

Childhood Prosperity Lab

Co-Design Summary Report: Increasing Visibility of the Community Resource Map

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Increasing Visibility of the Community Resource Map

North Hartford Ascend Co-Design Session

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Childhood Prosperity Lab partnered with North Hartford Ascend and The Connecticut Data Collaborative to explore how to increase awareness and utilization of the Community Resource Map, a resident-informed tool designed to connect families to programs, services, and supports throughout the North Hartford Promise Zone. The map is currently featured on the North Hartford Ascend website and paid advertising has contributed to additional dissemination. Although the map has evolved over time, community members continue to report that the resource lacks visibility and is not reaching as many residents as intended.

CPL facilitated a co-design session with eight residents. Using Human-Centered Design methodologies, participants reflected on the map's strengths, challenges, and opportunities for promoting the resource. Residents consistently described the Community Resource Map as a valuable tool and that awareness of the resource remains low. Participants emphasized that increased visibility—not major redesign—is the primary need, specifically citing social media marketing, the Ascend website, and Community Conversations as the most effective approaches for reaching families.

Specific recommendations include:

- Leverage social media marketing to increase visibility of the resource.
 - Expand social media promotion.
 - Place QR codes in community spaces such as libraries, schools, farmers markets, and health centers.
- Identify community champions who can spread the word about the map, especially youth.
 - Conduct community-based outreach.
 - Update existing promotional materials to feature more engaging messaging, family-centered imagery, and direct QR code access to the map.
 - Identify and leverage community champions and youth ambassadors.

Overall, findings suggest that the Community Resource Map is meeting an important community need, but strategic investments in marketing, community partnerships, and resident-led outreach are necessary to maximize its visibility, utilization, and impact.

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CHILDHOOD PROSPERITY LAB

[Childhood Prosperity Lab](#) (the Lab) advances social innovations that support the optimal health, development, and well-being of children, families and communities where they live, learn, work, play and pray. Collaboration is key to our work. We partner with practitioners, service providers, families and changemakers across Connecticut and beyond to improve child health outcomes. Our multidisciplinary team at Connecticut Children's brings expertise in family sciences, child development, public health and more to drive impactful change. The Lab has three core components that are unique to our approach:

- Co-designing solutions in partnership with children, families and communities using human-centered design approaches and methodologies;
- Strengthening family and community protective factors; and
- Advancing systems change to help children and families thrive in all areas of life.

NORTH HARTFORD ASCEND

[North Hartford Ascend](#) ([Ascend](#)) is a prenatal-to-career initiative to ensure children living in the North Hartford Promise Zone—which includes the Clay Arsenal, Northeast, and Upper Albany neighborhoods—have the support they need to reach their full potential. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Promise Neighborhoods Grant Program, Connecticut Children's is facilitating a cross-sector team of early childhood experts, community leaders, community-based organizations, and residents to identify community priorities and enhance the academic, health, and quality of life outcomes of North Hartford Promise Zone residents.

PROJECT OVERVIEW & SCOPE OF PARTNERSHIP

North Hartford Ascend and Childhood Prosperity Lab are two initiatives in Connecticut Children's that partner with CT Data Collaborative (CTData), an organization that seeks to connect individuals and communities with data to promote informed decision-making and to advance equity in Connecticut. Hartford Data Collaborative (HDC) is a key partner of North Hartford

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Ascend, co-leading development and implementation of the Data and Evaluation infrastructure in collaboration with University of Hartford's Center for Social Research. In 2023, HDC introduced the first draft of the Community Resource Map (the Map) (then titled the "Neighborhood Profile & Mapping Project") to the Ascend Family Navigation Work Group.

In response to an identified community priority, the interactive tool visually presents North Hartford Ascend providers by service category and developmental stage using a geospatial information system. The Map was designed to be widely used and accessed by family navigators, providers, and residents in the community so as to improve outreach, inform program strategies, and increase awareness and access to community resources. To optimize the design of the tool, specifically its utility and content, CT Data and the Lab partnered to co-design the Map with residents in the community.

Since designing the Map with care coordinators, family navigators, and residents in the community in 2022, it has been linked to the North Hartford Ascend website and utilized by service providers in the community to help connect families to services. Despite the evolution of the Maps' design and availability, community has emphasized that it is still not as visible, and therefore as utilized, as it needs to be.

