Suitability Assessment for Equitable, Community-Driven Resilience Hubs in Medford

City of Medford

Board of Health

Community Overview

City of Medford

- **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

- 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 working adults: **$76,784**

- 31.6% of Medford families have incomes **$75,000**

Climate changes presents 3 major health threats

Extreme Heat

Physical impacts: Drought and urban heat islands

Impacts to **health & wellbeing**:
- Stressed food systems
- High demand on water
- Heat-related illness

Extreme Precipitation

Physical impacts: Heavy downpours and flooding

Impacts to **health & wellbeing**:
- Sewage overflow
- Dirty drinking water
- Insect-spread diseases

Storms

Physical impacts: Damaged infrastructure and restricted mobility

Impact to **health & wellbeing**:
- Burdened health systems
- Infectious disease risk
- Weakened economy

Resilience Hubs are a concept by the Urban Sustainability Directors Network (USDN) meant to empower communities and increase community capacity to prepare, respond, and recover from climate change and other emergencies.

Project Goals

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.*

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

Resilient Medford Resilience Hubs Project

Approach: assess Medford's ability to withstand climate events from a public health perspective by 3 main tasks

Task 1: Where ?

Task 2: What ?

Task 3: How ?

1 – Identify Priority Service Areas

- Based on neighborhood resources, sensitivity to climate change, and adaptive capacity

2 – Evaluate Climate Preparedness

- Gauge adaptability of vulnerable residents to climate impacts
- Listen to residents on resilience concerns and amplify voices of those facing social inequities
- Engage providers in discussions to understand resilient programming to support constituents

3 – Explore Candidate Service Areas

- Evaluate their ability to accommodate resilient programming and advance equitable community resilience

Task 2 Breakdown

Gauge adaptability of vulnerable residents to climate impacts

- **Resident Adaptive Capacity:** City of Medford established the "R U OK?" program to respond to residents' needs during the COVID-19 pandemic, which informed the city of resident ability to adapt

Task 2 Breakdown

Listen to residents on resilience concerns and amplify voices of those facing social inequities

- **Resident Community Conversations:** residents provided input on community resilience in Medford

Q1 How do we as a community build safe spaces and trusting relationships?

Q2 What resilient programming would you like to see in Resilience Hubs?

Task 2 Breakdown

Engage providers in discussions to understand resilient programming to support constituents

- **Organizational Interviews:** 11 organizations evaluated by an organizational readiness survey assessing 9 criteria
- **Big Table Discussions:** invited providers to brainstorm ways to strengthen connections and build community resilience in Medford

Q1	How do we create safe spaces & build trusting relationships?
Q2	How do we become a more prepared city?
Q3	How do we develop a resilient Medford?
Q4	Vision for Resilience Hubs

