Transforming East Chicago: A youth survey

Greenhouse Fellowship

A report of findings from the 2015 survey of East Chicago youth

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Greenhouse Fellowship Inc.

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Table of Contents

Transforming East Chicago: A youth survey

Executive Summary

The purpose of *Transforming East Chicago: A youth survey* is to give youth in East Chicago a voice so that community leaders, stakeholders, organizations, and residents can create spaces and opportunities based on the needs they express. A total of 1,519 surveys were collected from six schools.

We believe that the results of this survey could impact the future of East Chicago by emphasizing the importance of youth involvement within their community. Including youth voice in decision-making may lead to an increased population of civically engaged East Chicagoans.

Findings from this survey indicate that:

- East Chicago youth tend to spend more time in parks than they do in other community spaces. This may be in part to its free access and its outdoor setting. While the public parks may be locations where youth in East Chicago are located, youth did not identify parks as safe places. Most East Chicago youth that took the survey feel the safest in their homes.
- East Chicago youth are quite hopeful for their city. They, at a rate of almost 75%, believe that problems in East Chicago can be solved over time.
- The division of East Chicago neighborhoods may be causing most of the conflict in the community.
- Survey participants believe that authoritative figures in schools abuse their powers and that youth are looked down upon because of how they dress.
- East Chicago ages 11 through 21 are interested in sports, and would benefit from facilities that meet these needs.
- East Chicago youth would care more about their city if they were more involved in decision-making.

Based on the findings we suggest the following recommendations:

1. Anyone in a position to create change in East Chicago should engage youth to participate in these decision-making processes.
2. The city of East Chicago should conduct a more thorough investigation related to the needs and wants of youth in East Chicago.
3. School officials should find ways to unify students while they are in school.
4. Instead of creating opportunities in every neighborhood (i.e. building a soccer field in every neighborhood of East Chicago), city officials should find ways to create more neutral spaces for all youth of East Chicago to come together collectively.
5. Adults in East Chicago should humanize all youth and recognize their leadership potential.
6. Adults in East Chicago should develop ways to collaborate across neighborhood boundaries.

Background Information

East Chicago, Indiana

East Chicago, Indiana is a small city with fewer than 30,000 people, about twenty-five miles southeast of downtown Chicago. Industrial plants including BP, an oil refinery, and Arcelor Mittal—a steel mill—surround the city. Many of the neighborhoods in East Chicago were developed out of the needs of industry workers. For example, in earlier years the local steel mill employed over 26,000 steel workers; most of these workers lived in East Chicago. With the invention of new technological advancements and a need for financial gains, employment at East Chicago's largest steel mill declined. Currently, Arcelor Mittal's employment has dropped to approximately 4,800 employees[1]. Like other de-industrialized cities across the United States, East Chicago has been impacted by low employment. Currently, East Chicago has an unemployment rate of 11.4%, a rate almost double the state of Indiana's unemployment rate[2]. This high unemployment rate may have caused an increase in poverty and crime within the city's boundaries.

East Chicago is one city divided into two. Bridges, a major shipping canal, and train tracks divide the city. At one point, East Chicago was known as the Twin City; these divides still exist. One side of East Chicago is called "the Harbor side" and the other is known as "the East Chicago side." This often causes conflicts between residents on each side.

In the past, the youth of East Chicago have often been overlooked when it came down to decision making, particularly as it related to spaces and activities for youth. Many surveys have been distributed to the youth to assess their feelings and perceptions in relation to East Chicago. The authors of this survey have taken several surveys during their k-12 education in East

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[1] http://usa.arcelormittal.com/Our-operations/Flat/Indiana-Harbor/).
[2] http://www.city-data.com/city/East-Chicago-Indiana.html

Transforming East Chicago: A youth survey

Chicago, and have noticed no change. Similar to other cities in the United States, decisions about East Chicago often times don't include the voices of youth.   As future leaders, youth are vital for the sustainability of their communities. Their young perspectives and unique experiences can serve as catalysts to community change and reform.

Greenhouse Fellowship

Greenhouse Fellowship is a non-profit youth organization in East Chicago, Indiana. Founded in 2014, Greenhouse Fellowship seeks to cultivate power within youth of East Chicago to act on their worlds. Every year, recent high school graduates are employed as Fellows to positively impact their city and to offer youth voice to the decision-making process.

Throughout our term as Fellows, we worked closely with different not-for-profits, community members, and stakeholders to expand our knowledge of our city, to increase our professional skills, and to gain experience in community development. Weekly, we attended seminars where we shared our knowledge and developed new critical skills. We also worked with local social service agencies where we not only contributed to their sustainability but also brought in new ideas and perspectives in hopes of increasing productivity. Finally, as Fellows, we developed and implemented community initiatives. One of those initiatives was the creation, implementation, and assessment of *Transforming East Chicago: A youth survey*

Purpose of survey

Through the deep evaluation and reflection of the historical marginalization of youth-voice in East Chicago, Greenhouse Fellows, in collaboration with Indiana University Northwest's Center for Urban and Regional Excellence, developed a youth-created survey. The purpose of *Transforming East Chicago: A youth survey* is to give youth in East Chicago a voice so that community leaders, stakeholders, organizations, and residents can create spaces and opportunities based on the needs they express.