Through co-design, the Lab and HDC explored how Ascend can increase visibility of the Community Resource Map in depth with residents and community so that they can set direction for their needs, goals, and priorities within the system.

OUR APPROACH: METHODOLOGIES & FACILITATION

The Lab team members are trained Human-Centered Design (HCD) practitioners. The Lab defines HCD as a methodological framework for centering the needs, goals, and perspectives of children, families, communities and other key stakeholders in the design, implementation, and evaluation of social innovations. Team members from the Lab are certified HCD Practitioners, specializing in the 36 methods that comprise the LUMA Framework.

A Conversation on Increasing Visibility of the Tool

Childhood Prosperity Lab engaged eight residents at Parker Memorial Community Center from 5:30-7:00 PM on June 1st. Of those that attended the session, 50% reside in the Northeast neighborhood; 37.5% reside in Upper Albany, and 12.5% reside in Clay Arsenal.

Before activities ensued, participants enjoyed a catered meal from a local restaurant. The Program Manager of the Lab welcomed participants into the space, shared the agenda for the session, and relayed insights from previous co-design sessions; this included a summary of how the Community Resource Map was co-designed with residents and Family Navigators in 2024. Providing context from former sessions helped to describe the tools' current interface.

Methodologies

After a comprehensive introduction to the Community Resource Map, inclusive of a live demonstration of how to navigate the tool, participants were prompted to individually reflect on the strengths and challenges of the tool – framed by the *Rose, Thorn, Bud* methodology (LUMA Institute, 2026). Rose, Thorn, Bud is a color-coded system for holistically reflecting on a data set,

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resource, or lived experience. Participants document their feedback on pink and blue sticky notes which are then organized for thematic review. Individual reflections were collected by the Lab team and organized onto a large easel pad for a group report out. Inputs that emerged from the conversation included:

- **Roses (strengths):**
 - The pop-up feature when a user hovers over a resource is very informative – specifically the contact information and program description.
 - It is helpful that multiple resources are available.
 - It is simple to use.
 - The table-view offers a different way of absorbing information.
 - The filter system to explore categories in more detail.
- **Thorns (challenges):**
 - There are a handful of programs and resources that are missing.
 - Hovering over locations can be a bit challenging and requires zooming in on a phone.
 - The map key should be shown on the map itself.
 - The resource table is less mobile friendly.

As a follow-up activity, the facilitator listed all of the current ways the map is currently available on the whiteboard and asked participants to vote on which method is most effective at reaching residents. The voting activity was facilitated as a round robin.

While all of the dissemination strategies are important, the goal of this activity was to build consensus, if any, on what might be most effective to dedicate more resources to. The activity was inspired by *Visualize the Vote*, a methodology for real-time prioritization and facilitated as a *Round Robin* so that everyone's voice could be heard and *Round Robin* (LUMA Institute, 2026). The top three strategies included: **social media marketing, the Ascend website, and Community Conversations.**

These activities organically segued into a large group discussion and open-ended brainstorming. Participants shared their bold ideas for how to update existing materials, listed organizations who can support dissemination – such as CRT, Our Piece of the Pie, and Wheeler Clinic – and detailed marketing strategies that the Ascend network should consider.

KEY LEARNINGS & FINDINGS

It became clear throughout the conversation that residents and caregivers in the three Ascend neighborhoods find the map to be a valuable resource, but affirmed that the resource is not as visible as it needs to be. One participant shared that “*it [the map] would be utilized if people knew about it.*” In addition to continuing to elevate the map at Community Conversations, participants unanimously agreed that social media will be the most effective dissemination strategy for increasing awareness. In addition to leveraging Ascend's Facebook and Instagram page, participants recommended that QR codes of the map be posted at farmers markets, libraries, schools, community centers and printed onto North Hartford Ascend swag (t-shirts, etc.). While leveraging technology was the initial recommendation, participants also generated boots on the ground, paper-based solutions including: inserting the QR code into back-to-school packets for

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families, community canvassing efforts, and partnering with health centers to get the map on a TV of rotating slides in their waiting rooms.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK & IMPACT

At the end of the session, participants were asked to provide their feedback through a quality and satisfaction survey. Seven of the eight participants completed the survey.

