

# Municipal Vulnerability Preparedness Program Action Grant Case Study

**Municipality:** City of Medford, Health Department

**Project Title:** Suitability Assessment for Equitable, Community-Driven Resilience Hubs in Medford

**Grant Award:** \$ 65,259.00

**Match:** \$ 25,159.00

## Community Overview:

Provide a general description of your community as a brief introduction to the project.

- Population: 57,771 residents
- Median household income: \$92,363
- Poverty rate (2014-2018): 9-10%
- Demographics: 75% White, 10.6% Asian, 9.4% Black, 5.3% Hispanic/Latino
  - Poverty rate break-down: 8.3% White, 16.5% Asian, 8.0% Black, and 17.4% Hispanic/Latino
- 21.4% of Medford residents are foreign-born and 28.6% speak a first language other than English
- MIT's Living Wage Calculator (2017) for a family of 4 with 2 full-time working adults must earn \$76,784 annually to afford basic living expenses in Middlesex County
  - In 2018, 31.6% of Medford families earned incomes <\$75,000

## Description of Climate Impact:

Address the community's current and potential future vulnerability to climate change impacts. What are the specific threats to the project area/site and reasons for applying to the grant program?

- Climate change presents three major threats to Medford
  - Extreme Heat: Physical impacts include: drought and urban heat islands; impacts to health and well-being include: stressed food systems, high demand on water and heat-related illness
  - Extreme Precipitation: Physical impacts include heavy downpours and flooding; impacts to health and well-being include: sewage overflow, dirty drinking water, insect spread diseases
  - Storms: Physical impacts include: damaged infrastructure and restricted mobility; impacts to health and well-being include: burdened healthcare systems, infectious disease risk and weakened economy
- Climate resilience is an environmental justice issue. Community resilience is a framework intended to support residents' fight against structural inequities to reduce sensitivity to disasters and support resident conditions to adapt to emergencies, ultimately promoting the health and well-being of all Medford residents.

## Project Goals:

What were the specific goals of the project?

- **Objective:** Medford Resilience Hubs will intentionally build a more just and inclusive space for all of Medford's residents, with the ambition of opposing the structural inequities of society.
  - Medford Resilience Hubs will intentionally build a more just and inclusive space for all of Medford's residents, with the ambition of opposing the structural inequities of society.
- **Vision:** Enhanced multi-use spaces with a variety of programs that build relationships, promote community preparedness, and improve residents' health and well-being. In times of emergency, spaces may act as a communication centers, distribution centers, and potential emergency shelters that are also necessary for emergency recovery

**Approach and Result:**

How did the project team implement the project? Describe the methodology or your approach to achieve the project goals. Describe, and quantify (where possible) project results (e.g. square footage of habitat restored or created). Provide web links, if available, to your project deliverables.

**Approach:** The Resilient Medford Resilience Hubs project aims to assess Medford's ability to withstand climate events from a public health perspective by 3 main tasks.

- Task 1 - Where?
  - Justly identify priority service areas for a pilot Resilience Hub based on neighborhood resources, sensitivity to climate change, and adaptive capacity.
- Task 2 - What?
  - A) Evaluate adaptability of vulnerable residents and gauge community provider's readiness to climate impacts.
  - B) Listen to residents on resilience concerns to amplify the voices of residents facing social inequities. Engage providers in discussions to understand resilient programming that would support their constituents.
- Task 3 - How?
  - Explore areas within the identified service areas that may accommodate resilient programming, share the requirements of a Resilience Hub site and recommendations to advance equitable community resilience.

**Results:** The assessment revealed that residents were intrigued by Resilience Hubs but were skeptical of reliable community engagement and questioned for whom Hubs would truly serve. Similarly, local providers were interested in Resilience Hubs, but would like to further understand how a physical space would be attained and how a multi-use, co-located space would operate.

- Despite interest in Resilience Hubs, it is clear that next steps must first lay a foundation of trust between community and City Hall through inclusive outreach and an active commitment from the city to practice anti-racism. Further planning is also needed to organize Resilience Hub coordination, communications, and operations.
- Task 1 Results
  - Precincts 1-1 (Glenwood), 5-1 and 5-2 (South Medford), and 7-2, (Wellington), were identified as the strongest candidates for a Resilience Hub.