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

MEDFORD HEALTH MATTERS

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MEDFORD HEALTH MATTERS

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

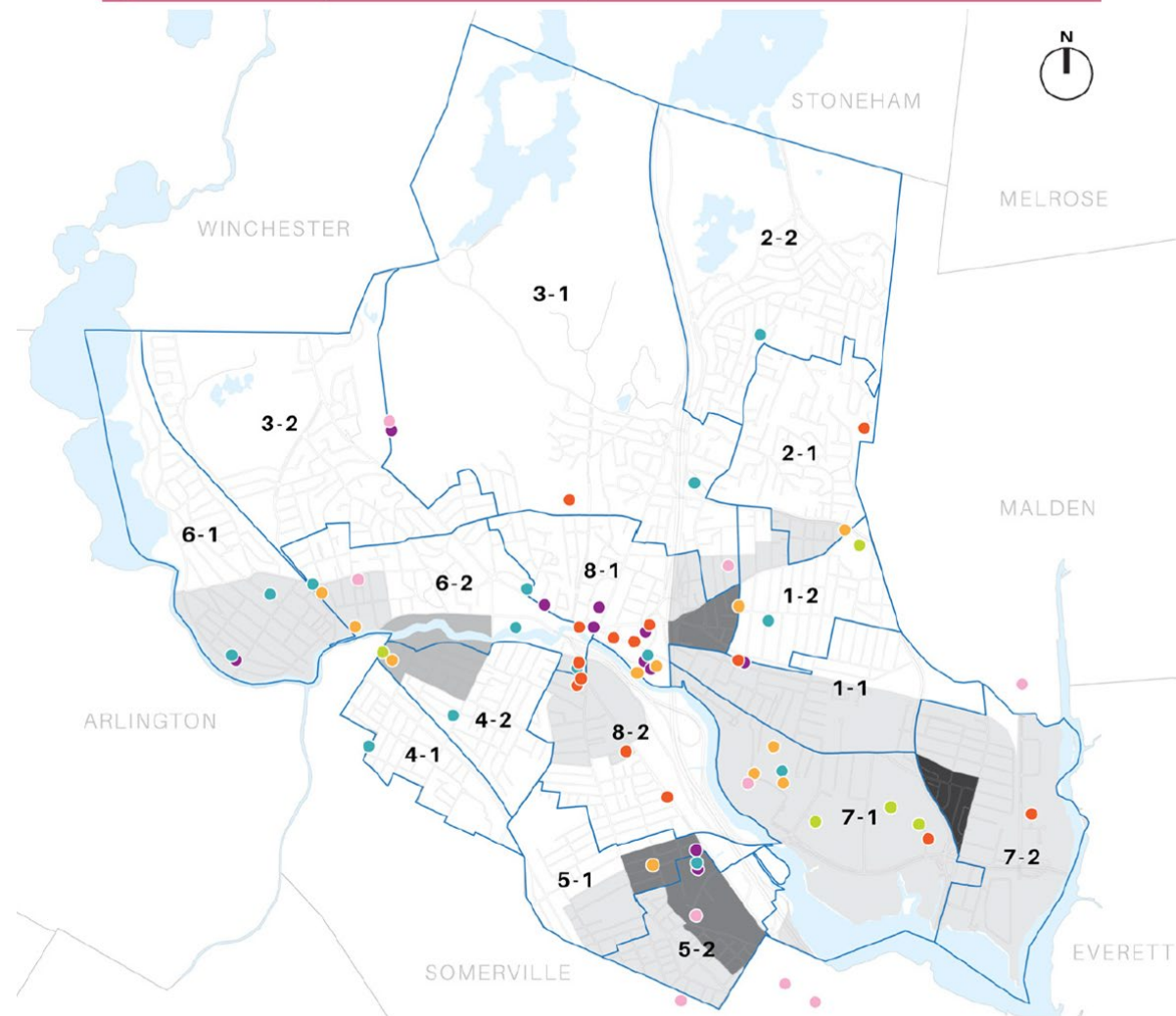DISCUSSION 2
WHEN: THUR, MAY 28
FROM: 3:15 - 4:30 PM
WHERE: ZOOM

