



Khmer Community of Seattle King County
in partnership with Noio Pathways & KIMYUNITY



March 2022-March 2023

Envisioning a city for our community បង្កើតទីក្រុងល្អបំផុតសម្រាប់សហគមន៍របស់យើង។

Perspectives and recommendations from Khmer community members for the
Seattle's Comprehensive Plan update and the Seattle Transportation Plan

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Introduction

This report summarizes the themes and recommendations from a year-long, immersive civic engagement project in partnership with the Khmer Community of Seattle/King County (KCSKC), Noio Pathways, and KIMYUNITY, to inform the Seattle Comprehensive Plan update and the Seattle Transportation Plan. Utilizing a trauma-informed approach, this work was centered in building trust through relationships, and community leadership through experiential learning. Our team designed multi-generational field trips, youth workshops, and celebration events that were rooted in learning about Seattle histories and current issues, and creating space and opportunity for new voices to share their opinions on what an ideal city would look like for them.

The Khmer community has experienced significant displacement - residential, commercial, and cultural, and many community members have stories about the difficulties in navigating systems and places across the city. KCSKC has a long-standing history as a community organization that provides direct services to the local Khmer community, and the staff, board, and community have lived experience of displacement and marginalization. Many of KCSKC's community members are low-income and have experienced (and continue to experience) displacement, food insecurity, and housing insecurity. KCSKC elders are primarily limited English speakers with little to no formal education, so programs are conducted primarily in the Khmer language. There have been many barriers to participating in public processes for our community members, and this project created an opportunity to support the leadership development of elders and youth within the community.

As a community that has often felt invisible in Seattle, this project was a chance to elevate Khmer voices and the voices of those in our community to inform key planning and decision-making around anti-displacement, housing, and transportation policies. We appreciate the opportunity for our community to weigh-in on a planning process that they may have never been involved in otherwise.



Who we are

Khmer Community of Seattle King County (KCSKC)

Stephanie Ung & Thyda Ros, Co-Executive Directors

KCSKC runs direct service and community programs that aim to serve the Khmer community, which includes refugees of the Khmer Rouge genocide, their children born in Thai refugee camps, and children born in the United States to these families. The Seattle area has the third highest metropolitan population of Khmer/Cambodian residents in the United States, with about 18,000 residents that identify as Khmer/Cambodian according to the 2017-2019 American Community Survey (IPUMS). KCSKC welcomes all who are curious and eager to learn about the Khmer community and culture. We encourage healing intergenerational connection, and run programs that are free to participants of all levels and experiences, and taught by volunteers in our community. Our core programs target elders/seniors and youth, and are based out of the Rainier Arts Center in Southeast Seattle, where we are an Anchor Partner, as well as the White Center/Highland Park neighborhood, from which we were displaced in fall 2019. Programs include the Khmer Amarak Performing Arts, which is a youth focused traditional Khmer dance and music program, an elders program through the King County Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy known as the Khmer Senior Village, as well as COVID-19 resource navigation and community vaccination clinics.

Jamie Stroble (She/Her), Noio Pathways, Founder & President

Jamie Stroble is a passionate environmental and climate justice policy advocate, community organizer, educator, and facilitator. As a movement builder, she is always looking for ways to support new leaders, and strategize around affecting change. She founded Noio Pathways to serve as a community capacity building catalyst to support community leaders in navigating government to build community & climate resilience. Jamie has over 15 years of experience working in environmental justice-related fields, including youth programming, leadership development, intergenerational immigrants & refugee programs, affordable housing, food access, air quality & environmental health. Jamie founded and led the creation of the first-ever climate justice framework for King County's 2020 Strategic Climate Action Plan, and created the Climate Equity Community Task Force, an innovative co-creative body led by frontline communities to center Black, Indigenous, and community of color voices in community-driven climate policy-making. Jamie currently serves as on the Seattle Planning Commission, and many boards & community committees, including the Healthy King County Coalition's Built Environment workgroup, and FEEST.

Kim Yu (She/Her), KIMYUNITY, Principal

Kim Yu is a research analyst, project manager, and community organizer. She holds a Masters in Public Health and has over 10 years of experience in managing teams and consulting on various projects. She has experience working with various communities, such as people of color, youth, refugee, immigrant and low-income communities. Throughout her career, Kim has centered social justice and equity through her work and serving on committees at local community organizations; most recently, with Got Green and Social Justice Fund NW.

Our Partnership

As a growing organization with limited capacity, the Khmer Community of Seattle King County partnered with experienced community advocates Jamie Stroble of Noio Pathways, and Kim Yu of KIMYUNITY. Jamie and Kim brought additional capacity through project management support, curriculum design, the creation of policy recommendations, and other technical assistance. During this project, staff from the Khmer Community of Seattle King County, served as key community builders and navigators, recruiting, and supporting youth and elder programs. As team members, Jamie has a background in supporting communities to create strategic leadership development programming and translating community needs into policy recommendations; Kim brings experience in public health, program evaluation, community health (with a focus on refugee, immigrant and migrant communities), and community-based participatory research. Acknowledging the invaluable relationships and trust that the staff have with community members, Jamie and Kim primarily focused on providing a platform for the work that KCSKC has already done and continues to do in the Khmer community.



