

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS STRATEGY

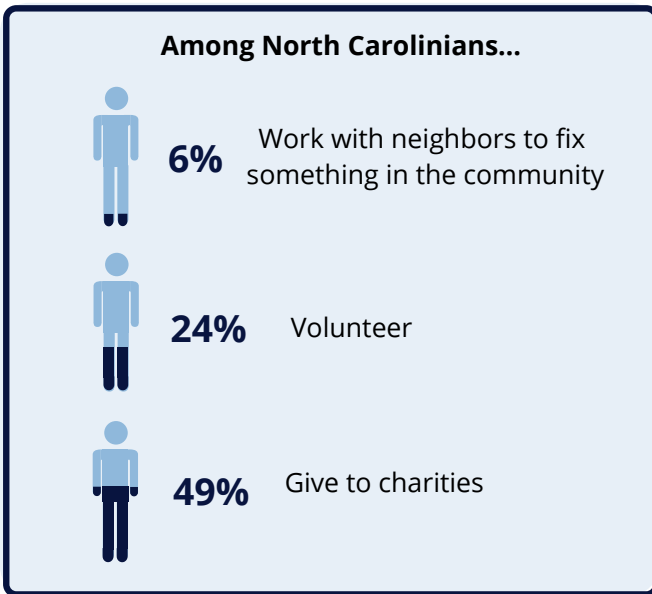


**TOWN OF CHAPEL HILL**

Prepared by the Office for Housing & Community

# INTRODUCTION

People are more disconnected and isolated from one another than ever before. In the past 25 years, involvement in clubs and civic groups decreased by 45% and involvement in community life, such as public meetings, decreased by 35%.<sup>1</sup> Recent statistics show that in North Carolina less than 10% of people work with neighbors to address community problems and only about 25% volunteer.<sup>2,3</sup> People are increasingly socially isolated, distrusting of the media, and forgoing associations with clubs and civic groups.<sup>1</sup> This loss of connection to each other, civic institutions, and associations has social, health, and economic consequences.<sup>1,2</sup>



Source: Current Population Survey, September 2015: Volunteer Supplement

Local governments are uniquely positioned to help reverse this current trend by providing residents with meaningful opportunities to connect and engage in their community.<sup>1,2</sup> To be effective and responsive to the community, local governments need residents to be connected and engaged - volunteering, working with neighbors on community problems, advocating for issues, voting, and participating in civic life. While Chapel Hill has a reputation of strong community engagement and participation in local government, the Town is intentionally focusing in this area by creating a Community Connections Strategy to guide our work in this area going forward. As we implement this Strategy, we anticipate reaping the many documented benefits of engagement: a Town that is more responsive to the needs and interests of all of our diverse residents (see Appendix A) and a community that is more equitable, resilient, and prosperous.<sup>1,2</sup>

*"Cities have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody"*

-Jane Jacobs  
*The Death and Life of Great American Cities*

## Strategy Contents:

|                                    |    |
|------------------------------------|----|
| 1. Introduction                    | 1  |
| 2. Past Efforts                    | 2  |
| 3. Our New Approach                | 2  |
| 4. Community Connections           | 5  |
| 5. Community Connections Framework | 6  |
| 6. References                      | 9  |
| 7. Appendices                      | 10 |