- Task 2 Results
  - **Resident Adaptive Capacity:**
    - Most requests were for food (47.0%) or medication and personal supplies (32.8%), emphasizing the importance of improving our local food and health systems.
    - Most requests were submitted by a city employee (30.2%) or by an “R U OK?” volunteer (32.7%) on behalf of a resident, suggesting that many residents who are not connected to city employees or programs may not be aware of available resources.
  - **Organizational Readiness:** For many local service providers, climate change and climate change preparedness are not within the **principles** of their organization, as the issue is “not yet on the radar” among **leadership**.
    - Ultimately looked to local governments to provide climate and emergency preparedness **policy and legislation** for the region.
  - **Resident Input:**
    - Haitian participants noted racism as a critical barrier to feeling supported, through tokenism, “English-only “ initiatives, “color blindness,” and general attitudes towards the Haitian community.
    - Participants cited communication barriers to feeling prepared and supported by their community.
      - Some reported City Hall as the only known place to access local information.
  - **Organization Input:**
    - Organizational concerns for the impacts of climate change centered on themes of social justice and accessibility, emphasizing meaningful collaboration between providers and City Hall to better support residents before, during, and after disasters.
    - Develop intentional policies that exercise active inclusion measures and anti-racism.
    - Organizations shared a **vision for a Resilience Hubs** that centered on 4 themes:
      - Social connection, as a multi-use gathering center involving communities of diverse backgrounds.
      - Community engagement, as a center for community organizing and supporting community-driven policies.
      - Information access, as a centralized communications center to share information on local resources.
      - Collaborative response, as an opportunity to integrate regional efforts in supporting community resilience.
- Task 3 Results
  - Preliminary analysis of potential sites identified only one candidate facility (St. Clement Church) in a priority area, though not located in the EJ neighborhood section.
    - Nine overall sites were within or close to an EJ neighborhood

### **Lessons Learned:**

What lessons were learned as a result of the project? Focus on both the technical matter of the project and process-oriented lessons learned.

- Community building and engagement are important *before* community events, which require more time than funding for a 5-month project.
  - Trust and communication as two critical pieces for both seeking community input/feedback and to begin creating resilient communities. Newly established networks and relationships are often lost when projects are not funded for another round, leading community members to see city staff as unreliable.
  - Communication issues with barriers in outreach methods and language support are wider system issues that cannot be resolved by grant projects alone.
- New community-driven processes founded on a leap of faith to (again) trust city officials cannot be rushed, especially by government agencies and bodies. This leads to community members feeling disrespected and disenfranchised, which justify community distrust in city staff.

### **Partners and Other Support:**

Include a list of all project partners and describe their role in supporting/assisting in the project.

- The following offices and organizations contributed to this assessment through their participation in the project planning committee throughout this process:
  - **City of Medford Offices:** Health Department, including the Office of Prevention, Office of Community Development; Office of Energy & Environment; Office of Diversity; Office of Veterans Affairs; Police Department
  - **Organizations:** Medford Health Matters; Medford Housing Authority
- The City of Medford Health Department, including the Office of Prevention and Outreach, the Medford Food Security Taskforce, the Medical Reserve Corps, and “R U OK?” volunteers worked on the “R U OK?” program, of which collected information contributed to this assessment.
- The following offices and organizations contributed to this assessment through their participation in the Organizational Interviews and Readiness Evaluation in March 2020:
  - **City of Medford Offices:** Council on Aging; Department of Recreation
  - **Organizations:** Cambridge Health Alliance; Medford Health Matters; Medford Housing Authority; MelroseWakefield Healthcare - Women, Infants and Children (WIC); Mystic Valley Elder Services; Tufts University; Walnut Street Center; Wayside Youth and Family Services; West Medford Community Center
- Medford community members shared their time, stories, and input during the Climate & Community Resilience Community Conversation in May 2020.
  - Volunteer facilitation and presentation support for the Climate & Community Resilience Community Conversation in May 2020
- The following offices and organizations contributed to this assessment through their participation in the Big Table mini-series in May 2020:
  - Medford Health Matters co-organized and co-hosted the Climate & Community Resilience Community Conversation and the Big Table discussions in May 2020.
  - **City of Medford Offices:** Health Department, including the Office of Prevention and Outreach; Medford Public Schools; Office of Veterans Affairs
  - **Organizations:** Alliance for Inclusion and Prevention; Cambridge Health Alliance; Safe Medford; Greater Boston Food Bank; Medford Food Security Taskforce; Medford Housing Authority; MelroseWakefield Healthcare - Women, Infants and Children (WIC); Tufts University; Wayside Youth and Family Services; West Medford Community Center