Our Approach

Our goal was to center the leadership and vision of Khmer community members in this work. So often traditional outreach for these sorts of plans are centered around extracting information from a community to inform a plan that they do not entirely understand. We believe that providing feedback and information to our public agencies is not enough, and that the empowerment and leadership of communities is critical to broadening and diversifying representation in planning spaces.

Thus, we took on a non-extractive approach of combining civic education and community engagement into two leadership development series that builds off of KCSKC's core programs for our elders and youth respectively. We sought to build understanding for our community participants around jurisdictions, what plans exist and why, what do these plans directly impact in your day to day life, and how to have your voice be heard. Because we believe engagement should be brought to the community, our approach was built upon existing long-standing programs that connect to our community through culture: adding to the Khmer Senior Village activities with elders, and dance and arts classes with youth. This allowed for more candid conversations, rich feedback, and create opportunities for mutual learning.

Our engagement plan was modeled after [Facilitating Power's Spectrum of Community Engagement to Ownership](#), and our desire to move from engagement towards true ownership in this work. Our goal in using this model was to increase the opportunity for long-term involvement in this planning process that impacts so much of Seattle's future. We were aiming to move beyond just informing and consulting with communities, towards collaborating on ensuring community needs and assets are integrated into processes and inform planning, by building community capacity for leadership on these issues.

What did we do?

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We ran two series of programming - one for our elders and one for our youth.

For our elders, we ran a series of field trips in Khmer language. These trips were designed to allow elders to learn about and experience different forms of transportation and areas of the city. Elders were provided with bags of culturally relevant groceries as a thank you for their participation and to help address food insecurity within the community.

For our youth, we built off of the existing Khmer Amarak Performing Arts program, which is a youth focused traditional Khmer dance and music program, based out of the Rainier Arts Center and the Garden Youth Program, which is a youth program held in the High Point P-Patch to educate youth on gardening and support food security. Youth were provided a stipend for their participation and leadership in this program.

4

**Elder Field
Trips**

2

**Youth
Garden
Workshops**

2

**Youth
Dance
Workshops**


1

**Celebration
Feedback
Event**

1

**Reportback
Event**

Timeline of Events



Jun 15, 2022	Elder Field Trip #1 Bus & Monorail to Seattle Center
Jul 19, 2022	Elder Field Trip #2 Light rail to Chinatown/ International District
Aug 3, 2022	Garden Youth Workshop #1 High Point P-Patch
Aug 7, 2022	Dance Youth Workshop #1 Rainier Arts Center
Aug 10, 2022	Garden Youth Workshop #2 Danny Woo Garden
Aug 24, 2022	Dance Youth Workshop #2 Union Cultural Center

Aug 25, 2022

**Elder Field Trip #3
Water Taxi to Seattle Waterfront**

Sep 13, 2022

**Elder Field Trip #4
Woodland Park Rose Garden &
Green Lake Park**

Oct 23, 2022

**Celebration Event
Centilia Cultural Center**

Feb 25, 2023

**Reportback Event
Bethaday Community Learning Space**





Elder Field Trip #1 Bus & Monorail to Seattle Center

June 15, 2022





Elder Field Trip #2 Light rail to Chinatown/ International District

July 19, 2022





Elder Field Trip #3 Water Taxi to Seattle Waterfront

August 25, 2022





GARDEN YOUTH WORKSHOPS

Workshop#1 - High Point P-Patch
August 3, 2022

Workshop #2 - Danny Woo Garden
August 10, 2022





DANCE YOUTH WORKSHOPS

Workshop #1 - Rainier Arts Center
August 7, 2022

Workshop #2 - Union Cultural Center
August 24, 2022





Elder Field Trip #4 Woodland Park Rose Garden & Green Lake Park

September 13, 2022



Transportation ការដឹកជញ្ជូន: Accessibility

Themes



Overall, it seems that there are many different factors to consider when it comes to improving public transportation in the Seattle area. Addressing these concerns could require a multi-pronged approach, including better information and communication, cost reductions or free transit, longer transfer times for older adults, increased access and availability of transportation options, and a focus on minimizing community impact while making public transportation more comfortable and appealing for riders.

Lack of information, especially in-language: Some riders feel that public transportation can be difficult to navigate and that there is a need for more signage and options for non-English speakers. Youth wanted an interactive way to ask questions about public transit and get guidance on a system that can be difficult to navigate.

Transfer times: Some riders feel that the current 2-hour transfer time is not enough and can feel stressful, particularly for older adults with mobility issues. They suggest that Senior ORCA cards could have longer transfer times. Some community members are also distrustful of the ORCA card tracking their transfer time, so prefer paper transfers.