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

Task 2
Flyers

Results

Task 1

- **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

Figure 1.1 Community Services & Resources Map

Task 1
Map

WINCHESTER

STONEHAM

MELROSE

2-2

3-1

3-2

2-1

MALDEN

6-1

8-1

6-2

1-2

1-1

ARLINGTON

4-2

8-2

4-1

7-1

7-2

5-1

5-2

SOMERVILLE

EVERETT

LEGEND

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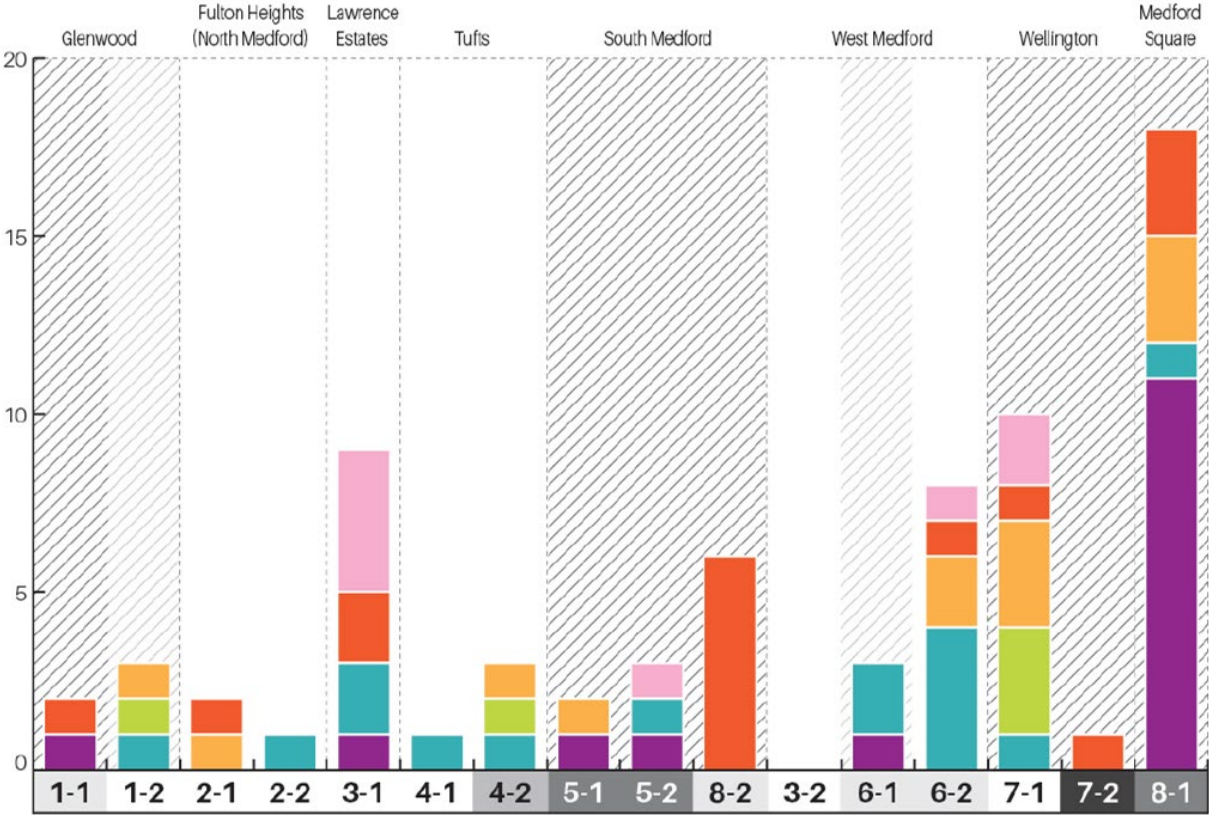- Community Resources

Environmental Justice Criteria
- Minority
- Income
- Minority + Income
- Minority + English Isolation

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

Task 1 Graph

LEGEND

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

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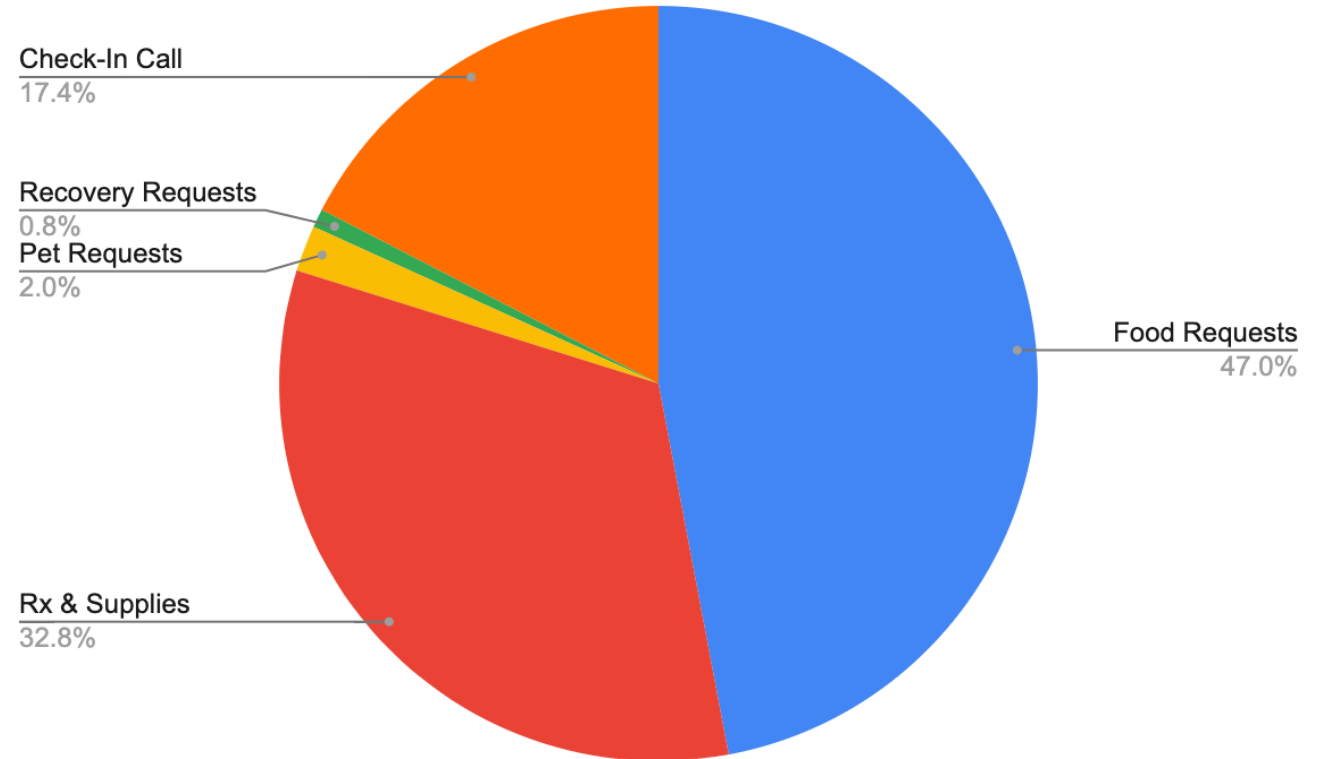*Communities facing reduced adaptive capacity*

