

2024

29th Street Thrive Zone

RESULTS FROM THE 2024 POVERTY IN TUCSON FIELD WORKSHOP

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Introduction

In 2024, The City of Tucson was selected to receive a \$500,000 Choice Neighborhoods Planning Grant from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to support the 29th Street Thrive Zone, which runs from Alvernon Way to Craycroft Road and 22nd Street to Golf Links Road.¹ That fall, the Poverty in Tucson Field Workshop (PTFW) partnered with the City to gain additional insights into this community. The goal of this report is to present the findings of the outreach and research conducted by PTFW and how these findings align with the broader goals of the 29th Street Thrive Zone.

Methods

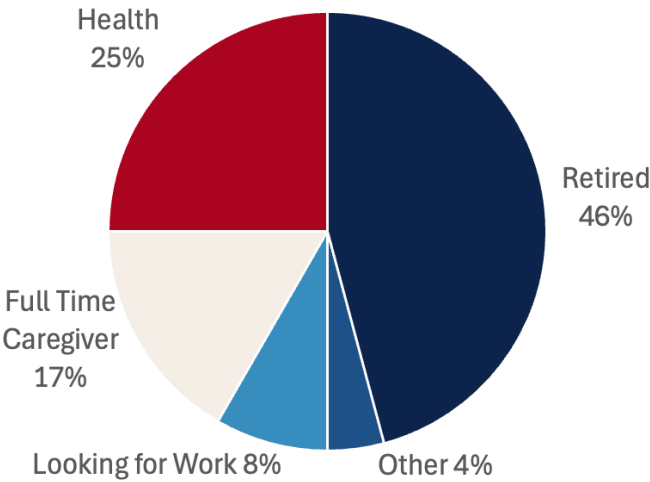
This report presents the findings from a survey of 63 households in the 29th Street Thrive Zone. Our partners at the City of Tucson sent invitations to eligible residents of the Thrive Zone to participate in the survey. Interested participants shared their contact information with the University of Arizona research team and were contacted during October-November 2024 by a student researcher. The survey took on average about 45 minutes with a mix of closed and open-ended questions. Each interview was recorded and transcribed using auto-transcription software. Respondents' addresses were cross-referenced with the thrive zone geographic area to ensure accurate reporting. All respondents were given a \$25 gift card to a local grocery store to thank them for their participation in the survey. The student researchers generated descriptive statistics and presented their broader findings at a community forum in December 2024, which included findings from the 29th Street Thrive Zone as well as the City of Tucson more broadly.²

The Respondents

In several key ways, the sample of 29th Street Thrive Zone residents looks similar to the average household in Pima County. The age of the respondents was 46 years old, which is only slightly above Pima County's average age of 40 years old.³ Most respondents were white (49%), which also reflects the distribution in Pima County (51%). However, the PTFW sample slightly oversampled residents who identified as Black (19%) or multi-racial (6%). Nearly one-third of the sample (29%) identified as Hispanic. Of the 29th Street sample, 62% had completed at least some college, with 8% having achieved an Associate's degree and 30% having attained a Bachelor's degree or higher (which is lower than the Bachelor's degree rate of 35.9% of Pima County residents).⁴ Education is a predictor of income and housing insecurity.⁵

Of the 29th Street respondents, 62% were employed. Of the 38% who were not working, 25% cited health reasons; 46%

Fig. 1. Reasons for Unemployment



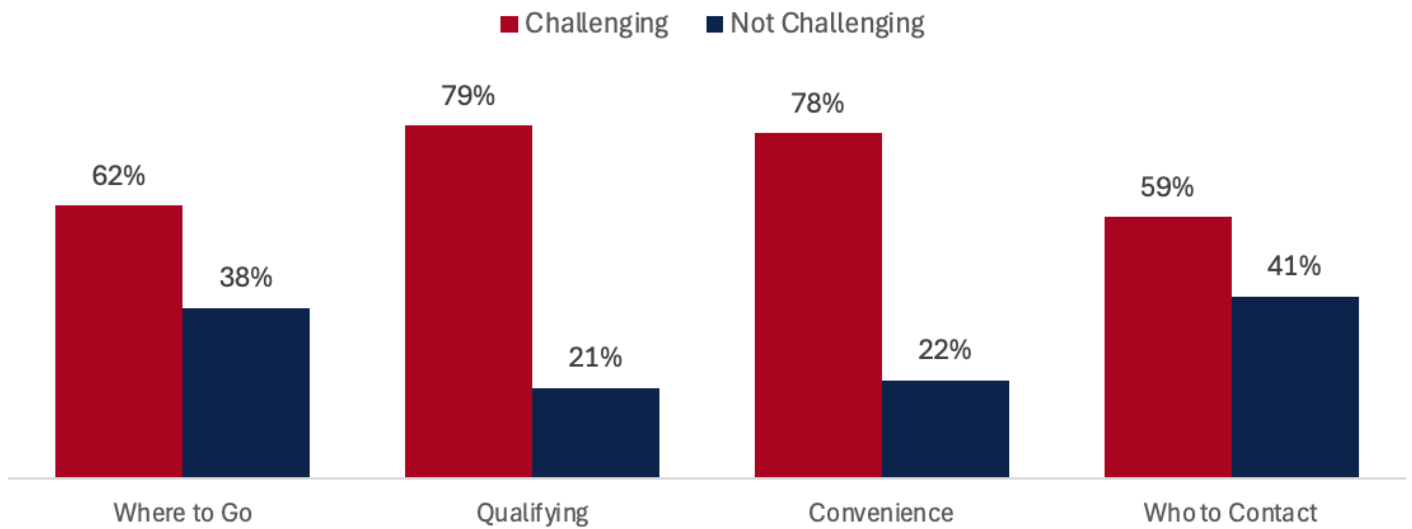
were retired, 8% were looking for work, and 17% were caring for children or other family members (Figure 1). Thus, unemployment was a result of multiple barriers to participating in the labor market. Most of the households in the sample were headed by two adults (41%), with a significant portion being headed by single adults (38%). Research has shown that being in a single parent household is a risk factor for housing insecurity.⁶