- **Grant Coordinators and Report Authors:** Andreanne Breton-Carbonneau, Climate, Health and Equity Coordinator, and Alexa Griffiths, student intern from Tufts University
- **Graphic Design:** Jess Choi
- **Consultants:** Kim Lundgren Associates provided support and guidance throughout this process, as well as writing Task 3 of this assessment.
- **Translators:** Baystate Interpreters provided language services throughout this process

**Project Photos:**

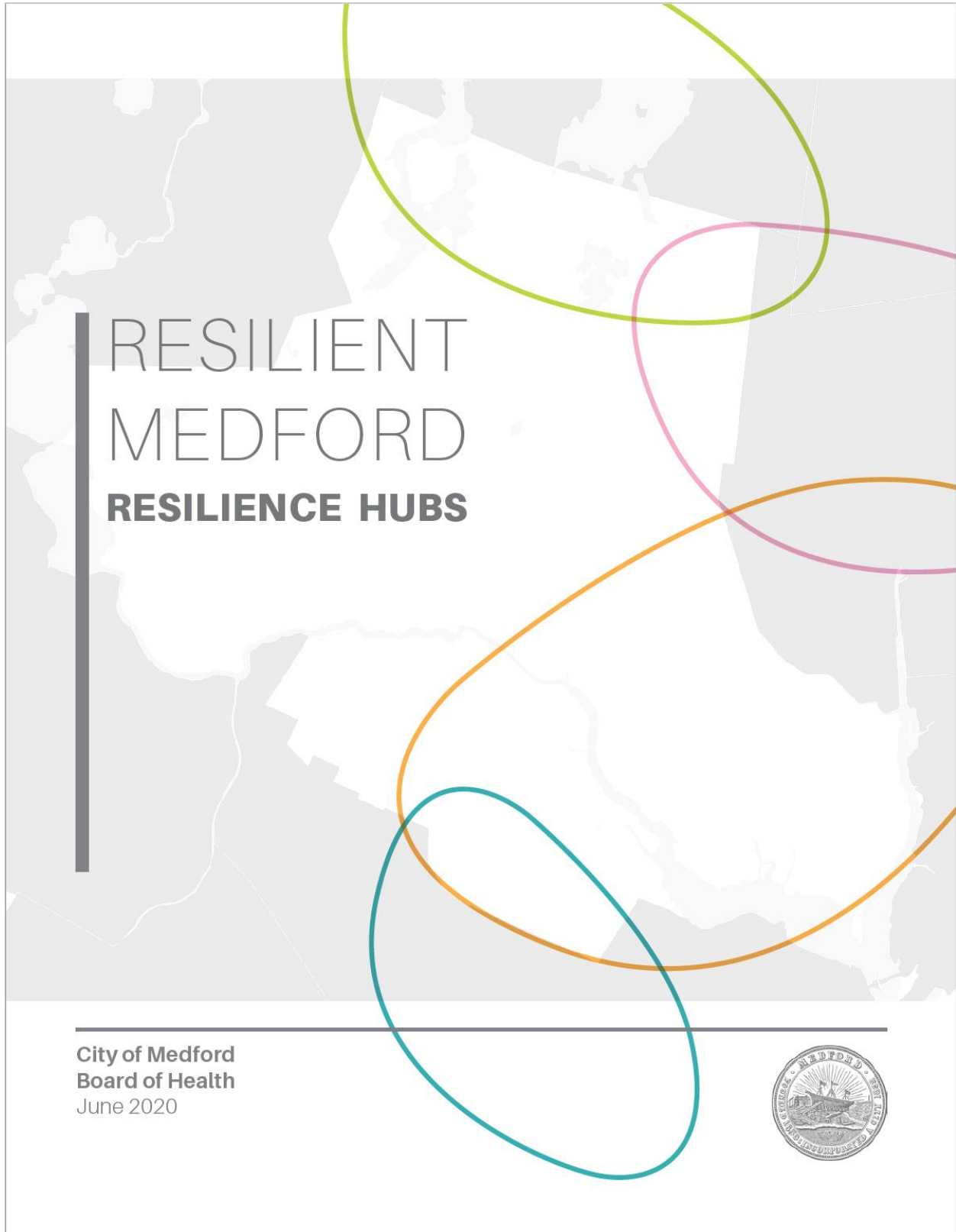
In your electronic submission of this report, please attach (as .jpg) a few representative photos of the project. Photos cannot show persons who can be easily identified, and avoid inclusion of any copyrighted, trademarked, or branded logos in the images.