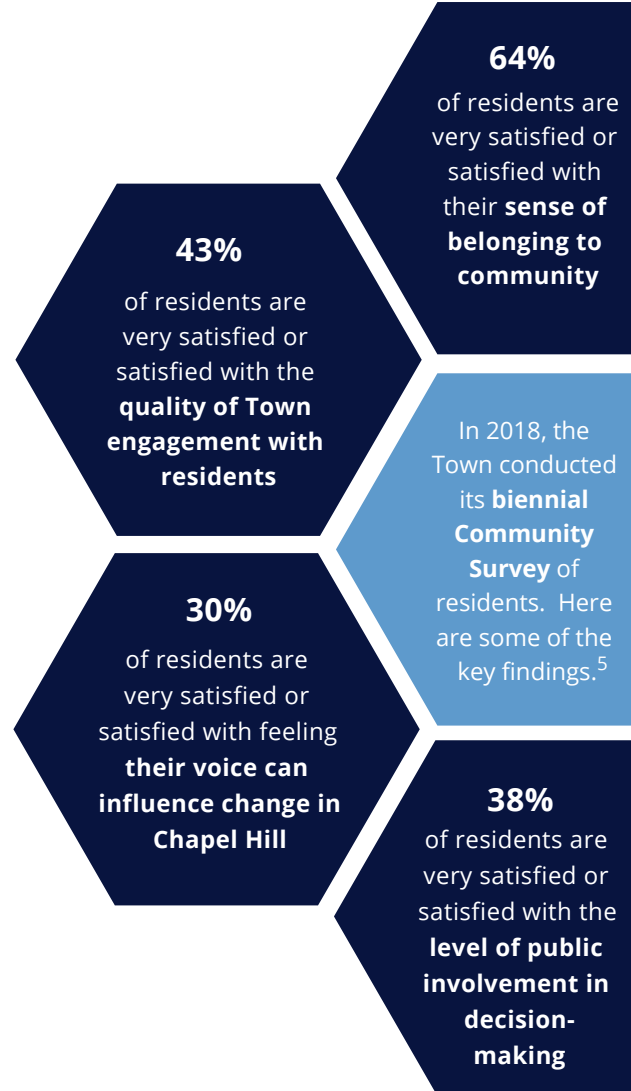
# PAST EFFORTS

The Town of Chapel Hill has a long-standing commitment to connecting with residents. Over the years, there have been many initiatives, programs, and services designed specifically to connect with residents and provide opportunities for engagement with Town government. Refer to Appendix B for additional details about the Town's efforts.

In 2016, the Town Council established a Council Goal focused on engagement and inclusion (see below).<sup>4</sup> Subsequently in 2018, the Town formed the Community Connections division of Housing and Community to further strengthen connections in the community and further engage residents in town processes. With the explicit identification of inclusion and engagement in Town Council goals, dedication of new staff resources, and an increasing programmatic focus in this area, the Town has laid a strong foundation to continue strengthening opportunities for community connections going forward.

## TOWN COUNCIL GOAL

Create a vibrant and inclusive community by enriching the lives of those who work, live and visit Chapel Hill by building community and creating a place for everyone.



# OUR NEW APPROACH



To have a vibrant and inclusive community, the Town understands that the people and communities most affected by issues need to be kept at the center of the discussion and decision making process.

Therefore, Community Connections incorporates several well-established approaches to building connections and engaging the community in decision making and planning for the future. These approaches include racial equity, human-centered design, and community engagement.

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS APPROACHES

### RACIAL EQUITY



### HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN



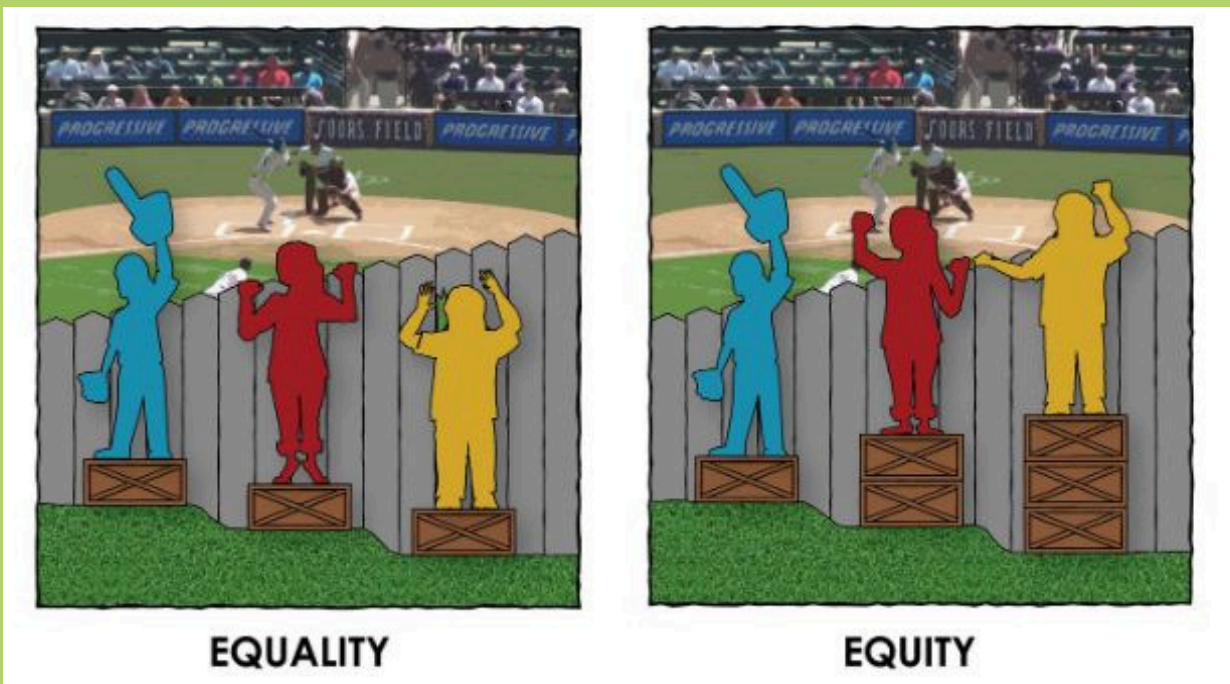
### COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



# RACIAL EQUITY

Racial equity is the elimination of privilege, oppression, disparities, and disadvantages by race.<sup>6,7</sup> Equity acknowledges that people start in different places due to racist historical contexts and should be provided different levels of support to have equal access to society's benefits. In contrast, equality assumes that everyone benefits from having the same supports which is not always the case.<sup>7</sup> A community that achieves racial equity is one where race no longer influences the distribution of society's benefits and burdens, nor predicts one's life outcomes.