Climate Change Vulnerability
- Higher Sensitivity
- Highest Sensitivity

Communities facing greater levels of sensitivity

Task 2 : Resident Adaptive Capacity

"R U OK?" Program Survey

- Majority of requests were for **food (47.0%),** medication and personnel supplies (32.8%) and support for social isolation via check-in calls (17.4%)

- The considerable need for food and medication emphasizes the **importance of improving our local food and health systems**

Check-In Call
17.4%

Recovery Requests
0.8%

Pet Requests
2.0%

Food Requests
47.0%

Rx & Supplies
32.8%

*Many "R U OK?" respondents are seniors 60+ with voting status

Community Conversation Takeaways

Q1 How do we as a community build safe spaces and trusting relationships?
- Cultivate **belonging and encourage diversity**
- Address communication barriers particularly **language barriers** and **racism**

Q2 What resilient programming would you like to see in Resilience Hubs?
- Programs that **build community** (intergenerational and multicultural activities)
- **Accessible information and resources** (language services, affordable access, wellness services)

Highlights from Haitian and Brazilian Communities

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.

Organizational Readiness Takeaways

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.

Organizational Discussion Takeaways

Q1 How do we create safe spaces & build trusting relationships?
- Promote a sense of community
- **Institutionalize equitable change** and take **an anti-racist stance**

Q2 How do we become a more prepared city?
- Address concerns for the impacts of climate change
  - Emphasize **social justice** and support **socially vulnerable populations**
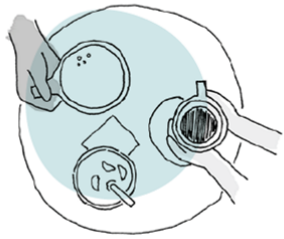- Build capacity

Q3 How do we develop a resilient Medford?
- Focus on **programming residents needs**