We believe that the results of this survey could impact the future of East Chicago by emphasizing the importance of youth involvement within their community. Including youth voice in decision-making may lead to an increased population of civically engaged East Chicagoans.

Guiding questions for survey

Transforming East Chicago: A youth survey had the following guiding questions in its creation. These questions served as a framework by which we developed individual questions.

What are the challenges East Chicago and its youth face?	What are East Chicago youths' perceptions and feelings about the spaces currently available for use in their city?	What are East Chicago youths' perceptions and feelings about the future of their city?	How can this survey give voice to East Chicago youth?

Why youth research?

Traditional research is often done by credentialed, professional "researchers". Seen from this stance, valid research can only be done by qualified "experts" that come from outside of the targeted population. At Greenhouse Fellowship, we believe that research can be done by anyone, especially those most impacted by the issues of investigation. Research conducted from within communities can offer new perspectives. Instead of someone else telling the story for us, we get to tell the story ourselves. Seen from this stance, we are able to use our own experiences instead of what someone else may believe based on their assumptions. This claim doesn't intend to de-value the work of traditional research, but rather recognizes the role that communities themselves can play in research.

Because we come from within the community we are researching, we have some knowledge about its inter-workings and operations. This "know-how" allows us to relate our assumptions, and analysis, to our experiences as members of the community. Researching from within, not outside of, not only validates the experiences that youth may experience in their neighborhoods, but also may help youth connect their experiences to the experiences of others.

Traditional research also can serve to be exploitive; it is often not generated from within the communities, it is at times not serving their interests or needs, and often portrays a negative picture of communities like East Chicago. In developing this survey, we made an effort to build relationships with the population we surveyed. Additionally, because we were from the community, it may have been easier to capture the attention and engagement from the participants; and as researchers we may have been able to better understand our observations.

Transforming East Chicago: A youth survey

Method

In the following sections you will find information related to the survey's design, its development and pilot phase, the participant selection process, the implementation, and assessment methods.

Survey Information

Transforming East Chicago: A youth survey is a forty-two question survey designed to understand what challenges youth of East Chicago face, what East Chicago youths' perceptions and feelings are in regards to the current state of East Chicago, what East Chicago youths' perceptions and feelings are in regards to the future of East Chicago, and how this survey can give voice to East Chicago youth.

Composed of five parts, the survey consists of multiple question types: true/false, open-ended, fill in the blank, multiple choice, and ranking. Over 2,400 (2,474) surveys were distributed to six schools, five of which were in East Chicago and all six had student populations from East Chicago. Over 1,500 (1,519) students completed and submitted the survey.

Survey development and piloting

The survey was developed after several months of investigation using available data on East Chicago youth. We found that youth of East Chicago were often overlooked when it came to decisions in the community. We, as Fellows, decided to create our own survey of East Chicago youth. This would be the first of its kind; the largest survey of East Chicago youth in the city's history. It would also be the first census survey designed, implemented and assessed by local youth. After forming an official partnership with Indiana University, we began to study the relevant concepts and ideas related to creating a quantitative survey.

To gain a better understanding of what questions students wanted to see on the survey and what format of questions they prefer to answer, we decided to conduct a pre-pilot. This pre-pilot phase helped to determine which types of questions to put on the survey and the preferred format. We spent an entire day talking to three classes of students, two at the local high school and one at a local middle school. From this pre-pilot phase, we determined that students preferred true/false and multiple-choice questions; they least preferred open-ended questions. The pre-pilot student population requested questions related to their feelings and perceptions. From this pre-pilot phase a first draft of the survey was created.

The pilot phase of survey development took place at Indiana University Northwest. Two Fellows attended an undergraduate mathematics class and administered a draft of the survey. Students were asked four questions: 1) Were the questions easy to understand? 2) If not, what questions weren't

easy to understand and why not? 3) How would you improve the survey? 4) How should the survey look? From the feedback we received, we created the final draft of the survey and submitted it to IUN's Internal Review Board (IRB) for research approval.

Participant selection

We selected participating schools based on their population of East Chicago students. We intentionally wanted to only survey East Chicago students. Originally, we identified ten schools. Each of these ten schools had students that lived in East Chicago, six of these schools were in East Chicago and the remaining four were located in cities in close proximity to East Chicago. These ten schools had approximately 4,000 East Chicago residents[3].

We selected grades 6th—12th to participate in the survey because of their comprehension levels and sets of experiences. From our experiences as youth in East Chicago, we believed that 6th—12th grade youth would be able to comprehend the vocabulary, sentence structure, and topics contained within the survey; any younger and we felt that the survey results could be negatively impacted. Another added factor to the grade selection is the structuring of schools in East Chicago. The high school houses 9th-12th grade, and the middle schools house 6th—8th grade.

