

Results for Surveys of Hispanic Residents in Lake City

May-June 2020

Introduction:

In February 2019, two dozen individuals participated in the second cohort of the Blandin Community Leadership Program. Following that week of intensive training, Tom Boe chose to focus on supporting the Hispanic community in Lake City as an ongoing leadership project. Towards this end, approximately twenty Lake City resident-leaders have worked to structure programming and provide support for the Hispanic community. This group is called Hispanic Community Inclusion.

Simultaneously, the Lake City Economic Development Authority successfully applied for an AmeriCorps VISTA worker. AmeriCorps VISTA is a national service program designed to alleviate poverty by building capacity in both nonprofit organization and public agencies, generating commitment of private sector resources, encouraging volunteer service locally, and empowering individuals and communities. Katie Yoder is the AmeriCorps VISTA member chosen to join the EDA to assist with the development of programming that supports the economic stability and well-being of the Hispanic community in Lake City.

During the summer of 2020, the Lake City EDA hired Denilzo Baltazar, a graduate from Lincoln High in Lake City and current student at Winona State University, as a summer intern. Baltazar helped Tom Boe's Hispanic Community Inclusion group conduct a survey of Hispanic residents in Lake City in the fall of 2019. The current survey expands on this original survey.

Methods:

From May 27th to June 17th 2020, Denilzo Baltazar and Katie Yoder completed interviews with 25 Hispanic families, which represented 112 residents of Lake City. The interviewers met the participants at or near their homes, largely located in the trailer parks on the east side of town. The surveys began with respondents that Baltazar had personal familiarity with and who had participated in the previous year's survey. The interviewers then asked these interviewees to recommend other households within their neighborhood to approach next. Most of the interviews were completed in a conversational format almost entirely in Spanish. One or both of the interviewers asked a set of questions and allowed respondents to elaborate however they chose. The interviewers would then often ask follow-up questions to further understand responses.

Below are the 15 main questions asked of each participant, with analysis and further discussion of the responses:

1. Have you felt welcomed in Lake City?

Most respondents answered yes, providing qualifications and further explanations as the interview progressed. Many expressed their level of feeling welcome primarily in relation to how they felt other Hispanic residents welcomed them, with limited reference to the broader local community. The level of "welcome-ness" *within* the Hispanic community depended on time in Lake City since arrival, national origin, and religion, as respondents noted these as divides that exist among local Hispanics. One respondent noted that there weren't many Hispanic residents when he moved here over a decade ago, which made it harder to adjust. Another said that he felt at home little by little, since he didn't know people at first.

Some respondents did address the larger Lake City context. One said she felt welcome “to a point” but that “there are many people who are not educated about Hispanics.” Another respondent noted that she “loved the small town” atmosphere here. Others echoed this, saying they liked the quiet and natural beauty of the Lake City area.

2. *What information or services would be helpful in Lake City?*

3. *What changes in general would you like to see in Lake City?*

These two questions served essentially the same purpose, and allowed respondents to think about and elaborate further on their answers. The following list outlines the frequency of interest in specific services:¹

Desired service	Frequency of interest
Medical clinic	19
English classes	10
Interpreters	8
Events/sports to engage young people	4
Housing information	4
Transportation	3
Tax/legal help	3
Children's summer activities	3
Store with Hispanic products	3
More stores and restaurants	3
Indoor recreation	3
Informational contact person/place	2
Preschool	1
Business information	1

There are clearly other factors behind each of these needs that require further explanation.

For example, the most common desired service listed was a medical clinic. Many respondents

¹ Most respondents offered multiple answers about desired services, so the numbers do not indicate the total number of respondents.

currently use and appreciate the CARE Clinic in Red Wing and wish they had similar access to a clinic in Lake City. Respondents were interested in a range of benefits from a clinic, including dental and vision services. This request for access to a local clinic likely reflects how transportation and work schedules limit residents' ability to use this service in Red Wing, rather than suggesting any dissatisfaction with service provided at the CARE Clinic. (More on the requests for transportation in further discussion of question 13.) Additionally, the need for this kind of clinic is based on lack of health insurance, which ultimately depends on employment and citizenship status. Legal concerns were not often explicitly mentioned, but they lay indirectly behind other concerns with lack of services that Hispanic residents shared.

Similarly, the second most commonly desired service, English classes, face underlying barriers to access. English classes have been offered regularly, free of charge, in Lake City for a couple of years, but a common theme among respondents was that it is hard to find a good time for classes because of work schedules.

As far as the need for interpreters goes, one respondent noted that the local Mayo system only uses computer interpreters. Another expressed the need for interpreters at public events.

An additional common theme was the need for more recreational outlets. Several respondents expressed interest in more activities for their children in the summer. Others would like to be able to play soccer indoors over the winter, perhaps at the schools through a community education program. One respondent expressed concern that there aren't enough events and options to keep young adults engaged in the community. A few respondents mentioned interest and involvement in existing community events.

