

## Community Themes and Strengths Assessment Executive Summary

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The Community Themes and Strengths Assessment (CTSA) is one of four assessments completed as part of Community Matters 20/20: Assessment, Visioning and Planning for a Healthy Jefferson County. The CTSA identifies assets in the community and issues, both strengths and weaknesses, important to community members. The following questions are used to identify these assets and issues:

- *What is important to the community?*
- *How is quality of life perceived in the community?*
- *What assets does the community have that can be used to improve the community's health?*



The CTSA Subcommittee<sup>i</sup> developed, implemented and analyzed results from a survey instrument entitled, *Your Opinion Matters!*, and focus groups using a scripted outline. A communication strategy promoted community-wide participation in the survey. The *Your Opinion Matters!* survey was available in English and Spanish online at the website of Jefferson County Department of Health from April 7, 2014 through May 31, 2014. Additionally, many community partners shared the survey through business email distribution and through their organizational websites. Paper surveys, also available in both languages, were distributed through the Jefferson County Department of Health Centers, community partners, community events, community meetings and informal gatherings.

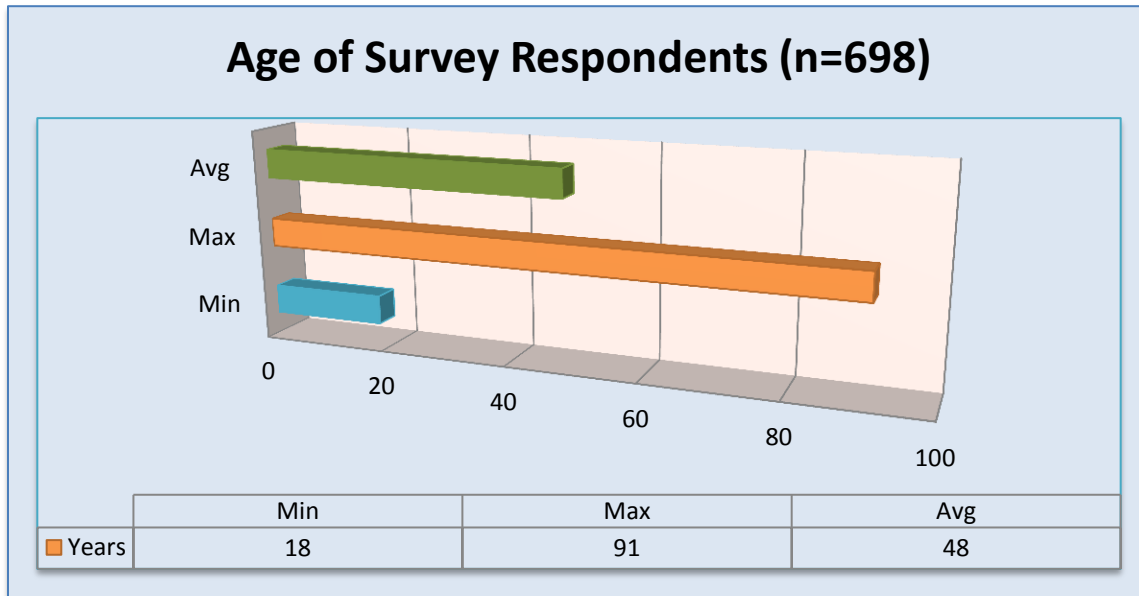
A total of 785 *Your Opinion Matters!* survey (107 paper and 678 online) responses were received, representing more than double the calculated sample size requirement of 384. The seven focus groups reached an additional 58 individuals from urban, suburban and rural locations within Jefferson County.



## Quantitative Results

The primary vehicle used to collect quantitative data from the community was the *Your Opinion Matters!* survey. The demographic profile of the *Your Opinion Matters!* survey participants is shown in Figures 1- 6 below; please note the number of individuals responding to each question. The survey, targeted for adults, had respondents ranging from 18 to 91 years. Almost three-quarters (73.2%) of the surveys were completed by females; the percent of female county residents is 52.8%<sup>ii</sup>. Based on race, the survey captured data from a larger percentage of white residents at 67.3% than live in Jefferson County (51.1%<sup>ii</sup>). Black or African Americans, who represent 42.3%<sup>ii</sup> of Jefferson County's population, completed 27.4% of the surveys. Five percent of the survey respondents were individuals of other races, including Asian and American Indian, a percentage slightly higher than the 1.8%<sup>ii</sup> of county residents in these race categories. Survey respondents could choose more than one racial category. By ethnicity, 4.6% of survey responses were generated from the Hispanic/Latino population which represent 3.9%<sup>ii</sup> of the county's population. The distribution of survey completion by individuals with a college degree or higher was substantially greater at 79.2% compared to 30.7%<sup>ii</sup> of the county with such degrees. Individuals with less than a high school education comprise 11.7%<sup>ii</sup> of the county's population, but represented only 2% of survey responders. The percentage of county residents without health care coverage is 12.4%<sup>ii</sup>, whereas 6.1% of survey responders indicated they lacked health insurance, note respondents could choose more than one insurance type. The profile of the survey respondents must be considered in the evaluation of the generalizability of the data as the demographics are not 100% representative of county residents.

