hours. With most parents working and few options for childcare, out-of-school time programming is a significant area of need.

Stakeholders identified additional community needs, including food security, childcare or enrichment activities, transportation, indoor gathering space or a community center, and access to healthcare and quality housing. Needs are deeper and wider among the families who live "up on the hill," i.e., in the Norton Tracks and Froehlich Addition areas, exacerbated by the fact that these areas are farther from and less accessible to the school, retail, and community resources generally.

To communicate with as many neighbors as possible, stakeholders believe it is necessary to use a variety of modes of communication. There is no one size fits all. But in general, communication rooted in personal connection and relationships will be more successful. Stakeholders recommend that Kid Link organizers work to build bridges to bring together diverse groups by connecting with community leaders, especially of immigrant and refugee groups; be consistent in order to build trust; and avoid framing programs as rescuing or saving families. Food and festivals, they point out, attract more visitors.

Neighbor Perspectives

Neighbors have immense pride in their neighborhood, especially in Riverside. They consider the neighborhood a tight-knit, safe community and compare it to a small town, but they are concerned that outsiders see it as poor and undesirable. The school and park are the social center of the neighborhood, at least for Riverside residents; people who live in the Norton/Froehlich areas do not live within walking distance of either the park or school and do not have similar neighborhood assets nearby.

Neighbors have enormous affection for the school with very positive things to say about the support their children receive from teachers and staff, though some would like to see a PTA or other more formal parent organization on top of ad hoc efforts that exist now.

Though some Riverside residents with reliable vehicle access consider the neighborhood's location convenient, others point out that there are no nearby grocery stores, drug stores, or general merchandise retailers, an inconvenience for residents. The neighborhood also lacks indoor public space like a library or community center where neighbors can gather. Particularly for those who live in Norton/Froehlich, traffic safety and walkability are concerns.

Most families rely on private vehicles for transportation, but it is not uncommon for families to carpool with immediate or extended family, whether because they share one vehicle or in order to save on gas money. More significant transportation challenges arise when it comes to children during out-of-school time when parents are at work and cannot provide rides.

Many neighbors walk a fine line between food security and insecurity. They may be doing well now, but struggled in the past, or vice versa. For many families, a change in employment or SNAP eligibility, someone getting sick, a bump in SNAP due to the CARES Act, or an unexpected expense is all it takes to push them over the edge one way or another. Among the biggest barriers to getting help with food are finding information about available resources and, even more significantly, overcoming the perception of stigma or shame associated with asking for help.

Though many families have been able to take advantage of remote work or extra flexibility in their schedules during the COVID-19 pandemic, juggling work and parenting obligations is difficult. Commonly, children spend out-of-school time at home, sometimes with a parent or with an older sibling or alone. Few children are able to participate in OST programs due to barriers presented by affordability and transportation.

Most people rely on a combination of phone calls and text messages for their personal communications and prefer to hear from the school by text message or paper notices sent home with children. Facebook is nearly universally used by families to find out about local events or neighborhood news, though people use it in different ways and it is unclear how effectively information makes it to the intended audience.

Regardless of the medium, the way a message is framed is important. Neighbors are not receptive to programs or messages that frame the neighborhood as destitute and needy or programs and volunteers that frame themselves as lifting up and saving those who cannot help themselves.

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I. Organization of the Report

This report begins with a description of the Riverside neighborhood and Laura B. Anderson Elementary (LBA) attendance area. This geographic area is made up of two main residential areas: a northern area composed of Froehlich Addition and Norton Tracks and a southern area composed of Riverside. The report's first section, "The Riverside Neighborhood," presents descriptive community data for these neighborhoods and explains why Riverside was selected as the first Kid Link neighborhood. Data reveal differences among Norton/Froehlich and Riverside neighborhoods that make up LBA attendance area.

Next, the "LBA Elementary School" section describes Laura B. Anderson Elementary, providing demographic data on the student population and summary attendance and performance metrics.

The "Kid Link Riverside Timeline" section briefly outlines the development of the Kid Link Riverside program to date, including how the program's development has overlapped research activities for this report.

The subsequent two sections present findings from interviews conducted with community stakeholders and neighbors with a connection to the Riverside area or LBA school.

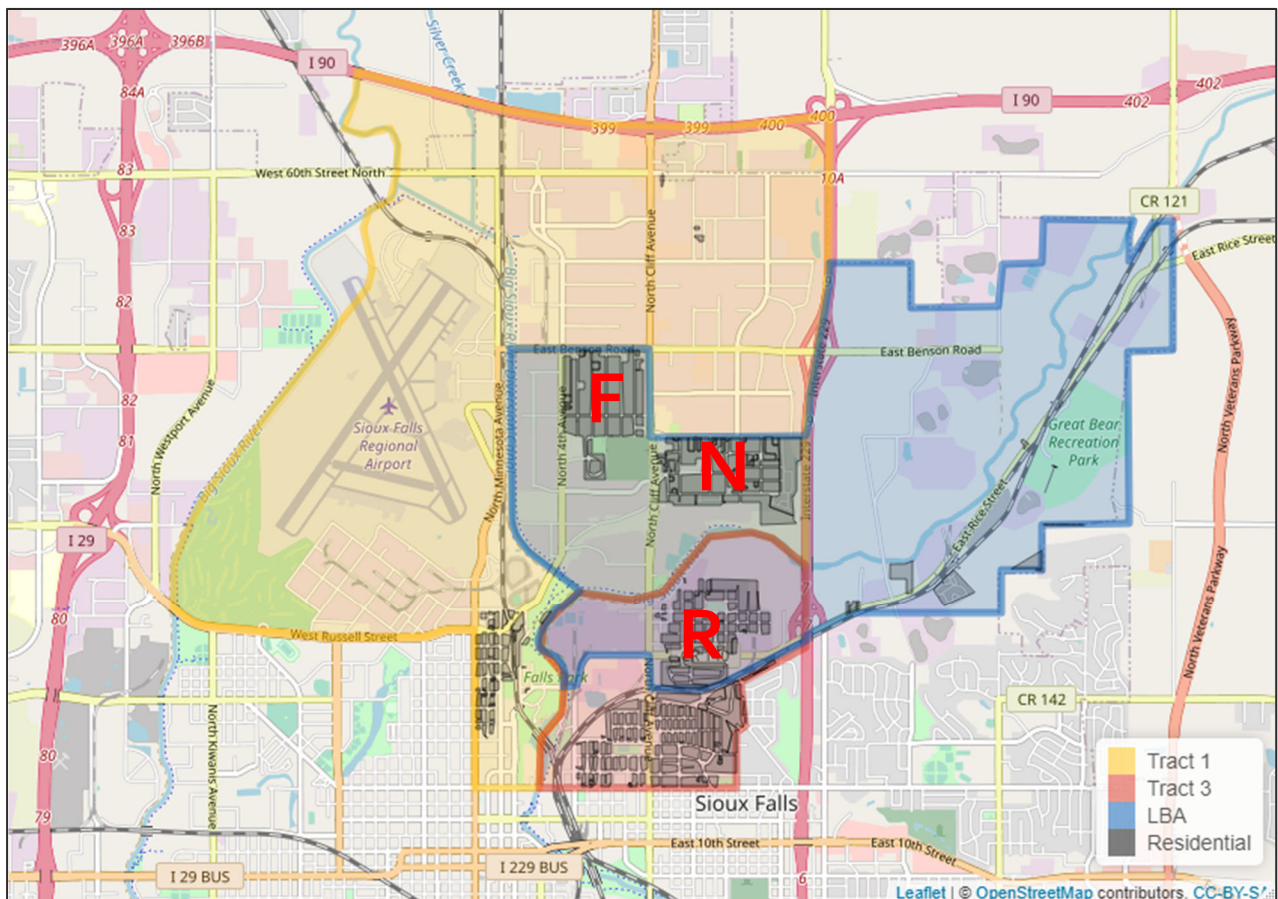
Finally, the report offers conclusions regarding Kid Link Riverside and Thrive's Kid Link initiative.

II. The Riverside Neighborhood

Kid Link takes a holistic, neighborhood-based approach to collective impact. The first neighborhood to join the Kid Link initiative was the north central neighborhood of Riverside, home to Laura B. Anderson Elementary (LBA).

Despite its name, the Kid Link Riverside program actually encompasses more than just the Riverside neighborhood. It is intended to serve the entire LBA attendance area, which is composed of Riverside as well as Norton Tracks to the north and the Froehlich Addition to the northwest. East of I-229, a few additional residential areas fall within the attendance area, including the Valley View Mobile Home Park.

The map below shows the LBA attendance area (blue) and the Riverside (R), Norton Tracks (N), and Froehlich Addition (F) neighborhoods. Tracts 1 (yellow) and 3 (red) refer to Census tracts, geographic areas used by the U.S. Census Bureau to collect and report data. Those tracts are the basis for the descriptive neighborhood data reported in this section.



Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Sioux Falls GIS (Note: F = Froehlich Addition, N = Norton Tracks, R = Riverside)

Figure 1. Map of the Kid Link Riverside Area

Of note, the Census tract geography does not align perfectly with the LBA attendance area or neighborhood boundaries. In particular, the Riverside neighborhood is entirely within Census tract 3, but tract 3 also includes homes in the Whittier area. Norton Tracks and the Froehlich Addition are both entirely within Census tract 1, but tract 1 also includes the residential North End East area to the west of Falls Park. The part of the LBA attendance area that lies east of I-229 falls outside of both Census tracts; however, nearly all of the residential areas within the LBA attendance area are west of I-229.

A. Why Riverside?

The neighborhood-based approach to collaboration grew out of the work of Sioux Falls Thrive’s Food Security Action Team. That group’s primary goal was—and remains—aligning community resources to ensure families have access to the food they need. The Food Security Action Team selected the Riverside neighborhood and LBA based on research that identified this area as a food desert with limited access to both retail and charitable food resources.¹

Despite its central location in the city, LBA Elementary is almost a mile from the nearest grocery store (Franklin Food Market), two and a half miles from the nearest large supermarket (Hy-Vee), and over four miles from the nearest superstore (Walmart). Before the Kid Link initiative began, the closest food giveaway was the monthly Food to You Mobile Food Pantry at East Side Lutheran Church, a mile and a half from LBA Elementary. To get to Feeding South Dakota’s food pantry on Westport Avenue, residents would have had to travel nearly six miles.

Further, many of the people who live in the neighborhoods around LBA Elementary rely on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps), free or reduced-price school breakfast and lunch, and the Feeding South Dakota food pantry to get the food they need. This area has among the highest rate of SNAP receipt and food pantry visits per household of any area in the city.²

Beyond food access, the Kid Link Riverside area does not enjoy the residential amenities found in other neighborhoods. As the map above makes clear, Riverside, Norton Tracks, and the Froehlich Addition are residential islands. The neighborhoods are surrounded by industrial supply businesses, trucking companies, and municipal utilities and maintenance facilities. Streets within the residential areas are quiet, but the neighborhoods are bordered by major thoroughfares. Though Riverside is home to the popular Pioneer Spray Park, the nearest public library (Oak View) and community center (Kenny Anderson) are over two miles away.

A Note on Data

The rest of this section describes the Kid Link Riverside community, drawing on data from the 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates. These estimates are compiled by the U.S. Census Bureau based on an ongoing survey. The American Community Survey reaches about two to three percent of the population each year. For small areas like neighborhoods, that results in a very small sample size. The 5-year estimates pool samples over five years in order to increase the sample size and the reliability of estimates. Throughout this report, American Community Survey estimates are shown

¹ Augustana Research Institute, “Food Security & Food Systems in Sioux Falls, SD,” December 2018.

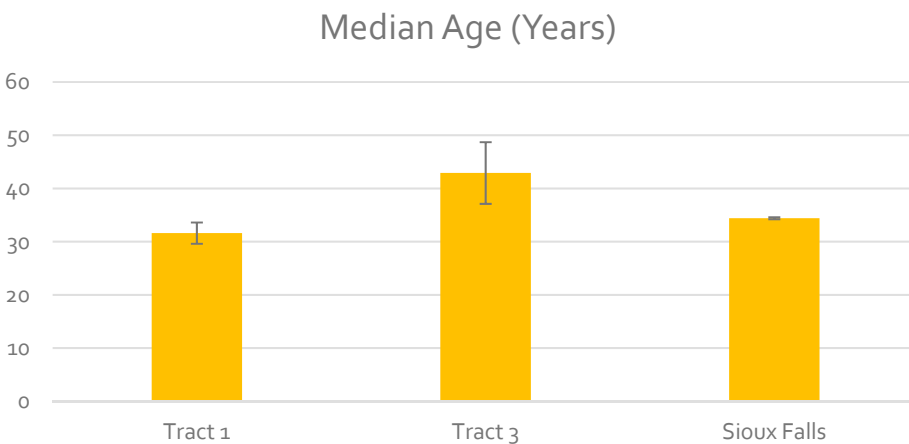
² Augustana Research Institute, “Food Security & Food Systems in Sioux Falls, SD,” December 2018.

with error bars, which represent the margin of error.³ Larger samples result in smaller margins of error, and conversely, smaller samples result in larger margins of error. As a result, there is a good deal of uncertainty around the true value of estimates for areas as small as Census tracts, and less uncertainty around the true value for larger areas such as the city of Sioux Falls.

American Community Survey data are presented for Census tracts 1 and 3 and for the city of Sioux Falls. Please refer to Figure 1 for a map of the Census tract areas. Roughly, tract 1 refers to the Norton Tracks and Froehlich Addition neighborhoods, and tract 3 refers to the Riverside and Whittier neighborhoods.

B. Demographics

Compared to the city as a whole, the Norton/Froehlich area (tract 1) is younger and the Riverside area (tract 3) is older. The median age for Norton/Froehlich is 31.6 years, compared to 42.9 for Riverside and 34.4 in Sioux Falls as a whole.



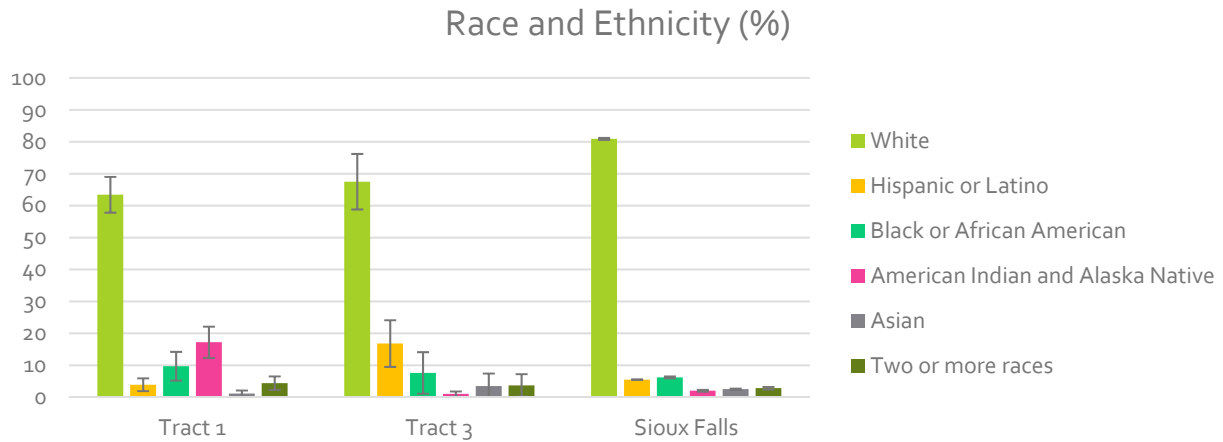
Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table S0101

Figure 2. Median Age

Both neighborhoods are also more racially diverse than the city as a whole. However, the areas differ in their composition: Norton/Froehlich is home to more American Indian residents, whereas Riverside/Whittier is home to more Hispanic or Latino residents.

In Norton/Froehlich, about 63% of residents identify as White, 17% as American Indian, and 10% as Black. By comparison, in the Riverside/Whittier area, about 68% of residents identify as White, 17% as Hispanic or Latino, and 8% as Black. Citywide, about 81% of residents identify as White, 6% as Black, 6% as Hispanic or Latino, and 2% as American Indian.

³ Margins of error are calculated at a 90% confidence level. The interval between the top and bottom of the error bar is expected to contain the true value for the population 90% of the time.

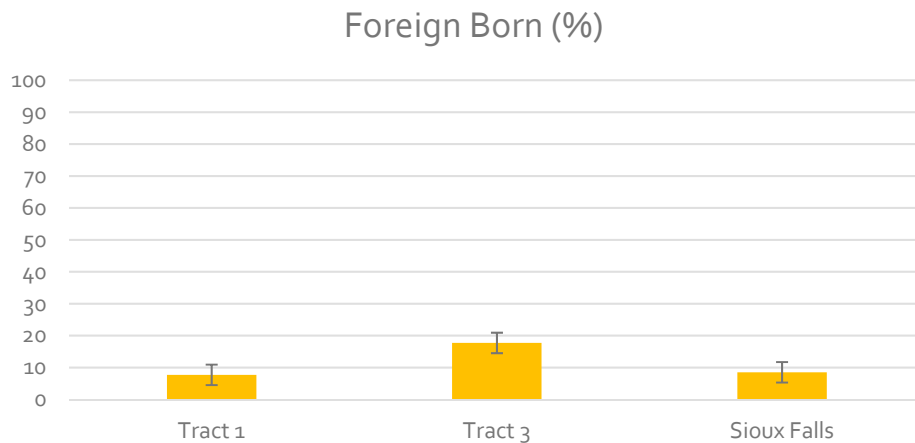


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP05

Note: Race categories refer to one race alone, not Hispanic or Latino. Categories making up < 0.2% of the population in each area are not shown (Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander and Some other race).

Figure 3. Race and Ethnicity

The Kid Link Riverside neighborhoods also differ when it comes to the nativity of residents. In the Norton/Froehlich area, around 8% of residents were born outside of the United States, compared to a citywide average of about 9%. In the Riverside/Whittier area, about 18% of residents were born abroad.

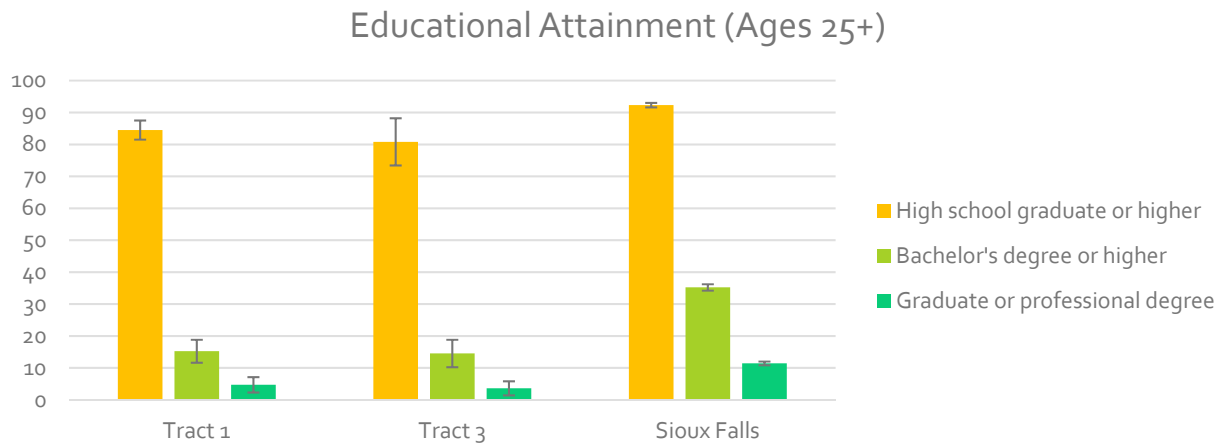


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B05012

Figure 4. Foreign Born (%)

When it comes to educational attainment, the Norton/Froehlich and Riverside areas are similar to one another but differ from the city as a whole. In both the Norton/Froehlich and Riverside areas, a little over 80% of adults ages 25 or older have at least a high school education, about 15% of adults have a bachelor's degree or higher, and around 4 to 5% of adults have a graduate or professional degree. By

comparison, citywide in Sioux Falls, about 92% of adults have at least a high school education, 35% have a bachelor's degree or higher, and 11% have a graduate or professional degree.