Historically, local governments played a role in creating and maintaining racial inequities.<sup>6,7</sup> Since the Civil Rights Movement, local governments have made strides in addressing discrimination; however, there is still room for improvement. Local governments focusing on racial equity can increase community success by developing strategies based on the needs of a particular group. In turn, these strategies result in improvements for all. A racial equity approach improves community outcomes and provides the supports needed for everyone to have equal access.



**Equality typically means equal resources.**  
It means treating everyone the same, no matter where they are starting or whether outcomes remain unequal.<sup>6,7</sup>

**Equity is about equal outcomes.**  
It means acknowledging that people start in different places due to racist historical context and giving everyone what they need to succeed equally.<sup>6,7</sup>

*"Government played a primary role in the historical creation of racial inequities, and despite milestone civil rights laws, has continued to maintain racial inequities. Local governments are uniquely situated to examine and transform policies and practices toward racial equity."*

-Government Alliance on Race & Equity, May 2018



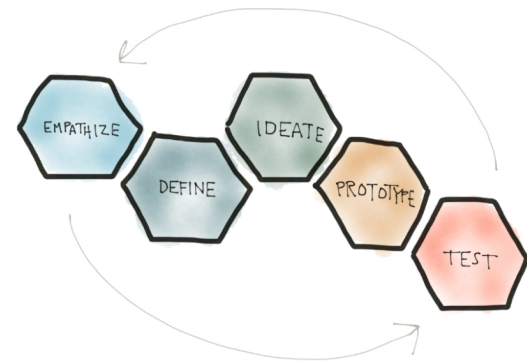
# HUMAN-CENTERED DESIGN



Human-centered design is an approach to problem solving that aims to create programs, policies, products, or services tailored to meet the needs of those who will use it or be impacted it.<sup>8,9</sup> The approach begins by developing a deep understanding of the people who will be impacted it. This understanding is key to human-centered design because it helps generate solutions that meet needs. Following this step a creative solution is designed and tested with the intended population. If the program, policy, product, or service does not meet needs, it should be redesigned and tested again.

The key steps to human-centered design are:<sup>8</sup>

- **Empathize:** Learn about the population facing the problem. Build connections and develop a deep understanding of the challenge.
- **Define:** Redefine and focus the question based on insights gained from learning about the population.
- **Ideate:** Brainstorm and come up with creative solutions. Recognize the assets and needs of the population.
- **Prototype:** Create a representation of one or more of the ideas to show to others.
- **Test:** Return to the intended population and test ideas for feedback.



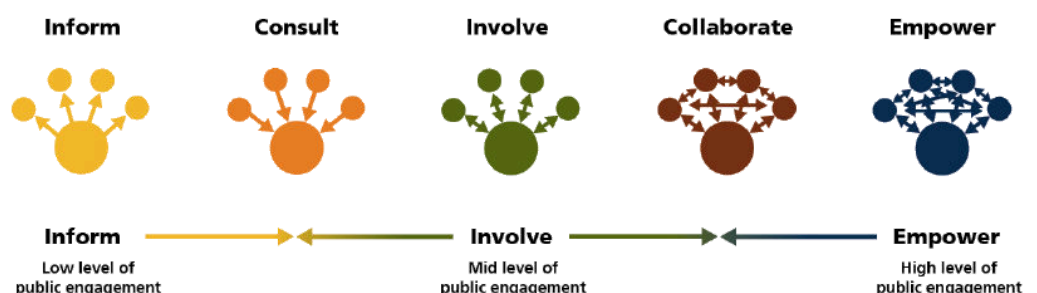
# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT



Community engagement involves the community in decision making processes. The main principle of community engagement is the right for people to have their ideas heard to better inform leaders' decisions.<sup>10,11</sup>

There are various levels of community engagement, including from only sharing information to collaborating on the entire decision making process. The IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation, an internationally recognized platform, outlines these various levels of engagement. A description and graphic representation of each level follows.<sup>11</sup>

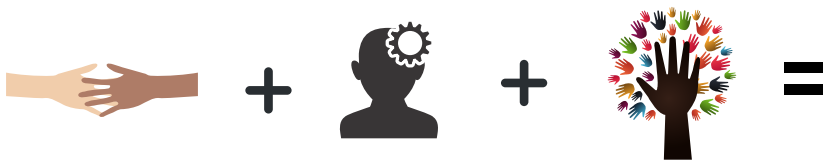
- **Inform:** Provide the community with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.
- **Consult:** Gather community feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.
- **Involve:** Work directly with the community throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and needs are consistently understood and considered.
- **Collaborate:** Partner with the community in each aspect of the decision including the development of the alternatives and the identification of the solution.
- **Empower:** To place final decision making in the hands of the public.



# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

The Town's Community Connections efforts incorporate the racial equity, human-centered design, and community engagement approaches.

We intentionally focus on being a collaborative and reciprocal partnership between the Town of Chapel Hill and the many communities of which we are comprised. Residents contribute ideas and opinions to Town decision making processes and programs. At the same time, the Town connects, builds relationships, and provides support to residents as they work to achieve their hopes and dreams for the community.



The Town commits to the following guiding principles for its Community Connections efforts.

**Joint design:** Design and create programs and policies for and with each other. Create an environment to constructively explore ideas, learn, and apply information in ways that generate options collaboratively.

**Transparency:** Be clear and open about the process and outcomes expected. Share all relevant information.

**Reciprocity:** Recognize, respect, and value the knowledge, perspective, and resources that each person contributes. Gain benefits by partnering together.

**Compassion:** Show empathy and care towards others, particularly those who may have a different point of view or lived experience.

**Equity:** Ensure fair and just treatment of all. Have equal access to opportunities by providing what is needed for everyone to participate.

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES

JOINT DESIGN

TRANSPARENCY

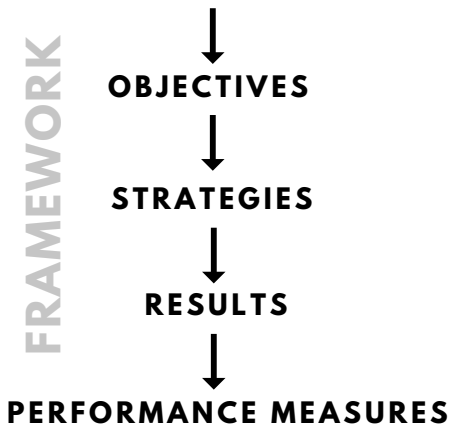
RECIPROCITY

COMPASSION

EQUITY

# COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS FRAMEWORK

## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS GOAL



## COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS GOAL

Adopt and sustain a culture and practice of meaningful civic engagement and community partnership to achieve outcomes that reflect our community's concerns, aspirations, and values.

Focus on engaging those who have been historically disengaged or disconnected from the Town, with an emphasis on the most impacted and historically marginalized populations.

## OBJECTIVE 1

Increase the diversity of individuals engaged in Town processes and programs to fully reflect the composition of the entire community, with particular focus on engaging populations that have been historically disengaged or disconnected from the Town.



## OBJECTIVE 2

Deepen the Town's connections and engagement with organizations, groups, and populations that historically have been disengaged or disconnected from the Town.

### KEY TERMS DEFINED

- **Goal:** The longer-term, wider change needed.
- **Objectives:** The benefits expected to occur.
- **Key Initiatives:** Current and future projects that will advance the objectives.
- **Strategies:** The planned actions that will help achieve the objectives.
- **Results:** The expected change in systems, policies, or institutions required to achieve the objectives.
- **Performance Measures:** Factors that provide a simple and reliable way to measure achievements. Performance measures should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, time bound).

# OBJECTIVE 1

Increase the diversity of residents engaged in Town processes and programs to fully reflect the composition of the community, with particular focus on engaging populations that have been historically disengaged or disconnected from the Town.



## Key Initiatives

- Boards & Commissions
- Building Integrated Communities
- Community Arts & Culture
- Good Neighbor Initiative
- Good Neighbor Liaisons
- Northside & Pine Knolls Community Plan
- Northside Neighborhood Initiative
- Peoples Academy
- Public engagement meetings
- Tar Heel Citizen Times
- Town communications
- Summer Youth Employment Program
- Visions/Brothers Group
- Local school engagement
- Youth Initiative

## Result 1.1 The Town creates effective pathways for residents to learn about and engage in Town processes and programs.

### Strategies

- 1.1a.** Conduct gaps analysis to identify populations who are not currently engaged with the Town and complete an Engagement Study to deepen our understanding of reasons for lack of engagement and ideas for new engagement approaches.
- 1.1b.** Assess our current and existing engagement tools and techniques and choose those that most effectively allow us to reach desired populations.
- 1.1c.** Pilot new approaches to invite and encourage all impacted residents and groups to participate in ways that are welcoming and comfortable to them, rooted in the findings of the Engagement Study.
- 1.1d.** Develop a Community Engagement Tool Kit for Town staff including handouts, templates, cheat sheets, and training opportunities.