Improve transit availability for suburbs and edges of Seattle (Access and Availability):

Especially since many community members have experienced displacement, some riders report that there are limited bus routes and train stations, particularly in more suburban areas, and that this can lead to longer travel times and greater reliance on cars.

Transit access to destination Green Space: Community members, especially those without a lot of access to green space in their own neighborhoods, wanted more public transit options to the big “destination” public parks in the city, like Green Lake, Seward Park, Discovery Park, Lincoln Park.

More affordable and discounted ORCA cards: The community suggests providing more accessible and affordable options, such as free/discounted ORCA cards, to make public transportation more accessible for all.

Transportation ការដឹកជញ្ជូន: Accessibility

RECOMMENDATIONS



- Integrate more signage options for limited-English speakers to get direction in their own languages.
 - City should work with Metro and Sound Transit to post interpreter helpline information at bus stops and on public transit.
 - Better graphic signage for non-English readers: Light Rail signage should include clearer graphic signage to help limited-English speakers navigate which stops they need to get off at. i.e. the icons for each station could be larger, clearer, and more easily seen on the platforms.
- Establish more transit education programs, especially for youth, limited english speaking community members, and recent immigrants, to learn how to use ORCA cards and public transit
 - Develop and implement more community-based education programs to inform recent immigrants and limited English speakers about how to use ORCA cards and public transit to improve comfort with public transit
 - Create transit navigators who speak different languages to assist riders with information about bus routes and schedules
- Extend transfer window time for Regional Reduced Fare Permit ORCA cards from 2 to 4 hours to allow for more time for those with mobility challenges.
- Improve accessibility of frequent and reliable transit in neighborhoods that are low-income, transit dependent, and/or have a high number of young people who are commuting to school and jobs.

Transportation ការដឹកជញ្ជូន: Accessibility

RECOMMENDATIONS (CONT.)



- Integrate anti-displacement policies, programs, and investments into major transportation capital project plans to preserve social cohesion, cultural anchors, connectivity, and prevent displacement of vulnerable residents.
- Expand public transit options to the big “destination” public parks in the city, like Green Lake, Seward Park, Discovery Park, Lincoln Park, especially for those in other parts of the city.
- Partner with local arts and cultural organizations to reduce transportation barriers to accessing art and cultural hubs or activities.
- Provide more van services for elderly and disabled residents to access bus and train stations.
- Improve transit availability for suburbs and edges of Seattle to address the impact of displacement
- More route options and service for those that do not work a 9am-5pm job.
- Youth would like more frequent and reliable buses to make taking public transit a more feasible option for them. They report it being accessible to get around within the city, but difficult to get out.
- Youth are often trying to get to and from neighboring suburbs to Seattle to reach cultural activities (dance practice), temple, family members, schools or jobs. One youth reported feeling isolated on the weekends due to being unable to do extracurriculars, since their bus didn’t run on Sundays.

Transportation ការដឹកជញ្ជូន: Safety

Themes



The community seeks more accessible, affordable, and safer public transportation options that are welcoming to all community members, including seniors, people with limited mobility, and non-English speakers. Improving lighting, shelter, and sidewalk conditions, providing accessible fare options, and prioritizing safety and de-escalation are some suggestions to make public transportation more inclusive and accessible.

Safety at bus stops and on public transportation: The community members expressed concerns about safety at bus stops and on public transportation, particularly around fare enforcement. The community also emphasized the importance of building relationships with bus drivers and other transportation staff. Value of transit operators that are a part of the community: Some bus drivers that are on the same route consistently get to know their riders, and the needs of their riders really well. Light rail has a very different feel, as you don't get to know the drivers.

- Safety, comfort and appeal: Some riders suggest that public transportation should be made more appealing and comfortable in order to encourage more people to take it as an option.

Improved Lighting & Sidewalks near transit: Better lighting and shelter at bus stops and sidewalks to improve safety for pedestrians, particularly for seniors and people with limited mobility. The condition of sidewalks is also a concern, as there are tripping hazards for able-bodied individuals, which can be even worse for seniors and those with limited mobility. Increase funding for sidewalks and curb cuts in neighborhoods without them to improve accessibility, particularly for elderly residents.

Transportation ការដឹកជញ្ជូន: Safety

Themes (cont.)



Alternate forms of fare enforcement and prioritizing safety besides police: Some members feel intimidated by fare enforcers on light rail and would prefer alternative ways of ensuring fare payment. Community members feel that fare enforcement can be intimidating and cause anxiety for some people, particularly elders, who may associate it with military intimidation in Cambodia. Community members reported saying that fare enforcement made them feel unsafe, and that got anxiety seeing people in uniform. Another participant shared a story about how quickly a situation escalated for a family member who was scared and ended up being held down and then arrested.

More community-based programs to build comfort with public transit: There is a need to make elders feel safe enough to ride the bus on their own or help them travel in groups where they feel more comfortable. Language barriers are also a concern for some community members, making it difficult for them to access city activities or navigate public transportation.

Safer crossings across major roads and intersections: The community members emphasized the need for safer crossing areas, particularly on busy roads like Rainier Ave.