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table S1501

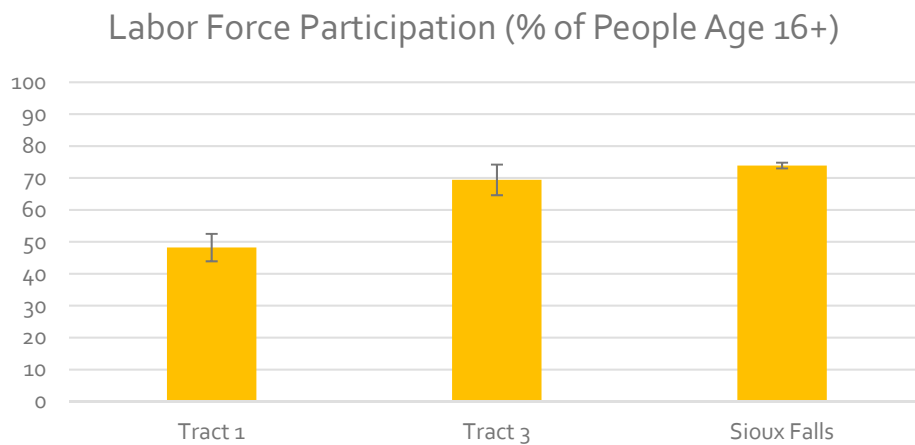
Figure 5. Educational Attainment among People Age 25 or Older

C. Work and Employment

Throughout the work and employment section, it should be noted that data reflected here were collected from 2015 through 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic fallout.

Labor force participation refers to people who are employed or looking for work. When it comes to labor force participation, the Riverside neighborhood looks much like the city as a whole.

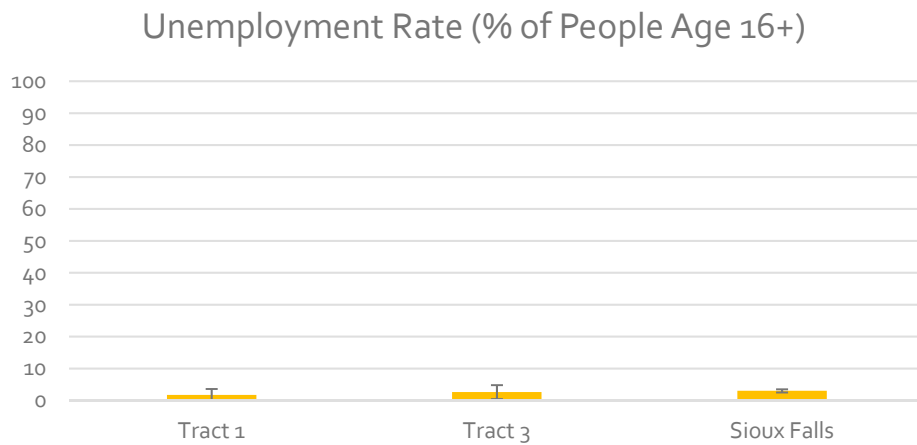
Norton/Froehlich, on the other hand, has a lower proportion of residents working or looking for work.



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP03

Figure 6. Labor Force Participation Rate among People Age 16 or Older

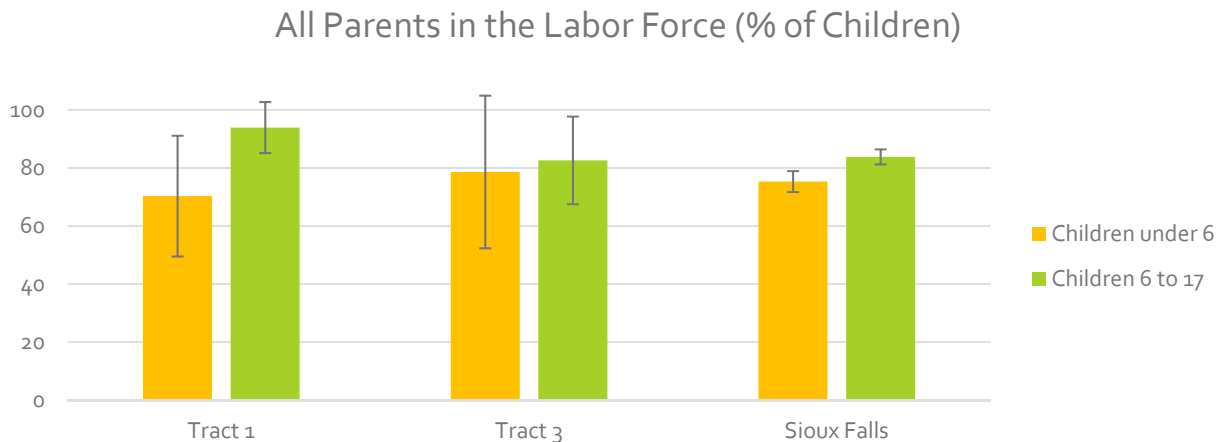
The unemployment rate is similarly low across geographic areas, though these figures should be interpreted with caution given the relatively large margin of error and unknown effects of the pandemic.



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP03

Figure 7. Unemployment Rate among People Age 16 or Older

Figure 8, below, shows the percentage of children in each area who have all of their parents in the labor force, either working or looking for work. The estimates demonstrate that families in Norton/Froehlich and Riverside—like families in Sioux Falls as a whole—are working families. The vast majority of children—especially but not only school-age children—have all of their parents in the labor force. That rate appears highest among school-age children in the Norton/Froehlich area.

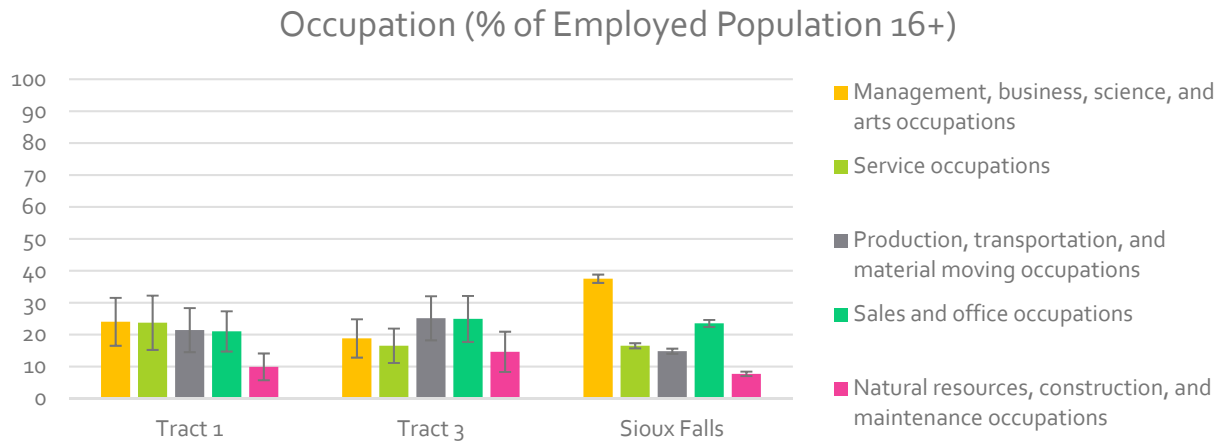


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP03

Figure 8. All Parents in the Labor Force (% of Children)

The occupational profile of the Kid Link Riverside neighborhoods also differs from the city as a whole. Citywide, around 38% of employees work in management, business, science, or arts occupations. These occupations are less common in the Kid Link Riverside neighborhoods, where workers are more likely

to be employed in service, sales, or production, transportation, and material moving. Workers in these neighborhoods are also more likely than others in the city to work in natural resources, construction, or maintenance occupations.



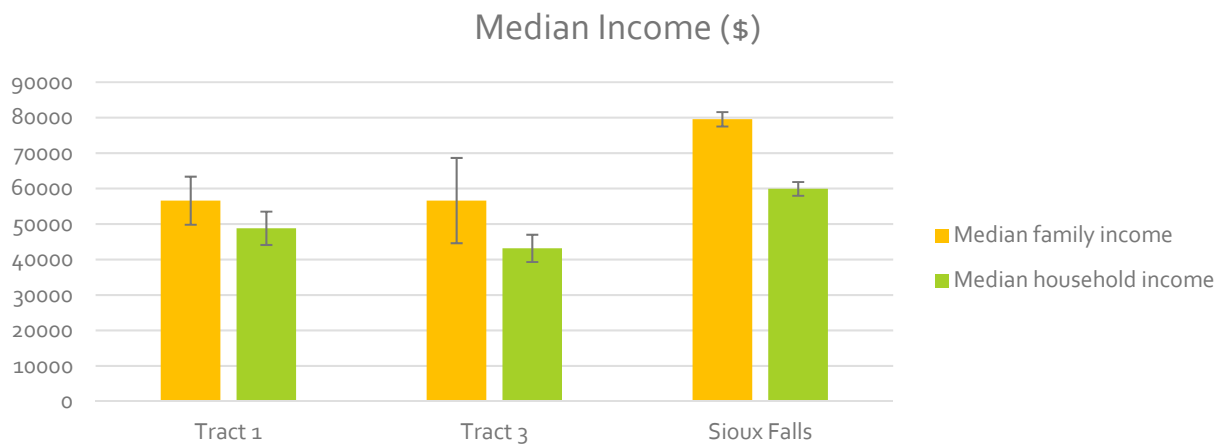
Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP03

Figure 9. Occupation (% of Employed Population Age 16 or Over)

D. Income

In both Norton/Froehlich and the Riverside area, typical incomes are lower than the rest of the city. Whereas the typical income for a family in Sioux Falls is nearly \$80,000, the typical family income in Kid Link Riverside neighborhoods is about \$57,000.

Median household income tends to be lower than median family income because it takes into account non-family households, including people who live alone. Median family income is measured only among families, two or more related people living together. Income includes earnings as well as Social Security and other retirement income, Supplemental Security Income, and cash public assistance.

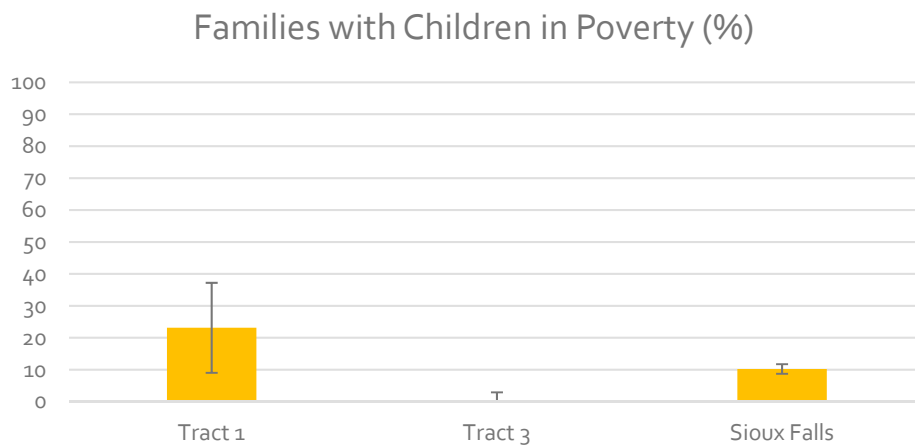


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table S1901

Figure 10. Median Family and Household Income (2019 dollars)

In Norton/Froehlich, an estimated 23% of families with children have incomes below the poverty level, compared to about 10% of families citywide. At the same time, estimates suggest that, in the Riverside area, essentially none of the families with children have income below the poverty level. This estimate should be viewed with skepticism given the small sample size.

Other data points suggest the actual poverty rate in the Riverside area likely falls between the citywide average and the poverty rate in the Norton/Froehlich area. The 2014 American Community Survey 5-year estimates calculated a poverty rate of 18.9% (plus or minus 13.7%) for the Riverside area, compared to a citywide poverty rate of 13.4% (plus or minus 1.8%). Though the proportion of people in poverty likely decreased with continued recovery from the 2008 recession, it is unlikely the poverty rate fell to zero. Further, the Riverside area is similar to Norton/Froehlich on other measures of economic wellbeing, including median income, the poverty rate among adults, and the proportion of households receiving SNAP.



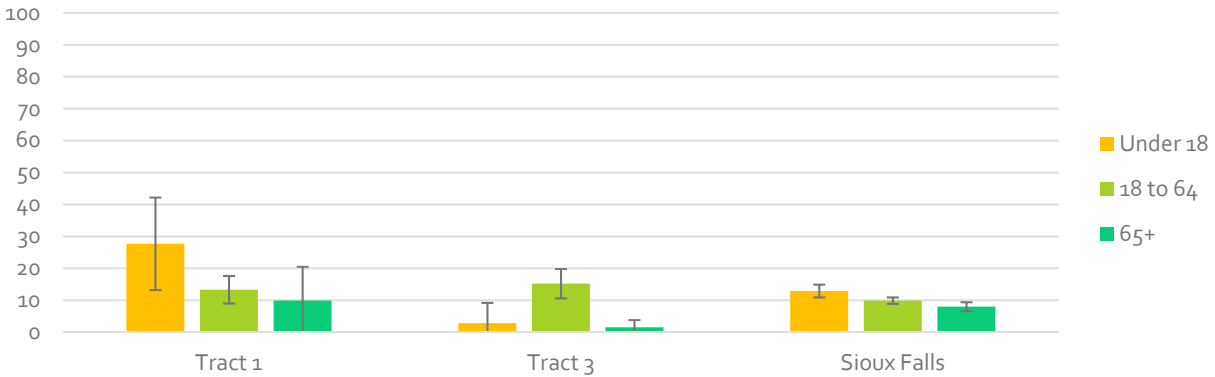
Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP03

Figure 11. Families with Children under 18 below the Poverty Level (%)

Across areas (with the apparent anomaly of tract 3), poverty rate tends to be higher among children and lower among adults. This could be due to a variety of reasons: Poverty level is calculated based on family size. In 2019, the poverty threshold for a family of two adults with no children was \$17,196, whereas the threshold for a family of six with four children was \$34,161.⁴ Additionally, although most families in Sioux Falls have all parents in the labor force, families with children may choose to have one parent stay home, work part-time, or take a job with lower pay but more flexible hours, all of which could reduce the family's income.

⁴ U.S. Census Bureau Poverty Thresholds by Size of Family and Number of Children, 2019

Poverty Rate by Age (%)

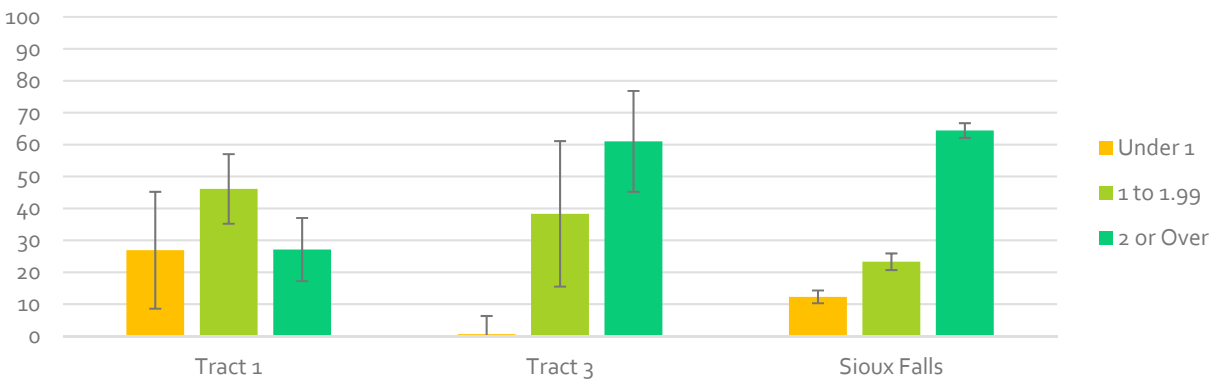


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP03

Figure 12. Poverty Rate by Age (% of Population)

Considering the actual expenses of supporting a family, the poverty level is very low, and the poverty rate is a strict measure of economic hardship. In fact, many assistance programs set eligibility levels well above the poverty level. For instance, the National School Lunch Program sets eligibility for free or reduced-price lunch at 185% of the poverty threshold. As Figure 13 shows, in both the Norton/Froehlich area and the Riverside area, a significant proportion of children live in families with incomes below 200% of the poverty threshold. In the Riverside area, an estimated 39% of children fall in this range; in Norton/Froehlich, an estimated 73% do.

Ratio of Income to Poverty for Children Under 18 (%)

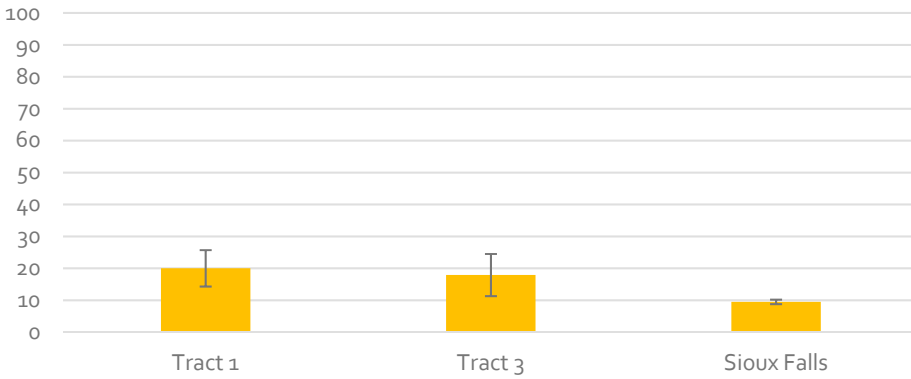


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table B05010

Figure 13. Ratio of Income to Poverty for Children under 18 (%)

Compared to the rest of the city, both the Norton/Froehlich and Riverside areas have high rates of households receiving SNAP. An estimated 20% of households in Norton/Froehlich and 18% in Riverside receive SNAP. By comparison, about 9.5% of households citywide receive SNAP.

Households Receiving SNAP (%)



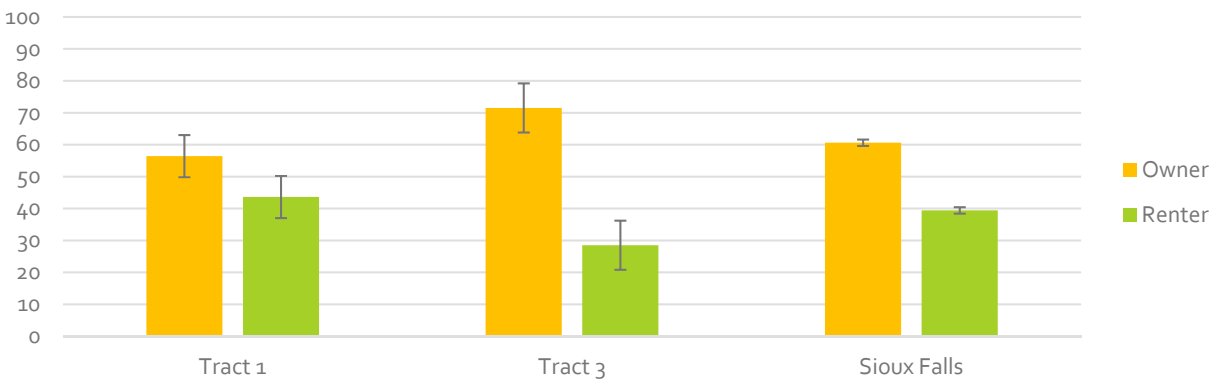
Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table S2201

Figure 14. Households Receiving Food Stamps or SNAP (%)

E. Housing

Compared both to the city overall and to Norton/Froehlich, the Riverside area has a higher proportion of home owners and fewer renters. About 72% of households in the Riverside area own their own home. By contrast, in Norton/Froehlich, about 56% of households are homeowners.