### Performance Measures

- 1.** # and % of total Chapel Hill residents and their demographic information who:
  - Currently participate in Town processes and programs
  - Currently do not participate in Town processes and programs
  - Are satisfied in feeling their voice can influence change, the quality of Town engagement, level of public involvement in Town decision-making, and Chapel Hill's acceptance of diverse populations
- 2.** # and % of total Town departments that:
  - report using the Community Engagement Tool Kit
  - report the Tool Kit helps with engagement
- 3.** # of new Town engagement processes and programs piloted in first year of strategy implementation
  - # and % of total residents participating in pilot processes and programs
- 4.** # and % of Town Boards and Commission positions filled by residents representing populations who have been historically disengaged or disconnected from the Town

## Result 1.2 Town communications are accessible to Chapel Hill's diverse community.

### Strategies

- 1.2a.** Explore implementation of new communications and marketing tools based on best practices and innovations from other communities and input from residents.
- 1.2b.** Develop and implement plain language guidelines for Town communications, with particular focus on national best practices and input from residents.
- 1.2c.** Train Town staff on Language Access Plan and plain language guidelines.
- 1.2d.** Create a Language Access Plan with a focus on language justice for limited English proficient communities.

### Performance Measures

- 1.** # of Town materials translated
- 2.** # and % of total Town meetings providing language access
- 3.** # and % of departments in compliance with:
  - Language Access Plan
  - Plain language guidelines
- 4.** # and % of Town staff trained on:
  - Language Access Plan
  - Plain language guidelines
- 5.** # and % of residents who are:
  - Subscribed to Town electronic newsletters
  - Following the Town on social media
  - Satisfied with quality of and access to Town information
  - Satisfied with language accessibility of Town communications





# OBJECTIVE 2

Deepen the Town's connections and engagement with organizations, groups, and populations that historically have been disengaged or disconnected from the Town.

## Key Initiatives

- Building Integrated Communities
- Community Connections Team
- DACA Renewal Assistance
- Facilitation Training Program
- Fire & Police Outreach Programs
- Good Neighbor Initiative
- Good Neighbor Liaison
- Library Outreach Programs
- Human Services
- Northside Neighborhood Initiative
- Peoples Academy
- Racial Equity Trainings
- Rental & Utility Assistance
- Summer Youth Employment Program
- Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion Plan
- Youth Initiative

**Result 2.1.** The Town builds community partnerships and programs that prioritize the needs and interests of residents historically disengaged and disconnected from the Town.

### Strategies

- 2.1a.** Determine who the Town is currently serving through existing programs and partnerships and regularly evaluate who we are reaching.
- 2.1b.** Increase Town investment in community organizations and community organizing based on findings of engagement study and identified gaps.
- 2.1c.** Pilot new partnerships and programs based on findings of Engagement Study and identified gaps.

### Performance Measures

- 1.** # and % of total residents and their demographic information who:
  - Currently participate in Town processes and programs
  - Are served through organizations funded by the Town
- 2.** # and % of total Town partners:
  - Serving populations historically disengaged or disconnected from the Town
  - Satisfied with their overall experience working with the Town
  - Satisfied with the Town's financial support and funding processes
- 3.** # of new pilot partnerships and programs formed annually

**Result 2.2.** The Town strengthens internal capacity and coordination to implement the Community Connections Strategy.

### Strategies

- 2.2a.** Define roles and charter for the cross-departmental Community Connections team that will lead Strategy implementation.
- 2.2b.** Conduct internal analysis to identify gaps in Town capacity to carry out the Strategy.
- 2.2c.** Develop a Community Engagement Tool Kit for Town staff including handouts, templates, cheat sheets, and training opportunities.
- 2.2d.** Build skills and a shared understanding among Town employees of Strategy guiding principles, practices and processes.
- 2.2e.** Further develop a cohort of multilingual and multicultural Town employees to lead Community Connections efforts.