Goal 1: Build a Resource Rich Community Efficiently Providing Education, Awareness, and Services to the Neighborhood

Accessing social services is an important way that individuals are able to manage difficult times. The vast majority (71%) of respondents said they either just barely earned enough income or did not make enough income to get by each month. Though this finding doesn't in and of itself suggest that these individuals are entitled to needs-based assistance, this finding does suggest that most households living in the 29th Street Neighborhood do not feel confident that their monthly income can sufficiently meet their needs and the households that do qualify for services could benefit greatly from the additional assistance.

For example, we observed high levels of food insecurity in the 29th Street Neighborhood. In fact, 32% of the households we interviewed reported the highest level of food security where respondents regularly felt hungry, skipped meals, lacked enough funds to purchase enough food, and were unable to shop for healthy foods locally.

Fig. 2. Why is it Challenging to Access Services?



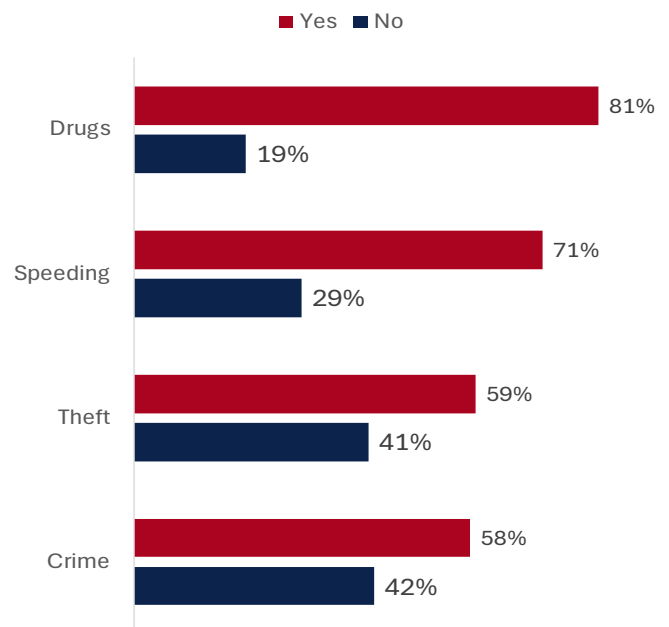
Thus, one of our core questions focuses on the accessibility of services in the 29th Street Thrive Zone. When asked whether respondents believed it was challenging to access services in their neighborhood, over half (60%) indicated that this was a difficulty for them. Of those who found it challenging to access services in their neighborhood, many (79%) had challenges knowing whether or not they qualified for services (Figure 2). In a similar vein, over half did not know where to go to access services (62%) or did not know who to contact to learn more about services (59%). Even for those who felt they knew where to go and whether they qualified, a majority (78%) cited that services were not offered at convenient places and times, which made accessing them challenging.

speeding and road safety were of particular concern for residents. Over two-thirds of respondents (71%) said that speeding was an issue in their neighborhood. Another resident lamented, “children just are out running wild ... I’m concerned that [a car] might actually hit a child.” Less cited concerns regarding safety included high rates of homelessness, drug dealing, and gang presence.