Increase traffic calming measures near all schools and other high pedestrian areas: The community members noticed during workshops and in their neighborhoods that traffic calming could be improved near schools as well as other high pedestrian areas. One example was that parts of Rainier Avenue didn't feel safe to pedestrians as an arterial street cutting through Columbia City.

Transportation ការដឹកជញ្ជូន: Safety

RECOMMENDATIONS



- Increase funding for sidewalks and curb cuts in neighborhoods without them to improve accessibility, particularly for elderly residents.
- Improve lighting near transit and walkways
- Improve safety at crossings across major roads and intersections
- Explore alternate ways of prioritizing safety and de-escalating situations besides police, and have fare enforcement staff work to build rapport with riders by connecting people with resources to get free/reduced ORCA cards, versus giving them a fine.
- There is also concern regarding fines for fare evasion and the lack of resources available for those who cannot afford to pay for fares. The community suggests providing more accessible and affordable options, such as free/discounted ORCA cards, to make public transportation more accessible for all.

Transportation ការដឹកជញ្ជូន: Infrastructure

Themes



“Transportation is essential for my community. Many have been displaced far from where cultural hubs are meaning they have to travel farther to find community. Much of my family lives out in suburbia so transportation is a must; we all use cars.

When going to UW, public transportation was great but as I moved away, that access went away too. The bus routes near my home are few and far between. Would love investment in more bus routes and train stations that don’t disturb the community.”

-Khmer youth

Community has expressed a need for investment in infrastructure to improve transportation and pedestrian safety. They noted inequities and disparities in infrastructural investments from neighborhood to neighborhood, and would like to see more equitable investments across the city.

Address impact of transportation projects on community: There are concerns that transportation projects can interrupt current communities and lead to displacement. Some riders feel that transportation should not interfere with community spaces or divide neighborhoods and that it is important to avoid dividing neighborhoods and disrupting existing housing and communities.

Address the disparities in transportation infrastructure from neighborhood to neighborhood: Community members noted that not all public transit stops had seating, shelter, lighting or safety mechanisms in place. They felt that these features should be a minimum at all public transit stops.

Lack of public bathrooms: Public bathrooms are an important need for both elders and youth, with a desire for real bathrooms that are clean and accessible. Elders express a fear of traveling (especially with taking public transit) without knowing where the next public bathroom is, while youth see the availability of public bathrooms as a measure of a healthy community. It would be helpful for public bathrooms to be available at transit stops and major bus stations.

Transportation ការដឹកជញ្ជូន: Infrastructure RECOMMENDATIONS



- Install digitized boards with bus schedules at businesses near transit stops/stations to provide easier access to information.
- Improve the cleanliness of public transportation to make it more appealing and comfortable for riders of all ages and backgrounds.
- Consider requiring housing built near heavy traffic/major air pollutant sources require advanced filtration systems for building air ventilation and heating systems.
- More public bathrooms, especially at light rail stations, transit hubs, parks and major public landmarks

Housing លំនៅដ្ឋាន

Themes



Overall, the community desires public spaces that are welcoming, inclusive, and meet the diverse needs of different age groups and cultural backgrounds. They value access to parks and open space greatly and many have noted the disparity in quality, cleanliness, and amenities of parks from neighborhood to neighborhood.

Displacement and Housing Instability: Almost all community members, especially elders, have experienced housing instability and have been forced to move away from their cultural centers, shops, and other community resources due to rising costs and lack of support. Subsidized senior housing has been a big stabilizing factor for many elders.

Access to Housing Resources: While there are public resources available, many community members do not know how to access them, few resources are in their language, and they do not have anyone to advocate for them.

Development and Disparities: While community members recognize that there is impressive development happening in the city, they do not feel that it is development they can access. There are concerns about the impact of development on communities – including displacement & housing affordability, cultural landmarks and anchors, and social cohesion.

Housing with access to green space: As a community with strong agricultural connections, access to green spaces and space to grow vegetable and flower gardens are important both for mental health and cultural significance. As many community members are transit dependent and/or mobility limited, it is critical that these areas are easily accessible in their neighborhoods or near their homes.

Housing | សំនេរដ្ឋាន

RECOMMENDATIONS



- Continue to support and promote senior housing opportunities, and resource in-language housing navigators.
- Support anti-displacement policies and programs that help low-income and cultural communities stay in place.
- Support in-language resources and navigators to help limited-English speaking residents navigate housing and financial systems so that they can remain safely and affordably housed.
- Support more affordable multi-generational housing and family-size housing of 3+ bedrooms.
- Incentivize more housing development that incorporates access to outdoor spaces to garden, such as courtyards, side yards, balconies, rooftop gardens, etc.
- Consider requiring housing built near heavy traffic/major air pollutant sources require advanced filtration systems for building air ventilation and heating systems.

Parks & Green Space အရာ

Themes



More sustainable and edible landscapes: Many community members, especially elders, expressed a desire for edible and sustainable landscapes in public spaces, such as gardens and fruit trees. This would not only increase food security but also provide a source of joy and connection to the community.

