

**Commons Community Needs Assessment Monthly
Quartesy Update
01-13-2026**

Community Needs an Assets Assessment : The Sub-Committee has discussed data collection methods for understanding community needs, noting that while some library usage data is available, broader community surveys are still in progress and won't be completed immediately.

We explored working using the data currently existing survey/reports.

We explored what might be the right approach for conducting an initial assessment given the need to ensure it truly meets community needs rather than just being driven by available space and funding.

It was decided to start with one-on-one surveys with community leader engaging the participation of interested community members in the conduct of the surveys.

Expanding Self-Healing Community Initiatives: We have discussed expanding the concept of a self-healing community beyond traditional library services, with city council that the initiative should be broader and more comprehensive.

Libraries as Community Hubs: We learned that public libraries can serve as community hubs offering various services like ESL classes and job fairs.

In the course of these discussions, we acknowledge the challenge of getting people to envision something beyond their immediate interests.

It appears that Community members lack experience with modern library services; this, in turn, suggests the need to approach the concept from different community perspectives to capture broader imagination

Sebastopol Health Index Initiative: The group discussed creating a community index focused on social determinants of health, aiming to improve Sebastopol's score from a C+ to an A+. We have discussed using examples from other communities to demonstrate what actions led to their improvements. Prior work on the Sebastopol Tobacco Retail Licensing highlighted Sebastopol's strengths and weaknesses, which resonated with the city council.

It was proposed that our report should be based upon "evidence based" standards and validated surveys.

How does a community tested achieved high scores. As noted above, the group agreed to interview local leaders to gather data and support for the initiative, with the support of interested community members ...a true community survey.

Sebastopol Commons Language Approval: The group discussed the language approved by City Council regarding the Sebastopol Commons and West County scope of the Building the Commons project.

The sub-committee has on-going discussion conversation also touched on the importance of community trust in public spaces,

Community Health Score Improvement Plan: We have explored strategies for improving their community's health score using social determinants of health data. The team aims to interview 30 community members, with council members volunteering to help conduct interviews. Dr. Dory Escobar of Santa Rosa <https://www.linkedin.com/in/dory-escobar-phd-1154868/> suggested reaching out to people in various community settings like churches, farmer's markets, and laundromats. The group agreed to emphasize the importance of the study and Dory's expertise in their presentation to the council.

Resources Reviewed This Quarter

West County Community Services (WCCS)please see attached reports from them that Dr. Ellen Bauer of West County Health Services approved of their decimation
<https://westcountyservices.org/about-wccs/>

- 2022 Needs Assessment: Understanding West County Communities and Populations through the Lens of Self-Healing Communities

County Health Ranking & Roadmaps
<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org>

Prioritized Community Health Needs
<https://sonomacounty.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services/about-us/prioritized-community-health-needs>

Public libraries for community building
<https://www.countyhealthrankings.org/strategies-and-solutions/what-works-for-health/strategies/public-libraries-for-community-building>

Sonoma County Sonoma County Master Plan for Aging
<https://sonomacounty.gov/Main%20County%20Site/Health%20and%20Human%20Services/Human%20Services/Adult%20and%20Aging/Documents/CC%20Sonoma%20County%20Master%20Plan%20for%20Aging%20FINAL%209.9.24.pdf>

Community Commons
<https://www.communitycommons.org>

Reimaging the Civic Commons (Tools for Your City)

<https://civiccommons.us/resources/>

Community Health Needs Assessment (County of Sonoma)

<https://sonomacounty.gov/health-and-human-services/health-services/about-us/community-health-needs-assessment>

Measure What Matters Tool Kit

<https://civiccommons.us/2019/01/measure-matters-diy-toolkit/>

Aspen Forum for Community Solutions (AFCS)

<https://www.aspeninstitute.org/programs/forum-for-community-solutions/>

Key findings about Americans' declining trust in government and each other

<https://civiccommons.us/2019/07/key-findings-americans-declining-trust-government/>

SONOMA COUNTY COMMUNITY HEALTH ASSESSMENT AND IMPROVEMENT PLAN

2024-25

<https://sonomacounty.gov/Main%20County%20Site/Health%20and%20Human%20Services/Health%20Services/Documents/About%20Us/Public%20Reports/Assessment-Improvement-Plan2024-25-Eng.pdf>

Project for Public Spaces

https://www.pps.org/?mc_cid=f31b4b9fbc&mc_eid=44ba17a25b

....among others.