**Figure 1: Age of Survey Respondents**



**Figure 2: Gender of Survey Respondents**

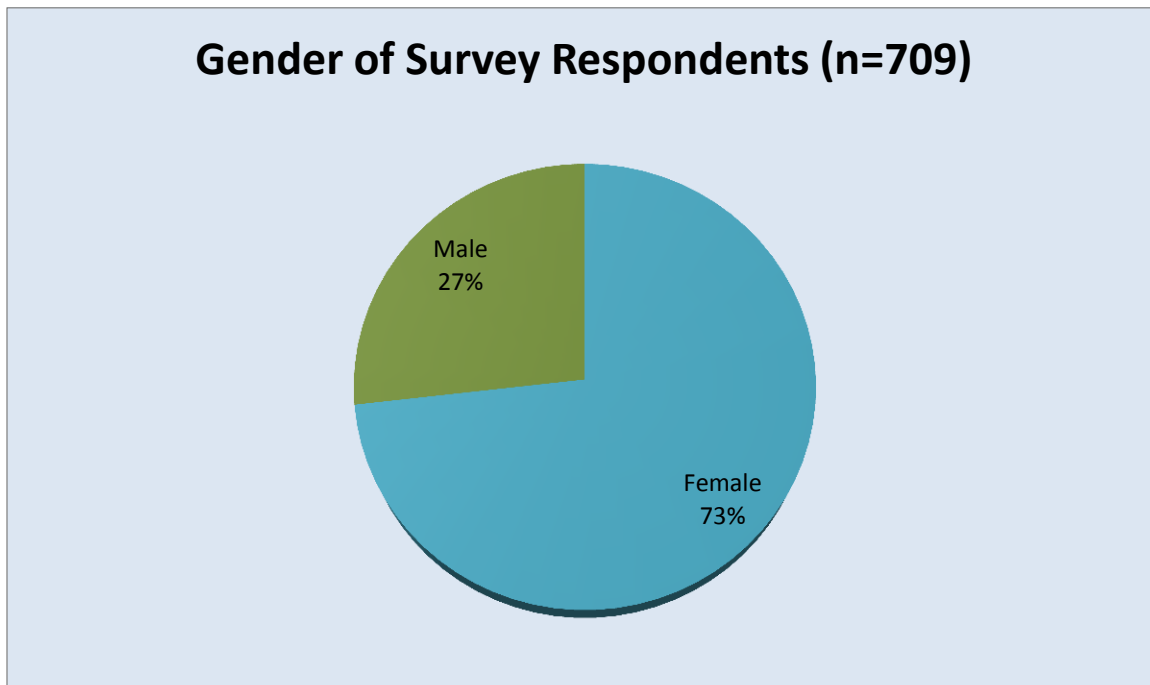


