

COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT



St. Tammany Parish Government
August 2023



Cover Photo: Courtesy of St. Tammany Parish Government
Image Description: St. Tammany Main Street

Inside Cover Photos:
Courtesy of St. Tammany Parish Government
Image Descriptions: 1) Heron in the marshes, 2) Slidell, Louisiana, 3) Parish Fairgrounds

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UNO Institute for Economic Development and Real Estate Research



Dear reader,

The Department of Grants is delighted to share with you the **St. Tammany 2023 Community Needs Assessment**. This document, assembled by the St. Tammany Department of Grants with the support of the Department of Health and Human Services, produces a portrait of unmet needs in our community at this moment in time, including community needs for housing, health care, employment, and transportation.

The Community Needs Assessment is developed every five years as part of our Parish's participation in the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Entitlement Funding Program. This program provides annual grants on a formula basis to entitled cities and counties to develop viable urban communities by providing decent housing and a suitable living environment, and by expanding economic opportunities, principally for low- and moderate-income persons. Eligibility for participation as an entitlement community is based on population data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau and metropolitan area delineations published by the Office of Management and Budget.

As an administrator of federal, state, and local funds, the Department of Grants is responsible for ensuring that all of our grants are strategically designed to fit St. Tammany's needs. From supporting programming that repairs and renovates housing stock for senior residents to fostering the provision of behavioral and mental health services, our Parish seeks to fund programs that will have the greatest impact on our communities.

The Community Needs Assessment provides our department with critical data and policy recommendations to inform a coordinated strategy over the next five years. We look forward to using this data-driven approach to partner with local service providers in ensuring that our residents receive the appropriate services and opportunities.

We also welcome service providers to use the data gathered in the Community Needs Assessment to help inform their own strategic decision-making in the years to come.

On behalf of the Department of Grants and the St. Tammany Parish Government, I thank you for your engagement in addressing our community's challenges, and look forward to working with you to ensure access to opportunities for all St. Tammany residents.

Sincerely,

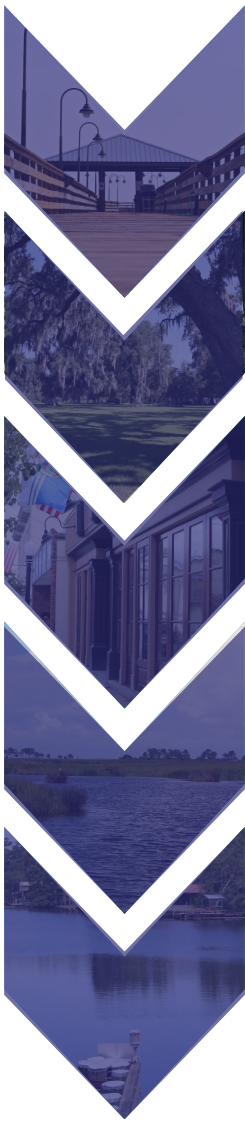
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INTRODUCTION

Prior to applying for Federal Community Development Block (CDBG) Grants and Community Services Block (CSBG) Grants, St. Tammany Parish Government (or STP) must update its Community Needs Assessment ("Assessment" or CNA). A community's CNA qualifies and analyzes local emerging trends and challenges associated with economic opportunities and barriers for all residents who are at risk of remaining or becoming economically insecure, as well as identifies existing and potential resources to expand opportunities.

Information in the CNA supports development of a multi-year strategic plan that includes programs to improve or address unmet housing, education, environment, economic, public health, and transportation needs. These programs, if funded, are implemented and promoted by Parish officials, grantors, staff, and leadership; as well as public agencies supporting incorporated areas to improve the quality of life throughout the Parish.

The St. Tammany Parish Grants Department and Department of Health and Human Services coordinated to complete this CNA, which compares St. Tammany public services, demographics, and potential vulnerabilities with those of the State and similar communities.

Together with the Parish's updated Consolidated Plan and Action Plans, this CNA will prioritize and support implementation of local CDBG and CSBG funded programs to reach and better support the most vulnerable residents and maximize the impact of available federal funds in the years to come.

What Does A Community Needs Assessment Do?