Photo Appendix

Due to the pandemic, all events and data collection were transitioned to online platforms and we have limited photos of the project. However, we have attached images that help represent the work of this project.

- A. Final Report Cover
- B. Map of Community Services & Resources in Medford
- C. Graph of Community Resources and Climate Vulnerability in Medford
- D. Flyers for Community Conversations and Community-Based Organizations Big Tables
- E. Highlights from Haitian and Brazilian Participants
- F. Vision for Resilience Hubs
- G. Map of Potential Candidate Sites for a Resilience Hubs

A. Final Report Cover Sheet



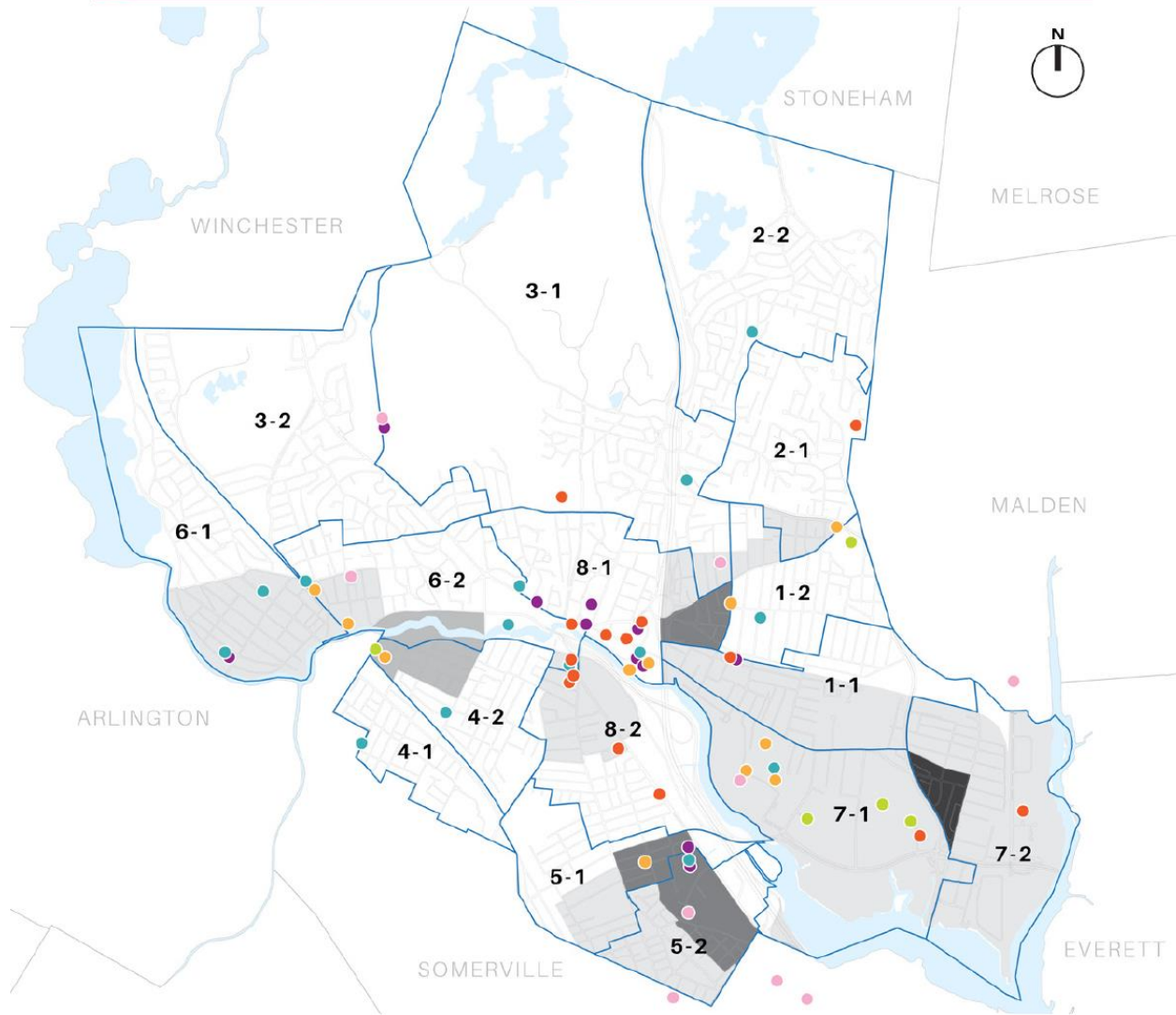
RESILIENT  
MEDFORD  
**RESILIENCE HUBS**