Transportation and connectivity: Some community members expressed a desire for improved transportation options to public spaces, such as express buses. Additionally, having multiple parks in the neighborhood and access to a variety of public spaces was important to the community.

Improve quality of public spaces and amenities to support elders & youth: The community values access to public spaces that are safe, clean, and well-maintained. Elders in particular appreciate having benches and seating available as well as clean public restrooms, while youth want to see more parks and playgrounds with a variety of amenities like sports courts, green spaces, and areas to relax. The community also values public spaces for their mental health benefits, such as access to nature, flowers, and opportunities to exercise and socialize.

Mental health benefits of welcoming parks and green spaces: The community desires more inclusive, accessible, and culturally-relevant public spaces that cater to the needs of both elders and youth. These spaces should be designed with enjoyment in mind, and promote physical and mental wellbeing while also fostering a sense of community and cultural identity. When these spaces feel welcoming, safe, and accessible amenities, community members can benefit more from available parks and green spaces in their neighborhoods. Some community members noted the stark differences between the parks in North Seattle we visited (Green Lake, Woodland Park) versus parks near their own homes, and wondered if they were allowed to be there.

Parks & Green Space | 2575

RECOMMENDATIONS



- Increase availability of welcoming park spaces, and create programming and landscaping that welcomes a diversity of cultures to be highlighted.
- Expand public transit options to the big “destination” public parks in the city, like Green Lake, Seward Park, Discovery Park, Lincoln Park, especially for those in other parts of the city.
- Improve quality of public spaces and amenities to support elders & youth
- More clean public restrooms available at all parks
- More shaded benches and places to sit and rest
- Promote edible landscaping in parks across Seattle. Create an urban foraging map showcasing the different types of plants.
- the community desires more inclusive, accessible, and culturally-relevant public spaces that cater to the needs of both elders and youth. These spaces should be designed with enjoyment in mind, and promote physical and mental wellbeing while also fostering a sense of community and cultural identity.

Food Systems

Themes



Almost all community members mentioned the importance of the ability to grow their own food. With the increased need for food sovereignty among a community that has experienced food insecurity, growing food and having access to culturally appropriate food was a priority for community members.

Access to nutritious and culturally appropriate food: The community would like greater access to healthy food, particularly fresh produce, and there is a concern about the lack of healthy food options in some neighborhoods. Having access to affordable food and being in close proximity to healthy food options was important to the community. Many emphasized the importance of culturally relevant food options and the need to rebuild intergenerational knowledge about growing and using fresh foods. Many noted not having close access to a Khmer grocery store.

Community gardens and other spaces to grow food: There is a desire for more community gardens and green spaces where people can grow their own food. Even as housing gets more dense, there is a desire to utilize available outdoor space (porches, rooftops, etc) as potential growing spaces.

Sustainability: Many community members emphasized the importance of sustainable food systems, with an emphasis on shorter distances between farm and plate, equitable pricing, and access to basic ingredients.

More sustainable and edible landscapes: Many community members, especially elders, expressed a desire for edible and sustainable landscapes in public spaces, such as gardens and fruit trees. This would not only increase food security but also provide a source of joy and connection to the community.

Food Systems

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Increase access to fresh, nutritious, and culturally appropriate food. Provide support for cultural community grocery stores to remain in place and prevent displacement.
- Fund and support community-led programs to utilize shared and public space to grow food. Increase p-patch program to reduce wait-list times, and incentivize designing gardens into new developments.
- Improve utilization of public spaces to grow more food and create edible landscapes, such as parks, right-of-way, empty lots awaiting construction, community centers, rooftops of city-owned buildings, etc.
- Incentivize housing development that incorporates access to outdoor spaces to garden, such as courtyards, side yards, balconies, rooftop gardens.
- Enable affordable housing projects to provide communal outdoor space as part of the project, where residents could garden.



Climate Change & Environment

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Themes



Climate change and health of the environment was a top concern of community members. Especially since so many of them live in neighborhoods that are most vulnerable to extreme weather conditions, this is something that impacts their lives significantly and has had real consequences to their livelihood. Some Khmer community members were severely impacted by the recent South Park neighborhood flooding due to extreme rain events and sea level rise, losing their homes and many of their possessions without much recourse as renters.

Concern around lack of shade/shelter especially in extreme heat: On several occasions, elder field trips coincided with extreme heat warnings. With our trips primarily being outdoors, it was difficult to find shade or sheltered seating in public spaces. This posed a real threat to the health of those participating in the trips and generally those traveling outdoors in the heat. Infrastructure to help stay cool in the heat was notably lacking on some of our field trips, especially on the downtown waterfront, in the Chinatown/International District, and along Alki - all mostly urban neighborhoods with a lack of shaded cover, heavily paved walkways that reflected heat, and limited tree canopy coverage and vegetation. These places also lacked public water fountains, and we were forced to buy bottled water to keep everyone hydrated during the heatwave.