Emerging Trends

Identify STP role

Identify resources and partnerships

Outreach and Education

Explain rationale and prioritization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

GROWTH AND HOUSING

The Parish is growing at a slower rate than in prior years. Even with housing construction continuing across the Parish, housing supply does not yet meet the demand for residential units in the Parish, resulting in families facing prohibitively high housing prices both to purchase homes and to rent units.

St. Tammany has historically been a refuge for young families and growing households looking for affordable housing options. If housing supply does not keep up with demand, housing opportunities will likely shift elsewhere.

Renters and homeowners in the Parish are burdened by high mortgages and rent. To that end, this Assessment finds that affordable housing options for first time homebuyers and the aging population are a high-priority need. Rising flood and homeowners' insurance rates increase this burden.

At any given point in the Parish approximately 90 persons are unhoused, representing another significant and constant housing challenge in St. Tammany. A 2015 study found that there is an unfortunate correlation between untreated mental health illnesses and a greater chance for an individual to become unhoused while they are without mitigating treatment and/or support [1].

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND SUBURBAN DEVELOPMENT PATTERNS

In recent history St. Tammany Parish experienced rapid growth that enabled the widespread installation of individual Aerated Treatment Units (ATUs) and septic tanks. These methods of wastewater treatment are generally appropriate in a rural environment but have become problematic as the Parish continues to become more suburban with higher-density neighborhood development, where a higher concentration of ATUs can negatively impact water quality[2]. Within suburban areas, there is an opportunity to consolidate wastewater treatment in a manner that is better for the local environment. The CDBG-funded Sewer Upgrades Program for residential development successfully converts homes with ATUs to consolidated sewerage but is routinely underfunded. Future CDBG allocations are needed for this program to continue to address changing development patterns and to reduce negative impacts to the environment.

EMPLOYMENT AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

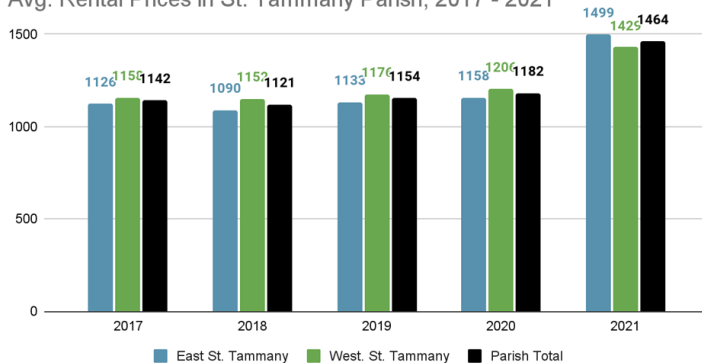
While St. Tammany enjoys relatively low unemployment rates, low-to-moderate income Parish residents may have limited access to (1) job opportunities with small businesses within the Parish having a short commute and (2) childcare to support full-time employment for families with small children. These needs are not currently met by state economic development or childcare programs and limits residents' access to sources of wealth and social mobility.

EDUCATION

The St. Tammany Parish school system receives higher state ratings and generally serves residents well, however there remains a significant gap in service provision for early childhood education and childcare. While this is important for childrens' development, subsidized or low-cost early childhood education can support household income and stability and enhance the likelihood of long-term family success.

Figure 1.

Avg. Rental Prices in St. Tammany Parish, 2017 - 2021



Source: University of New Orleans Institute for Economic Development and Real Estate Research Annual Report 2022.



HEALTHCARE AND HEALTH EQUITY

St. Tammany has had great success in recent years with enhancing access to healthcare for residents. Residents are largely covered by health insurance and the Parish has seen an increase in Federally Qualified Health Clinics (low-cost clinics) in recent years. The growth of the Safe Haven facility has also made significant strides toward more equitable access to mental health care, however the Parish still has a significantly high rate of suicide and deaths from drug overdose. This illuminates the remaining need for mental health, behavioral health, and substance abuse services in the Parish.