Figure 3: Race of Survey Repondents

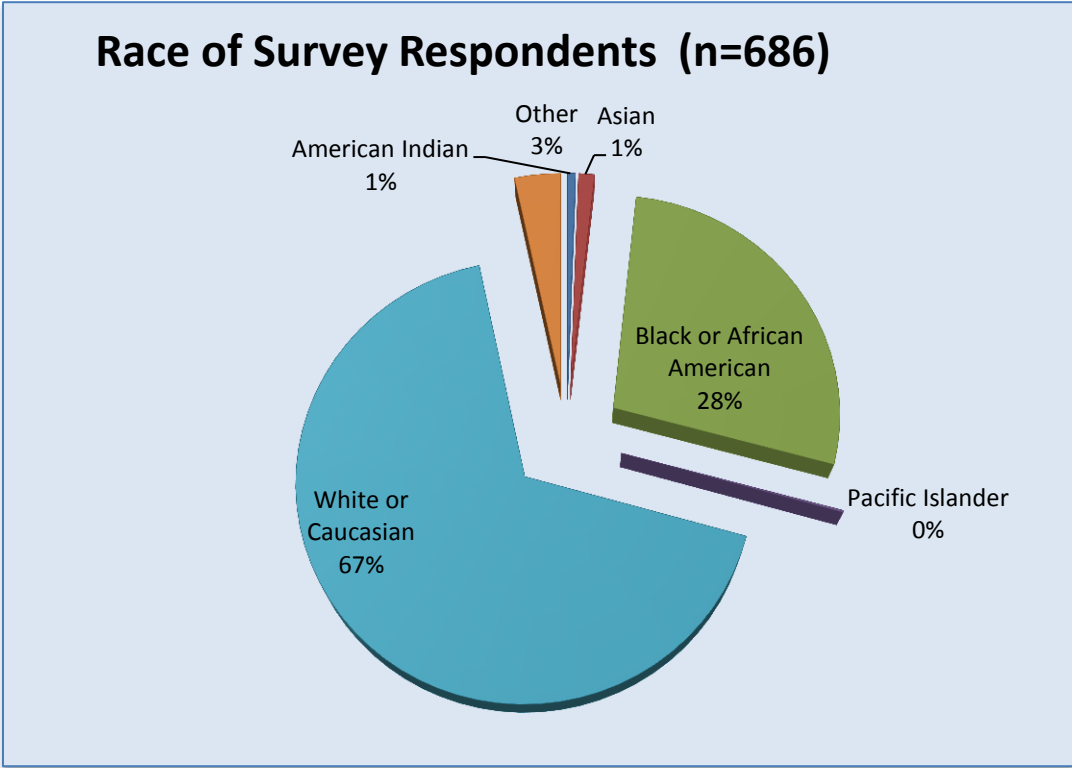
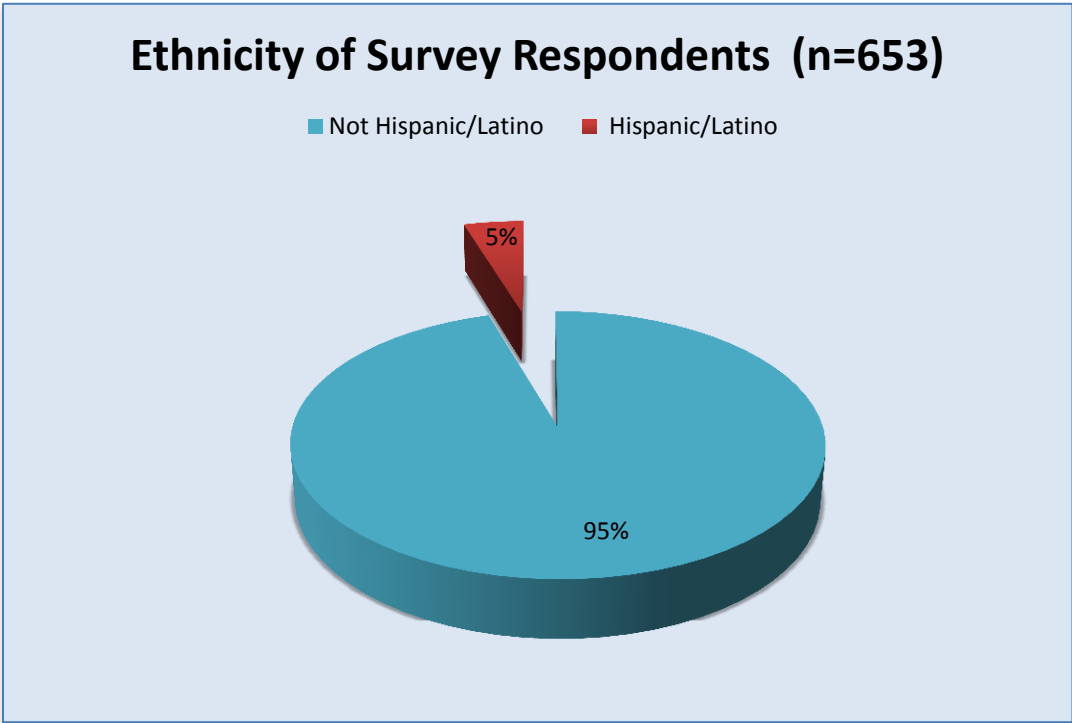
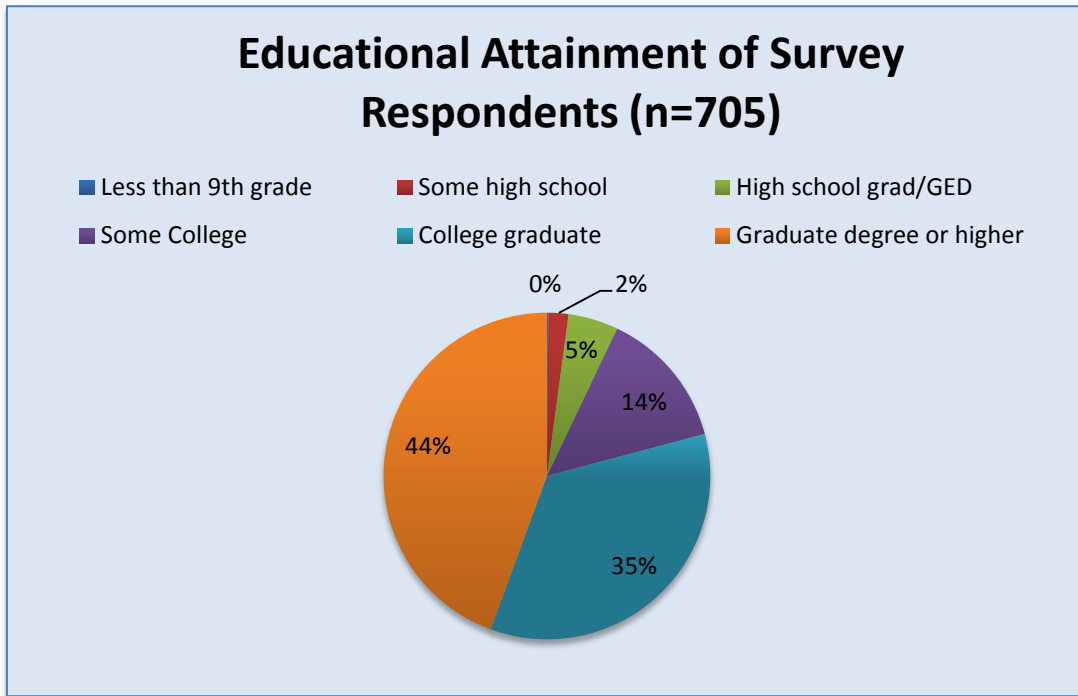