Housing Tenure (% of Occupied Units)

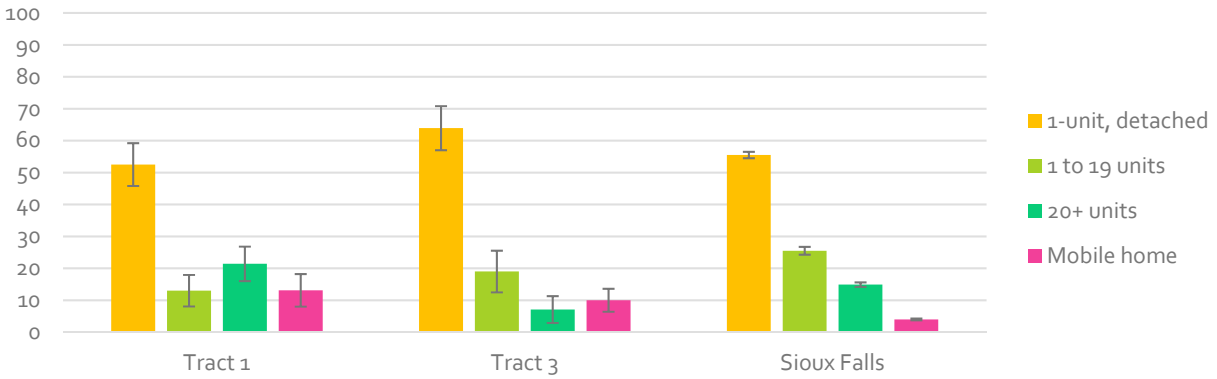


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP04

Figure 15. Housing Tenure (% of Occupied Units)

Consistent with homeownership patterns, the Riverside area has more 1-unit, detached single family homes compared to both Norton/Froehlich and the city as a whole. Norton/Froehlich, on the other hand, has more housing units located within large apartment buildings of 20+ units. Both the Riverside and Norton/Froehlich areas have a higher proportion of mobile homes than can be found in the rest of the city.

Housing Structure Type (% of Housing Units)

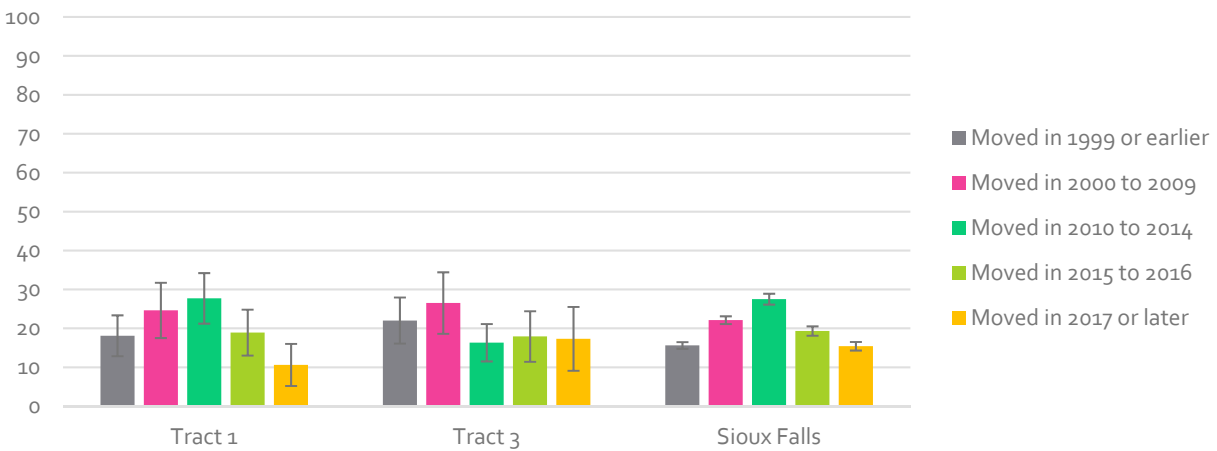


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP04

Figure 16. Housing Structure Type (% of Housing Units)

Although residential mobility may be associated with lower incomes,⁵ compared to the city as a whole, both the Norton/Froehlich area and the Riverside area appear to have similar or even higher proportions of long-term residents. In both areas, 40 to 50% of householders have been in the same home since at least 2009.

Year Householder Moved into Unit (% of Occupied Units)



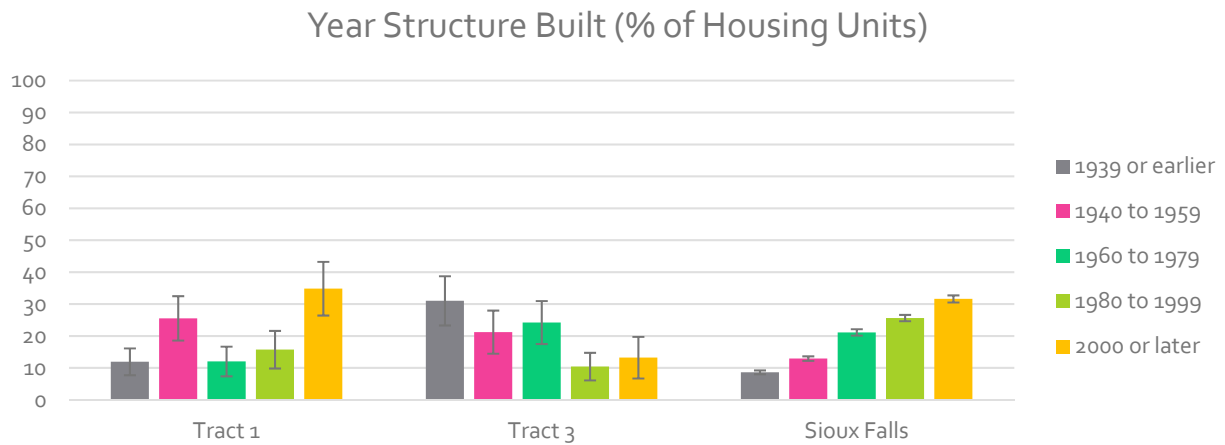
Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP04

Figure 17. Year Householder Moved into Unit (% of Occupied Units)

Compared to the rest of the city, both areas are made up of older housing stock, particularly the Riverside area where three quarters of housing units were built before 1980—and nearly a third of units before 1940. The Norton/Froehlich area has seen some new construction in the past twenty years, with

⁵ Phinney, Robin. "Exploring residential mobility among low-income families." *Social Service Review* 87, no. 4 (2013): 780-815.

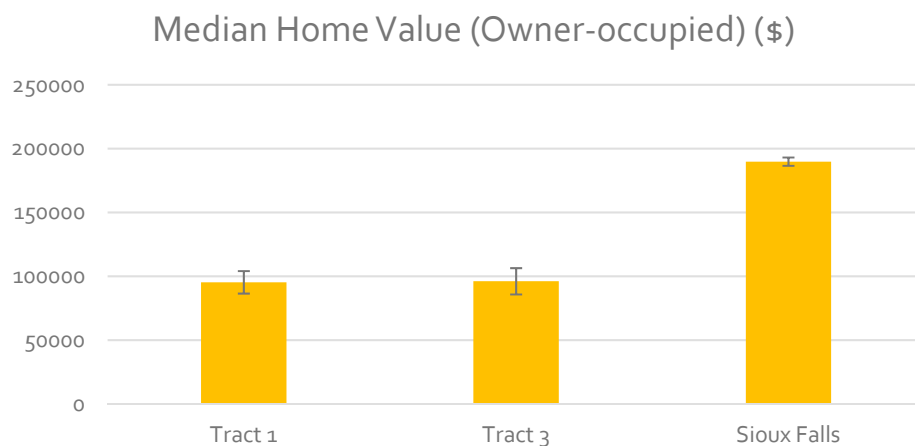
about 35% of housing units built in 2000 or later. But another 25% of units were built during the 1940s and 1950s, twice the proportion found in the city at large.



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP04

Figure 18. Year Structure Built (% of Housing Units)

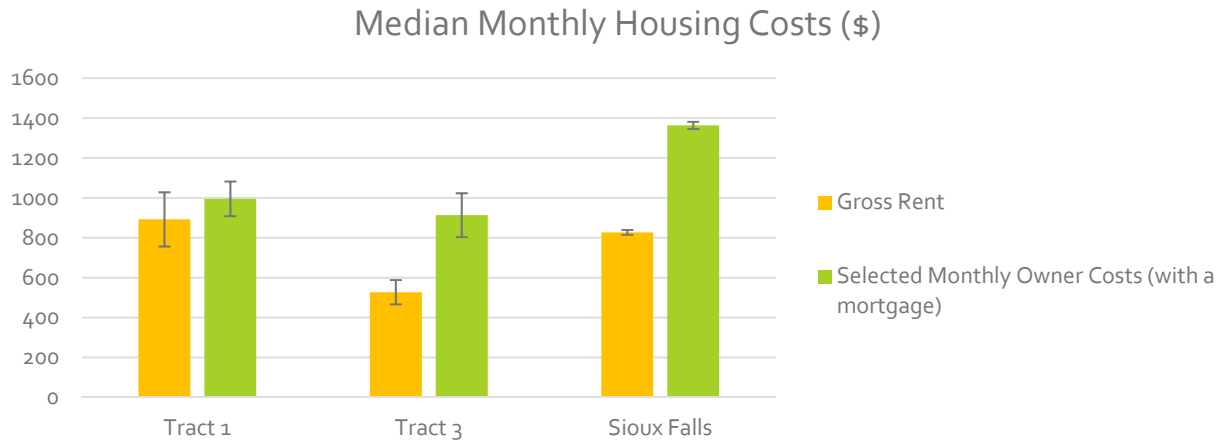
The homes in Norton/Froehlich and Riverside have, on average, lower value than those in the rest of the city. On the one hand, this reflects the fact that they are older and smaller than homes in newer neighborhoods. On the other hand, it makes these homes more affordable for homeowners. Even considering the lower average incomes among residents in the Kid Link Riverside neighborhoods, the homes there are more affordable. One way to compare affordability is to calculate the median multiple, or the median home value as a multiple of median household income. In the Norton/Froehlich area, the median home value is 1.95 times the median household income; in the Riverside area, the median multiple is 2.23. By comparison, the median multiple for the city of Sioux Falls as a whole is 3.17. Lower values reflect greater affordability, even considering differences in income levels.



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP04

Figure 19. Median Home Value (Owner-occupied) (\$)

With lower home values come lower monthly housing costs. Homeowners in Norton/Froehlich and the Riverside area generally pay around \$400 or \$500 less per month than homeowners in the rest of the city, with median monthly costs at or below \$1,000. Renters in the Riverside area likewise pay lower gross rent than renters in the rest of the city, averaging about \$527. The same is not true in Norton/Froehlich, where a higher proportion of households rent. In that area, median rent is \$892, similar to the rest of the city.



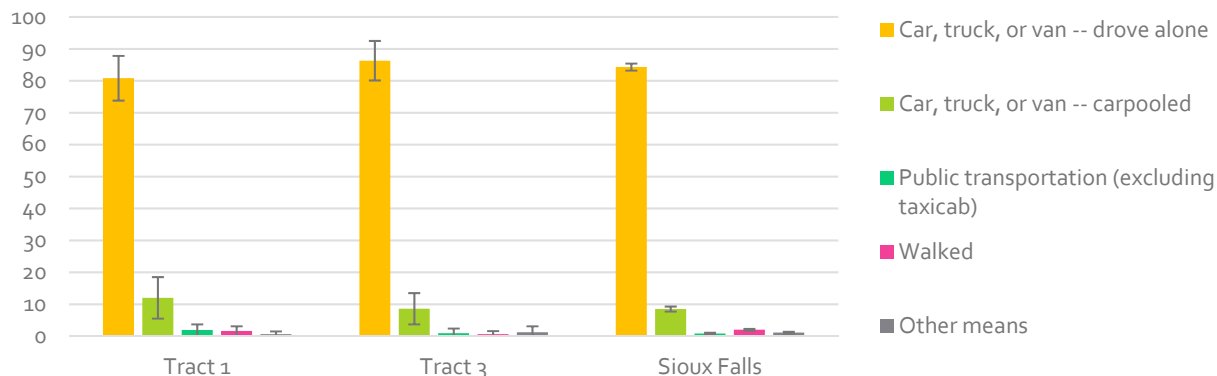
Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP04

Figure 20. Median Monthly Housing Costs (\$)

F. Transportation

Workers in Norton/Froehlich and the Riverside area commute to work by similar means as other workers in Sioux Falls. Across all areas, most workers drive a car, truck, or van to work by themselves—though the proportion of workers who drive alone in Norton/Froehlich may be slightly lower. Around 10% of workers carpool, and that proportion may be slightly higher in the Norton/Froehlich area than the rest of the city. Norton/Froehlich also may have a slightly higher proportion of workers who use public transportation or walk to work, though they still make up a very small segment of commuters.

Commuting to Work (% of workers 16+)

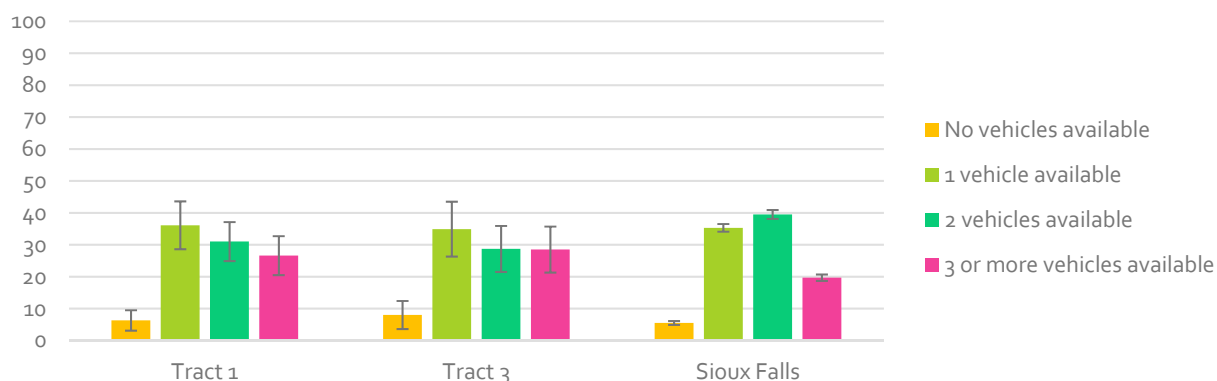


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP03

Figure 21. Means of Commuting to Work (% of Workers Age 16 or Over)

Compared to the rest of the city, both the Norton/Froehlich and Riverside areas have similar proportions of households with no vehicle or only one vehicle available, making up a little more than 40% of the households in each area.

Vehicles Available (% of Occupied Units)



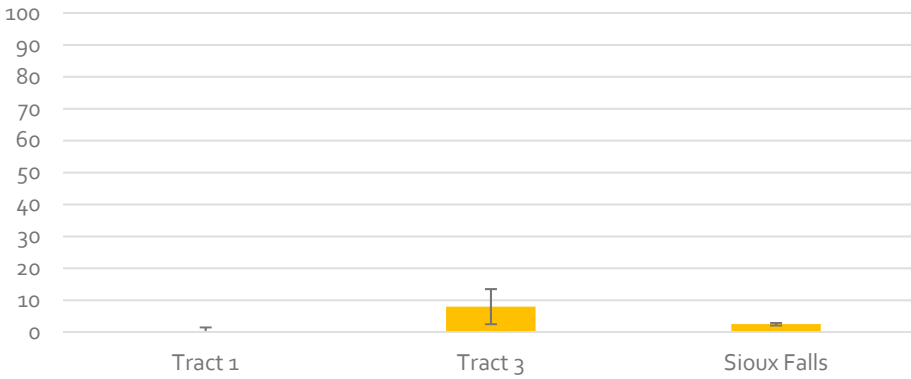
Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP04

Figure 22. Vehicles Available (% of Occupied Units)

G. Communication

Compared to the Norton/Froehlich area and to the rest of the city, the Riverside area has a higher proportion of households classified as limited English-speaking, which means a household where there is no one who is at least 14 years old and speaks only English or speaks English “very well.”

Limited English-speaking Households (%)



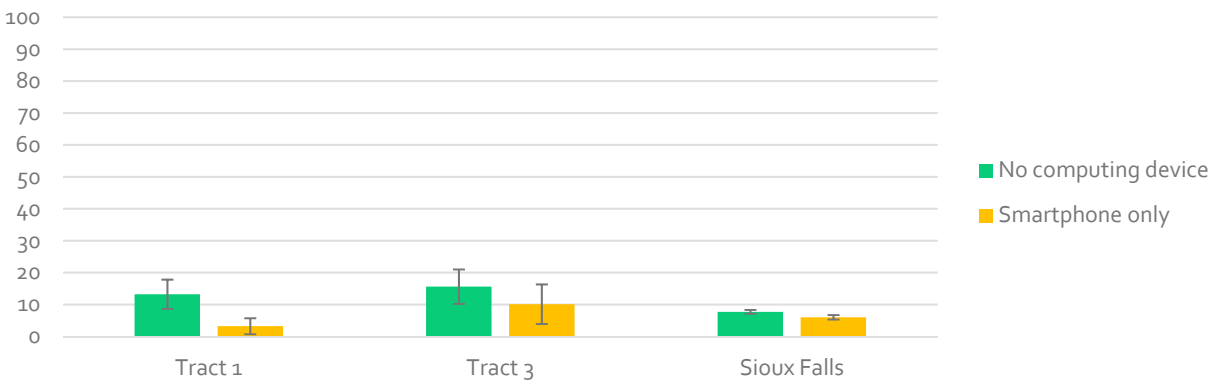
Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table S1602

Figure 23. Limited English-speaking Households (%)

The following two figures show household access to computing devices and the Internet. It should be noted that these estimates are based on surveys fielded from 2015 to 2019 and do not fully reflect recent changes in access resulting from outreach programs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

With that caveat in mind, there is an evident digital divide between the Kid Link Riverside neighborhoods and the rest of Sioux Falls. In Norton/Froehlich, about 13% of households have no computing device at home, and another 3% only have a smartphone. In the Riverside area, about 15% of households have no computing device, and another 10% only have a smartphone.

Computing Devices at Home (% of Households)

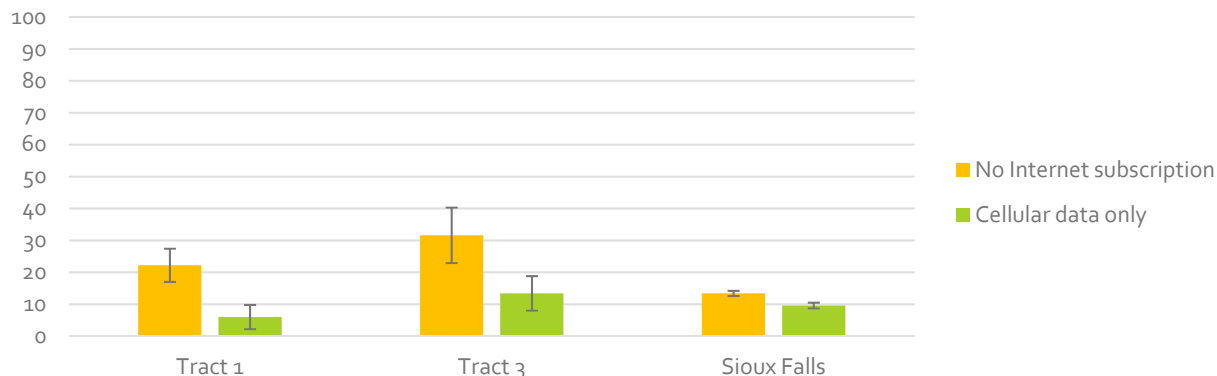


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table 2801

Figure 24. Computing Devices at Home (% of Households)

Similarly, households in the Kid Link Riverside neighborhoods have more limited access to the Internet: in Norton/Froehlich, about 22% of households have no Internet subscription, and another 6% only have home Internet access through cell phone data. In the Riverside area, about 31% of households have no Internet subscription, and another 13% only have home Internet access through cell phone data.