TRANSPORTATION

Cars remain a necessity for life and work in St. Tammany. Review of commuter travel time indicates that many residents must regularly venture across the Causeway or far from their home for work. This creates a gap for residents without regular access to a car and those that are reliant on public transportation, walking, or bicycling. Furthermore, this can hamper residents' opportunities for education, childcare, healthcare, and employment, which can be a special challenge for residents in the north or outside of the Covington / Mandeville / Slidell areas.

COVID RESPONSE AND DISASTER RECOVERY

Families and individuals are still experiencing housing insecurity from the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic distress. This can look like overcrowded households, individuals experiencing unemployment and unable to return into the workforce, and residents struggling with long-term health impacts.

Disaster Recovery programs such as those associated with CDBG-CV, the ARPA, and CDBG-DR and HMGP funds have supported recovery and long-term resilience in St. Tammany. In order to maintain a successful CDBG Entitlement Program and CSBG program, the Parish must contend with multiple program objectives and streams of funding that, if managed properly, can amplify the effects of one another. To this end, this assessment considers not only the isolated needs in a non-disaster environment, but the resilience needs and long-term recovery needs of St. Tammany that compound social vulnerability or infrastructure needs.



Image Credit: St. Tammany Parish Government
Image Description: Amphitheater and oak trees





Image Credit: St. Tammany Parish Government
Image Description: Bird overlooking water

THE ROLE OF THE COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT

St. Tammany Parish government receives funding from the Department of Housing and Urban Development in the form of Federal Community Services Block Grants. A requirement of this grant funding is regular comprehensive community assessments that inventories community needs and available resources and partners. According to the Federal Office of Community Services, “regular assessment of needs and resources at the community level is the foundation of Community Action and a vital management and leadership tool that is used across the organization and utilized by the community to set the course for both CSBG and all agency resources.”

This Assessment will support both the CSBG and the CDBG entitlement programs in St. Tammany, as an assessment of needs is also a building block of the Consolidated Plan and Action Plan for CDBG Entitlement expenditures.

METHODOLOGY

This report uses data from multiple sources including:

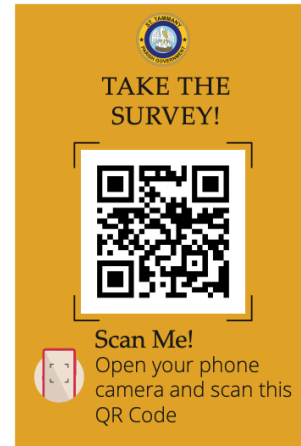
- The U.S. Census Bureau’s American Community Survey
- The UNO Institute for Economic Development and Real Estate Research’s New Orleans and Northshore Regional Real Estate Market Analysis
- Esri Population and Housing Data
- CDC Social Vulnerability Index (SoVI)
- HUD LMI Data by Census Tract
- Survey data from a Parish-released survey for residents
- Data from the Northshore Area 2021 Community Health Needs Assessment
- The National Association of Free & Charitable Clinics NAFC Data Report 2022



COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

To best ensure this Community Needs Assessment reflects the values and priorities of the Parish input from residents of all walks of life is needed. Outreach and engagement efforts focused on spreading awareness of the Community Needs Assessment process through in-person and online resources aimed at soliciting input on CNA development, including:

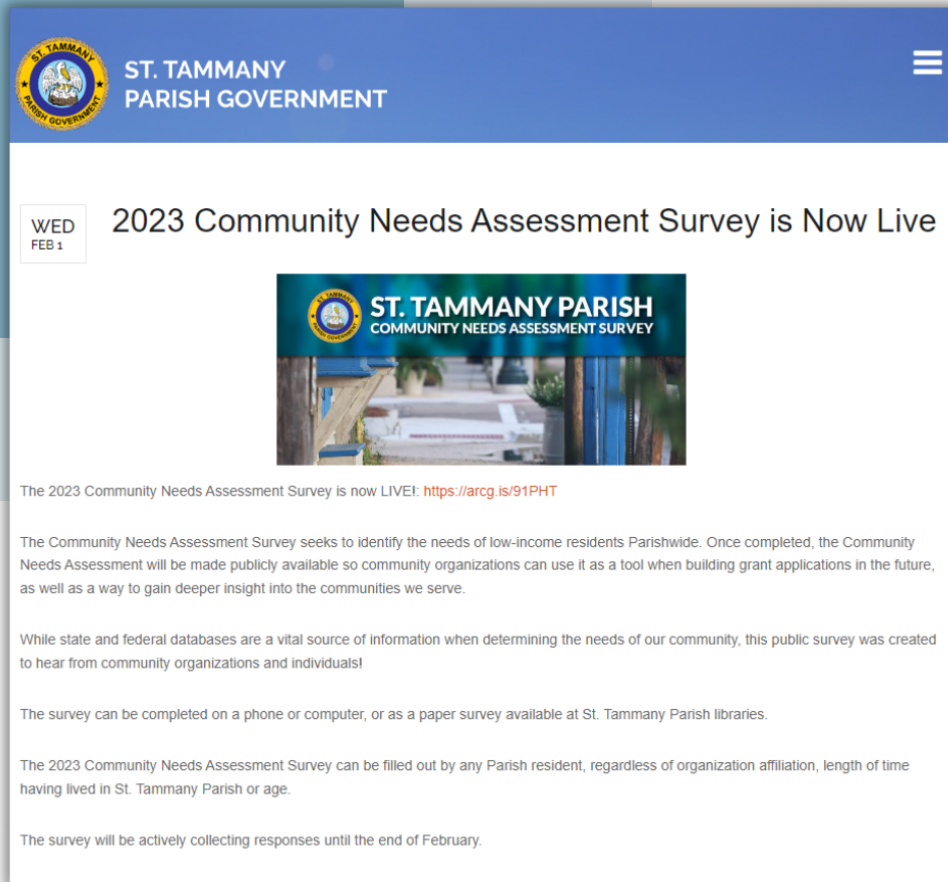
- Development of a Parish CDBG CNA Community Outreach Strategy
- Issuance of an online and paper Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) survey
- Distribution of a link to the survey via a QR code on stickers to:
 - Incorporated areas
 - St. Tammany Parish offices
 - Library staff and leadership
 - Lacombe Technical Community College
 - Northshore Technical Community College
 - Providers and organizations at Resource Roundup
 - Safe Haven Campus Event
 - St. Tammany Commission on Families
 - Parole Offices
- Attendance of Parish and project team staff at the Northshore Resource Roundup to solicit survey responses and answer questions about the Community Needs Assessment
- Compilation of a nonprofit stakeholders list



Outreach stickers including a QR code directing users to the survey were distributed at public sites to increase public awareness of and input on the CNA development process. 90 online surveys have been completed. Complete results are available in Appendix A - Community Feedback.




PARISH PRESS RELEASE



The screenshot shows a webpage from the St. Tammany Parish Government. At the top left is the parish seal, and to its right is the text "ST. TAMMANY PARISH GOVERNMENT". A hamburger menu icon is in the top right corner. Below the header, on the left, is a date box: "WED FEB 1". The main headline reads "2023 Community Needs Assessment Survey is Now Live". Below the headline is a banner image with the text "ST. TAMMANY PARISH COMMUNITY NEEDS ASSESSMENT SURVEY" overlaid on a photo of a street scene. Underneath the banner, there are several paragraphs of text providing details about the survey, including its purpose, how to access it, and the deadline for responses.

WED
FEB 1

2023 Community Needs Assessment Survey is Now Live



The 2023 Community Needs Assessment Survey is now LIVE! <https://arcg.is/91PHT>

The Community Needs Assessment Survey seeks to identify the needs of low-income residents Parishwide. Once completed, the Community Needs Assessment will be made publicly available so community organizations can use it as a tool when building grant applications in the future, as well as a way to gain deeper insight into the communities we serve.

While state and federal databases are a vital source of information when determining the needs of our community, this public survey was created to hear from community organizations and individuals!

The survey can be completed on a phone or computer, or as a paper survey available at St. Tammany Parish libraries.

The 2023 Community Needs Assessment Survey can be filled out by any Parish resident, regardless of organization affiliation, length of time having lived in St. Tammany Parish or age.

The survey will be actively collecting responses until the end of February.

St. Tammany Parish sent out a press release about the survey to boost public participation.