City of Medford  
Board of Health  
June 2020



B. Map of Community Services & Resources in Medford

**Figure 1.1** Community Services & Resources Map



**LEGEND**

**Community Services & Resources**

- Affordable Childcare
- Mass Health
- Affordable Housing
- Supermarkets
- Food Resources
- Community Resources

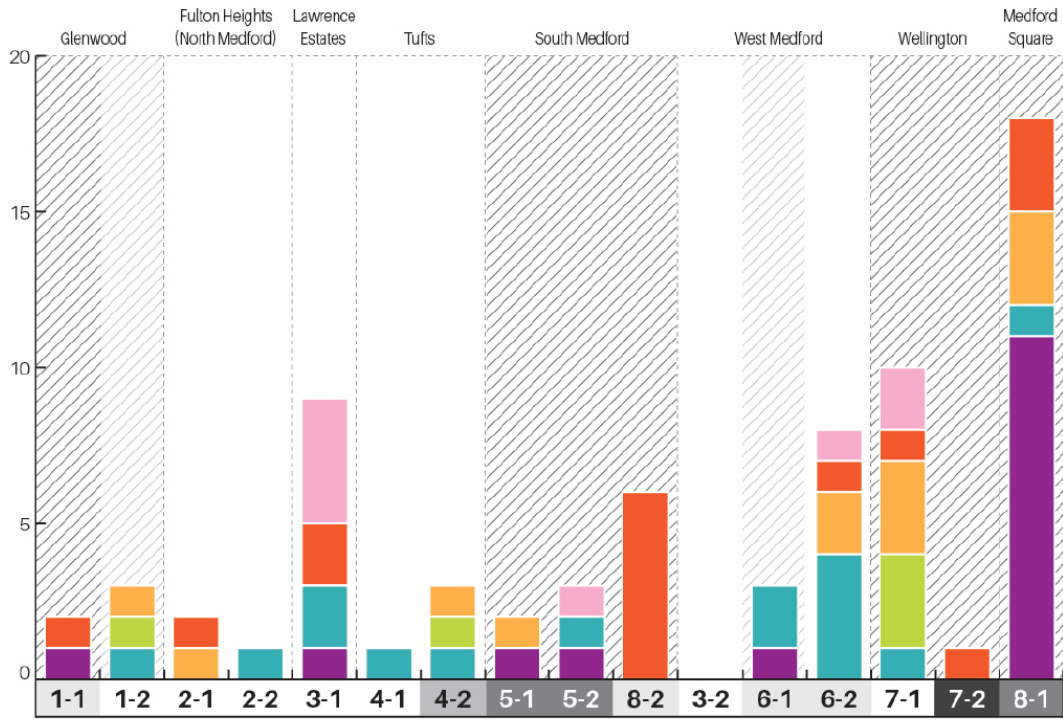
**Environmental Justice Criteria**

- Minority
- Income
- Minority + Income
- Minority + English Isolation

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C. Graph of Community Resources and Climate Vulnerability in Medford

**Figure 1.3** Evaluative table of Medford services by ward-precinct, cross-referencing known climate change vulnerability



**LEGEND**

**Community Services & Resources**

- Affordable Childcare
- Mass Health
- Affordable Housing
- Supermarkets
- Food Resources
- Community Resources

**Environmental Justice Criteria**

- Minority
  - Income
  - Minority + Income
  - Minority + English Isolation
- Communities facing reduced adaptive capacity*

**Climate Change Vulnerability**

- Higher Sensitivity
  - Highest Sensitivity
- Communities facing greater levels of sensitivity*

D. Flyers for Community Conversations and Community-Based Organizations Big Tables





CLIMATE &  
COMMUNITY  
RESILIENCE

## JOIN OUR COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

From risk to resiliency.