Of the feedback collected:

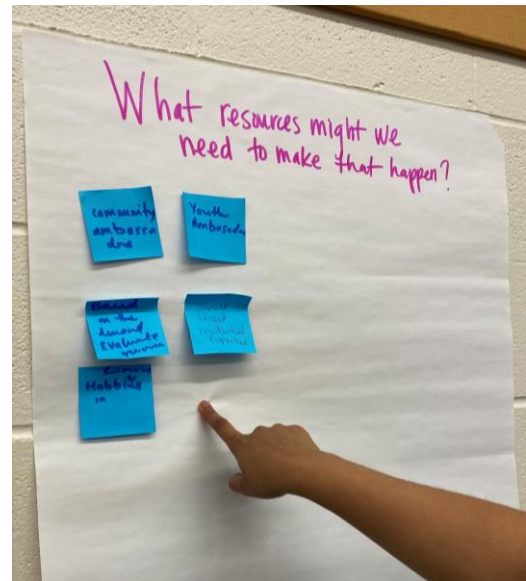
- 100% strongly agree or agree that they felt a sense of community, a protective factor for health and well-being.
- 100% strongly agree or agree that there was ample opportunity for participation.
- 100% strongly agree or agree that the activities were interactive and engaging.

**"The food was great.
Everyone was friendly and
listened very well. I felt
heard."**

RECOMMENDATIONS & NEXT STEPS

The following recommendations are informed by the feedback from residents who participated in the co-design session. The recommendations are intended to be concrete next steps in the short-term for North Hartford Ascend and their network of partners:

- **Update the postcard featuring the Community Resource Map and disseminate it through diverse channels:** Early in the conversation, Childhood Prosperity Lab team members listed the different ways in which the map is currently being disseminated, which includes a postcard designed by a local vendor, 14G. Participants reviewed physical copies of the material and shared detailed feedback for quality improvement. Participants recommended that the slogan be updated to *"Community Resources: Just a Click Away"* versus the current *"Real Help. Real Results."* Tagline. Residents emphasized that not everyone feels comfortable asking for help, and therefore the current framing may deter people from reading more. Participants also recommended that 14G update the photo on the front to a fun, bright image of a family and children to grab the viewers' attention. The current image of someone holding a phone is not as engaging. Lastly, participants recommend that a QR code that links to the map be added to the back of the postcard for easy access. Participants recommended that the postcard be



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sent to physical addresses, posted in apartment building bulletins, and added to back-to-school packets.

- **Leverage social media marketing to increase visibility of the resource:** Participants agreed that social media is an effective strategy, especially if programs are highlighted seasonally to drive traffic to the map. For example, participants suggested that 2-3 summer camps or childcare options be featured in the summer because those are common resources being sought at that time of year. Not only does this effort elevate programs, but provides a regular opportunity to highlight the map as a centralized resource. Participants also suggested more lighthearted, fun ideas for increasing visibility of the map and its featured resources. One resident referenced the “Pokémon Go” app from 2016, which gained national traction at the time. At its launch, the app drew in massive crowds of people exploring their neighborhoods to catch Pokémon via an augmented reality. Other participants echoed this idea, sharing that a Community Resource Scavenger Hunt could be an interactive, engaging Community Conversation or other Community and Family Engagement activity.
- **Identify community champions who can spread the word about the map, especially youth:** Participants recommended that in addition to the aforementioned strategies for dissemination, providers partner with “Community Champions” such as CRT, Our Piece of the Pie, and Wheeler Clinic who can spread the word about the resource to their wide audiences. Participants agreed that engaging youth as ambassadors of the tool could help to engage that catchment as users. One participant shared with the group that students at Weaver High School need to complete a minimum number of volunteer hours with an organization to graduate, and suggested that canvassing for the tool might be an opportunity to get youth engaged in their community. This recommendation will be explored in an upcoming co-design session the week of June 8th, 2026. Childhood Prosperity Lab is facilitating a series of co-design sessions with youth that dive deeper into the following topics:
 - After school Activities, Extracurriculars, & Other Programs & Services
 - Participation in Ascend Leadership & Decision-Making
 - Social Media, Marketing & Communications
 - Community & Family Engagement

STAY CONNECTED

- **Email:** childhoodprosperitylab@connecticutchildrens.org
- **Facebook:** Connecticut Children’s Community Child Health
- **LinkedIn:** Connecticut Children’s Office for Community Child Health
- [Advancing Kids Blog](#)

RESOURCES

- [North Hartford Ascend Community Resource Map](#)
- [YouTube Video: Navigating the Community Resource Map](#)