Concern around cleanliness of water and air: Elders noticed at various locations that the bodies of water were not clean and had concerns about the pollutants in the water and in the air. Youth also expressed a desire for cleaner air and streets.

Lack of knowledge and community resources for extreme weather: Some community members are unaware of available resources for extreme weather and do not know where to find them in their neighborhood. Many public resources are not available in the Khmer language, or community members just didn't know where to access information so assumed there wasn't help. With increasing extreme weather events, it is critical that there are educational resources available before an event, communication in multiple languages and through trusted community partners during an event, and funding available for impacted low-income households following an event.

Climate Change & Environment បញ្ហាជាមួយនឹងការប្រែប្រួលអាកាសធាតុ និងបរិស្ថាន

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Elders and small children are more vulnerable to the heat. Need to add more infrastructure to support them staying safe in the heat (i.e. more trees, shaded public seating, covered walkways on key routes, misters, etc.). Consider doing a shade assessment for the city, to determine where the biggest gaps are.
- Support and resource low-income residents impacted by flooding and sea level rise.
- Improve water & air quality, and provide resources for vulnerable community members
- Partner with King County Public Health and provide free/low cost air filters for low-income families
- Provide education around air quality & health
- Consider requiring housing built near heavy traffic/major air pollutant sources require advanced filtration systems for building air ventilation and heating systems.
- Provide educational resources before an extreme weather event, communicate in multiple languages and through trusted community partners during an event, and make funding available for impacted low-income households following an event.



Healthy & Connected Communities

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Themes



Lack of public bathrooms: Public bathrooms are an important need for both elders and youth, with a desire for real bathrooms that are clean and accessible. Elders express a fear of traveling (especially with taking public transit) without knowing where the next public bathroom is, while youth see the availability of public bathrooms as a measure of a healthy community. It would be helpful for public bathrooms to be available at transit stops and major bus stations.

More community spaces to support well-being and connection among youth: Youth want to see people spending more time outdoors and connecting with each other, and desire peaceful places to relax both indoors and outdoors. Supporting youth who lack a sense of community and providing space for them to come together, chill, and hang out in a safe and friendly atmosphere is a recurring theme. Overall, safety and a sense of connection and community are important to both elders and youth.

Complete neighborhoods: Community members, particularly youth, see a healthy community as having lots of resources available, including libraries, community centers, cafes, stores, parks and bus/train stops. They also want affordable healthcare and insurance, good schools, and access to cultural activities. Overall, the community wants more resources and support for equitable development, including funding for community centers and public spaces. They want to preserve their cultural identity and have access to all the previously mentioned amenities. Transportation access, displacement, communication barriers, and intergenerational barriers are some of the obstacles that they face.

Healthy & Connected Communities

សហគមន៍ដែលមានសុខភាពល្អ (Community Well-Being)

Themes (cont.)



Lack of space for community to gather and support community well-being (building social cohesion): The Khmer community currently lacks a centralized community center, and KCKSC struggles with finding affordable space for all their programs that is accessible to community members, meets their needs (often they need access to a kitchen, and dance space independently), and is large enough to accommodate everyone.

Support community navigators: Many participants cite KCKSC as a trusted organization, and are thankful for the programs they provide in connecting them to resources, navigating complex systems (a recent example included navigating health insurance and medicare), providing education and learning opportunities, and building a community where they felt belonging and happiness. These community organizations are critical partners in ensuring city programs actually reach their communities.

Healthy & Connected Communities

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(Community Well-Being)

RECOMMENDATIONS



- More public bathrooms, especially at light rail stations, transit hubs, parks and major public landmarks
- Encouraging more community spaces where youth can hang out with their friends without having to buy anything.
- Support healthy communities with lots of in-language resources and gathering spaces
- More affordable spaces for community to gather and support community well-being and build social cohesion
- Directly support and resource community organizations that provide community navigators and other community-led programs that help connect people to resources and navigate complex systems.
- This also includes supporting community engagement led by community partners and resourcing them to provide food, supplies and staffing to enable their communities to engage in public process in culturally meaningful ways.

Arts & Culture សិល្បៈ និងវប្បធម៌

Themes



Support for a dedicated Khmer Community Center: The desire for a dedicated Khmer Community Center is also evident among the community, particularly youth. This space would serve as a cultural hub for the community to come together, showcase their culture, and learn about their heritage. However, funding and transportation remain barriers to achieving this goal, and concerns about displacement due to rising space costs are also present.

More inclusive, accessible, and culturally-relevant public spaces that cater to the needs of both elders and youth: These spaces should be designed with enjoyment in mind, and promote physical and mental wellbeing while also fostering a sense of community and cultural identity. Additionally, addressing the barriers of funding and transportation are necessary to ensure equitable access to these spaces.

Access to cultural activities: Necessary to address displacement, as many arts spaces and organizations have struggled with rising space costs. The Khmer dance program run by KCSKC for example, does not have a permanent space, and rents space from Rainier Arts Center as well as from a local restaurant in White Center. Participants often have to travel farther to participate, especially when they have been displaced themselves.