From this original sample size of ten schools, we attempted to coordinate with all school administrators. From these requests we received permission from six school administrators to administer the survey at their school. Unfortunately, we were unable to gain access to the four remaining schools; the administrators failed to respond to our inquiries.

Although we made attempts to locate students that are no longer enrolled in school but met the participant age range, we were only able to locate a small sample of students (~30) that were in a transition program through the East Chicago public school district.

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[3] http://compass.doe.in.gov

Transforming East Chicago: A youth survey

School	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th	12th	Total	%
Table 1									
Participating schools and relevant East Chicago student population									
Central	N/A	N/A	N/A	319	332	277	248	1176	47.5%
Block	157	157	159	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	473	19.1%
West Side	173	175	175	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	530	21.4%
Urban Enterprise	48	42	38	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	131	5.3%
East Chicago Lighthouse	59	58	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	117	4.7%
HAST (47 EC students)[4]	N/A	N/A	N/A					47	1.9%
TOTAL								2474	

Survey campaign

In an effort to form relationships and trust with the survey participants, we developed and implemented a "campaign" phase to the project. Unfortunately, we were unable to implement the full campaign in all six schools; only three received the week-long relationship-building endeavor. The remaining three schools received an abbreviated campaign. Before taking the survey we wanted students to have the opportunity to hear from us about the survey, ask us questions, and spend time bonding with us and one-another through game and dance. For an entire week, in the schools that participated in the full campaign, students were lead through an informational assembly, lunchtime team-building games, and a culminating pep-rally to get them excited and engaged in the survey process. Throughout the campaign we were able to build rapport with the student population.

Survey administration

The survey was administered by classroom teachers in participating schools during one class period. Teachers were given pre-packed survey packets along with instructions for distribution. Students had an entire class period to complete the survey, but were not allowed to ask questions regarding survey content as they completed it. All completed surveys were collected from each school and brought back to our office for coding and analysis. A total of 1,519 completed surveys were collected. A total of 213 surveys were not labeled by school, but the results were still included in data analysis.
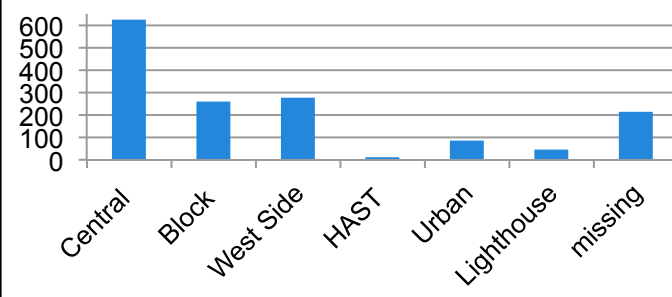
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[4] HAST is a school outside of East Chicago. Although a majority of its student population is made up students residing outside of East Chicago the school had 47 East Chicago students in the 2014-2015 school year.

Table 2		
Surveys collected by school		
Response Item	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Central	624	41.1%
Block	261	17.2%
West Side	278	18.3%
HAST	12	0.8%
Urban Enterprise	85	5.6%
Lighthouse	46	3.0%
missing	213	14.0%
Total	1519	

Figure 1

Surveys collected by school

Survey assessment (coding and analysis).

At the conclusion of survey completion, 1519 surveys were coded and analyzed for their major themes in collaboration with the Center for Urban and Regional Excellence at Indiana University Northwest. Codes were developed based on the survey responses and were entered into a Microsoft Excel database. After cleaning the data (carefully scanning our data set to look for obvious errors) frequency tables and graphs were created for every question. Frequency tables were grouped together according to the relevant research questions and analyzed across multiple variables (i.e. neighborhood, ethnicity, gender, age, and school) to identify emergent themes. To guide us through this process we used Leahy (2004) *Using excel for analyzing questionnaires[5]*.

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[5] Leahy, J. (2004). Using Excel for analyzing survey questionnaires. University of Wisconsin Extension, 1-28.

Transforming East Chicago: A youth survey

Findings

In the following sections you will find data related to four major themes of investigation. We were interested in better understanding: what East Chicago youth have now? What challenges East Chicago youth currently face? What sports related needs East Chicago youth have? What are the future wants and needs of East Chicago youth? Each section contains narratives on how we experience each of the themes, relevant data from the survey, and general conclusions.

Theme 1: What do East Chicago youth have now?

Understanding how people currently view their city may lead us to understand their perceptions of their community. Also, it is important to understand if and how people are currently using resources in their community to identify which resources are "valuable" and which are unused.

In East Chicago, structures continue to be built but we are unsure of their usage amongst youth. For example, almost all of the parks in East Chicago have undergone renovation over the past several years. What is unclear is how these renovations have impacted East Chicago youths' usage of the parks. This same concept can be applied to other spaces that youth may use in East Chicago.