Internet Subscriptions at Home (% of Households)



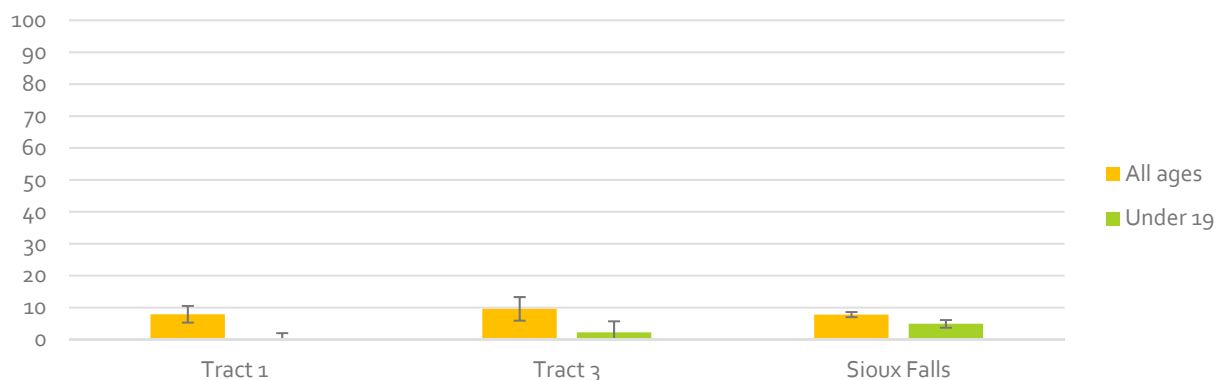
Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table 2801

Figure 25. Internet Subscriptions at Home (% of Households)

H. Healthcare

In both Kid Link Riverside areas, around 8 to 10% of people do not have health insurance. This is similar to Sioux Falls as a whole. Notably, though, the rate of uninsured children is low, estimated at around 0% in Norton/Froehlich and around 2% in the Riverside area. This pattern could be due to the Children’s Health Insurance Program, or CHIP, which provides coverage for eligible children. The income limits for CHIP are higher than the limits for Medicaid for adults.

No Health Insurance (%)

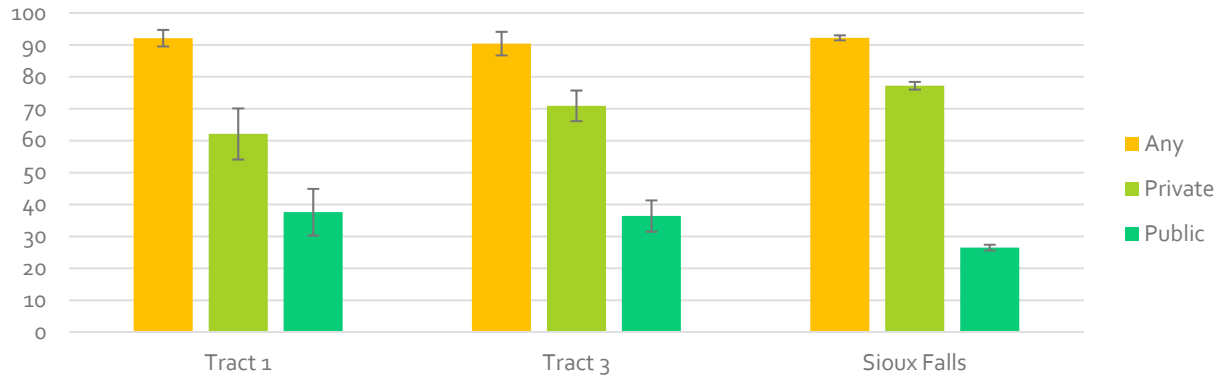


Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP03

Figure 26. No Health Insurance (% of Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population)

In both Kid Link Riverside neighborhoods, the proportion of people covered by private insurance is lower and the proportion covered by public insurance (e.g., Medicaid, CHIP) is higher than in the city as a whole. Nevertheless, in both neighborhoods, it is more common for people to be covered by private insurance than public.

Health Insurance Coverage (%)



Source: 2019 American Community Survey 5-year Estimates, Table DP03

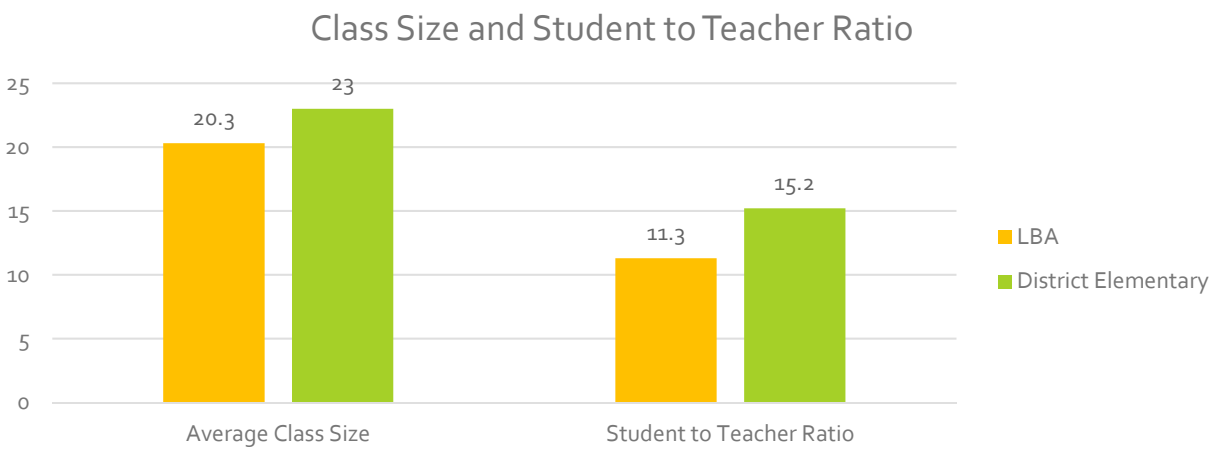
Figure 27. Health Insurance Coverage (% of Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population)

III. LBA Elementary School

This section describes the student population at Laura B. Anderson Elementary (LBA) and student outcomes prior to the launch of the Kid Link Riverside initiative. Data are derived from the Sioux Falls School District’s 2019-20 Data Profiles for Laura B. Anderson Elementary and Sioux Falls School District Elementary Schools and from the South Dakota Department of Education’s 2018-19 Report Card for Laura B. Anderson and for the Sioux Falls School District. The state report card is not available for 2019-20 because state assessments were suspended in spring 2019 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

A. Student Population

On average, LBA has smaller classes than the typical Sioux Falls elementary school, with about 20 students per classroom compared to 23 districtwide. Likewise, LBA has a lower student-to-teacher ratio, with 11.3 students per teacher, compared to 15.2 students per teacher districtwide.

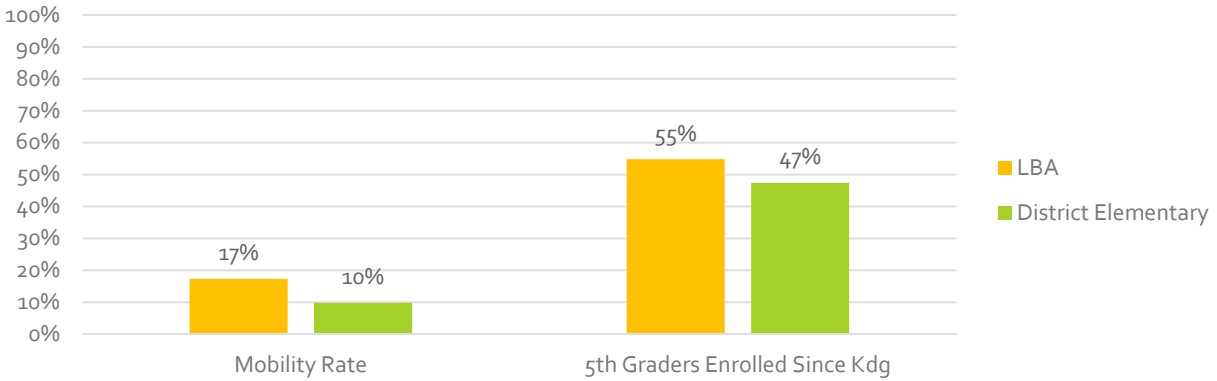


Source: Sioux Falls School District 2019-20 Data Profile

Figure 28. Class Size and Student to Teacher Ratio

LBA has a higher mobility rate than the district as a whole (17% versus 10%), but also has a higher proportion of fifth grade students who have been enrolled in the school since kindergarten: 55% compared to 47% districtwide.

Student Mobility and Stability

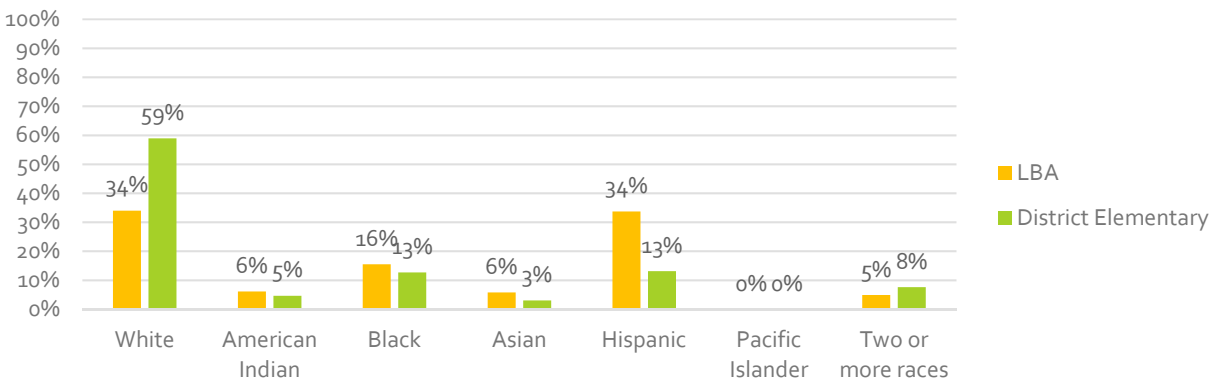


Source: Sioux Falls School District 2019-20 Data Profile

Figure 29. Student Mobility and Stability

Compared to other elementary schools in Sioux Falls, LBA has a smaller proportion of White students and relatively more Hispanic students. In fact, equal proportions of the LBA student population are White and Hispanic, both making up about one-third of students.

Student Race and Ethnicity



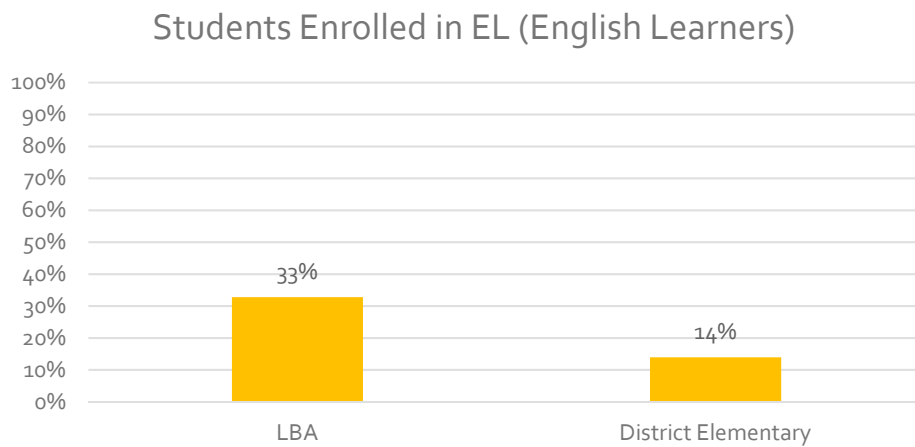
Source: Sioux Falls School District 2019-20 Data Profile

Figure 30. Student Race and Ethnicity

LBA student race and ethnicity differs from that of the general population in the attendance area, which is predominantly White. However, the racial diversity among children in the area is more similar; among children under 18 in Norton/Froehlich (Census tract 1), about 50% are White; in the Riverside area (Census tract 3), the proportion is 54% (compared to 70% citywide).⁶

⁶ 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates, Tables S0101 and B01001

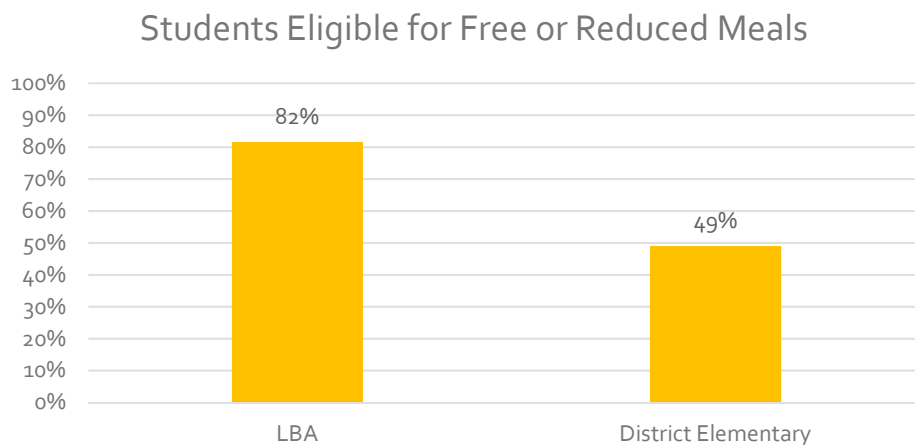
LBA is a center-based English Learner (EL) program site, and one-third of students there are enrolled in the EL program. Districtwide, 14% of elementary students are enrolled in the EL program.



Source: Sioux Falls School District 2019-20 Data Profile

Figure 31. Students Enrolled in EL (English Learners)

At LBA, 82% of students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals through the National School Lunch Program. By comparison, 49% of elementary students districtwide are eligible.



Source: Sioux Falls School District 2019-20 Data Profile

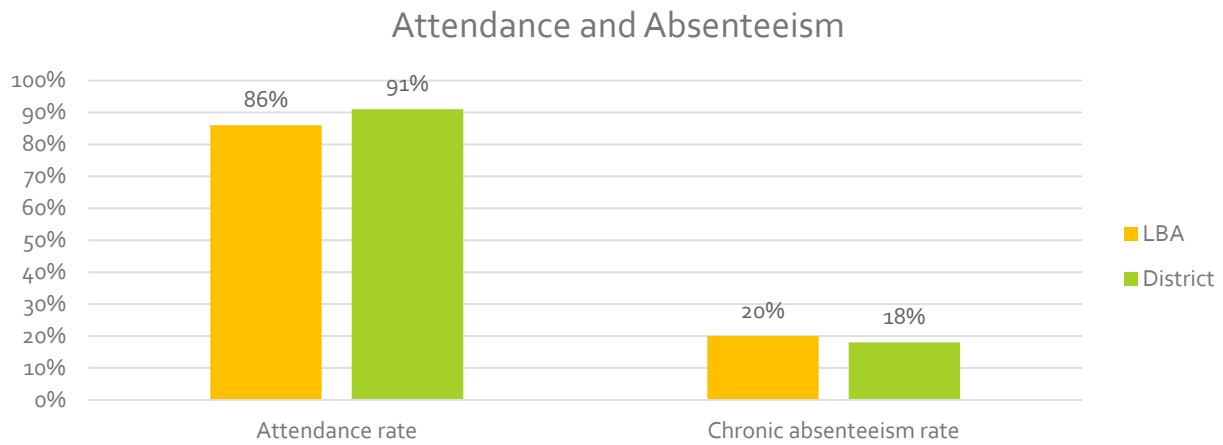
Figure 32. Students Eligible for Free or Reduced Meals

B. Student Outcomes

Compared to the district as a whole, LBA has a slightly lower attendance rate (86% versus 91%) and slightly higher rate of chronic absenteeism (20% versus 18%).

The attendance rate refers to the percentage of students attending school for 90% or more of enrolled days during the full academic year. The chronic absenteeism rate refers to the percentage of students

who attended school for more than 10 days and who also missed 10% or more of enrolled days within the school year.

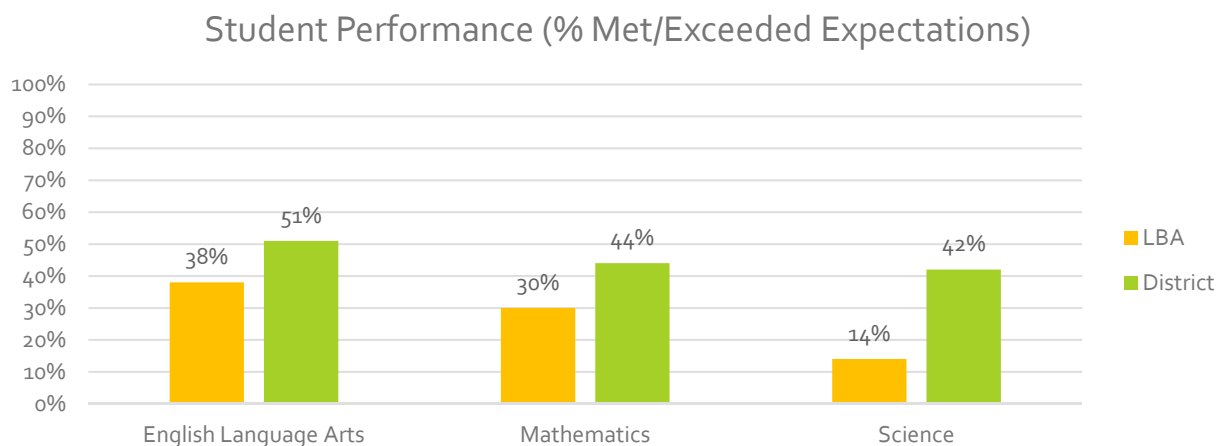


Source: South Dakota Department of Education 2018-19 Report Card

Figure 33. Attendance and Absenteeism

Student performance measures are based on annual state assessments, which are given in English language arts and mathematics in grades 3 through 8 and 11, and in science in grades 5, 8, and 11. The figure below shows the percentage of students at LBA and districtwide who were assessed and who met or exceeded the state’s grade-level expectations in each subject.

At LBA, 38% of students met or exceeded English language arts grade-level standards on state assessments, compared to 51% districtwide; on the mathematics assessment, 30% of LBA students met or exceeded expectations, compared to 44% districtwide; and in science, 14% of LBA students met or exceeded expectations, compared to 42% districtwide.



Source: South Dakota Department of Education 2018-19 Report Card

Figure 34. Student Performance (% Met/Exceeded Expectations)

IV. Kid Link Riverside Timeline

Kid Link first went public in summer of 2019, with a set of talking points describing the initiative's vision. Kid Link was described as a "strategic swerve" from Thrive's typical approach to problem solving. Whereas Thrive had begun with action teams devoted to citywide realignment of resources around a particular service area (e.g., food security or out-of-school-time programming), Kid Link proposed a focus on a single neighborhood. The intent was to create more immediate, measurable improvement for children and their families.

Kid Link was intended to be built like other Thrive programs, from the ground up. Though it was intended from the beginning that Kid Link would focus on a Title 1 neighborhood, it remained to be determined which neighborhood would be the first site.

In the original Kid Link vision, as proposed in summer 2019, the Kid Link Steering Committee would convene, select the first Kid Link neighborhood, then work with the Augustana Research Institute (ARI) on an initial needs assessment in that neighborhood. After the needs assessment was complete, the neighborhood Kid Link initiative would go public, hold community meetings, solicit volunteers, and convene task teams. Then, the Kid Link team would identify goals and proposed actions, meeting with ARI to identify performance indicators aligned to those goals and actions, and finally move forward with implementation. They would later come together to review the performance indicators, revise the Kid Link process, and select the next neighborhood to expand the program.

These were the anticipated Thrive Kid Link Outcomes:

In the targeted Title 1 neighborhood:

1. Access to and use of charitable food resources will improve.
2. Access to and participation in meaningful, supervised out-of-school time activities will increase.
3. Student absenteeism will decrease.
4. Student reading proficiency will improve.

In the community:

5. Policies that, albeit unintentionally, restrict access to services will be changed to accommodate the special circumstances of families in need.
6. Providers of services will collaborate to find innovative ways to bring existing programs to families in need.
7. Solution finding will be more inclusive.
8. Government, nonprofit, and faith-based entities will form new alliances that maximize the effectiveness and efficiency of provided services.
9. A second Title 1 neighborhood will be targeted for Kid Link replication.

However, the COVID-19 pandemic threw a wrench in these plans, delaying and shuffling startup and research activities. The actual timeline unfolded like this:

December 2019 – ARI compiled school and neighborhood information about Title 1 schools to aid the Kid Link Steering Committee in choosing a site.

January and February 2020 – Thrive held initial community roundtable discussions with residents of the Riverside area, people affiliated with LBA, and members of the public who expressed interest in the Kid Link initiative.

March 2020 – ARI began conducting stakeholder interviews, holding the first interview in person, but was quickly forced to pivot to online and phone outreach as Sioux Falls moved into lockdown in response to COVID-19.

June 2020 – Kid Link Riverside held its first event at LBA, an outdoor event featuring a visit from the Bookmobile, volunteers to greet attendees and talk about Kid Link, and snacks and activity bags for children to take home. Outdoor events continued throughout the summer.