Arts & Culture | សិល្បៈ និងវប្បធម៌

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Resources and support for a dedicated Khmer Community Center!**
- Increase access to cultural activities by reducing barriers such as transportation, cost, and space. Consider partnering with arts organizations and programs to remove barriers for their participants.
- Support access to affordable spaces for community to gather and support community well-being and build social cohesion
- Prioritize anti-displacement policies to preserve culture, social cohesion, and community arts.



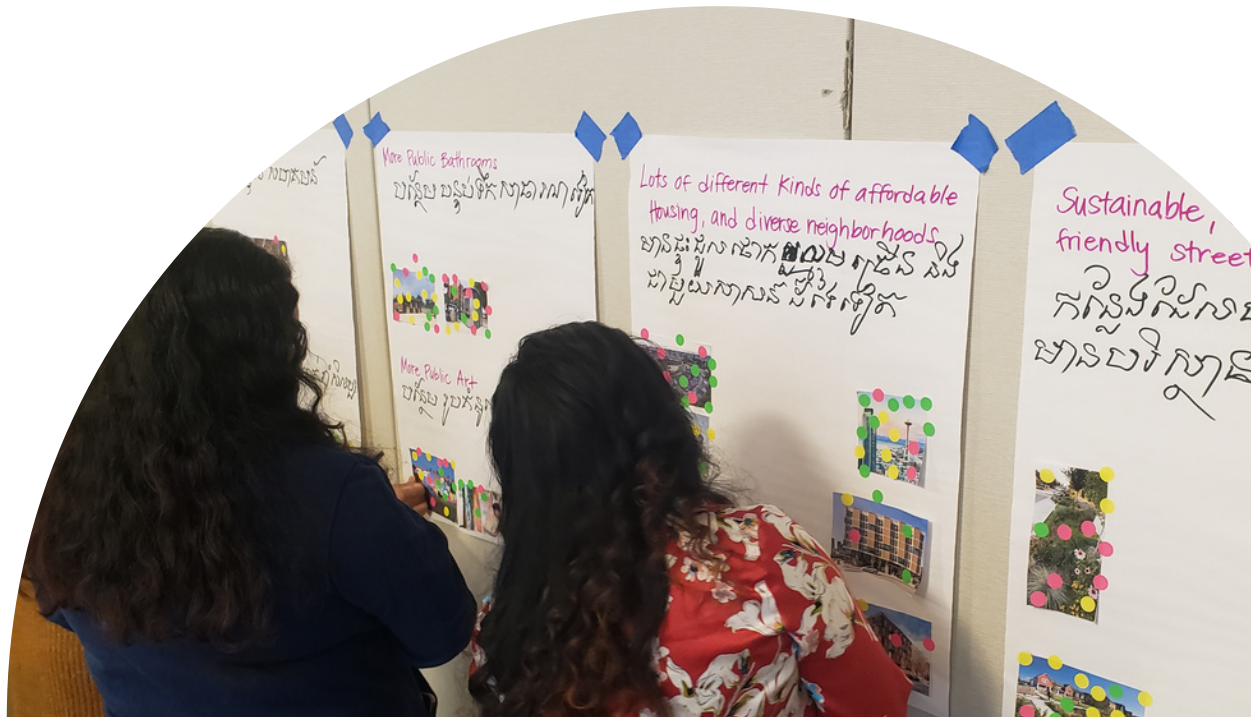
Economic Development

Themes

Valuing small businesses that provide culturally relevant goods and services: Both elders and youth appreciated neighborhoods where there is a confluence of cultural business, restaurants, grocery stores, and residents, and that these resources help create a sense of community. For the Khmer community, this was largely in the White Center area, however displacement, gentrification, and rising rents for commercial spaces have pushed out several Khmer businesses.

Concern around inequitable economic development and its impact on community members:

There were concerns that with such high commercial costs, sometimes one emergency can be enough to push a small business owner out of business and impact their own housing stability.



Economic Development

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Support and incentivize affordable commercial spaces, especially in neighborhoods with high risk of displacement.
- Create supports to prevent displacement for small business owners, especially those from BIPOC, immigrant, and refugee communities, that provide culturally relevant services and goods to the community.
- Incentivize business owners that provide affordable or free gathering space for local community organizations. Many spaces serve not just as commercial spaces, but also rent or provide space for community gatherings or events, and addresses the lack of affordable non-profit space.



Displacement ត្រូវបានបង្ខំឱ្យផ្លាស់ទីកន្លែង Themes



Because the issue of displacement cuts across all of the topics discussed in this report, we wanted to highlight themes that were especially relevant to displacement as this was a high priority issue for the community. There are many more connections throughout the rest of the report.

Displacement and Housing Instability: Almost all community members, especially elders, have experienced housing instability and have been forced to move away from their cultural centers, shops, and other community resources due to rising costs and lack of support. Subsidized senior housing has been a big stabilizing factor for many elders. Many elders have lost their homes because no one helped them and no one was able to help them navigate financial and housing systems or help them save their home, and banks told them to move out. Some community members have lost businesses, lost jobs, or lost family members that were helping to support them due to complications with immigration or law enforcement.