### Performance Measures

- 1.** Demographic profile of the Community Connections Team team
- 2.** # and % of Town departments that report using the Community Engagement Tool Kit
  - # and % of departments who report the Tool Kit helps with engagement
- 3.** Demographic profile of Town workforce
- 4.** # and % of total Town employees with multilingual skills

# REFERENCES

1. Better Together: The Report of the Saguaro Seminar - Civic Engagement in America (2000). [PDF file]. [http://robertdputnam.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/bt\\_1\\_29.pdf](http://robertdputnam.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/bt_1_29.pdf)
2. NC State Institute for Emerging Issues (n.d.). Reconnect to Community: Resources. [Webpage]. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Opi4r4UAkVBfAArZDoOQRJeZZ5ZisC1S/view>
3. NC State Institute for Emerging Issues (n.d.). Data Update on North Carolina's Civic Health. [PDF file]. Retrieved from <https://drive.google.com/file/d/1Opi4r4UAkVBfAArZDoOQRJeZZ5ZisC1S/view>
4. 2016-2018 Council Goals. (2018). [Webpage] Retrieved from <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/town-hall/departments-services/chapel-hill-2020/2016-2018-council-goals>
5. ETC Institute. (2018). Town of Chapel Hill Community Survey: Findings Report. [PDF file] Retrieved from <https://www.townofchapelhill.org/home/showdocument?id=39473>
6. Nelson, J. (March 3 2014). Racial Equity: The Responsibility and Opportunity for Local Governments. [Online article] Retrieved from <https://citiesspeak.org/2014/03/03/racial-equity-the-responsibility-and-opportunity-for-local-governments/>
7. GARE Communications Guide (2018). [PDF file]. <https://www.racialequityalliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/1-052018-GARE-Comms-Guide-v1-1.pdf>
8. What is Human-Centered Design? (n.d.) IDEO. [Webpage] Retrieved from <http://www.designkit.org/human-centered-design>
9. Explainer: What is 'human-centered design'? (2019). [Online article] Retrieved from <https://medium.com/@BloombergCities/explainer-what-is-human-centered-design-4d7883d406ce>
10. What is community capacity building? (2014) [Online article] Retrieved from <https://sustainingcommunity.wordpress.com/2014/03/10/ccb/>
11. Advancing the practice of public participation. (2018). International Association for Public Participation. [Webpage] Retrieved from <https://www.iap2.org/>
12. 2012-2017 American Community Survey (2018). Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs>



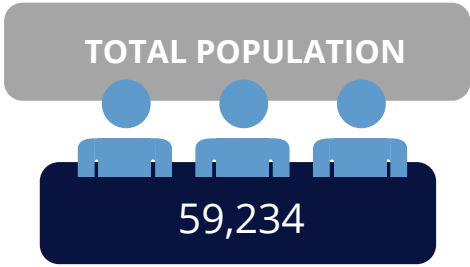


# APPENDIX A:

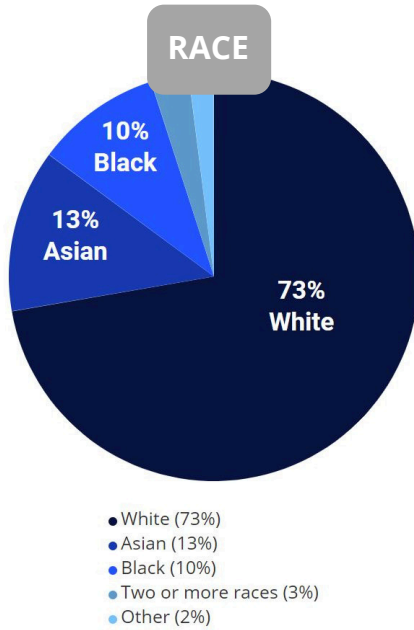
## CHAPEL HILL, NC

### KEY DEMOGRAPHICS

As we carry out the Community Connections Strategy, it is important to understand who makes up our community. The data here reflects the 2012-2017 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census and provides a snapshot of our diverse community.



Chapel Hill is a **diverse community**.



of community members sometimes or always **speak a language other than English at home**



### COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

#### Top 5 Countries of origin among foreign born residents

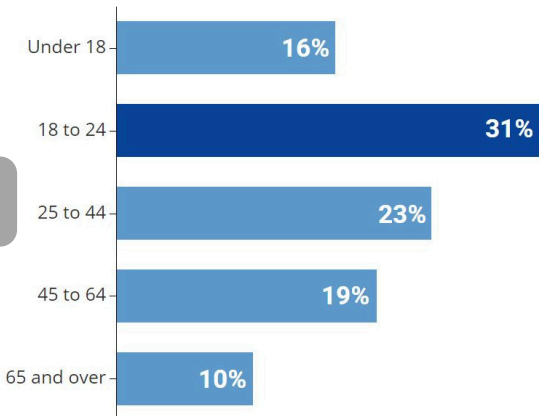
- China
- India
- Korea
- Mexico
- United Kingdom



#### Common countries of origin for refugee arrivals

- Burma/Myanmar
- Democratic Republic of Congo

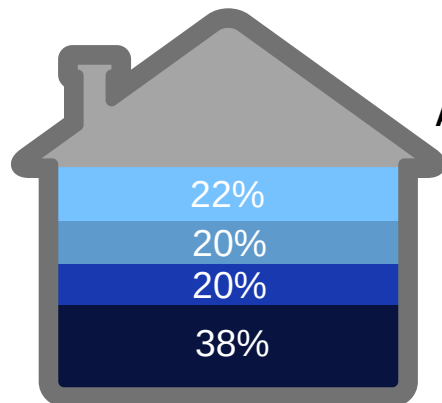
### AGE



Roughly **1 in 3** Chapel Hill community members are between **age 18-24**.