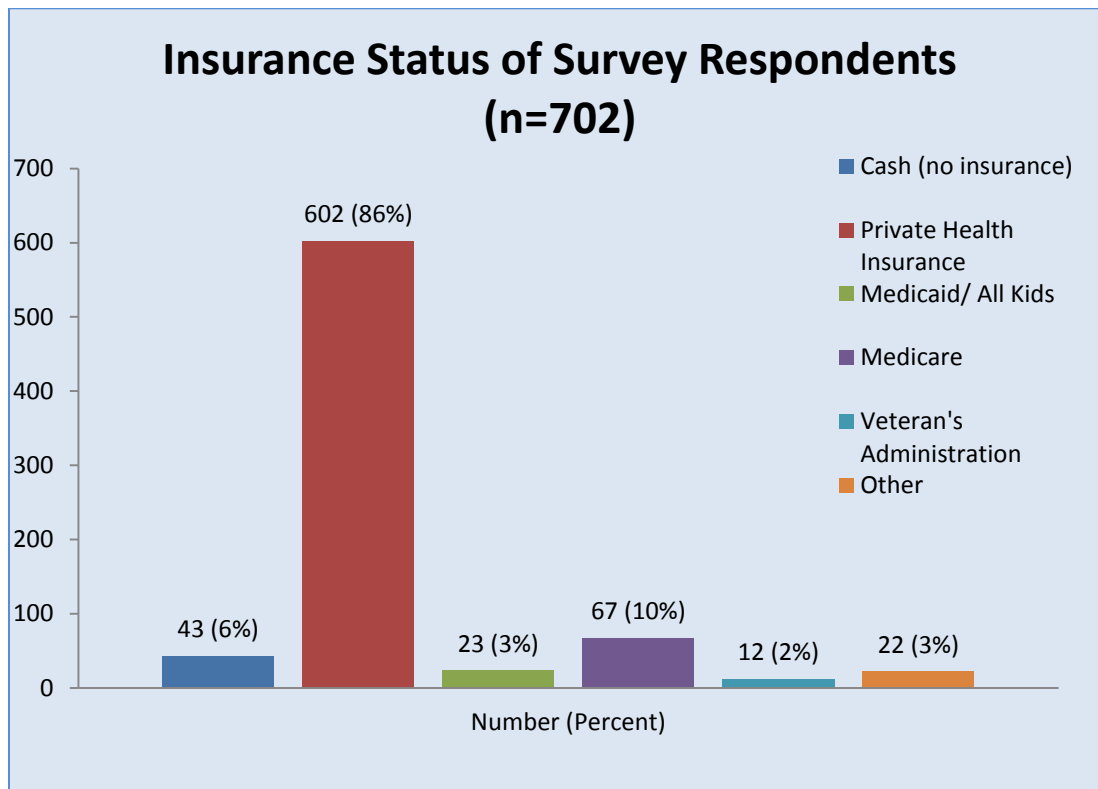
Figure 4: Ethnicity of Survey Respondents