Access to cultural activities: Necessary to address displacement, as many arts spaces and organizations have struggled with rising space costs. The Khmer dance program run by KCSKC for example, does not have a permanent space, and rents space from Rainier Arts Center as well as from a local restaurant in White Center. Participants often have to travel farther to participate, especially when they have been displaced themselves.

Address impact of transportation projects on community: There are concerns that transportation projects can interrupt current communities and lead to displacement. Some riders feel that transportation should not interfere with community spaces or divide neighborhoods and that it is important to avoid dividing neighborhoods and disrupting existing housing and communities.

Displacement | ត្រូវបានបង្ខំឱ្យផ្លាស់ទីកន្លែង

RECOMMENDATIONS



- Integrate anti-displacement policies, programs, and investments into major capital project plans to preserve social cohesion, cultural anchors, connectivity, and prevent displacement of vulnerable residents.
- Address impact of transportation projects on community.
- Support more affordable arts & commercial spaces: resource programs to prevent displacement of cultural spaces & businesses, and fund relocation support if they are being actively displaced.
- Improve transit availability for suburbs and edges of Seattle to address the impact of displacement
- More affordable spaces for community to gather and support community well-being and build social cohesion
- There are many more connections throughout the rest of the document - please read through! :)

Community Engagement & Process

Themes

"This [program] empowers us to express that - yes, we can and should demand these kinds of space in our neighborhood... When you're in survival mode, you live in fear, so you don't feel like you're entitled..."

What this project helps us realize is that - yes, we can speak our mind and we are entitled to enjoy those kinds of beautiful spaces in our neighborhoods too."

- KCSKC staff reflecting on elders' comments



Value being included and having opinions heard: Specifically, the Khmer community has experienced historical trauma related to totalitarian governments in Cambodia, where giving feedback or advocating for community needs is not something they are familiar with or feel safe doing. Through this process, the community members valued being included in the decision-making as well as having their opinions heard. Advocating or providing feedback, however, took time for them to understand and be comfortable with doing.

Desire for accountability for input given to local leaders: Community members, especially youth, asked what is the point of providing feedback if their voices are not heard. Although this process aims to include their voices, they still want to know what will be done once they have share their feedback, and want to know how they will be included in the future. Youth were more skeptical than elders about whether their feedback would actually impact their communities, and were concerned there would be no impact.

Empowerment and advocacy: The project helped to empower elders to stand up for themselves and their community, and to understand that they are entitled to more. This understanding led to a greater desire for civic engagement and advocacy resources.

Community Engagement & Process

Themes (cont.)

Flexibility and responsiveness: The project team had to be flexible and responsive to the needs of the participants, including accommodating accessibility, bathroom access, and health/comfort needs, and community events and holidays. They also adjusted the timing and content of events to engage participants when it was most convenient for them, on topics they were interested in.

Healing: KCSKC staff reflected that the engagement process itself can be healing for participants, building their trust in local government and creating space for dreaming and hope for the future.

Inequity and past harm: Participants expressed concerns about past harm and inequity, especially between North and South areas of the city, and in communities with lots of people of color. They wanted to see communication between communities and the city/county government and action to address past harm.



Community Engagement & Process

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Offer a more diverse array of ways to engage with community that is informed by the community. Allow for flexibility to respond to community needs and changes.
- Community engagement should have long-term relationship-building at the core of its approach.
- Follow-up with the community about decisions and include them at key decision-points.
- Community-based organizations should be resourced to engage and serve the community as they see fit.
- Directly support and resource community organizations that provide community navigators and other community-led programs that help connect people to resources and navigate complex systems.
- This also includes supporting community engagement led by community partners and resourcing them to provide food, supplies and staffing to enable their communities to engage in public process in culturally meaningful ways.
- Build ample time into community engagement timelines to allow for relationship building and flexibility. The elders in the community have felt validated and included in the process for the first time. However, it takes time to build understanding and trusting relationships with elders to get feedback and understand the purpose of the project. Longer engagement timelines would be beneficial.



Key Takeaways

Addressing displacement is key to cultural preservation and social cohesion.

Prioritize anti-displacement policies to preserve culture, social cohesion, and community arts.

Trust-building takes time - Be flexible & adaptive

Short-term and surface-level engagement is not effective and can be extractive.

Engagement should begin with long-term relationship building in mind and recognize that change can take time.

Invest in community-led partnerships to build trust around public processes.

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Investing in community-driven engagement activities to heal and build trust in local government.

Accessibility & Language Access

Make the city accessible for limited-English speakers, elders, youth, and low-income folks.

Context matters.

Understand past harm and inequity before engaging community. Trauma-informed community engagement can be an effective approach.



សូមអរគុណ Thank you

This report could not be completed without the contributions of time, insight, and most importantly care for community by KCSKC program participants and staff.

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