Our survey asked a variety of questions related to East Chicago youth regarding: spaces they use, programs they have participated in, opportunities available to them, and their feelings towards these opportunities, spaces, and programs. We wanted to understand what East Chicago youth have now in a better effort to understand what resources are currently available to youth and to understand how or if they utilize them. By better understanding current utilization, we were attempting to avoid duplication of current resources or creation of un-engaging resources in our recommendations.
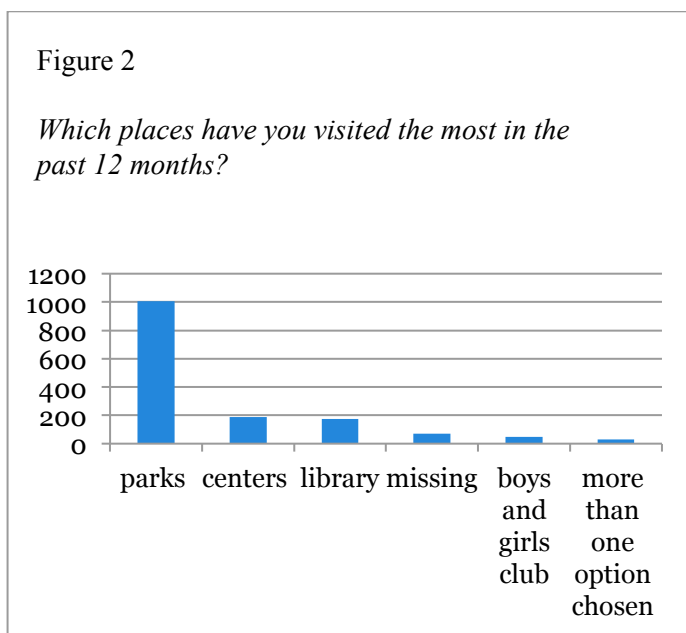
When asked, "Which places have you visited the most in the past 12 months", 66% of total respondents chose "parks" as the response (see Table 3). This was followed by "centers" (12.5%), "library" (11.5%), and "boys and girls club" (3.3%).[6]

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[6] It should be noted here that 4.6% of participants did not answer this question and 1.9% of participants chose more than one answer. Although these percentages are accounted for in the overall statistics, they represent 5.0% or less of the total data. In these cases we felt the data was reliable enough to include in this report.

Table 3

Which places have you visited the most in the past 12 months?

Response Item	Frequency	Percent
parks	1005	66.2%
centers	190	12.5%
library	175	11.5%
missing	70	4.6%
boys and girls club	50	3.3%
more than one option chosen	29	1.9%
Total	1519	

Figure 2

Which places have you visited the most in the past 12 months?

When asked to respond to the statement "I believe problems in EC can be solved over time", 69.5% of respondents marked "true" related to 28.0% that marked "false" (see Table 4).   It must be noted here that 5.7% of collected responses were missing.

Table 4

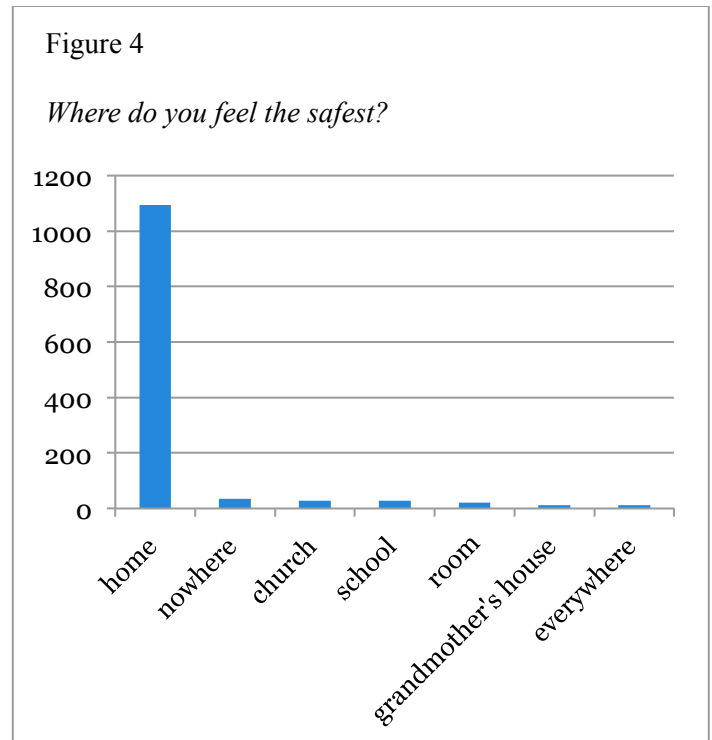*I believe problems in EC can be solved over time*

Response Item	Frequency	Percent
true	1056	69.5%
false	426	28.0%
Answer missing	87	5.7%
Total	1519	

Figure 3

I believe problems in EC can be solved over time

When asked, "Where do you feel the safest", 72.1% of total respondents chose "home" as the response (see Table 5). This was followed by "nowhere" (2.4%), "church" (1.9%), "school" (1.8%). Responses in Table 5 do not represent all responses to this question, only those with the most frequent response rate. It should be noted here that 5.0% of respondents did not answer this question.