### HOUSEHOLD INCOME

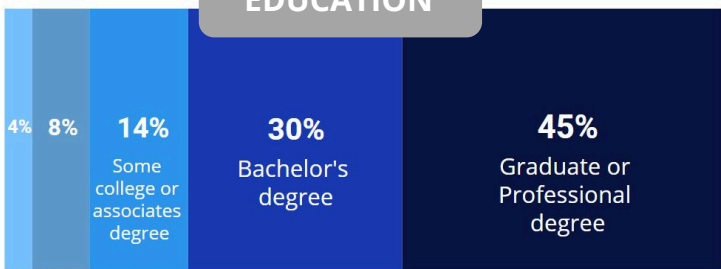
There is an **income gap in Chapel Hill**, with **42% of residents earning less than \$50,000** and **38% earning \$100,000 or more**.



**Annual Household Income**

- less than \$25,000
- \$25,000 - \$49,999
- \$50,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000 or more

### EDUCATION



**Nearly half** of Chapel Hill community members **have advanced degrees**.

# APPENDIX B:

## Chapel Hill Community Connections Efforts

**Advisory Boards and Commissions:** The Town has ~20 advisory boards, committees, and commissions comprised of residents, subject matter experts, and organization representatives. These provide recommendations to the Town Council on key community issues and help inform the policy making process that influences the future of Chapel Hill.

**Building Integrated Communities (BIC):** Chapel Hill BIC is a collaborative initiative of Town, the community, and UNC-Chapel Hill that aims to create innovative, locally-relevant public policies and initiatives to support the integration, well-being, and leadership development of immigrant and refugee residents. Since beginning in 2017, the BIC project team has engaged with 250+ immigrant and refugee residents and developed a Community Assessment and Action Plan rooted in resident recommendations.

**Chapel Hill 2020 Comprehensive Plan:** Adopted in 2012, the Chapel Hill 2020 Comprehensive Plan is a reflection of the values, aspirations, and ideas of the community, and it sets a vision and path for Chapel Hill leading up to 2020. The main goal of Chapel Hill 2020 process was to create a plan that was the "people's plan." The Town set a goal of touching 10,000 people during the process and quickly surpassed this number to touch over 28,000 people.

**Chapel Hill Peoples Academy:** The Peoples Academy is an intensive educational program for Chapel Hill residents to learn about Town services, connect with their fellow community members, and gain valuable knowledge and understanding to lead in the Chapel Hill community. Launched in 2018, the inaugural year saw over 100 residents apply to participate, 62 were invited to participate, and 43 residents completed the program.

**"Charting our Future" Land Use Management Ordinance Rewrite Project:** In April 2017, the Town Council initiated a project to protect what the community loves and add what it needs by rewriting its Land Use Management Ordinance and refining the Future Land Use Map. As of 2019, the Town engaged an estimated 2,400 residents.

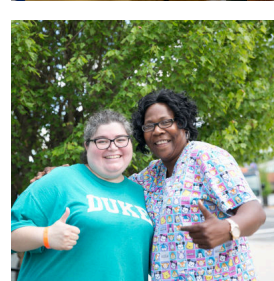
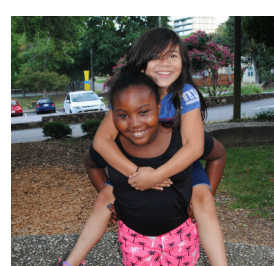
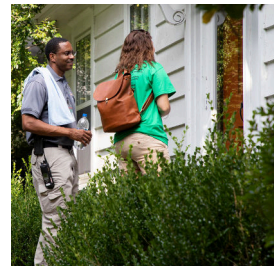
**Communications:** Several Town departments connect regularly with residents through various communications channels including emailed newsletters (eNews) and social media postings. The Town has ~5,500 subscribers to the e-news and ~27,000 social media follows (Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram). Additionally, the Tar Heel Citizen Times reaches ~23,000 off campus UNC students, the Public Library reaches ~45,000 through its newsletter, and Parks and Recreation connects with ~9,400 people.

**Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program:** Chapel Hill receives an annual funding allocation from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to support community planning and development activities that promote approaches to provide decent housing, create a suitable living environment, and expand economic opportunities for low and moderate-income persons.

