

CCPL COMMUNITY NARRATIVE – YOUTH SAFETY & ENGAGEMENT

Taken from 43 Community Conversation attendees, as well as 150 respondents from the Main Library and the School of Innovation, living and/or working in the 45505/45506 zip codes, from August 2021 – May 2022.

ASPIRATIONS:

People in south Springfield want a safe community that engages its youth and families.

CONCERNS:

1. *They're concerned about the safety of its citizens. As people talk more about this, there's a specific concern for the safety of our youth.*
 - *Youth want to feel safe to visit friends, to be able to walk down the street without being scared for their life. There are many concerns surrounding **gun violence**, especially for people of color.*
 - *In addition, many are concerned about the rise in **youth suicide** and the **mental health crisis** happening today.*
2. *They're concerned that youth & families are not being actively engaged or supported. As people talk more about engaging youth and families:*
 - *Teens say that there is nothing for them to do in Springfield, that **they don't have a positive outlet**.*
 - *Many also talk about the need for **safe spaces for youth to interact**, and for **youth to be instilled with pride for their community**.*
 - *Parents & caregivers talk about the need for **more free and low-cost activities to engage in with their children**.*
 - *Parents & caregivers talk about the need for **more supportive services to help them grow and raise their children**.*

ACTIONS:

In order to have a safe community, they believe that we need to:

- *Focus on ways to deescalate violence, such as walking away instead of acting out.*
- *Speak up when something is wrong, such as bullying, and tell someone they trust.*
- *Build awareness and educate the public about trauma and mental health concerns.*
- *Cultivate safe places, especially for youth.*
- *Encourage local law enforcement to build relationships with the community.*

In order to have a youth & family engaged community, they believe that we need to:

- *Ask youth what they want to do, and create opportunities for youth to be supported and heard.*
- *Revive youth centers to give them safe spaces to interact, as well as opportunities to see what's possible for them and to give back to their community.*
- *Give parents and caregivers more education and support with raising and nurturing their children.*