Table 5

Where do you feel the safest?

Response Item	Frequency	Percentage
home	1095	72.1%
nowhere	36	2.4%
church	29	1.9%
school	27	1.8%
room	20	1.3%
grandmother's house	13	0.9%
everywhere	11	0.7%
Total	1,231	

Figure 4

Where do you feel the safest?

From the data we can better understand some of the resources that East Chicago youth use and their perceptions related to their community as it is. East Chicago youth tend to spend more time in parks than they do in other community spaces. This may be in part to its free access and its outdoor setting. Parks are one of a few public, free, and authority-free spaces in East Chicago. Youth may frequent the parks because of these mentioned characteristics. When targeting youth for future campaign in East Chicago, parks may be a good location to interact with them in a place that they find comfortable. While the public parks may be locations where youth in East Chicago are located, youth did not identify parks as safe places. Most East Chicago youth that took the survey feel the safest in their homes. Our data shows that youth in East Chicago are quite hopeful for their city. They, at a rate of almost 75%, believe that problems in East Chicago can be solved over time.
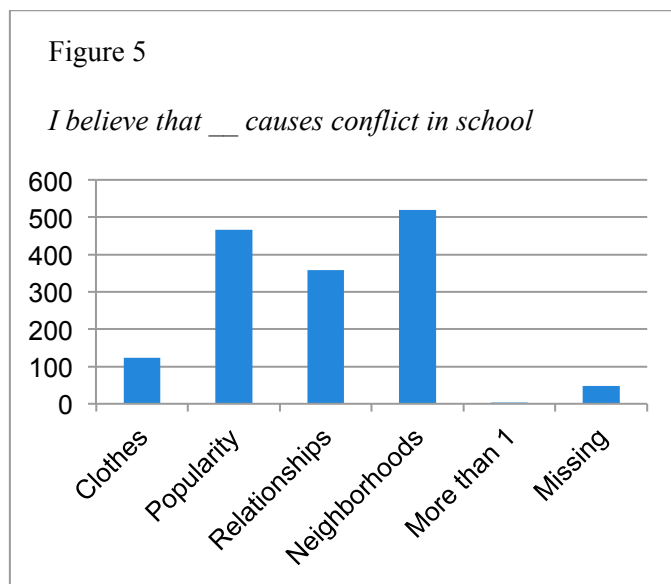
Theme 2: What challenges to East Chicago youth face?

Understanding the challenges that youth in East Chicago are facing can help us identify root causes of conflict within the city. Finding the root cause of conflict may possibly lead to the unification of East Chicago, historically know as the Twin City. Unification of East Chicago communities and residents is important because it may bring more people together when thinking about how to solve social problems. This may help us to understand why or how things happen. Often times in East Chicago, conflicts are passed down generationally. For example, parents that grew up in the Harbor often tell their children not to travel outside of the neighborhood. This claim may cause further division amongst East Chicagoans and may also lack a systemic analysis of the root causes of the conflict.

Our survey asked a variety of questions related to conflict and social injustices as perceived by the youth of East Chicago. These categories included questions about negative experiences, perceptions of authoritative figures, beliefs about how youth are perceived, and how East Chicago youth feel about traveling outside of their neighborhood.

When asked to respond to the statement "I believe that ___ causes conflict in school", 34.2% of total respondents chose "Neighborhoods" as the response (see Table 6). This was followed by "popularity" (30.7%), "relationships" (23.6%), and "clothes" (8.2%). [7]

Table 6

I believe that ___ causes conflict in school

Response Item	Frequency	Percent
Neighborhoods	520	34.2%
Popularity	466	30.7%
Relationships	358	23.6%
Clothes	124	8.2%
Answer missing	47	3.1%
More than one option chosen	4	0.3%
Total	1519	