July 2020 – Task teams began meeting. Task teams were organized around communications (especially with people who speak limited English), food distribution, and out-of-school-time.

August 2020 – ARI began neighbor interviews, recruiting neighbors from lists of people who attended outdoor Kid Link events. Most interviews were conducted by phone, but some were conducted in person outside and, by October, indoors with appropriate precautions.

September 2020 – Kid Link tried out Family Link, initially imagined as a half hour weekly educational/support program for parents scheduled to coincide with Kid Link events. Due to the ongoing pandemic, Kid Link set aside plans for monthly fun family gatherings during the fall semester. Sioux Falls students returned to school (though some families chose to have children learn remotely in a Virtual Academy). Printed flyers advertising Kid Link were sent home in student backpacks. A neighborhood meeting was held about a proposed housing development (unrelated to Kid Link but relevant to neighbors). Planning began to combine Kid Link events with a Nightwatch hot meal service opportunity. Feeding South Dakota announced they would not reopen their Sioux Falls food pantry on Westport Avenue after the pandemic and would instead shift to neighborhood distributions, with one in Riverside beginning in October.

October 2020 – Feeding South Dakota began its neighborhood distribution at LBA on Tuesday, October 13 and handed out 275 boxes of food. Kid Link announced plans to move weekly events from Mondays to Tuesday evenings and to hold them indoors at the Sermon on the Mount Mennonite Church, beginning in November. The Tuesday events would include food service outdoors by the Nightwatch Food Truck and a table of Family Link information set up inside. Out-of-School-Time Task Team members planned to help provide activities for kids during weekly Kid Link events, and partnerships with Bread Break and Boys and Girls Club would provide snacks. The new schedule meant that Kid Link events would coincide once monthly with Feeding South Dakota food distribution in the neighborhood.

Kid Link Event Attendance

Kid Link Riverside events began in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, with due attention to formats that would allow safe participation. During the summer of 2020, outdoor events brought neighbors together on Monday evenings and Saturday afternoons. As the weather grew colder in the fall, and as understanding of appropriate public health precautions advanced, events moved indoors, beginning in November of 2020. Indoor events were held weekly on Tuesday evenings.

During the summer, outdoor events on Monday evenings featured visits from the Bookmobile as well as an array of special guests and activities, including the Zoomobile, a magician, carnival games, and live music. Community organizations provided information, and volunteers were present to meet neighbors, talk about Kid Link, and hand out snacks and activity bags for children to take home. Average weekly attendance at Monday evening events during summer of 2020 was about 30 visitors. (as measured by Bookmobile visits).

During the summer, outdoor events on Saturdays featured picnic meals, activities, and volunteers to meet neighbors and talk about Kid Link. Saturday events averaged about 60 meals served.

Since November, average attendance at weekly indoor events has been consistent with summer attendance: about 15 adults and 22 children participating in activities inside, and an average of 64 meals served outside from Nightwatch Food Truck. But since Kid Link has moved indoors, participation has ticked up over time. The first Tuesday event in February 2021 saw 26 adults and 33 children visiting inside and 96 hot meals served outside.

Kid Link Riverside events take place in the Riverside neighborhood, at or near LBA. However, they are open to visitors from other neighborhoods. Nevertheless, it appears that most people who have attended Kid Link Riverside events have lived nearby: 73% of visitor addresses recorded at events during the summer and fall of 2021 were within the LBA attendance area.

V. Stakeholders' Perspectives

A. Who We Heard From

The Augustana Research Institute (ARI) conducted in-depth interviews with community stakeholders in order to understand their perceptions of Riverside area assets, needs, and preferences. Interviews also sought to learn from stakeholders with experience working in the community about what has worked—or not worked—when it comes to engaging and communicating with neighbors.

Stakeholder interviews were conducted from March 18 through April 27, 2020. A total of 10 stakeholders were interviewed. The first interview was held in person, and the rest were conducted by phone, video conference, or email.

The list of stakeholders to be interviewed was compiled by Thrive based on early work in the community and roundtable conversations during January and February 2020. In order to preserve confidentiality, names and specific roles are not given in this report. In general terms, stakeholders were people in the following roles: Laura B. Anderson Elementary (LBA) staff, community-based social workers and service providers, and volunteers with church groups or service providers. In addition to holding professional roles in the neighborhood, a few stakeholders were also residents of the area.

All of the interviews were transcribed and thematically coded. Findings are presented below.

B. Neighborhood

Stakeholders characterized Riverside as a stable neighborhood with intense community pride and long-running support for the neighborhood school, Laura B. Anderson (LBA). Those stakeholders who worked in the neighborhood but did not live there expressed some concern about their own position as outsiders, reflecting that they did not feel they knew the neighborhood or neighbors' needs very well.

Stable Neighborhood

Asked about community assets, stakeholders nearly all singled out residential stability and neighborhood pride. They described Riverside as a neighborhood where multiple generations of families have lived in the neighborhood and gone through the school, creating a strong neighborhood identity and a shared sense of community.

"They have a sense of they all are pulling together to make things work," one stakeholder said, speculating that this sense of camaraderie came from the shared experience of working hard to make ends meet. Others echoed that neighbors watch out for one another (for example, by picking up food to bring to a neighbor), though most attributed strong neighborhood bonds to residential stability rather than income level.

Stakeholders who lived in the neighborhood said they also appreciated that Riverside is a diverse community where neighbors have pride in the neighborhood but are easygoing, not judgmental about keeping up appearances.

Neighborhood Support for School

Stakeholders—many of whom themselves have professional or volunteer ties to the school—observed that LBA is the neighborhood's organizational center of gravity, bringing people together. Many families, even those without current students at LBA, have ties to the school, often across multiple generations. School gatherings are not only a chance to support current students; they also bring

parents and grandparents who attended LBA back to the school and reinforce a shared identity. Stakeholders believed that most neighbors hold positive perceptions of the school.

Stakeholders also described a set of businesses and community groups that support the school: nearby local businesses, such as Franklin Foods and Sioux Nation AG Center / Pet Clinic, and several churches. Churches (both from the neighborhood and from across the city) have stepped in to fill some of the functions of a PTA (e.g., serving meals during conferences); church members have volunteered directly in the school as classroom helpers and through the LSS school mentoring program.

Stakeholders Are Outsiders

Stakeholders who work or volunteer with the school said they believed there are groups of outsiders, themselves included, who are eager to help support LBA students and Riverside neighbors but are not sure how. For one thing, they pointed out that many outside partnership in the neighborhood are directly with the school, not the neighborhood or families. Stakeholders felt they had little familiarity with the neighborhood outside of the school walls. Many stakeholders said they only visit Riverside for discrete volunteer events or for work and then head home to another part of the city:

“We just sort of drive in there...and help out with events. I would say we drive in, do our thing, and drive out. And you drive around the neighborhood, you realize we really don’t know the neighborhood that well.”

Church volunteers from outside the neighborhood said they were unsure how best to direct their efforts or what would be the most meaningful outreach at or beyond the school:

“On a superficial level, we’ve talked about supporting more family events at the school—an ice cream social, a movie night, those types of things, because some churches are doing that in schools. But for meaningful outreach, I really don’t know [what we should do].”

C. Work and Employment vs. Family Time

Stakeholders who worked closely with families as LBA staff said they knew parents to be “hard-working people, people that care about their kids and care about their kids’ education.” But sometimes, stakeholders acknowledged, parents struggled to juggle hard work and family time. For families working long hours to maintain financial stability, “that hard work leads to they don’t get to spend as much time with their family at home.”

One stakeholder who works in social services said that the COVID-19 pandemic has been especially hard on families where parents working in service industries saw their hours cut, though most families, she said, are still working. With fewer hours at work, parents must manage the stress that comes with reduced earnings. It is difficult, this stakeholder observed, for parents to make the choice between supporting their families and spending time at work, especially for single parents.

Parents can see work as the solution to material problems, but it comes at the expense of time with family or children. For example, one stakeholder from the school staff explained that she has worked with families who have struggled with the bus system and focused on earning money to buy a car, at the expense of time with their children:

“They work so hard to get the transportation until sometimes they’ve left behind their kid for education.”

Earlier, during January and February of 2020, attendees at Kid Link roundtables suggested that large local employers, such as Smithfield and Grand Prairie Foods, be invited to be part of the Kid Link initiative. They also suggested that, in order to better reach neighbors who work, Kid Link develop in-reach into workplaces, along the lines of the model REACH Literacy uses.

In particular, stakeholders highlighted the challenges long working hours create for out-of-school time and communication with families.

Out-of-School Time

In interviews, stakeholders raised out-of-school-time (OST) programming and childcare in general as a concern for families in the Riverside area. They observed that many LBA families are headed by single parents or by two parents who both work, sometimes working split shifts so one parent can be home while the other is working. In both arrangements, though, work wears away at parents. As one stakeholder put it, "They're just trying to so hard that the kids end up being on their own."

Stakeholders familiar with the school explained that, for teachers, parents' work hours make it unreasonable to expect that much homework will get done because, often, parents are not home to help. These concerns were echoed by roundtable attendees in January 2020.

A few of the stakeholders interviewed for this report work for or partner with OST programs. Staff in OST programs serving the area have noticed that, although some children are picked up by their parents around 5:00 p.m., when parents get off work, many children leave the program to go home on their own. OST staff have interpreted this to mean that parents are not available to pick children up by the time the program ends in the evening, likely because they work a late shift or overnight.

Stakeholders familiar with the Boys and Girls Club program at Horizon Apartments saw it as an enormous asset for families there. In fact, they thought it would be beneficial to have expanded hours, including earlier mornings on non-school days. They observed how OST programs can change the environment for an entire apartment building or neighborhood: "Boys and Girls Club has been amazing to help our kids have some structure and routine and some stability."

Communication

Long work hours and late or overnight shifts can make it difficult to communicate with families. One stakeholder, a school employee, pointed out:

"Parents working the night shift come home to sleep, so we cannot reach them until they wake up again at 3 o'clock, for example, or 4 o'clock. And if that's when our time [at work] is finished, I cannot do that [meet with them]!"

In order to connect with families, program staff or volunteers must be flexible and willing to talk to parents early in the morning before they go to work or late in the evening.

These observations echoed what had been noted among attendees at roundtables in January 2020, that many parents work long hours, so that evening (as late as 8:00 or 9:00 p.m.) is often the best time to meet with families.

Compounding the difficulty of finding time to connect outside of work hours, stakeholders acknowledged it can be tough to ask parents to do anything more than they are already doing (e.g., showing up at school for a meeting). Parents, they explained, are already busy juggling so much that

they may struggle to find energy or motivation for additional meetings or activities. Work can be exhausting and leave parents without time or energy to do much else: “They are workers [in that area], so when they come home, they come home. That’s it!”

Even when it comes to fun activities, one stakeholder noted, long work hours, fatigue, and tight budgets can make events a challenge: “I think they’re also separated by the fact that they all work pretty hard, and they don’t really have time or money to get together.”

D. Community Needs

Food Security

Although a few stakeholders said they were surprised to learn that the Riverside area was considered a food desert, stakeholders largely agreed that the neighborhood has barriers to accessing food.

Stakeholders noted that there are no grocery stores in or near the Riverside area that residents can easily reach, especially residents without have personal vehicles. They also noted that the area lacked nearby food giveaways or charitable meals before Kid Link started. Before neighborhood food distribution began in October 2020, it was a long trek from the Riverside area to the Feeding South Dakota food pantry, and a few stakeholders speculated that distance would be a barrier for some families to access assistance.

A couple stakeholders recognized that food needs are more marked in the Norton/Froehlich areas, up the hill on north Cliff Ave., “on both sides of I-90 between North 4th Ave. and I-229.” This observation is consistent with the demographic data presented earlier in this report. Another stakeholder reflected on how school-based food distribution during the COVID-19 pandemic reinforced the fact that families who live farther from the school may have more need *and* more difficulty taking advantage of programs located at the school site. As a result, she explained, the district started delivering food to the North 4th Ave. neighborhoods by school bus.

Additionally, stakeholders pointed out that working families can find themselves in a difficult gap, earning too much to qualify for full Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits but not enough to be fully food secure. A couple stakeholders said they knew families in the Riverside area who found themselves in that gap. One of those stakeholders described a single mother, who, she said, struggles because she is “one of those families that works quite a bit, so she falls in that crack of food, to where she doesn’t get much food stamps at all, but she struggles keeping food on the table.”

Stakeholders from the school said they often see hungry kids. When children are dysregulated or having a tough day, they explained, one of the first things staff do is check whether the student is hungry, then offer a snack. School staff explained that they sometimes make food available—through the backpack program, for example, or as a giveaway on tables at conferences. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the school converted its Little Free Library out front to a Little Free Pantry, and the same day they made the switch, they observed families dropping off and picking up food. Another stakeholder remembered providing Thanksgiving boxes to families through the school. She was struck by the effort families would make to get to the school to pick up a box even if they struggled with transportation, and to her it reflected how much families must need the food to put forth such effort to get it.

When food is available, stakeholders from the school explained, it gets taken. Yet, while some children come to school hungry and families readily accept food when it is available, according to stakeholders from the school, families rarely ask the school for help with food.

Childcare or Enrichment

There was widespread agreement among stakeholders that childcare and enrichment activities for children are lacking in the Riverside area. They identified both a need for childcare or supervision and a need for enrichment activities for children who might have a safe place to be but little to do.

Stakeholders who have worked in the neighborhood for years observed that they were not aware of any childcare providers in the neighborhood—certainly no licensed centers and very few if any home-based providers. Church volunteers expressed concern that when school transitioned to virtual learning during the spring of 2020, many families in the area likely found both parents (or a single parent) still working with children home alone during the day. They speculated that the pandemic aside, childcare—especially afterschool care—is a long-term problem for the neighborhood. Even absent the pandemic, stakeholders said they were aware (and neighbor interviews confirmed) it is common for children in the neighborhood to be home after school.

Stakeholders widely agreed on the need for affordable afterschool care and OST programs in the Riverside area. They observed that even Kids Inc., which offers a sliding fee, can be expensive for families.

When asked how parents manage childcare, one stakeholder said, “I believe what a lot of them do is the parents work opposite shifts of each other, and so they are able to not have to rely on childcare.” When split shifts are not an option, children are left with relatives or neighbors, with siblings, or home alone.

Stakeholders pointed out that even when children are at home with parents or other adults, access to enriching activities presents a separate concern. Some stakeholders reflected on home visits they had done in the neighborhood and said they sometimes visited homes where there were few toys available for the children. With no nearby library branch, children in the Riverside area have less ready access to library programs and materials, computers, and programs like the Toy Lending Library. At a roundtable in January 2020, attendees also tied the availability of childcare or preschool programs with early literacy, pointing out that improved access to childcare could help improve kindergarten readiness.

Another stakeholder who had both lived and worked in the neighborhood concurred with the need for enrichment; asked to identify the biggest needs in the neighborhood, she answered, “entertainment—we have a park and then the school park of course, and that’s really all that they have to do up here.” She added that human connection and caring adults are a need among the children, too: “I definitely see some loneliness.”

Another stakeholder echoed that concern. She explained that, in addition to needing safe places to be and enriching activities, children would benefit from engaged and caring adults:

“The biggest want that I see is among the children. They just want somebody to pay attention to them, you know? The kids are just in want of some human interaction, a loving human interaction.”

Transportation

Stakeholders said they saw transportation as a need among LBA families. This need, they explained, was exacerbated by the fact that the neighborhood has few retail stores, so families must travel to other parts of the city for groceries, pharmacies, clothes, and other general merchandise. One stakeholder characterized the neighborhood as more industrial than retail: "I think the businesses in that area, a lot of them are more industrial. There aren't a lot of things like Target."

Stakeholders explained that, for some families, transportation hurdles are related to vehicle availability and reliability. One stakeholder from the LBA staff put it this way:

"A lot of times our families just don't have a vehicle that's working. They might have a vehicle or they might not have a vehicle and so then they can't get there. Or there's one vehicle in the family and the person that's at work has the vehicle so the other person in the family doesn't have it, or they're living with their parent or someone, a relative of some kind, and that person is using the vehicle for the day, and so that becomes a challenge."

Access to a vehicle does not guarantee a family's transportation problems are solved. Stakeholders pointed out that unreliable vehicles, the cost of car repairs, and the cost of gas all pose additional challenges.

One stakeholder, a social worker in the area, reported that among those without their own vehicles, some are afraid or unwilling to ride the bus and instead find rides. Alternatives like Lyft exist, but while they are less expensive than taxis, they can still be too expensive for families whose budgets are already stretched thin. Further, rideshare services like Lyft typically require electronic payment, making them inaccessible for people who do not have a credit or debit card.

Several stakeholders said they believe transportation may be more of a problem among families in Norton and Froehlich. Students in those neighborhoods, about half of the students at LBA, are bussed because they live outside of the walk area. As one stakeholder pointed out, school buses solve the transportation equation for children to get between home and school, but they do not help families access other resources.

Even when families have reliable vehicles, transportation can be a problem for children without parents at home. Several stakeholders pointed out that young children are left without transportation until adults get home from work. For those in neighborhoods without walkable libraries, community centers, or similar resources, children who are too young to drive may find themselves stuck at home after school.

A couple stakeholders said that parents may be reluctant to let children walk very far, especially during the winter: some parents do not even want children who live within walking distance of the school to walk to school when it is cold outside. On a related note, two stakeholders affiliated with LBA reported that winter clothes such as coats, snow pants, and boots are a perennial need among students.

One stakeholder suggested that families' troubles getting places may not be purely transportation-related. Sometimes, motivation is a challenge. She explained that school staff have had success in getting children to school by making morning wakeup calls to families who just need a little extra push.

Community Center

Several stakeholders said they felt like the Riverside area has been overlooked by the community when it comes to providing resources to support families or investing in planning and development. In particular, they noted that the area lacks an indoor public place where families can gather, such as a library branch or community center.

In other neighborhoods, libraries and community centers offer convenient public meeting spaces and safe places for children to spend time outside of school. One stakeholder compared the neighborhood around LBA to the neighborhood around Anne Sullivan, an elementary school attached to the Kenny Anderson Community Center and very near the Oak View Library. For that neighborhood, she observed, having a space that is open, accessible, available, and safe has been key to maintaining connections among schools, service providers, and families. It has also provided children a safe place to be after school: even if there are no planned or structured activities at the community center, she reflected, at least kids can go there after school to play basketball and be safe and inside.

Other stakeholders connected the need for a community center to the ways in which neighborhood needs vary with seasons. Several stakeholders explained that the two fixtures of the Riverside area are the school and the park. During the summer, the school is less present; and the need for childcare and enrichment is higher with children home all day, and families make use of the park and spray park. During the winter, though children are in school during the day, outside play is limited, and stakeholders said there are few activities available to neighbors without driving to another part of town.

Ideally, stakeholders reflected, any public indoor space in the Riverside area would be walkable for LBA students, because children who would most benefit from this type of resource likely do not have parents available to transport them back and forth.

Healthcare and Housing

Just as stakeholders lamented the fact that the Riverside area does not have a community center like other neighborhoods, one pointed out that the neighborhood does not have its own clinic. She believed it would be beneficial to have a school-based health clinic at LBA like the one at Terry Redlin.

A few stakeholders speculated that there may be unaddressed housing concerns, particularly with safe and adequate housing. Those concerns were not shared by any of the neighbors interviewed for this report; however, the neighbors interviewed for this report may not be fully representative of the neighborhood population.

E. Communication Tips

During interviews, stakeholders were asked to share their experiences communicating with LBA families and Riverside neighbors and to share any recommendations for effective communication.

Modes of Communication

Stakeholders did not recommend a single mode of communication as the best way to reach families and neighbors. Instead, they agreed that the best mode of communication depends on the family: some like a phone call, others prefer texting, and some want something in writing—which can be especially useful if a recipient needs to show the message to someone else who can read or translate it. Emails often get overlooked, but one advantage of email is that families without phone service can still access email on public Wi-Fi if they have a smart phone or other device, even without a data plan.