WHEN: SATURDAY, MAY 9  
FROM: 9:00 - 10:30 AM  
WHERE: ZOOM  
BONUS: \$20 STOP&SHOP GIFT CARD  
LIMITED SPACE - REGISTER ONLINE!



<http://www.medfordma.org/climate-community-resilience-may-9-2020/>

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY OF MEDFORD BOARD OF HEALTH

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE CITY OF MEDFORD BOARD OF HEALTH



## BIG TABLE BIG IDEAS

From risk to resiliency.

## CLIMATE & COMMUNITY RESILIENCE

**DISCUSSION 1**  
WHEN: THUR, MAY 14  
FROM: 3:15 - 4:30 PM  
WHERE: ZOOM

**DISCUSSION 2**  
WHEN: THUR, MAY 28  
FROM: 3:15 - 4:30 PM  
WHERE: ZOOM

*BONUS: Participating groups may elect a local community group for a grocery store gift card!*

## E. Highlights from Haitian and Brazilian Participants

### Highlights from Haitian and Brazilian Communities

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Four themes were highlighted from conversations with Haitian and Brazilian communities:

1. Limited language support and limited city outreach in other languages restrict participants who speak languages other than English. Haitian and Brazilian participants expressed, "either through negligence or a limited capacity, information is just not reaching our community".
2. Participants suggested City Hall and other agencies provide information directly to their places of community, like churches and OASIS Restaurant, and to utilize social media platforms like WhatsApp to improve communication
3. Racism was referenced as a critical barrier by Haitian participants to feeling supported by the Medford community, through tokenism, "English-only" initiatives, "colorblindness", and general attitudes towards the Haitian community. Haitian participants want representation in City Hall and local organizations.
4. Language support services were said to be crucial for Resilience Hubs. Haitian and Brazilian participants both envisioned a resource center with language capacity that connects individuals and families.

*Racism was referenced as a critical barrier by Haitian participants...*

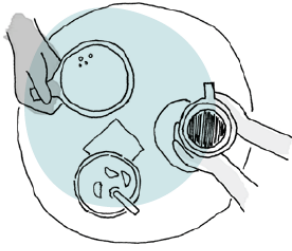
#### KEY WORD

**Anti-racism** includes beliefs, actions, and policies adopted or developed to directly oppose racism and change policies, practices, or procedures that have racist effects.

## F. Vision for Resilience Hubs

## Vision for Resilience Hubs

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### **Social Connection: Multi-use gathering center**

Resilience Hubs could serve as a space to host community events and recreational activities that involve multiple community groups. Hubs could function as a safe space wherein community connections are fostered across people of diverse backgrounds.

- Ideas included cafés that invite community members to stop in.
- Suggested using Resilience Hubs as a space for universal and inclusive recreation, designed for all community members with an awareness of different groups' needs.



### **Community Engagement: Center for Community Organizing**

Organizations foresee the opportunity for community engagement within Resilience Hubs. Hubs could host community-wide discussions and could function as a gateway to local volunteer groups.

- Recommended recruiting and retaining staff of color in Resilience Hubs as providers and organizers.
- A shared permanent or drop-in workspace for community providers.



### **Information Access: Communications center**

Organizations envisioned Resilience Hubs as a centralized communications center where residents can easily access information on available resources.

- Engage multi-sectoral partnerships and improve communications between City Hall, organizations, and residents.
- Information stations to advertise events, available community grants, or application guides for public services.