Figure 5
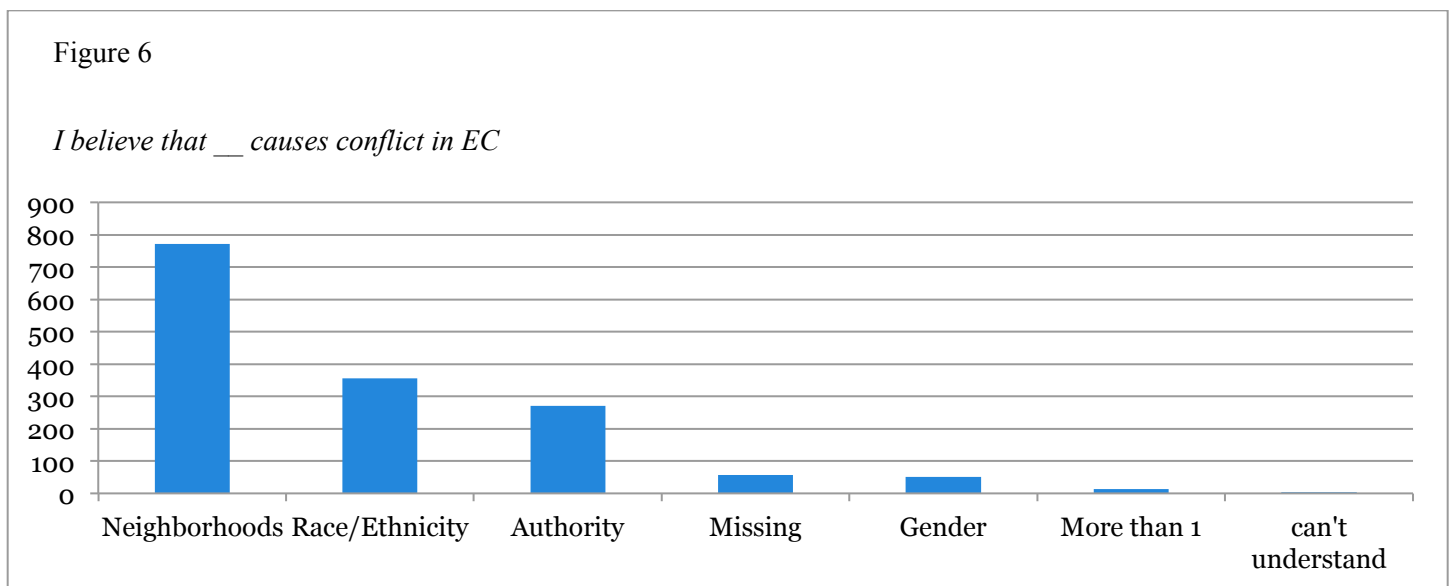
I believe that ___ causes conflict in school

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[7] It should be noted here that 3.1% of participants did not answer this question and 0.3% of participants chose more than one answer. Although these percentages are accounted for in the overall statistics, they represent 5.0% or less of the total data. In these cases we felt the data was reliable enough to include in this report.

When asked, "I believe that ___ causes conflict in EC", 50.8% of total respondents chose "Neighborhoods" as the response (see Table 7). This was followed by "Race/Ethnicity" (23.4%) and "Authority" (23.6%). It should be noted here that 3.7% of respondents did not answer this question, that 0.9% chose more than one answer, and 0.2% of responses were unable to be coded. [8]

Table 7

I believe that ___ causes conflict in EC.

Response Item	Frequency	Percent
Neighborhoods	771	50.8%
Race/Ethnicity	355	23.4%
Authority	270	17.8%
Answer Missing	56	3.7%
Gender	50	3.3%
More than one option chosen	14	0.9%
Can't understand option chosen	3	0.2%
Total	1519	

Figure 6

I believe that ___ causes conflict in EC

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[8] Although these percentages are accounted for in the overall statistics, they represent 5.0% or less of the total data. In these cases we felt the data was reliable enough to include in this report.

When asked, "Have you had a negative experience dealing with...?", 45.8% of total respondents chose "none" as the response (see Table 8). This was followed by "school" (29.8%), and "violence" (11.6%). [9]
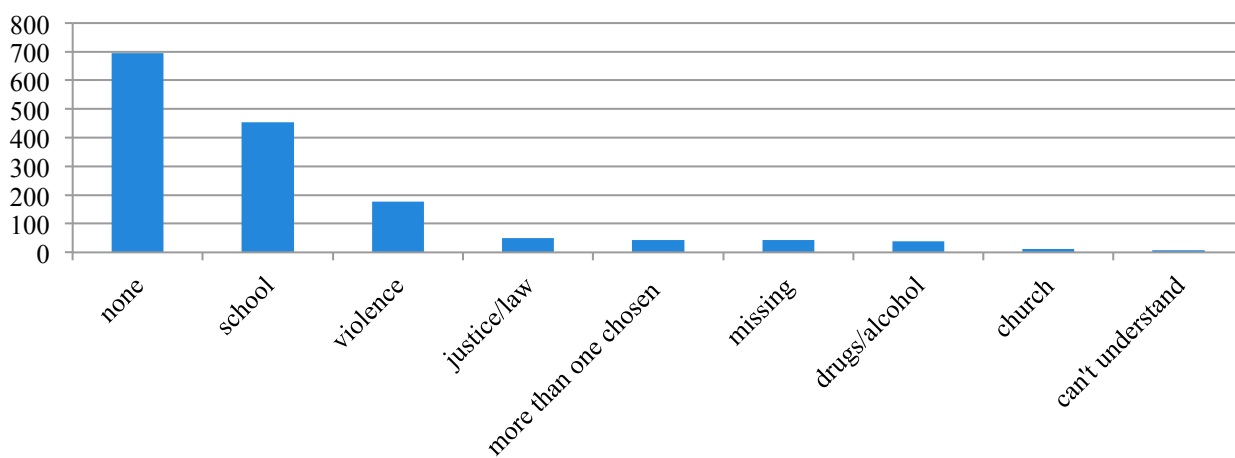
Table 8

Have you had a negative experience dealing with ...?