Stakeholders agreed that messages need to be sent using a variety of methods, and they also cautioned that messages that come across as blanket notifications are easy for people to ignore. Instead, communication needs to be personal. One stakeholder, who works and lives in the neighborhood, illustrated this point by talking about posting flyers. Flyers on a wall do not work well, she explained, especially if they take a long time to read, have complicated directions, or require someone to stand and make it known they are looking at the flyer and interested in (or in need of) whatever it is promoting.

Stakeholders agreed on the importance of making a personal connection when communicating. For families that are hard to engage or who are unresponsive to texts and calls, school staff said they have had success with in-person visits—including holding an open house style meeting at the Horizon Apartments. Stakeholders who have worked with similar populations in other neighborhoods affirmed the importance of connection, explaining that a personal conversation is an opportunity to communicate care and start forming a relationship:

“I think one-on-one personal contact is the best way to engage folks who don’t maybe know or trust the system.... It’s not just this blanket thing that, here I’m going to toss out a net and if you want to jump on it, great, if not, I don’t care.”

Stakeholders who live and work in the neighborhood suggested even going door to door in order to introduce Kid Link:

“A lot of people like—I know you can’t do it now [because of COVID], but they like that engagement.”

However, she warned that Kid Link representatives should practice what they are going to say, being particularly careful to avoid framing Kid Link as an effort to save residents or using language that could be construed as judgmental.

Trust and Consistency

Stakeholders said that successful communication will depend on establishing trust. One way to build trust, several suggested, is through consistency: showing up, being present, and demonstrating good intentions through good work.

Attendees at the January 2020 roundtable shared similar reflections, pointing out that LBA has been able to build trust with the community because they have been a consistent fixture in the community. Attendees also observed that, outside of the school, the Riverside area has not had consistent community champions from year to year.

In interviews for this report, one stakeholder described the slow process of building trust through consistency by showing up at the same time and same place every weekend, always with snacks and positivity, to connect with families. Gradually, families recognized the consistency, understood the space was safe and welcoming, and started to come.

Generally, stakeholders agreed that the school can help broker trust between Kid Link and neighbors. Stakeholders overall shared the sense that families and neighbors (adults and children alike) support the school, want their kids there, and have positive feelings about school. Interviews with neighbors support that view. However, stakeholders did point out that in the past they have encountered families

who find the school intimidating—maybe they did not have a good experience in school themselves. They suggested that meeting people in a place that is familiar and comfortable to those families (e.g., a park or community room in an apartment building) would be a better way to start conversations.

Cultural Barriers and Community Leaders

When asked about effective communication, most stakeholders brought up concerns about language barriers and cultural differences, especially between program staff or volunteers and Riverside area residents who have immigrated from other countries. Stakeholders recommended connecting to diverse social networks via trusted liaisons and leaders within various cultural groups.

For example, school staff described how school liaisons can be key partners in bridging cultural gaps. School liaisons may become the first trusted connection an immigrant family has to the school—the broker who brings families into closer communication with the school and helps teachers and parents communicate across language barriers or resolve cultural misunderstandings. Some stakeholders routinely navigate cultural differences as part of their work; they pointed out that one culture’s assumptions about what is appropriate behavior for social interaction could be very different from another’s—even the meaning of a hug, for example, or expectations about parental involvement in children’s education. Having trusted liaisons can help carry messages and allay some of those misunderstandings.

Some stakeholders suggested that it might be fruitful to identify and partner with leaders in different cultural communities to have them advocate for Kid Link within their own networks. Some drew parallels to their past experiences in other neighborhoods working on garden projects with refugee groups:

“We found out with that, that if you had the leaders involved, that people would tend to be involved with that.”

School staff confirmed that it can be useful to work with community leaders from different ethnic or immigrant groups to spread the word about programs and build support and trust.

But, stakeholders pointed out, communication gaps are not unique to working across language or cultural differences with immigrant families. Even among native-born residents, differences in socioeconomic background can create communication challenges. Stakeholders who have been volunteering in the Riverside neighborhood for a while observed, “We have a cultural barrier that we have a hard time crossing”—a barrier based on race, age, and class differences between themselves and the families in the Riverside area. Similar to approaching leaders of immigrant or refugee groups, this stakeholder suggested, Kid Link might try finding well networked families in the neighborhood to spread the word about Kid Link:

“It would be important to find families or core families in the neighborhood that are pretty solid and would be able to champion the idea of what Kid Link has to offer.”

Indeed, interviews with neighbors conducted for this report, as well as the early experiences of Kid Link Riverside, reinforce how personal networks are a crucial recruitment method; the challenge is to bridge across different networks in order to be more inclusive.

Some stakeholders recommended specific types of community leaders to involve in communication efforts, including any Spanish-speaking school staff (and school staff in general) who have connections to families, local business owners and landlords, and the owners of nearby mobile home parks.

Pride, Shame, and Resignation

Stakeholders articulated a variety of reasons why families might be unwilling to ask for help when they need it: they may be ashamed to reveal they need help, they may not be aware that help is available, or they may be resigned to their circumstances. Stakeholders suggested that by building trust and cultivating relationships, Kid Link could help reduce these barriers.

“There are a lot of needs [among LBA families],” a stakeholder from the school explained, “but the families don’t just come to school saying this is what we need or this is what we want.” Of course, school staff acknowledged, this varies by family and depends especially on the relationships they have formed with the school and with particular people at the school. School staff said they work on cultivating trust. Over time, some families have become willing to reach out to a social worker or school liaison to ask for help—even with problems beyond school, like housing issues. School staff explained that the process of building this sort of trust is slow; it is done by demonstrating intention and doing good for the community: actions speak louder than words. To begin, one stakeholder from the school offered, this may mean making help available before anyone asks: “If the offer is there, our families take us up on it,” even when they will not ask. Gradually, stakeholders promised, families will come to trust, build relationships, and see people as someone they can count on for help if they need it.

One stakeholder who is well integrated in the neighborhood through personal networks said that she sees newcomers to the neighborhood as more prideful and less willing to reach out for help, whereas long-time residents are more likely to ask friends, family, or neighbors for a hand when they need one:

“They’re not afraid to reach out. More of the newer people who’ve moved into the neighborhood, they’re very proud. Sometimes it’s hard to put that aside to reach out for what they need.”

Like school staff observed, people who need help are more willing to ask those they trust than reveal vulnerability to people they do not know well.

Asked what to avoid in reaching out to families, a couple stakeholders were quick to caution against patronizing neighbors, which could be perceived as judgmental and condescending, undermining trust:

“[Avoid] telling them what they need, trying to—or even making comments or saying things like ‘those families’ or ‘that school’—you know, that negative connotation to anything. I think people get turned off really quickly by that.”

Another stakeholder echoed these sentiments. Asked how *not* to reach out to neighbors, she answered:

“Probably not planning out or revealing that you want to assist or help tremendously in a way that is a *need*—so, like, not having food, shelter, stuff like that. Some people are pretty prideful and they might not like that approach.”

One stakeholder drew on her experiences in other neighborhoods to explain reasons that neighbors might not seek help with food from the school. She said she saw two major reasons that parents did not avail themselves of help with food in other neighborhoods, though their children might come on their

own: first, parents are busy working so they cannot visit food programs, or second, parents are resigned to their circumstances and are not motivated to seek help or upward mobility; they have “accepted that lifestyle,” as this stakeholder put it.

Self-Sufficiency

Stakeholders (who admitted they are outsiders to the community) expressed unease with what they perceived as tension between giving support and enabling dependence. One volunteer in the neighborhood put it this way:

“It’s wisdom to know when you’ve given too much and how to help them rise up and just give them enough to get them going so that they have the self-initiative, the self-satisfaction of doing it themselves. But they need some help. I think that’s the tension.”

One stakeholder said that in her work with low-income communities in other neighborhoods, she saw apathy arise not necessarily from learned dependence but rather from a sense of futility. She described what she saw as people’s perception that they just couldn’t get ahead:

“I don’t see them working hard at trying to change the situation, and I don’t say that because they don’t want to. I think either they don’t know what to do, they don’t know how to work through it, and they just plain don’t have the time to do it.”

She continued, “People are resigned to life the way it is and just are either tired of trying or don’t know how to try.”

Several stakeholders who volunteer or work with service programs shared concerns about promoting motivation and self-sufficiency while also offering immediate, necessary support. Some said they would feel better about interventions that provide support while encouraging direction and self-reliance.

A few stakeholders drew a distinction between adults and children. To them, children had the potential to rise beyond their circumstances—for which they were not responsible—and realize upward mobility, whether or not their parents could or would. One stakeholder urged organizers and volunteers to “realize that the kids don’t have a lot of control over the environment that they’re in and they come to us and we love them where they are and try to build from that, help them to be resilient.”

Another voiced his hope that support for families might change outcomes for children:

“How do you break that cycle? How do you allow these children to realize their potential and hopefully not be in that same position later in life?”

F. Events and Celebrations

Stakeholders were asked to describe the types of events that families enjoy attending. There was universal agreement that the most popular events have a festival atmosphere and revolve around free food, fun, and activities for or performances by children.

One stakeholder generalized the free food recommendation to suggest other giveaways or prizes could entice families to attend, even something as utilitarian as handing out hand sanitizer and wipes. She explained that, when parents are already short on free time and energy, offering an incentive like this is “Kind of like making it worth my while to come over.”

During a January 2020 roundtable, attendees also hit on the idea of festival-style gatherings. Taking that idea further, they suggested encouraging inclusivity by organizing festivals or cultural celebrations that signal Kid Link is not trying to acculturate or destroy differences, but instead celebrates and encourages neighbors to learn from one another.

Another roundtable attendee suggested offering opportunities for families to learn about the community, like how to get a library card, how to talk to teachers, or parenting strategies.

In interviews for this report, a few stakeholders recommended that Kid Link consider holding events at locations other than the school. The school is a community fixture and many people see it as part of the community, but it might not be a comfortable space for everyone (plus it is not as convenient for people who live in the Norton Tracks and Froehlich Addition areas). One stakeholder described visiting the Horizon Apartments a few years ago in an effort to better engage families with the school. She booked the apartment building's community room, brought food, and had a casual open house that, she reported, was well received by residents.

VI. Neighbors' Perspectives

A. Who We Heard From

The Augustana Research Institute (ARI) conducted in-depth interviews with adults who live in the Riverside neighborhood or surrounding areas, who have children who attend school in the Riverside neighborhood, or who socialize in the Riverside neighborhood. Interviews with neighbors were held in order to understand their experiences and perceptions of Riverside area strengths and needs. Interviews also sought to learn from neighbors about their preferences for ways to engage with Kid Link Riverside.

Neighbors who attended a Kid Link event or indicated interest in learning more about Kid Link were invited to participate in an interview. As a result, neighbors interviewed for this report are likely not fully representative of the Riverside area population, especially of families that are less likely to engage with Kid Link.

Neighbor interviews were conducted from August 21 through November 17, 2020. A total of 20 neighbors were interviewed. Interviews were conducted either over the phone or in person at a Kid Link event. All of the interviews were transcribed and thematically coded.

The table on the following page summarizes characteristics of the interviewed neighbors and their households. Where relevant, interview responses have been broken down and analyzed by different characteristics in order to understand how experiences and preferences might vary among groups.

Table 1. Characteristics of Neighbors Interviewed

<u>Total Interviews (N)</u>	20	<u>Adults in Household Who Are Employed</u>	All	55%
<u>Adults in Household</u>			Some	45%
1	20%		None	0%
2	50%	<u>Housing Tenure</u>	Own	55%
3+	30%		Rent	45%
<u>Average Adults in Household</u>	2.25	<u>Language Spoken at Home</u>	English only	75%
<u>Children in Household</u>			English + another language	15%
0	20%		Other language	10%
1	0%	<u>Race (respondent)</u>	Asian	10%
2	30%		Black	0%
3	30%		Hispanic	10%
4	5%		Native American	10%
5	15%		White	70%
<u>Average Children in Household</u>	2.45	<u>Age (respondent)</u>	20s	25%
<u>Total Household Size</u>			30s	30%
1	5%		40s	20%
2	5%		50s	25%
3	10%	<u>Neighborhood of Residence</u>	Riverside	40%
4	40%		Froehlich Addition	35%
5	15%		Norton Tracks	15%
6	10%		Other	10%
7+	15%			
<u>Average Total Household Size</u>	4.70			

B. Neighborhood Strengths

Pride, Comfort, Camaraderie: It's like a small town

Asked to comment on neighborhood strengths, respondents focused on the small-town atmosphere in their neighborhoods and positive relationships with neighbors. However, responses varied depending on whether neighbors lived in Riverside, Norton Tracks, or the Froehlich Addition.

Neighbors who lived in the Froehlich Addition described their neighborhood as home to kind neighbors with tight-knit relationships. A few also described the neighborhood as diverse, which they saw as a strength. Several talked about opportunities for children to play—either in a family's large backyard or with other children in the neighborhood.

Neighbors who lived in Norton Tracks described their neighborhood as safe and reminiscent of a small town. One resident said she appreciated that there was space between houses, more like a small town than a concentrated urban area. Another echoed the idea that the neighborhood felt like a small town:

“To me, it’s like living in a small, country, out-of-town town. It doesn’t feel like being in Sioux Falls where I live.”

Neighbors who lived in Riverside were the most effusive in describing their neighborhood strengths: it became clear that, among the three residential areas that make up the LBA attendance area, Riverside has the strongest neighborhood identity and significant neighborhood pride. One resident proclaimed, “I’d say it’s the best place in the world to live!”

Riverside residents described the neighborhood as “a small town inside the city,” “a cozy area,” “a hidden gem,” and generally a nice, quiet, safe place to live. Asked to elaborate on what made Riverside like a small town, neighbors explained that, because of its location, the neighborhood is somewhat insular:

“People have to have a purpose to come into the neighborhood. It’s not like we’re on our way, you can’t go through out neighborhood to get to anywhere else. I mean, you almost have to have a purpose to be there. I feel it’s kind of safe in that manner, too.”

One respondent compared Riverside directly to Norton / Froehlich, explaining that Riverside has no major thoroughfares, so it is quieter with less traffic.

Riverside residents said the neighborhood is also like a small town in that neighbors know one another and watch out for each other. Several respondents shared stories demonstrating how neighbors keep eyes on the street and know who comes in or out of the neighborhood, talking with one another about anything unusual.

Residents of Riverside said they felt safe because they saw Riverside as relatively cut off from major streets, insulated from outside traffic, and populated by neighbors they could trust. As a result, neighbors in Riverside said they generally felt comfortable with their children “hanging out outside by themselves” or walking across the neighborhood to the park or a neighbor’s home.

Neighbors

Across all three residential areas, respondents said they had positive relationships with their neighbors. A few respondents talked about a few “bad apples” or personal conflicts with a particular neighbor, but overall, they said they felt they knew their neighbors and got along well. Neighbors interviewed for this report generally indicated a high degree of trust in their neighbors and at least a few close neighbor friends. One mother, for example, described how she felt she could count on neighbors to watch out for her children:

“Our neighbors are great. We’ve built relationships with all of our neighbors, and they all know who we are, and we know who they are, and like [one neighbor], she watches out for our boys, and if anything ever happens, that’s where they go.”

In Riverside, many neighbors talked about how they knew other neighbors because they had all been in the neighborhood for a long time, even multiple generations. However, they occasionally commented about not having met or not knowing people who had recently moved in, especially renters.

In Norton Tracks and Froehlich Addition, respondents shared positive feelings about neighbors in general, though a few Froehlich Addition residents expressed concerns around apartment buildings. One mother explained that she did not feel comfortable letting her children go outside to play because she had seen glass on the playground and needles outside; she also shared concerns that other families and children in her building were rude and prone to fighting or damaging property. Other respondents who lived in the same apartment complex did not share this complaint; they acknowledged having had similar concerns in the past but said things had improved recently.

Several neighbors—across all three residential neighborhoods—said that one thing they appreciated about their neighbors was that they were not petty. That is, neighbors do not call in complaints to the city about tall grass, overgrown weeds, or messy garbage:

“They’re kind of unified where they don’t bother each other. And they tell you before they call the city on you.”

Diversity

Diversity was mentioned as a neighborhood strength by about half of the neighbors who live in Froehlich Addition, but not by neighbors who live in other areas. One neighbor put it simply: “It’s a really diverse neighborhood. I really like it.” Another elaborated:

“When I grew up, obviously, it wasn’t such a diverse neighborhood. But now there’s so much diversity.... I think it’s good because the kids get to see and learn about other cultures and not be so sheltered.”

Stability

Although a handful of respondents in Froehlich Addition (and one in Norton Tracks) mentioned neighborhood stability as a strength, this asset was most frequently mentioned by Riverside residents—nearly all of whom said residential stability was a core strength of the neighborhood and wrapped up with neighborhood identity and pride. One Riverside resident put it this way:

“The way I describe Riverside is, there’s a bunch of families here that have, that were born here, that were raised here, that have raised their children here, that are raising their grandchildren here, and there’s a lot of pride in this neighborhood.”

Several Riverside residents talked about growing up in the neighborhood, temporarily moving away, then returning as adults. Others said they had never left. Testifying to the school’s position as a fixture of the neighborhood, a few people said that even when they lived outside the neighborhood, they chose to open enroll their children to LBA because they liked the school. They had since returned to the neighborhood, in part because of the school.

Safety

Overall, neighbors in all three residential areas described safety as a strength of their neighborhoods. However, neighbors in Norton Tracks and Froehlich Addition had somewhat divided opinions about just how safe the neighborhoods are.

In Froehlich Addition, a few neighbors said they knew of some minor vandalism, but nothing serious. A couple neighbors reiterated concerns about apartment building residents and signs of drug use or destruction of property. But most Froehlich Addition residents said they felt safe and they trusted their

neighbors. One respondent said she liked living in the neighborhood because she would not worry about having a package delivered and having it sit out all day or having it delivered to the wrong address because she trusts her neighbors.

In Norton Tracks, a couple neighbors expressed concern with drug-related activity and visible police presence, but others said they felt safe in the neighborhood. Several neighbors cited safety as a neighborhood asset and said that neighbors watch out for one another.

Riverside residents expressed the most agreement on neighborhood safety. Most neighbors who lived in Riverside said they feel safe, especially because the neighborhood is secluded, so most traffic through the neighborhood is people who live there or who have ties to the neighborhood. One person described leaving the neighborhood years ago over concern with crime, but coming back to find a safe, family-friendly neighborhood:

“I moved out of Riverside once before because the crime had started picking up. And then we sold our house and got out of there. But then we bought again and came back. I would describe it now as family-oriented again. Lots of children. The parks are safe.”

Pioneer Park

Mansor-Pioneer Park and the Pioneer Spray Park stood out for neighbors as a gathering place for children and an attraction that brings people into the neighborhood. For most Riverside residents, the park is within walking distance; it is near the school, and respondents said children often go back and forth between the school playground and the park. Parents described the spray park as a lifesaver during the summer, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. They also said the basketball court, picnic shelter, and open green space are “a big draw.”

Like LBA, the park is a neighborhood fixture. One neighbor reminisced about visiting the park as a child, when it had a skating rink and warming house. Other neighbors said they nearly always see groups of children playing at the park. In a neighborhood without a community center or public indoor gathering space, the park has become the social center of the community.

Location and Traffic

Riverside residents expressed mixed opinions about the neighborhood’s location and traffic.

Several residents pointed out that the Riverside neighborhood is secluded and has few retail stores. They explained that the nearest grocery stores, drug stores, and general merchandise retailers are far away. But a few residents identified Riverside’s location as a neighborhood strength—at least for those with reliable vehicles. One said he valued Riverside’s location because it was close to where he worked. Another put it like this:

“It’s a great place to live. You have everything here, accessible, easy access. You can jump on 229, get anywhere. Everything is close.”

C. LBA Elementary

“They’re just awesome.”

Neighbors were exuberant in expressing their love for LBA. Of all the topics explored in interviews with neighbors, there was the most widespread and enthusiastic agreement that LBA is a gem of a school. “They’re so wonderful on every level,” gushed one parent.

A few people said the school weighed heavily in their decision to move into (or stay in) Riverside, and a couple said they had open-enrolled their children to LBA during periods of time when they lived outside the neighborhood.

Parents said that the teachers in particular stood out. “The teachers are all caring,” one parent said. “They want to help the kids learn and thrive.” A few parents attributed part of the school’s appeal to its small size, which they believed allows teachers and staff to connect with students and their families:

“They’re very proactive and really involved with the children.... You felt like you were a family. You had a question about why is my kid not doing very well in this class, they’re there to answer it. They’re so small that they can do that.”