Several people expressed interest in stores that sell Mexican and/or Guatemalan commodities. One respondent noted that many Lake City residents go to Red Wing for these

kinds of products. Another respondent said he would like to see these businesses as similar to stores in Rochester, but realizes that there may not enough customers here to support them.

One of the most complex areas of access to services is to financial and legal information and resources. The needs are wide-ranging, but also intertwined, including needs for more information on how to buy a house, how to file taxes, how to open a bank account and how to receive insurance. (These needs are further reflected in the “personal goals” of question 11.) Addressing these goals means encountering numerous barriers involving legal status. The fact that many of the Hispanic respondents may not fully know their legal rights complicates this further. Language barriers and cultural differences makes it even more challenging for them to understand and access needed resources. Consequentially, some legal barriers are very real, but others may be assumed and could in fact be overcome.²

In this vein, one respondent acknowledged the need for an identified contact person who could assist the Hispanic community. A respondent described a man who had informally served this function previously in Lake City by helping people find apartments and offering interpreting services. Some would like to see another person like this available to assist local Hispanic residents.

² One particularly instructive example came from a respondent recounting her experience of trying to open an account at a local bank. She felt she had not been properly informed about needing a Social Security Number before starting the process and had lost money by the end. It’s difficult to determine how much language and cultural differences influenced this situation, but it’s not difficult to see how it could create distrust between Hispanic residents and institutions like banks. What’s more, a SSN should not necessarily be a prerequisite for starting a bank account, as every non-citizen resident who pays taxes has an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number which can be used for this purpose. It’s another question whether banks in Lake City have experience using ITINs and/or Hispanic residents know how they can use their ITIN.

Some other responses didn't neatly fall into the above categories. One respondent talked about the possibility of requesting services from a Guatemalan consulate, since the nearest consulate is Chicago and they only occasionally come to the Twin Cities. Another respondent talked about a trash cleaning service day that happened in their trailer park previously and that she'd like to see again.

4. *Would you want to be part of our inclusion group?*

Most respondents said they interested in learning more and/or listening in, with some saying they'd like to be actively involved. Several people also offered that they'd like to help out in the future if the group needed it.

5. *Are you single or married?*

Status	Individuals
Married	28
Single	13
Other	6

6. *How old are you?*

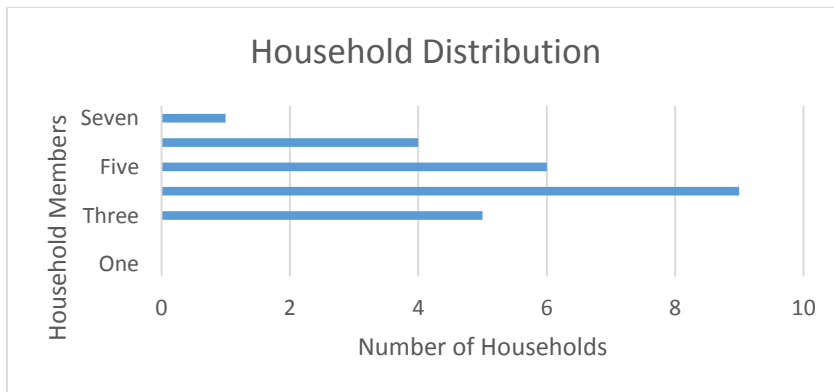
Age Range	Number of respondents
0 to 10	24
11 to 20	13
21 to 30	23
31 to 40	8
41 to 50	5
51 to 60	2
61 to 70	1
71+	1
Unaccounted for	35

Those Under 18 Compared to those 18 and Older

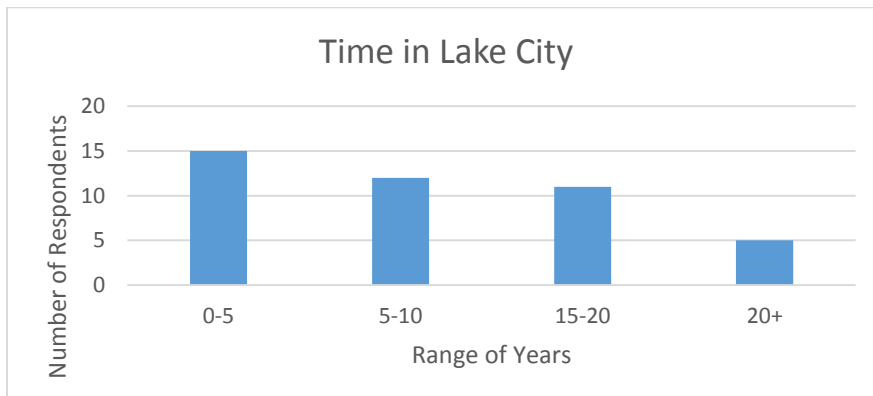
Children	44
Adults	53
Unaccounted for	15

This data is based on household member ages as reported to us by the respondents, with some of the residents' ages unaccounted for. These ranges are supplemented below by the non-age specific information given to us by respondents on how many children (those under 18) and adults (those 18 and older) live in each household, which leaves a smaller number unaccounted for. Either way of approaching this data, though, demonstrates that those under 18 make up a high percentage of this cohort of respondents.