**Figure 5: Educational Attainment of Survey Respondents**



**Figure 6: Insurance Status of Survey Respondents**



The quantitative findings indicate that Jefferson County residents perceive the following as strengths and weaknesses of the county:

### Strengths

- The availability of parks/outdoor recreation opportunities
- Access to and participation in arts and cultural events
- The availability of public libraries and their resources.

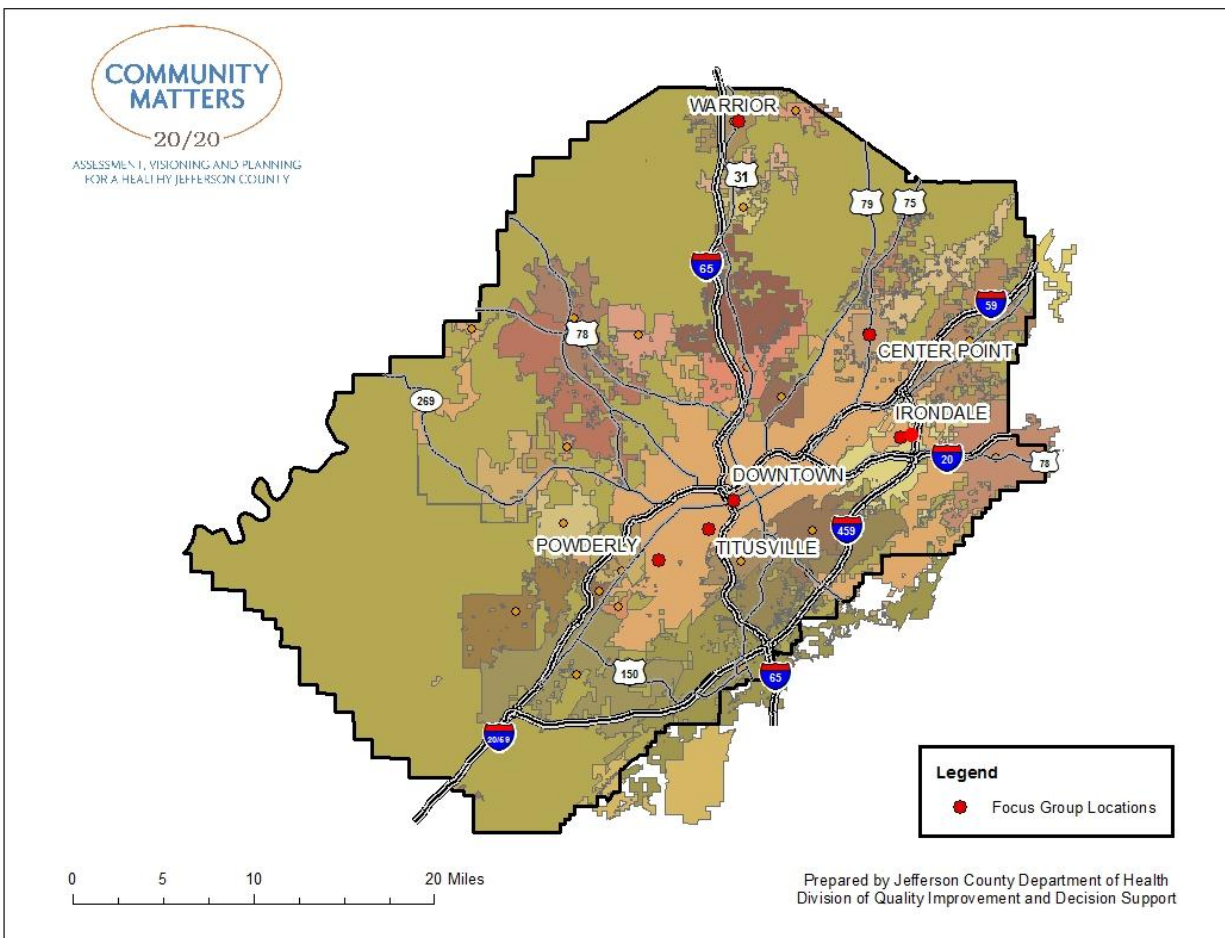
### Weaknesses

- Poor road conditions and lack of repair
- Lack of sidewalks and broken sidewalks
- Unreliable public transportation with limited access and reach
- The presence of litter and graffiti
- The presence of crime, especially violent crimes, burglary and theft
- Inadequate resources for the homeless
- Failing school performance within some school systems
- Increasing substance abuse
- The lack of responsiveness by leaders to the concerns of county residents.

## Qualitative Results

The primary vehicle used to collect qualitative data from the community was a series of focus groups. Focus Groups were conducted to obtain more detailed information concerning resident perceptions of quality of life, including the assets, strengths and weaknesses of communities. The Focus Groups which were conducted in urban (Birmingham – Powderly, Titusville, Downtown), suburban (Center Point, Irondale) and rural (Warrior) locations within the county included two groups which focused on Spanish-speaking residents and one with the homeless population. Figure 7 shows the locations where Focus Groups were conducted.

**Figure 7: Focus Group Locations**



In total, 58 individuals provided qualitative data regarding the experience of living in Jefferson County generated from asking standardized questions. The demographics of participants are as follows: 74.1% female, 25.9% male; 63.8% Black or African American, 19% White, and 17.2% Hispanic or Latino. The profile of the focus group participants must be considered in the evaluation of the generalizability of the data as the demographics are not 100% representative of county residents. In addition to the transcripts from the focus groups, the open-ended comments from the survey were analyzed as an additional source of qualitative data. In interpreting this data, please

note that an item is denoted as a strength if it received the highest number of mentions as a strength among all responses, but could also be listed as a weakness based on its ranking among weaknesses. Assets are defined as elements or constructs that responders believe can be used to improve the health of the community.