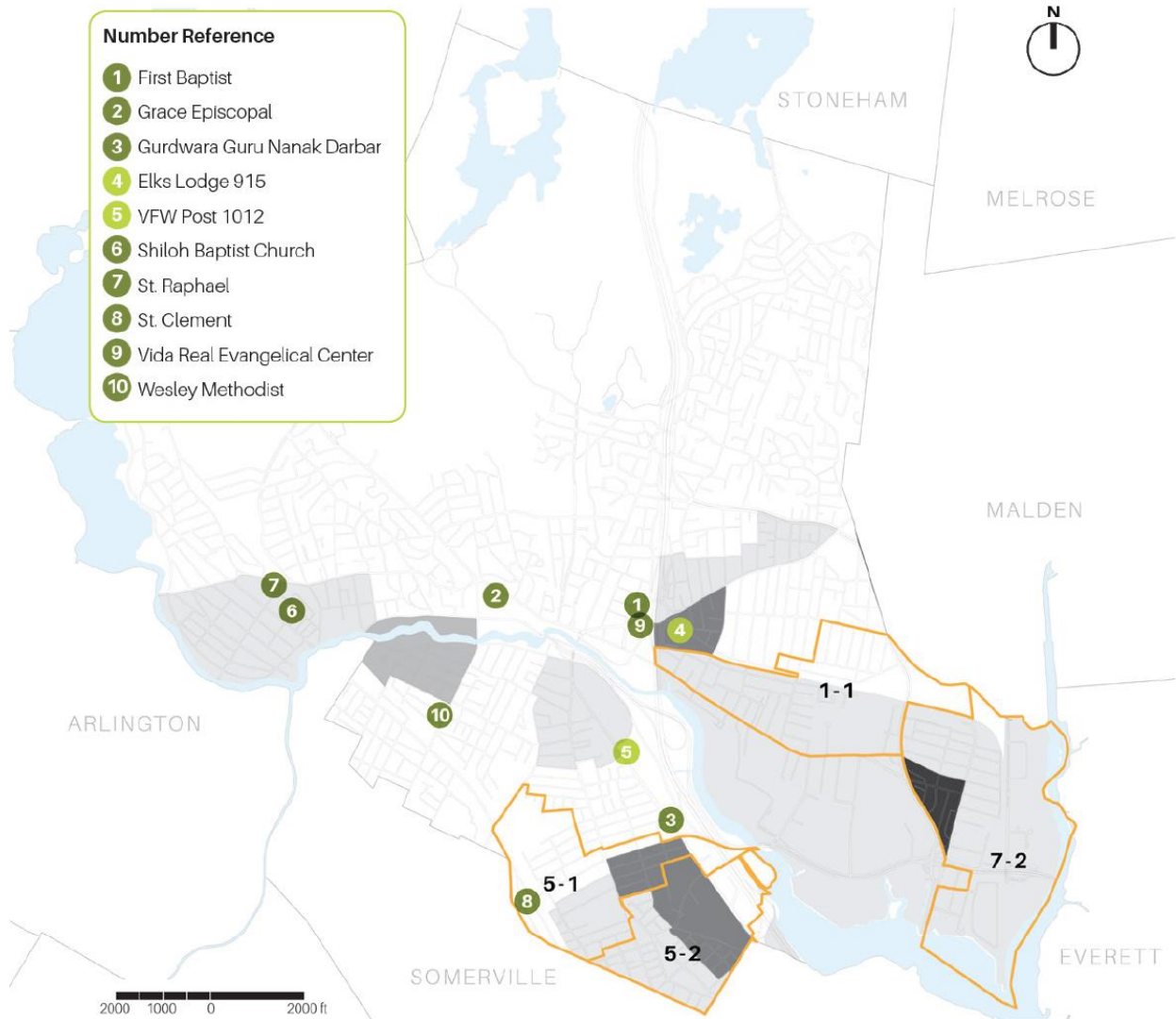
### **Collaborative Response: Regional Efforts**

Organizations suggested that Resilience Hubs encourage regional collaboration. While some Hubs may be in Medford, organizations spoke to the strengths of a nodal network with neighboring municipalities.

- Could create more comprehensive preparedness plans to support gaps in capacity in lower-resource municipalities.
- Helps reduce confusion for organizations that support folks across different municipalities.

## G. Map of Potential Candidate Sites for a Resilience Hubs

**Figure 3.1** Potential Resilience Hub Sites Map



**LEGEND**

**Environmental Justice Criteria**

- Minority
- Income
- Minority + Income
- Minority + English Isolation

**Precincts & Neighborhoods**

- 1-1 (Glenwood)
- 5-1 (South Medford)
- 5-2 (South Medford)
- 7-2 (Wellington)

**Candidate Locations**

- Social Clubs
- Religious