7. How many people live in your house?



8. How long have you lived in Lake City?



Note: This question doesn't take into account how long the respondents have lived in country or in areas near to Lake City.

9. *What is your country of origin?*

Country of origin	Number of respondents
Guatemala	38
Mexico	29
U.S.	32
Unaccounted for	13
Total	112

10. *Where do you work?*

Place of Employment	# of Respondents
J&B Pallet	9
Farm (dairy)	7
None	6
Student	3
Cleaning service	3
Farm (apples)	2
Restaurant	2
School district	2
Retired	2
Kwik Trip	1
Hearth & Home	1
Engineering Lab Design	1
Food Liner	1

Most of the "none" responses are stay at home mothers.

11. *What personal goals do you have?*

Personal goals	# of Respondents
Buy a house	9
Insurance	3
Growing a business	3
Different job	3

Education for children	2
Education for self	2
Real estate license	1
Building credit	1
Learn English	1

Buying a house was the most common goal, but again, respondents cited common barriers to accomplishing this, including lack of social security number or credit score. Lack of insurance contributed to this as well, and this refers generally both to home and health insurance.

12. Do you have access to the internet?

Access to the internet	# of respondents
Yes	13
Only cell data	7
No	4

Some respondents who said yes only had access at the time because the school district had provided it during the pandemic when schools closed buildings and moved to distance learning.

13. Do you have transportation needs?

Need for transportation	# of respondents
Yes	7
No	16

While most respondents owned or had access to a car, there was still need expressed for public transportation. Many households had only one car, complicating schedules because of limited options. For example, if a family member needed to utilize a service that has limited hours, like the CARE Clinic, completing that goal depends on the availability of the one family

car or other transportation options. Another example was a family who listed local preschool as a desired service. They reported that they were sending their daughter to preschool in Wabasha (about 15 miles away) because she could take a bus, which was the best option that worked for their schedules.

14. Do you want to join our Facebook group?

This is a newly created group called “Desarrollo Hispano de Lake City,” which is part of the Lake City Economic Development Authority’s page. The group was developed to share relevant information to Spanish speaking residents. The interviewers invited people join during the interviews.

15. Do you have any other questions or concerns?

This was an opportunity for respondents to add any additional information which has been included in the discussion of responses offered to the survey questions.

Recommendations:

Based on the feedback received from the Hispanic community during this survey, the following recommendations were compiled:

1. Develop a centralized resource access point for support of Hispanic residents, either through a small group of individuals and/or an organization

The group Tom Boe initiated, Hispanic Community Inclusion, has discussed how it can best serve the community, debating whether it should become a nonprofit or continue as a community action group without legal designation. If a non-profit group emerged in Lake City, it would have higher capacity to hire staff and leverage resources that directly serve

the needs outlined above and the recommendations included below. Establishing a central resource point would not only make it easier for Hispanic residents to access help, it would provide an outlet for volunteers to connect and provide assistance with transportation, educational programs or whatever needs are most pressing.

2. Strengthen partnerships between the Hispanic community and existing resources

Given that the process of creating a non-profit organization can be lengthy, difficult, and time consuming, it is important for community members who are advocating for Hispanic people to develop strong partnerships with existing resources such as the CARE Clinic.

While Hispanic people might prefer that a medical clinic be developed in Lake City, it is more realistic in a rural area to bridge resources and help people access existing services in the broader geographical region. This recommendation also means bridging gaps to larger local institutions like the school district and the city government.

3. Develop a list of interpreters to help Hispanic people at meetings, appointments, and local events and make this list available to Hispanic people and partners in the community, such as local medical clinics

4. Provide assistance specific to the Hispanic community for banking, housing and insurance

The EDA is one community entity that can address these unmet needs through future programming and partnership with the city government.

5. Organize entertainment options for kids and young adults

While some respondents mentioned interest and involvement in existing community events, further exploration is needed to determine whether Hispanic residents as a whole are connected with and aware of established activities in Lake City. It is important to note the

youthful demographic this survey reveals. If the town of Lake City wants to retain the youngest generation into the future, it must develop ways to make these young people feel welcomed by and connected with Lake City.

6. Organize cross cultural heritage events to promote education and connections with local community and Hispanic community

This was listed as a common theme among respondents as a way to bring together people across traditions through food, dance, and other activities.

7. Assist current businesses to recognize and respond to interest in a broader offering of Mexican/Central American foods

This might involve surveying Hispanic residents about food that they would purchase locally and connecting stores with this information so they could stock these items.

8. Update and educate the broader Lake City community about the presence of Hispanic residents in the town and the economic, social, and cultural contributions they bring to rural Minnesota

Volunteers who support Hispanic people and the AmeriCorps VISTA employee could develop an educational presentation for local service organizations, school groups and churches, offering education about the Hispanic community in Lake City, focusing both on the benefits these residents bring to the community and on what they need to succeed in Lake City.