**Community Engagement Meetings:** The Town offers a wide range of community engagement meetings, which are opportunities for the Town to share information and receive input from residents on Town initiatives, potential development projects, and more. Meeting dates and times are shared through the Town's communication channels and posted on the Town's calendar of events.

**Fire and Police Community Services and Outreach:** The Chapel Hill Fire and Police Departments do extensive outreach to civic groups, schools classes, faith communities, and other groups about community safety and the services offered.

**Good Neighbor Liaison Program:** Launched in 2018, the Good Neighbor Liaison Program is a pilot project designed to amplify the Town's existing communication channels, advance the Town's goal of exchanging relevant information with the community, and target specific neighborhoods with news and engagement opportunities that matter most to them.





**Good Neighbor Initiative (GNI):** Started in 2004, GNI is a partnership between the Town, UNC-Chapel Hill, and community organizations to promote positive living experiences in neighborhoods where students and long-time residents live in close proximity. At the beginning of every school year, Town and University staff, students, and community volunteers gather and go door-to-door welcoming students to the neighborhood and sharing with them relevant information about local laws and ordinances. Today, the door-to-door walk reaches over 1,200 residences. The GNI also includes a block party bringing students and non-student residents together for a fun-filled afternoon of music, food, dancing, and community building.

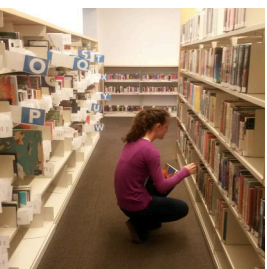


**Human Services Program:** This program funds nonprofit organizations that improve education, livelihood security, and health outcomes for Chapel Hill residents. Since its establishment in the 1970s, the Town has invested over \$7 Million in the Human Services Program to support hundreds of community programs and services. In 2018, 50 plus agencies were funded, \$419,500 deployed into the community, and over 32,000 individuals were served through funded programs and services.



**Library Programs:** The Chapel Hill Public Library provides many programs and events for all ages in the community including those focused on topics of reading, science, arts and culture, computer literacy, and more.

**Local School Outreach:** Various Town departments, including Communications and Public Affairs, Police, and Fire engage with local schools to host field trips at Town Hall or visit schools to share information about town processes, services, or community safety information.



**Northside and Pine Knolls Community Plan:** The Town has a history of connecting and collaborating with its neighborhoods. One example is the Town's involvement with the historic Northside and Pine Knoll neighborhoods. When these neighborhoods experienced continued incompatible development and changing demographics in the 2000s, the Town collaborated with community groups to develop the Northside and Pine Knolls Community Plan in 2011. This plan identifies solutions to key community issues, with the goal to preserve the culture and history of these important neighborhoods.



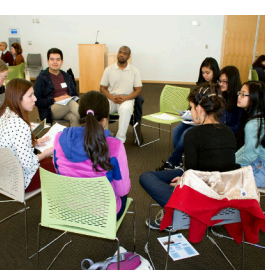
**Parks and Recreation Programs:** Chapel Hill Parks and Recreation provides a variety of recreational programs for the community.

**Rosemary Street Vision and Implementation Plan:** From May 2013 to August 2014, community members, visitors, and residents were asked to share their thoughts about the future of Rosemary Street in Downtown Chapel Hill. Feedback from the community was used to develop the Rosemary Street Vision and Implementation Plan.



**Summer Youth Employment Program:** This program provides low-income youth, with job opportunities in Town departments and community partner organizations. In addition to providing youth with employment experience, the program provides job readiness training and mentorship.

**Visions/Brothers Group:** This school-based program provides intensive mentorship to middle and high school boys facing academic and social challenges. The program uses a holistic approach to addressing boys' social, emotional and physical needs through individual mentoring, group work, and connection to community services.



**Youth Initiative:** The Town has had a long-standing commitment to youth through various program and service offerings, including: providing recreational and educational programming, employing youth, and maintaining public spaces enjoyed by youth. Beginning in early 2018, the Town intensified its efforts to engage with young people and embarked on an intensive youth engagement process of listening and learning. Over 150 youth were engaged through focus groups in a two month period in 2018-early 2019. The Town will continue to engage youth as we begin designing potential solutions to more fully meet youth's needs and interests.





## For more information contact:

Megan Peters, Community Connections Coordinator  
mpeters@townofchapelhill.org, 919-968-2756

Sarah Osmer Viñas, Assistant Director for Housing & Community  
svinas@townofchapelhill.org, 919-969-5079

[www.townofchapelhill.org/communityconnections](http://www.townofchapelhill.org/communityconnections)

## Town of Chapel Hill Mission

*Learning, serving and working together to build a community where people thrive.*