Response Item	Frequency	Percent
none	695	45.8%
school	453	29.8%
violence	176	11.6%
justice/law	50	3.3%
more than one option chosen	44	2.9%
answer missing	43	2.8%
drugs/alcohol	39	2.6%
church	11	0.7%
can't understand option chosen	8	0.5%
Total	1519	

Figure 7

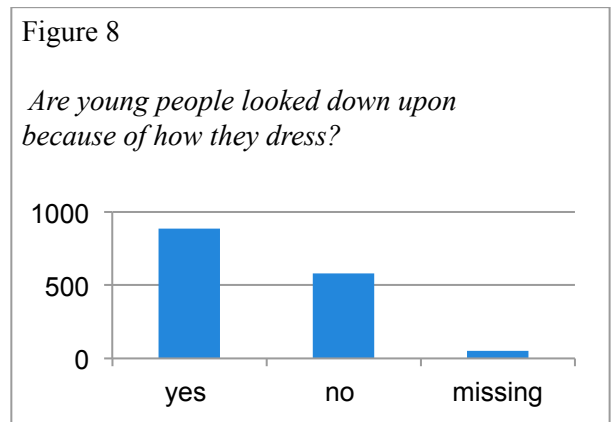*Have you had a negative experience dealing with ...?*

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[9] It should be noted here that 2.8% of participants did not answer this question, 2.9% of participants choose more than one answer, and 0.5% of participants' responses could not be coded. Although these percentages are accounted for in the overall statistics, they represent 5.0% or less of the total data. In these cases we felt the data was reliable enough to include in this report.
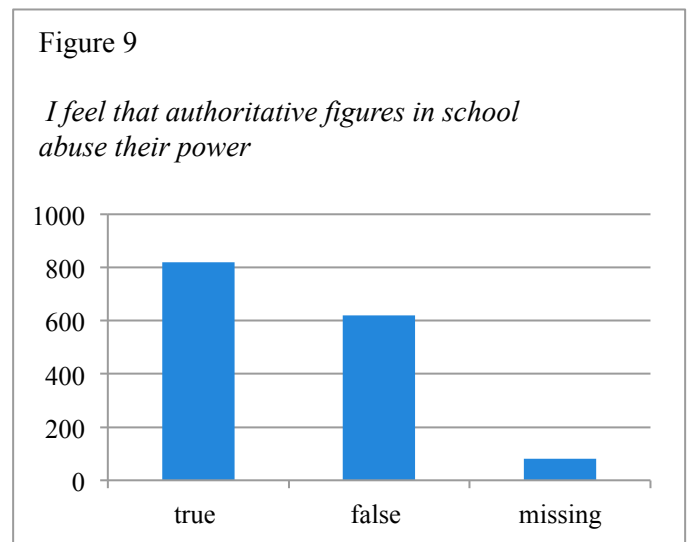
When asked to respond to "Are young people looked down upon because of how they dress", 58.4% of respondents marked "true" related to 38.2% that marked "false" (see Table 9). It must be noted here that 3.4% of collected responses were missing.

Table 9		
Are young people looked down upon because of how they dress?		
Response Item	**Frequency**	**Percent**
yes	887	58.4%
no	581	38.2%
Answer missing	51	3.4%
Total	1519	

Figure 8

Are young people looked down upon because of how they dress?

When asked to respond to the statement "I feel that authoritative figures in school abuse their power", 50.4% of respondents marked "true" related to 40.8% that marked "false" (see Table 10). It must be noted here that 5.3% of collected responses were missing.

Table 10		
I feel that authoritative figures in school abuse their power		
Response Item	**Frequency**	**Percent**
true	820	54.0%
false	619	40.8%
Answer missing	80	5.2%
Total	1519	

Figure 9

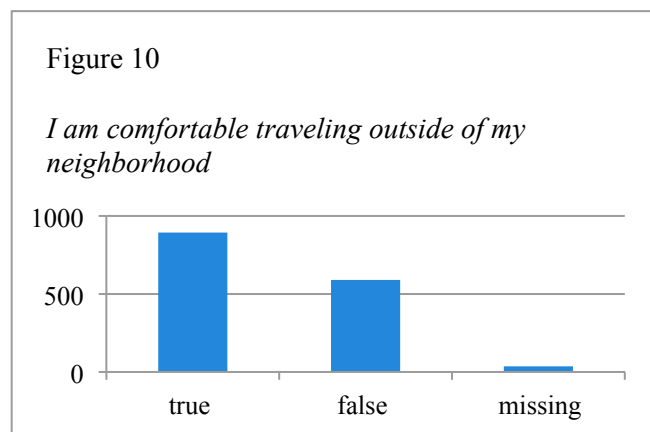*I feel that authoritative figures in school abuse their power*

When asked to respond to the statement "I am comfortable traveling outside of my neighborhood", 59% of respondents marked "true" related to 39% that marked "false" (see Table 11). It must be noted here that 2% of collected responses were missing.