Goal 2: Residents and Business Owners Live and Work in a Crime-Free, Safe, and Secure Community

Public safety is a top concern for our respondents, especially for caregivers. When asked whether their neighborhood was a good place to raise kids, the respondents were split: half (51%) agreed their neighborhood was a good place to raise kids, while a little less than half (41%) did not believe their neighborhood was a good place to raise kids. Of those who did not believe their neighborhood was a good place to raise kids, the vast majority (89%) cited concerns with public safety as the reason they would not recommend raising children in the area. Even those who believed it was a good place to raise kids expressed concerns about safety. Over half of respondents (58%) said that crime was a serious issue in their neighborhood, including theft (59%) and drug use (81%) (Figure 3). As one resident said, “we have a lot of [safety] issues ... we have constant shootings and break-ins.” Additionally,

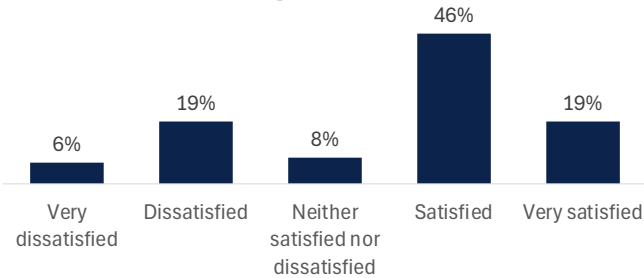
Fig 3. Safety Concerns in Neighborhood



Goal 3: The 29th Street Area Celebrates a Thriving Culture that Uplifts the History, Heritage, and Residents and that Demonstrates Pride, Unity, and Strength

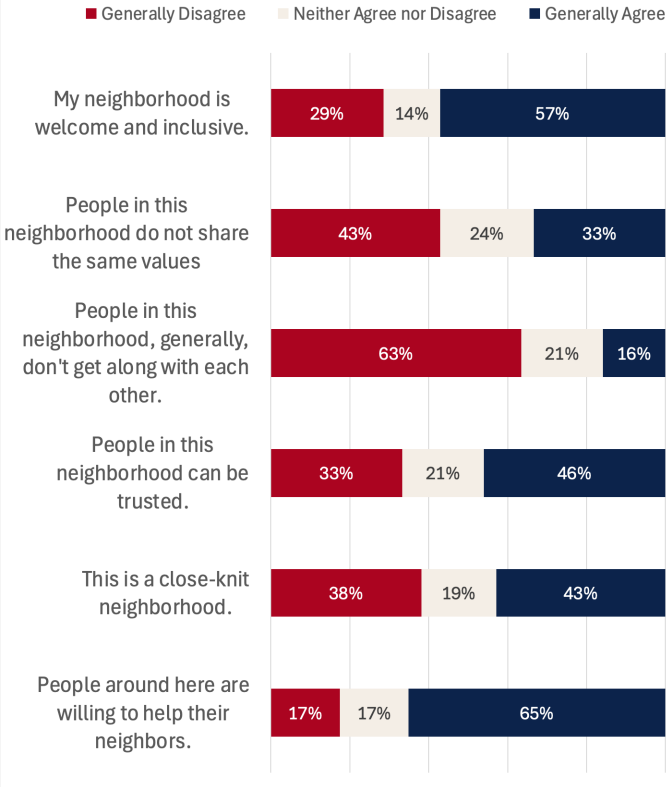
Most respondents were satisfied living in their neighborhood. Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied living in their neighborhood, whereas only a few (6%) reported being very dissatisfied (Figure 4). Residents were relatively split as to whether they believed their neighborhood was close-knit, with 43% agreeing, 38% disagreeing, and 19% neither agreeing nor disagreeing (Figure 5). Residents were similarly split as to whether people in the neighborhood could be trusted, perhaps related to concerns expressed previously regarding safety in the neighborhood. Despite this, there are still signs of neighborhood cohesion based on our findings. For example, the vast majority (65%) of individuals felt that people were generally willing to help their neighbors. Over half of respondents (57%) felt their neighborhood is welcome and inclusive.

Fig 4. Satisfaction with Neighborhood



¹ City of Tucson, "Choice Neighborhood Planning Grant," 2024, <https://29thstreet.tucsonaz.gov/pages/planning-grant>
² Repository of student posters can be found at <https://repository.arizona.edu/handle/10150/552895>.
³ Census Reporter, "Pima County, AZ, ACS 2023" <https://censusreporter.org/profiles/05000US04019-pima-county-az/>
⁴ U.S. Census, "Pima County, Arizona," 2020.

Fig 5. Neighborhood Cohesion



Conclusion

These findings highlight key challenges and opportunities in the 29th Street Thrive Zone as the city continues to build a resource-rich, safe, and connected community. Findings indicate there are still challenges in accessing services, concerns over crime and safety, and a mixed sense of neighborhood cohesion. These findings underscore the need for improved service accessibility, enhanced safety measures, and strengthened community engagement. Addressing these issues will be critical in fostering a thriving, inclusive, and secure 29th Street community

⁵ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, "Education pays, 2022," Career Outlook, May 2023. <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2023/data-on-display/education-pays.htm#>:
⁶ John Iceland, *Poverty in America: A Handbook* (3rd ed.), University of California Press (2013); Rebecca Bentley, Emma Baker, and Zoe Aitken, "The 'Double Precarity' of Employment Insecurity and Unaffordable Housing and its Impact on Mental Health," *Social Science & Medicine* 225 (2019): 9-16, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2019.02.008>.

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Additional information can be found at
<https://povertyproject.arizona.edu/>

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