Several people said their children love the school, too:

“My daughter just absolutely loves going to school every day. She’s excited about it and doesn’t want to miss it ever, so obviously they’re doing something right!”

One parent, who moved into the LBA attendance area from out of state, compared LBA to schools her children had attended in the past:

“I do feel like Laura B. Anderson is more attentive [than other schools we’ve been at].... When I go in, they know exactly who [my daughter] is, and it’s like oh wow! You have a whole school full of kids and y’all seen me coming and y’all already know to call her out. It’s just little things like that.”

Several parents spoke about how the school had supported children and families beyond the classroom, demonstrating that “They care about their kids. They actually genuinely care about each child.” A few parents shared stories of how LBA teachers or staff had provided resources for them in the past when they had been in need: “They’re just really sweet and generous with the kids there.” Others reflected on how the school had come through for their children and neighbors during the turmoil of the COVID-19 pandemic:

“This summer the community really blew me away at how well my kids were taken care of during this pandemic.”

Respondents also indicated that LBA is effective at supporting children and families with diverse needs. Several people volunteered that the school and teachers are good at communicating—including respondents whose first language was not English. A few parents said that they had a child who had struggled at other schools—or just struggled with school in general—but had been well supported by LBA teachers who helped them thrive. One parent reported that she had an older child who had a tough time at the school with bullying, but her younger child who is at the school now has had a very positive experience.

When it comes to LBA, parents interviewed for this report concurred with stakeholders. Both groups described LBA as a tight-knit community with passionate teachers. As one stakeholder put it, LBA does not have a lot of teachers, but the teachers who are there are there for a long time. New teachers who feel shocked or uncomfortable in the environment do not stay; those who do become part of the family. Parents shared the feeling that the LBA teachers and staff are “a close-knit community,” and several people specifically praised the principal. As one parent said, “I honestly think [he] is amazing.”

Things to Change at LBA

Most neighbors who were interviewed for this report said they could not think of anything they would want to change at the school. One suggestion surfaced by a couple parents was to form a PTA or way for parents to communicate with one another more effectively than now, where parents rely on word of mouth or informally organized social media groups.

D. Neighborhood Needs

During interviews, neighbors were specifically asked about certain areas of need: food security, out-of-school time, laundry, healthcare, transportation, and communication. Each of those areas is described in detail in subsequent sections of this report.

This section focuses on neighborhood needs that were unearthed during interviews and had not been anticipated in the interview guide: lack of retail and public space, negative outside perceptions of the neighborhood, and traffic safety and walkability concerns.

Lack of Retail and Public Space

Across all three residential areas, neighbors described a lack of retail stores and public gathering spaces. In the Riverside neighborhood, respondents highlighted the park as a neighborhood asset, but pointed out that during the winter, there are no indoor spaces for neighbors to gather. Several people talked about community centers in other neighborhoods—how they were too far away for their children to use but they had used them when they lived elsewhere, for example, or how they wished they had one in the neighborhood:

“[I wish] that they had an indoor community [center] for the kids, because during the wintertime it was kind of harder for the kids to have a place. There’s nothing close by for them to go to.”

One parent specifically said that it would be nice for children to be able to go to a library to get on computers, do activities, or check out books after school. But for younger children without a parent to give them a ride, the nearest library branch is too far to visit—about two miles from the school and across I-229, Rice Street, and Cleveland Avenue.

Another parent connected the lack of indoor gathering space to out-of-school time enrichment opportunities:

“I feel like there’s a lot of opportunity [to do more] for young people.... Even having community centers and things like that, programs like that for teens. It would be nice to see something that would take it to more of an educational level.... Getting them less on video games and more on robotics, things like that.”

One Froehlich Addition resident observed that not only grocery stores, but retail stores generally, are relatively inaccessible:

“We are lower income up here and we don’t have anywhere that we can walk to for a grocery store or anything like that around here. So, anywhere we would have to go, we would have to drive to.... I mean, we have a convenience store but it’s very overpriced and not really affordable for people around here.... I would want some kind of stores around here that we could walk to. Something that would be reasonable. Maybe a Dollar Tree or something like a

larger grocery store that we could walk to that's affordable. Maybe not a Walmart, but maybe an Aldi's."

She went on to explain that the neighborhood feels more like "an industrial area for trucking and things like that" without many retail options for families.

Outside Perceptions of the Neighborhood

Asked what she would change about the neighborhood, one neighbor answered:

"Just probably the way that people view our neighborhood, 'cause it's kind of rundown and it's not like the richest part of town or anything."

Several neighbors shared similar thoughts, though they juxtaposed outside perceptions with their own lived reality, even finding virtue in what outsiders might consider faults. For example, several people cited low rent or affordable house prices as a positive attribute of the neighborhood, while recognizing that lower housing costs reflected older housing stock. "I call it the hood," laughed one neighbor, "because, you know, they're older houses." Neighbors felt some indignation at outsiders' perceptions of the neighborhood, but balanced those with what they valued in their homes:

"I know what other people say about the area around Riverside and the areas up here [in Froehlich], that we're like Title [1] and poor. But honestly, we have a huge backyard. And I'd rather have a huge backyard where my kids can play than be able to touch my neighbor's house from my side window."

One neighbor even twisted negative perceptions into a declaration of neighborhood pride:

"I know it's not always been thought of as the 'best' neighborhood, like one of the things that we kind of pride ourselves on over here is we're called River Rats—because Riverside, River Rats. That wasn't given because it was a good name! But you know, now that's who we are! We're River Rats! But you know what? We're proud to be River Rats! We're proud to be a part of this group here."

Nevertheless, it was clear that neighbors felt outsiders were prone to judge them or look down on them and the neighborhood.

Traffic Safety and Walkability

While most neighbors identified safety as a neighborhood strength, and Riverside residents in particular said they enjoyed quiet traffic on the streets, several residents brought up traffic and safety concerns as neighborhood needs—especially when it comes to walkability within and between neighborhoods.

On the one hand, Riverside's location insulates it from outsiders and unwanted traffic. On the other hand, walking anywhere from the neighborhood means crossing highly trafficked streets. Residents in the Froehlich Addition and Norton Tracks areas are less insulated from traffic, and all three residential areas are bounded and connected by busy streets. Several people talked about how they could not—or would not want to—walk anywhere from their neighborhood because it would mean crossing or walking along Cliff Avenue or Rice Street. Traffic was especially concerning when people thought about children: some worried about dangers to children playing in the street and riding bikes within the neighborhood, while others were concerned about the prospect of children walking to or from school or

other destinations. For children, neighbors explained, routes are as important as distance when it comes to accessibility: even a relatively short distance is unwalkable for children if it requires crossing busy streets.

E. Food Security

The Kid Link Riverside initiative was launched by Thrive's Food Security Action Team. From the beginning, the program was intended to address the area's limited access to retail and charitable food resources. Accordingly, interviews with neighbors drilled down to better understand food security and food access among residents in the area.

Although demographic data presented earlier in this report suggests material needs and food insecurity may be higher in the Norton / Froehlich areas, neighbors' accounts of food security did not vary much across residential areas.

Self

Asked about their own family's experience getting the food they needed, neighbors expressed the general sentiment that it would be nice to have more, but they get by on what they have. Several respondents, especially those with smaller households, reported no concerns with food. Larger families with more children more frequently described trouble getting enough food.

Some neighbors may have downplayed difficulty they experienced with food. A few respondents initially said they were doing fine getting the food they needed, but during follow-up questions indicated they had relied on food giveaways or food pantries earlier in the year:

"It's better now. We struggled up until, you know, about four weeks ago. There was a lot of things that we weren't being able to get. We lived off of a lot of the school programs that LBA has where the kids could go over and get lunch."

Many neighbors described circumstances that suggested they were perched on a precarious edge between food security and insecurity, making tough choices about what to buy or hanging on changes to earnings or benefits. Several talked about losing SNAP eligibility or not having it because of eligibility restrictions. One person explained it this way:

"[It's] terrible. I am one of the parents that they consider that I make too much to receive assistance from the government, but I'm with three kids. It's really hard. I mean, I go to food pantries when I can, or I'll go to the church when they give out the food and stuff like that. I have teenage boys, and I feel like they don't get enough to eat. They're always hungry, always. So, any kind of help that I can get, I look for it and get as much of that as I can. I mean, honestly, it sucks."

Several people attributed their struggles to the ongoing pandemic, demonstrating their precarious position: lost hours at work, forced quarantine, time off to care for children home from school, or an increase in price or dip in availability due to COVID might dramatically change a family's food security. One neighbor shared her difficulty buying her usual groceries:

"We went without meat for the longest time other than like your hotdogs or stuff. And then when they did have it, it seemed like it was in stock for a very short time. And then of course now the prices are a lot higher."

Indeed, it was clear during interviews that neighbors' food security was precarious and volatile—perhaps more than usual as a result of the pandemic, but not solely due to COVID-19. For example, one person said they had been struggling before increased SNAP (EBT) allowances went into effect:

“[It’s going] better. We get EBT, so they’ve done a lot of the extra EBT which honestly helps a lot because we weren’t getting very much.”

For the most part, neighbors who were interviewed for this report did not rely heavily on SNAP or food pantries and giveaways, but many used these resources to fill food gaps from time to time.

Neighbors

When asked about how they believed their neighbors were doing getting the food they need, many respondents assumed they were fine, but admitted they were not sure. One neighbor gave a fairly typical response: “Actually, uh, I don’t know! I guess we’ve never really talked about it, but it seems like they do alright.”

Those respondents who did express concerns about their neighbors tended to focus on the older adults in the neighborhood—either sharing general concerns about food security for homebound seniors or concerns specific to the pandemic and elder residents' inability or unwillingness to leave the house and visit stores.

A few respondents reported that they already bring food to neighbors—either picking up food from giveaways to share with neighbors or just sharing an occasional meal or treat. Several said they had told their neighbors about Kid Link events as an opportunity to get a free meal and extra food on Tuesday nights.

One respondent said she was not sure how most of her neighbors were doing with food, but those with whom she felt close enough to talk about food security were struggling like she was:

“I know it’s [extra EBT] helped them out a lot too. I do have two neighbors that I’ve become close with, and I know that it’s helped them a lot more too. We joked about actually eating, you know, getting actual food!”

Respondents' reports that their neighbors are doing fine when it comes to food could mean a variety of things. It could mean neighbors do not talk about their struggles with food with one another. The one exception where neighbors did share their food struggles suggests pride and trust play a role—she talked about food security but only with a close neighbor. In explaining why they believed neighbors had the food they needed, respondents typically said they knew neighbors were working or they saw them leave and return from the store. Of course, most respondents who said they themselves were struggling with food were also working and also leaving to get what food they could from the store.

What many respondents did share, though, was that if they learned a neighbor was struggling to get the food they needed, they would want to help.

Getting to the Store

Respondents were asked to talk about where they usually shop for groceries and how they get to the store. Overall, neighbors reported that several factors influence their decisions about where to shop for groceries: first and foremost, for most neighbors, is price, followed by time and convenience (which

drives some to order online or choose big box stores that are a one stop shop), and finally, for a handful of people, supporting local businesses.

A few neighbors shop primarily at Franklin Food Market because it is nearby, they prefer to support local businesses, and they find their meat is high quality and affordable. But many others said they find cheaper prices elsewhere or they prefer bigger supermarkets like Walmart where they can get everything they need—not just groceries, but also clothes, paper products, vitamins, and the like. A few people said they stop by Franklin for quick stops but rely on larger grocery stores for big shopping trips. Neighbors also commonly mentioned shopping at Aldi for affordability. Hy-Vee and Sam’s Club were preferred by a few respondents.

Nearly all respondents said they drive to the store when they are buying groceries, explaining that it is too far to walk. A couple neighbors said they carpool with family or neighbors who need a ride, either because they do not have a car or in order to save gas money. A couple people said they order online for pickup or delivery (both for convenience and to save time), and another said he often rides his bike to the store.

Resources

Neighbors were asked to talk about food resources they knew of and places they might refer friends or neighbors who needed help with food. Most frequently, neighbors cited the Banquet, Feeding South Dakota, the Faith Temple Food Giveaway at the Fairgrounds, and the Food to You Mobile Food Pantry that rotates among Lutheran churches. Several people also talked about the backpack program and the sack lunches that were distributed by the schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Typically, neighbors described food pantries and giveaways by location or days when they were available, not by name. For example, people referred to the Friday giveaway at the Fairgrounds (i.e., the Faith Temple Food Giveaway), or “the one on Thursday” or “the one at the church” (i.e., Food to You Mobile Food Pantry), or “the one on Tuesdays” or “the giveaway at Wells Fargo” (i.e., Feeding South Dakota).

Other resources were named by one person each: Salvation Army, St. Vincent de Paul, and Meals on Wheels.

Several neighbors were quick to say that they would share their own food with neighbors if they knew of anyone who was hungry. A few gave examples of sharing food with friends and family or helping neighbors with shopping. One person explained that, because a family member works at Smithfield, they receive a lot of food at a discount from the employee store.

Finding Help

In general, neighbors were aware of one or more food pantries and giveaways, but not necessarily the details of who organized the distribution, which distributions were connected, or what steps were necessary in order to visit a distribution. Those who had recently visited a giveaway were more familiar with these details.

One person said that finding details about hours and locations is less of a concern than initially finding out about what is available. She explained that she was relatively new to Sioux Falls, did not have a wide network of friends or family here, and had trouble finding out about available food resources. But, she explained, once she knew of a giveaway, she could look up details about when and where to visit.

Several neighbors said they rely on social media to find out about available food distributions. However, the way they use social media varied. One person said she follows certain pages or groups, such as the Facebook page Sioux Falls Blessings, and sees upcoming giveaways come across her news feed; another said she asks on Facebook when she needs to and people tell her what is coming up.

Others rely on word of mouth; they hear from friends, family, or neighbors about available resources. In most cases, neighbors said they rely on family, such as a mother or aunt who volunteers with a food program and recommends they visit.

A few people mentioned written communication, both personal invitations and mass flyers. One person said she got a note from her child's teacher about upcoming giveaways. Another said she hangs on to the flyer handed out at giveaways that lists upcoming dates and locations.

Barriers

Neighbors mentioned several barriers that have kept them from visiting giveaways more often: big crowds or long lines, inability to choose food types that meet their needs, shame, and a sense that the program is not meant for them.

Several neighbors talked about being intimidated or overwhelmed by crowds at giveaways, and some felt lines were worse and more noticeable now with drive-through style giveaways. A couple specifically mentioned the anxiety they experienced driving through a maze of cones in a crowded parking lot. One neighbor reported that she used to go to the giveaway at the fairgrounds, but she didn't want to wait in the long line. Even though she thought it would be nice to have more food, she decided she could get by without it. Another person talked about the problems with waiting in her car in line for a giveaway for an hour and a half, running the car, "burning their gas up," out in the elements, "and no bathroom!"

A couple neighbors identified another disadvantage of the drive-through style distributions being held in response to the COVID-19 pandemic: people are not able to pick the items they want the way they were in the past. One mother explained that she finds it difficult to manage her family's food allergies and preferences when they drive through and receive a box but cannot choose what goes in it.

Several neighbors alluded to the shame associated with needing help with food, and a few shared that they feel food giveaways are not meant for them. One father wished that programs were more aware of messages they may be sending visitors, whether intended or not:

"There's approaches of humility that would take that sting away. It's a matter of really understanding how to be humble and truly wanting to just help people. People that need help can sense that."

He spoke at length about the significant ways in which shame weighs on people who may need help, making them feel as though others are judging them to be unworthy:

"I think people that need help are scared to ask for help because they're ashamed of needing help. Like somebody's gonna say, 'Well, if you just hold down a job, or if you would just quit complaining, or if you would just...' You know what I mean? They probably have the emotional and other issues that are making it hard for them to even ask for help or to accept the help, where they want to pretend like they don't need help because they don't wanna be judged that way. I think sadly that's the biggest hurdle."

Other neighbors expressed the feeling that giveaways were meant for other people, not them. One neighbor said she feels guilty visiting free meals or accepting free food because she is working and believes the food should go to people who need it more than she does. Another said that she believes neighbors may think giveaways are meant only for children or students at a school, not for adults or neighbors in general:

“A lot of these food drives that they do, the kids just try to get them [adults] to come but they don’t. They think it’s for the kids.”

F. Out-of-School Time

Parents interviewed for this report described a significant need for additional out-of-school-time (OST) programming for students in the LBA attendance area. Many families said they enjoyed more flexibility with the schedules this year due to pandemic-related changes to work. But as they looked forward to returning to normal, they shared deep anxiety about making OST arrangements.

Getting to and from School

For the most part, parents who were interviewed for this report did not have concerns about getting their children to or from school, other than the usual difficulty waking children up and getting them ready on time. No one interviewed for this report said that getting to school too early was a problem. However, parents did share some concerns about safety for children who walk to school, and several also said that they expected transportation could become more difficult in the future if their current flexibility at work changed.

The LBA student population is split between those who ride the bus or are expected to walk to school, depending on the neighborhood where they live. The ways children get to and from school depended largely on where they lived: families near the school said children easily walked there, but for people toward the edge of the walking zone, and especially across busy streets (like Rice), parents interviewed for this report worried about the walk.

A few families said they drive children to school, though their reasons for doing so varied. Several talked about new work flexibility because of COVID-19 that made it possible to pick up or drop off children where they would have previously relied on the bus or had children walk home alone after school. In one case, a parent shared that her family was in a new situation because the students’ grandmother was working remotely due to COVID-19. In order to access the internet for work, the grandmother spent the day in the students’ family home, and as part of the arrangement, took the children to school in the morning. A few parents said they were lucky to have flexible employers who made it possible to pick up children who would otherwise have had an untenable walk:

“If my boss wasn’t willing for me to take my lunches late and my breaks and things like that, there would be no way that I would’ve been able to do it [juggle schedules and transportation].”

All of the families who were interviewed for this report had found a way to make transportation to and from school work, but some feared that arrangements might be temporary, and others shared that they made it work because they had no better options:

“I have to pick her up because she doesn’t have a place after school to go [since there’s no community center].”

Current OST Arrangements

Nearly all of the parents interviewed for this report said that their children spend out-of-school time (after school, in the summer, on weekends) at home. In some cases, children are home with a parent; in other cases, they are with siblings; and some children are alone, at least some of the time. Although a few families said they had chosen to stay home with their children and would not have it any other way, more commonly families said they wished there were more options available—either for supervised care or just for activities to do to keep children busy, especially during summer.

Some families had permanently arranged to have a parent home with children during out-of-school time, either by working split shifts or having one parent work part-time or not work outside the home. A few families were able to stay home with their children because of changes in their work arrangements (working from home or lost work) due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A couple parents said they chose to keep children home last summer due to the risk of COVID-19 exposure, but hoped to do something different the coming summer.

Parents with children who stayed home alone talked about how safety factored into their decisions. A couple parents said they felt safe leaving children home alone because they were in a secure apartment building or kept the house door locked. Parents also said that they generally believed the neighborhood was safe, and a few said they had nearby neighbors who they trusted to keep any eye out or help children in case of any trouble. Some families said they have the advantage of relatives in town, but indicated they only rely on them in a pinch—for example, if older siblings are not going to be home to watch a younger sibling. In some cases, children have an aunt or grandparent in the neighborhood who they can visit or who can casually keep an eye on them.

Asked to name OST activities in which their children typically engage, most parents mentioned playing outside: riding bikes, going to the park, or playing in a friend's yard, for instance. Most parents also mentioned time on digital devices, watching TV, or playing games. Some parents mentioned afterschool sports practice. But for the most part, parents explained, children spend their out-of-school time at home or around the neighborhood.

During the summer, families agreed, many children spend their days playing outside at the park and the school playground. Usually, they said, this time is unstructured, though one parent mentioned the Parks and Recreation department's summer program and wished it happened more often. Parents explained that their children spent summers at the park because they had no real alternatives to keep busy while they were at work. Some parents felt good about children having free time to play outside, while others wished for more options:

“We've only put them in daycare once [over the summer]...and that was great because then normally there's people there, there were programs, all of that stuff. Something like that was awesome. Just something, because they do plenty of watching TV and playing video games right now, and that's not ideal, you know?”