The following lists are the perceived strengths, weaknesses and assets garnered through the focus groups and survey comments.

### Strengths

- Educational excellence in some school systems
- Revitalization of downtown and other communities bringing new business and industry
- Availability and expansion of parks and recreational spaces
- A general feeling of physical safety
- Beauty of the county

### Weaknesses

- Lack of access to healthy and affordable foods
- Lack of access to health services for all residents
- Local Government's lack of responsiveness to residents
- The impact of crime and violence on families and the community
- Increasing substance abuse
- Lack of physical safety in some communities
- Vacant and run-down properties
- Inadequate school performance in some school systems
- Poor road conditions
- Inadequate public transportation
- Poor air quality
- The prevalence of inequalities in distribution of assets and services
- Parks and recreational opportunities are not accessible to all residents
- Waste management services are not available to all residents
- Lack of sidewalks and sidewalk disrepair
- Chronic homelessness and increase of individuals at risk for homelessness
- Access for rural populations to assets and services

### Assets

- The presence of church groups in communities
- Local government's ability to solve problems
- Service organizations providing resources to communities
- Neighborhood associations connecting resources to communities
- Health service providers rendering care to vulnerable populations



The qualitative findings illustrate that there is a difference of opinion in regards to the designation of strengths, weaknesses and assets among participants. This difference in categorization was also seen among the quantitative and qualitative data. This difference is most likely due to the difference in experience of county residents dependent on the area of the county they spend the most time. Despite the differences there was some agreement across the results on significant community strengths, health-related issues and areas for improvement. Additional details of these assessments are provided in the full CTSA report.

The information gathered through the CTSA process will inform the identification of key issues in Jefferson County communities and will lead to an action plan to improve health and quality of life in Jefferson County.



The work of Community Matters 20/20 is supported by the Jefferson County Department of Health.

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<sup>ii</sup> Source: US Census Bureau, 2012 American Community Survey (1 yr Estimate)