Vision for Resilience Hubs

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

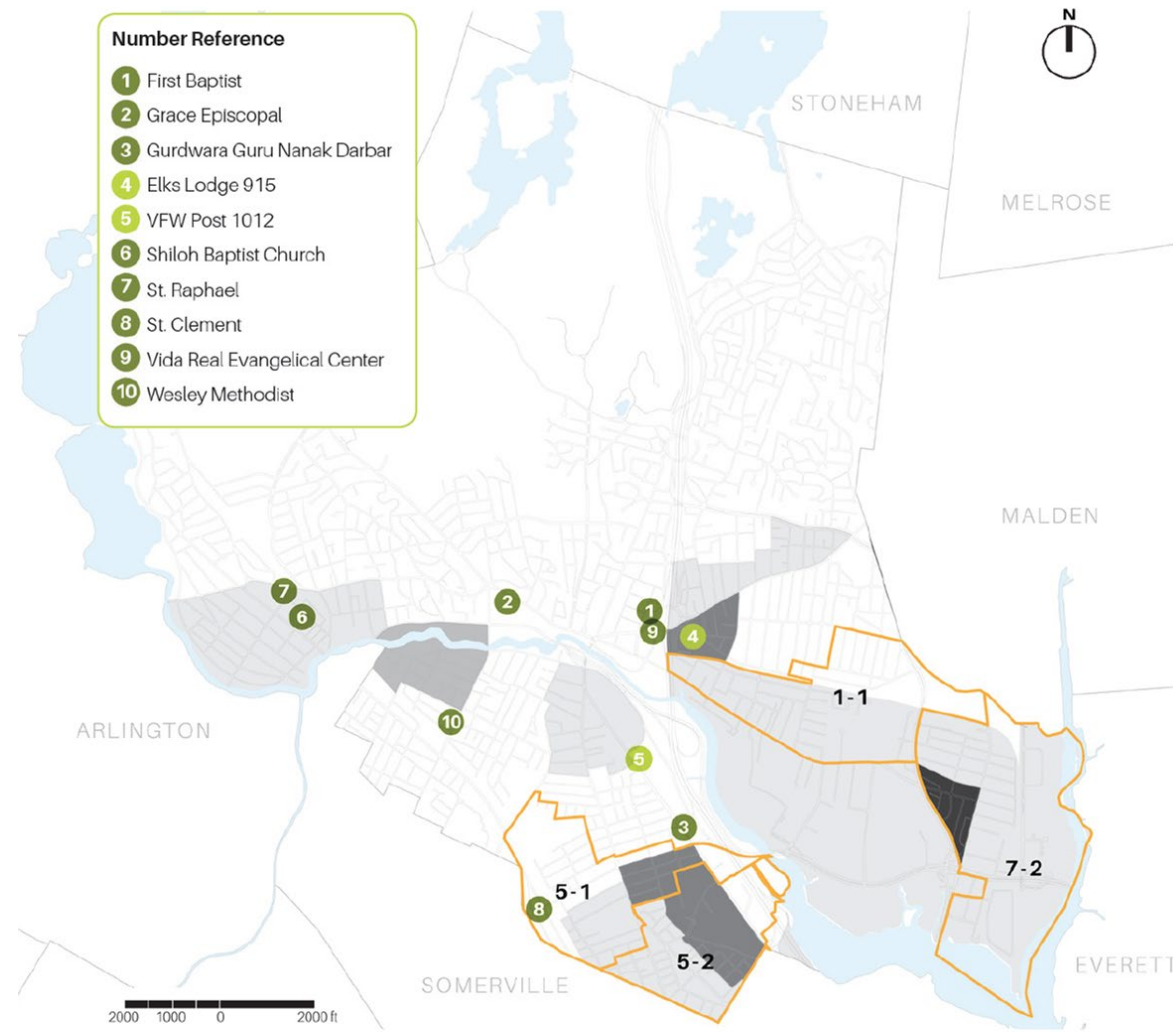Organizations suggested that Resilience Hubs encourage regional collaboration. While some Hubs may be in Medford, organizations spoke to the strengths of a nodal network with neighboring municipalities.

- 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.

Task 3

- **P**reliminary analysis of potential sites identified only **one candidate facility** (St. Clement Church) in a priority area, though not located in the EJ neighborhood section.
- **9 overall sites** were within or close to an EJ neighborhood

Figure 3.1 Potential Resilience Hub Sites Map

Task 3 Map

Number Reference
1. First Baptist
2. Grace Episcopal
3. Gurdwara Guru Nanak Darbar
4. Elks Lodge 915
5. VFW Post 1012
6. Shiloh Baptist Church
7. St. Raphael
8. St. Clement
9. Vida Real Evangelical Center
10. Wesley Methodist

STONEHAM

MELROSE

MALDEN

ARLINGTON

EVERETT

SOMERVILLE

2000 1000 0 2000 ft

LEGEND

Environmental Justice Criteria
- Minority
- Income
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Precincts & Neighborhoods
- 1-1 (Glenwood)
- 5-1 (South Medford)
- 5-2 (South Medford)
- 7-2 (Wellington)

Candidate Locations
- Social Clubs
- Religious

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

Grant project funded by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy & Environmental Affairs Municipality Vulnerability Preparedness Program

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; Council on Aging; Department of Recreation; Police Department; Medford Public Schools.

Organizations: Medford Health Matters; Medford Housing Authority; 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 ; Mystic Valley Elder Services;Walnut Street Center.