Two families had children in Kids Inc., and families who lived in the Horizon Apartments said they had the Boys and Girls Club program available to them. One parent praised that program, while another was skeptical of it, worrying that the staff were inattentive. In total, only four families out of the 20 interviewed for this report reported that their children regularly participate in an OST program.

OST Needs

Although some parents said they were happy to stay home with children after school and in the summers, many expressed a desire for more OST options. Even those who had found a way to juggle work schedules with OST care said it was difficult to do and a source of anxiety, especially as they began to plan for summer OST arrangements. Parents worried that children could get into trouble while they were on their own, but found that cost and transportation were barriers to accessing existing OST programs. Describing what they would like to see available for their children, many parents suggested a drop-in program or community center where children could go for a few hours to participate in activities and connect with caring adults.

Many parents said that although they currently stay home or work part time, they consider the arrangement temporary until children are older or until the COVID-19 pandemic ends. They anticipate needing to find new solutions in the future—in some cases, likely soon:

“Right now, it’s not so bad for me ‘cause [she’s] at her school from 8-3 and I’m off at 4, but that’s just ‘cause of COVID. We’re eventually going to go back to 8-5 and that two hours makes a big difference.”

Those who do work full time—but who do not have children enrolled in OST programs—said “It is extremely difficult” to juggle. They rely on the benevolence of supervisors who let them be flexible with scheduling, or they have family in town or older siblings they can rely on, or they just hope for the best. Many parents expressed anxiety over the summer or the coming year.

“I don’t know what we’re going to do now coming up.... I just recently changed jobs where I work ‘til 5 now, and I never used to do that. So, with my other job, I was a little bit more lax with coming and going and stuff, and [my husband] works until 5. And so I just, I honestly don’t know. That will be a challenge for us.”

Single parents found themselves in a tough spot without the option of having one parent stay home and opt out of work. One single mother said that being able to work from home during the pandemic alleviated some of her worry about OST, but typically it would be a concern for her:

“This year I’m a little more open, or I don’t feel as worried. But previous years, I have, like starting now [in October] would struggle with what am I going to do in the summertime? Again, this year it’s kind of different now that we have the capability of working from home [because of COVID].”

Even parents who felt good about children having free time to play and explore outside expressed some worries about safety and supervision. Most said they would prefer to have more structure for children:

“They all gather in the park and they all gather at the school but there’s always something that happens. You know, it would just be nice to have some structure or somewhere for them to go that’s supervised.”

Despite their desire for OST programs that would give children structure and keep them safe, parents ran into cost and transportation barriers. Asked about what has kept them from signing their children up for summer programs or other OST activities, most families first answered cost:

“Actually the finances, because everything’s a lot more expensive. I’d say that was the hardest.”

Several also cited transportation as a barrier, often in combination with cost:

"I even have a problem with where I can't get the kids to it or they're really, really, really expensive. Because there are programs that I can enroll my daughter in during the summer but I can't get her there and I can't afford what they're asking."

One parent said that she has had so much trouble finding affordable OST programs that she has chosen to find work she can do from home, instead.

When they turned to the types of OST programs they wished were available for their children, parents described having a slate of activities to choose from: physical activity as well as play-based educational activities that cater to children's' interests. Some parents suggested that simply having an indoor space with adult supervision—something like a public library or community center—or organized outdoor activities at the park would be valuable. One parent described that vision like this:

"I think a community center, because them being able to go to the library, I think that's kind of the one thing that we really enjoy for them to be able to do, especially going to the library. And like I said, it's been kind of hard this year to do that [because of COVID]. But even if they have little places where the kids can go and get on the computers and do different things at the library. I would say that I think that if that could be something that would stay open for them, then I would be more than content for them to be able to do that."

Another parent dreamed of having more options during the summer:

"Some sort of camp. I don't want to say daycare 'cause it's not a daycare. But some sort of [program] where they can go over there for a few hours a day or just come together as a community in the school. The kids like mine that are latchkey kids but still tend to not stay home when they're supposed to.... She could be at the school doing something a few hours a day. There's less room for her to get in trouble."

Finally, just as stakeholders had noticed loneliness among children and a need for more caring adults, parents too said they wished their children had the opportunity to connect with more adult mentors. Asked to describe what she would like to see in OST programs, one parent answered this way:

"Just to be with different people. You know, something we've always wanted to do, too, is just have people that would pour into them, you know, other adults."

Another parent said she wanted to see strong adult role models, especially for children whose parents were less involved in their lives:

"Better role models to help with the kids.... I would want someone who could be out there and help them make better choices. Because a lot of these kids out here, their parents honestly just kick them outside, out the door all day.... And that's when the kids start misbehaving and destroying the property and littering everywhere and bullying the other kids.... So maybe better role models and stuff. A resource for the children to go to."

G. Laundry

Neighbors were asked about their access to laundry facilities. Nearly all neighbors said they have a washer and dryer at home or in their apartment building. Just two families reported that they do not

have any laundry facilities where they live, so they have to go to a laundromat. Additionally, two families who live in apartment buildings said that, although they have laundry facilities in the building, they prefer not to use them because they are dirty, crowded, poorly maintained, or because they are concerned others in the building will mess with their laundry. Instead, they choose to go to the laundromat.

Those who used shared laundry rooms in apartment buildings and those who went to laundromats had some similar concerns, especially over the cleanliness of the facilities and maintenance of the machines. They explained that a broken dryer not only wastes time but money, too:

“I’ve had issues where machines weren’t drying my clothes correctly, and I’ve never been refunded, you know? That kinda sucks, especially when you’re in a pinch, you’re trying to make things work all you can and you’re losing what little that you have to be able to do laundry.”

Neighbors also described the struggle of lugging laundry up and down stairs or to a laundromat, then having to wait and watch their laundry to be sure it would be safe—all while also concerned for their own safety as they waited in the laundromat or watched their laundry through the window from the car.

H. Healthcare

Neighbors were asked about their access to healthcare. Most neighbors said they have a primary care provider, though a few reported that they do not have insurance. One of the uninsured families said that the adults visit Falls Community Health, but the other two families reported that although they had been there at least once before, they did not go for regular care. One neighbor said she had used the Avera clinic downtown in the past but recently had not been able to get ahold of anyone there to schedule a visit.

In general, uninsured families seemed unsure of what options they might have for care. A couple said that, in their view, the care they were able to access was not the same quality as care they would have received if they had insurance:

“Since we don’t have any health insurance, we go down to Falls. The adults go to Falls because we can’t afford a normal doctor.... I mean, I don’t take my kids there because I feel like they’re not real doctors. They send you to a nurse practitioner most of the time. So, I feel like since they’ve got CHIP, they should just go to Avera. But for us, we see a nurse practitioner because it’s what we have to do.”

Some families did not have insurance available to them through work, while others had coverage available but found it unaffordable:

“My husband lost his health insurance because it tripled in price and we couldn’t afford it anymore, so we had to drop it.”

One neighbor explained that, because they do not have insurance, the family tries to take advantage of any free dental cleanings or similar events. Otherwise, they try to take care of their health at home, and they do not see a doctor unless someone is seriously ill:

“We don’t have any health insurance, so if they’re really sick, I just take them into the emergency room, which the back bills on that is horrible.”

In at least two of the families interviewed for this report, children were covered by the Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), but the parents had no coverage.

For families with insurance, their primary healthcare concerns were avoiding waits at the clinic and being able to get time off work. One neighbor said she prefers to visit acute care in the evening because she usually has a shorter wait than at her primary clinic. Others said they doctored at clinics across town rather than near their homes because the wait was typically shorter.

I. Transportation

Nearly all of the neighbors interviewed for this report said they rely on a personal vehicle for transportation: most said they usually drive themselves where they need to go or live with a spouse or partner who drives. However, several neighbors said they shared one family vehicle and coordinated rides for immediate and even extended family—often because they only had one vehicle or one driver in the household and/or to save money on gas.

A few people had used public transportation in the past but no one said they exclusively relied on it currently. Those who had recently relied on the bus system admitted they found it confusing at first, but found it workable—if still cumbersome—once they learned their way around. One parent compared the Sioux Falls bus system to systems she had used in bigger cities before moving here. She said she initially found the Sioux Falls system confusing: bus stops were tough to identify, and it was difficult to work out efficient routes:

“No matter how many buses I did take, it was far away from where I need to go, like the walking distance [from the bus stop].... It’s more or less trying to find the best route to go where I would walk the least. And for it to be such a small town, that was just confusing.”

As she got used to the system, she explained, it became less confusing, but she still finds it to be inefficient, especially for reaching places farther from downtown.

Another neighbor she got used to the bus system when she had to rely on it, though she often found she had to take three or four buses a day with transfers. On the weekends, she had to rely on Lyft or rides from friends because the bus did not come near her apartment:

“With the bus schedule it was difficult trying to plan on how to get here in time for that, so I’m definitely blessed to have a car.”

In general, neighbors did not see public transportation as a viable alternative to driving; it was seen as more of a safety net program. One person explained that, though she had used public transportation all through her childhood, given the choice between driving and taking the bus, she would always choose to drive:

“I’m able to drive and I have access to a car and there’s no reason that I should take a bus.”

Several people shared more pointed concerns or criticisms of public transportation. One parent reported that her daughter would be taking the city bus to high school next year, and she was concerned about her daughter’s safety and the cost. Another parent recalled using the bus during childhood, remembering she had found it dirty and unpleasant.

Neighbors did share some positive feedback about the bus system. Those who had used the bus system recently agreed that the \$30 monthly pass is a good deal. One neighbor, among the 20 interviewed for this report, did talk about the bus as a viable alternative to driving. Although he had a car, he said he often chose to walk, bike, or take the bus:

“I actually really like it [the bus system]. Once you get to know it, that’s the hardest part, trying to get to know. But once you get that schedule down where you’re going, and then what times everything’s going to be, it’s actually pretty nice.”

When asked about places that are tough to get to, people generally said they do not have difficulty getting to where they need to be. A couple people pointed to places like banks or city or county offices that close by 5:00 pm. One person explained that even staying open until 6:00 pm makes offices that serve the public much more accessible.

J. Communication

In interviews, neighbors were asked about their communication preferences. They shared how they prefer to communicate with close friends and family, how they prefer to receive information from school, and how they find out about public events in their neighborhood and around Sioux Falls.

Personal Communication Preferences

Respondents were split on whether they prefer to communicate with friends and family over a phone call or by text message or Facebook Messenger. Roughly half said they usually make a phone call or prefer to visit by voice, while the other half said they are more likely to send a text message or use Facebook Messenger.

Most people who text said they *also* call people on the phone, whereas people who said they prefer phone calls explained that they dislike texting. A couple people (of various ages) said they prefer phone calls over text messages because talking on the phone is more like face-to-face communication or because they worry about misinterpretations that can arise in text. “I like to be able to hear their voice,” explained one neighbor, “find out how they’re doing and if everything’s okay.”

Many said they sometimes call and sometimes text, depending on the context. Several people said they are more likely to text for quick questions but would make a phone call for longer conversations. Preferences also depend on the person neighbors are trying to reach: for people who are hard to get ahold of, some said, they find it better to text. But neighbors said they have phone relationships with certain people, especially with their older parents, and would not text them.

For personal communication, nearly everyone said they do not rely on phone apps other than Facebook Messenger, which some people use in place of text messages. However, there were a couple exceptions: One person said she uses WhatsApp for talking to family who live in Mexico, and another reported communicating with friends via Snapchat.

School Notices

When asked how they find out about what is going on at school, most parents said they rely on direct communication from the school: notes sent home with students, texts, or emails. Several said they also turn to the school’s Facebook page for news. A couple parents expressed a preference for text messages from the school over email, explaining that they were less likely to be overlooked:

"Lately I've been getting a lot of texts from them [the school], which helps a lot better than going into my email every couple hours!"

Another parent agreed:

"I believe that text was the best. My emails are so filled with nonsense stuff, so I don't really get into my emails very much because I have to go through so much. But when they do text, send out text alerts...it gets to me quicker."

One person said he would prefer to receive letters in the mail from the school rather than electronic communication.

Public Events

When asked how they find out about what is going on in the neighborhood or around town, neighbors nearly universally reported turning to Facebook. Some also learn about events from local news sources or, more commonly, through word of mouth.

Though most neighbors said they find out about events through Facebook, the way they access information through the site varied. Some said they casually browse their feed, some actively search events, some rely on particular pages or groups to highlight events of interest, and some post questions to find resources. Neighbors may use different strategies depending on what they are seeking. One neighbor, for example, said that she sometimes does targeted searches for resources she needs, but for annual events she depends on her Facebook news feed to remind her; she acknowledged that sometimes that has resulted in her missing out when she did not see a scheduled event until after it happened, like a school supply giveaway.

Specific Facebook pages or groups that people follow include Sioux Falls Blessings, whose members and moderators post about giveaways and other resources, the local Pay It Forward group which is similar, Tea Storm Chasers, and neighborhood groups like RIVERSIDE UNITED. A few neighbors said that churches often post about things going on, and several said they follow local news outlets on Facebook as their primary news source. Some also said they moved conversations with neighbors from Facebook groups to direct messages through Facebook Messenger.

Although most neighbors said they rely on Facebook to learn about local events, it was unclear how effective this strategy is. For instance, while a couple people said they first heard about Kid Link Riverside on Facebook (mostly through neighborhood pages), others who had said Facebook was their primary way for learning about local events admitted they only found out about Kid Link events when friends, family, or neighbors mentioned them.

Indeed, interviews revealed that word of mouth is still a common way for information to travel. Several people said they first heard about Kid Link through friends or neighbors: for example, from a sister, grandkids, a "gal from church", during run-ins at the Dollar General or the Casey's, or in conversations across yards with immediate neighbors. Neighbors said they sometimes also heard about events around town from colleagues at work, while visiting family attractions like SkyZone, or from billboards around town.

News that travels by word of mouth tends to travel within social or organizational networks. Several people said they started coming to Kid Link events because they had a personal tie to someone who

knew about it—whether because they were involved with organizing an event or had close ties to the school or church where events were held. People’s connections to organizations like the school and church, and their ties to one another, filter the information they receive. The challenge is to deliver information about events to people whose networks do not intersect with those who already know about the event.

A combination of personal outreach and blanket information campaigns could help reach more neighbors. A couple people said they had discovered Kid Link by chance during the summer because they saw free food and signs. Another parent remembered that, during the summer, an LBA teacher had walked over to Pioneer Park and invited the kids and families there to head over to the school playground to get something to eat. One neighbor, remembering the Kid Link signs that flew during the summer Bookmobile visits, suggested positing signs or banners or handing out paper flyers throughout the neighborhood to publicize events.

Several neighbors did mention local news outlets as a source of information, though most said they get their news through social media. One person said she has the TV news on in the morning while getting ready, and another couple neighbors said they regularly tune in to watch local news on TV. Another neighbor said that when he hears about something through word of mouth, he sometimes looks up more information from a news outlet’s website. But overall, most people said they do not really read or watch the news except for stories that come across on Facebook. If they do read local news, they read it online.

Other sources of information mentioned by one person each were the Downtown Sioux Falls (DTSF) website, social workers, and the Helpline Center (211).

Framing the Message

In interviews with neighbors, it became clear that how a message is framed is critical to how it will be received. They are not receptive to programs or messages that frame the neighborhood as destitute and needy or programs and volunteers that frame themselves as lifting up and saving those who cannot help themselves.

Neighbors take pride in their neighborhood. They recognize that they live in an area with older, modest homes and working-class incomes, but they bristle to think that other Sioux Falls residents look down on them as poor or needy. They are happy to receive the blessing of a gift given in a spirit of generosity, but are uncomfortable with the idea of benefiting from charity. Neighbors tend to adopt an attitude of self-reliance, insisting they are content to make do with what they have, while admitting they are often one setback away from instability. Neighbors also wish to help one another, seeking opportunities to give what they can, whether sharing meals or keeping an eye on neighbor children.

K. Scheduling Events

Neighbors were asked about their preferences for scheduling future Kid Link Riverside events. Their responses should be interpreted with some caution. Those who were interviewed for this report had already attended a Kid Link event. They are, by virtue of the recruitment strategy used for these interviews, people who are interested in, willing, and able to attend Kid Link Riverside events as they are currently organized and scheduled. With that caveat in mind, neighbors shared the following preferences.

In the summer, neighbors said, afternoons work well, with families split in their preferences for weekends or weekdays. Some families preferred events on weekdays in the summer in order to keep children occupied while parents are at work. Other families preferred summer weekends because parents and children could attend events together.

Of course, not all parents work daytime hours on weekdays. A couple parents, who work overnight or early morning shifts, said afternoon is nevertheless a good time to come with their family members to a Kid Link event. They are able to sleep in the morning, then attend an event before heading to work.

During the school year, neighbors said, evenings are best, though preferences varied between early evening and later evening. Some families preferred early evening so they could get home in time for children to go to bed, but others said later in the evening is better; they said it would be difficult for people who get off of work at 5:00 or 6:00 pm to arrive at an event before 6:00 or 7:00 pm.

It should be noted that, when asked about scheduling events, many parents answered with respect to when they would be done with work—typically, after 5:00 pm. But these same parents said their children usually come home after school and could use more activities to keep them occupied. Evidently, parents were envisioning a family event that they would attend with their children. If safe transportation and supervision were available and children could attend on their own, an earlier start time would work even for parents who do not finish work until evening.

Several families said that, during the school year, weekends would work better than weekdays, but this was not a widely shared preference. For some families, weekends were workable but not necessarily better than weekday evenings. For others, weekends during the school year were difficult times to get the family together: “everybody’s busy doing something else” on weekends, whereas “during the week...it seems to bring more parents together.”

The one point of scheduling consensus was that mornings are not families’ preferred time to attend events.

Families who had attended Kid Link regularly reported that their children loved the events and looked forward to them every week. Asked what Kid Link activities they especially enjoyed, neighbors gave a fairly comprehensive list: Bookmobile visits, magician shows, live music concerts, food trucks and free food, carnival games, balloon animals, ZooMobile visits, puppet shows, and seeing friends.

VII. Conclusions

The LBA attendance area is made up of three residential areas that share certain common attributes: they are home to hardworking families and parents who, like many parents in Sioux Falls, struggle to manage the conflicting demands of supporting their family by putting in hours at work and spending time at home. There is a significant need for out-of-school time programming that engages children in enriching activities and connects them with caring adults.

Families have pride in their community and close relationships with neighbors, many of whom have lived in the neighborhood for multiple generations; but they have concerns about how outsiders view their neighborhood. Building relationships and establishing trust will be critical to Kid Link Riverside's success.

Families in the neighborhood and other stakeholders alike are uncomfortable with the idea of charity and programs that purport to rescue people who cannot help themselves; they agree that programs should focus on enhancing neighborhood resilience. In communications, those working with Kid Link Riverside should be cognizant of the way they frame the program and messages about the need for and intent of Kid Link. For example, language about "breaking the cycle of poverty" could be perceived by residents as degrading or blaming parents and families for their circumstances.

Indeed, families and stakeholders together with community demographic data demonstrate the ways in which systems beyond residents' control have created transportation and out-of-school time gaps. As neighbors voiced in interviews, the physical structure of the neighborhood itself—its relative seclusion, heavy traffic on bordering streets, and the lack of nearby community spaces—has left some residents with the feeling that the community has been overlooked. Families find themselves trying to fill gaps on their own that are built into the structure of the neighborhood. For example, working until 5:00 or 6:00 pm to support a family becomes problematic for parents who live in a neighborhood without a community center or work a job where earnings are not enough to cover transportation, food, and childcare.

One of the central challenges for Kid Link Riverside will be how to effectively include families and children who live "up on the hill" in the Norton Tracks and Froehlich Additions areas. These children, who are bussed to and from LBA, live in homes with working parents. They generally do not have their own means of transportation outside of the school bus schedule, and distance aside, the walk along busy Cliff Avenue is unrealistic for young children. Even children who live nearer to the school but across Rice Street may not walk on their own to a program that requires crossing a busy street.

Among the neighborhood's greatest assets are the people who live there, who deeply identify with the neighborhood, have immense support for the school, and wish to help their neighbors when they can. Kid Link Riverside might consider ways to engage multigenerational families with grandparents at home or older adults in the neighborhood as well as older siblings in leadership or mentoring.