

Funded Community Partner Kickoff Convening – August 21, 2025

UWGC Social Capital Survey Data Walk

Feedback from participating organizations

United Way asked participants to consider findings from a recent regional survey on social capital. Feedback focused on four main themes: engagement strategies and solutions, digital vs. in-person community, housing and economic factors, data insights.

Engagement Strategies & Solutions

- **Strengthening Existing Gathering Places** Participants emphasized leveraging spaces where people naturally congregate — child care centers, gyms, businesses, libraries, barber shops and churches — rather than creating new venues. Community centers were highlighted as particularly important for building social capital.
- **Programming & Events** Multiple participants called for more community programming: farmers' markets, block parties and organized activities. They noted that a lack of community events may have affected survey results and stressed that "young people need role models and things to do."
- **Civic Engagement** Suggestions included increasing participation in local community councils, expanding youth engagement with regional leadership and creating community council clubs. One participant said there's a need to educate people about civic engagement and "the point of life in community."

Digital vs. In-Person Community

Participants raised questions about social media's impact on building social capital, with one noting that "Communities aren't next door anymore, they're on the app NextDoor." This highlights tension between digital connections and physical neighborhood engagement.

Housing & Economic Factors

- **Rental Market Dynamics** Participants wanted to explore how landlord-tenant relationships affect neighborhood connectedness and whether rent prices correlate with neighbor assistance levels. They questioned whether luxury apartments with amenities like clubhouses create more social capital.
- **Housing Instability** The group identified a lack of long-term residency, driven by housing market increases, as a barrier to building social capital.

Data Interpretation Insights

- **Systemic Changes** Participants observed that society has "systematized" how we receive care, food and necessities, potentially reducing reliance on neighbor assistance compared to previous generations.
- **Neighborhood-Specific Factors** Contributing factors identified included lack of neighbor-to-neighbor engagement and "marketed fear in specific neighborhoods."

The feedback suggests participants see both structural (housing, economics) and programmatic (events, civic education) opportunities to strengthen social capital, with a particular emphasis on meeting people where they already are rather than creating new infrastructure.