Table 11

I am comfortable traveling outside of my neighborhood

Response Item	Frequency	Percent
true	892	59%
false	590	39%
Answer missing	37	2%
Total	1519	

Figure 10

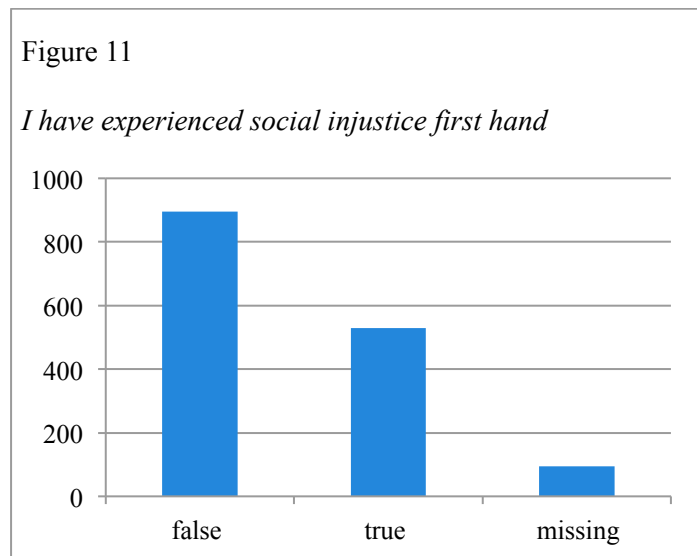*I am comfortable traveling outside of my neighborhood*

When asked to respond to the statement "I have experienced social injustice first hand", 34.8% of respondents marked "true" related to 58.9% that marked "false" (see Table 12). It must be noted here that 6.3% of collected responses were missing

Table 12

I have experienced social injustice first hand

Response Item	Frequency	Percent
false	895	58.9%
true	529	34.8%
Answer missing	95	6.3%
Total	1519	

Figure 11

I have experienced social injustice first hand

The division of East Chicago neighborhoods may be causing most of the conflict in the community. This conflict often times enters into school spaces, one of the places named as a space where a negative experience has taken place; often as a result of neighborhood conflict. These students also expressed the belief, through this survey, that authoritative figures in schools abuse their powers and that youth are looked down upon because of how they dress.
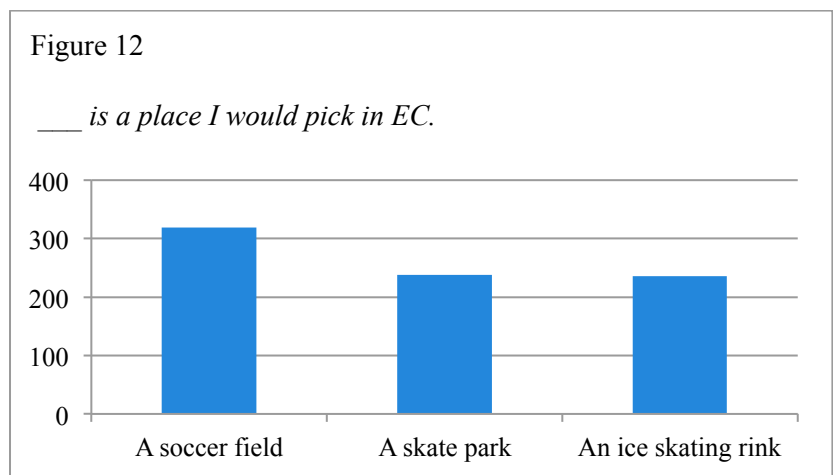
Transforming East Chicago: A youth survey

Theme 3: What are the athletic needs of youth in East Chicago?

East Chicago has a rich history dealing with sports. In the past several years, sports have become more popular among the youth in East Chicago. Sports are an important topic to talk about when looking through the data being that a soccer field, a skating park, and an ice skating rink were the top three responses regarding things young adults would like to have in East Chicago. Young athletes do not have a specific place to skate, play soccer, or go ice-skating in East Chicago. Some athletes, before the city invested money in the development of a soccer/football field, had to travel to nearby cities to play.

Not having a proper place to play soccer, skate, and ice skate in East Chicago, it is safe to say that East Chicagoans want to see more areas in the parks since parks are a very popular attraction for the youth. The community parks have an average of two basketball courts and two baseball fields, among other playgrounds. When asked to respond to the statement " _____ would be one place I would pick to be in East Chicago", 21% of total respondents chose "a soccer field" (see Table 13). "A skate park" and "An ice skating rink" tied among the top 3 responses. Both "A skate park" and "An ice skating rink" were tied with 16%.

Table 13

___ *is a place I would pick in EC.*

Response Item	Frequency	Percent
A soccer field	319	21.00%
A skate park	238	15.70%
An ice skating rink	236	15.50%

Figure 12

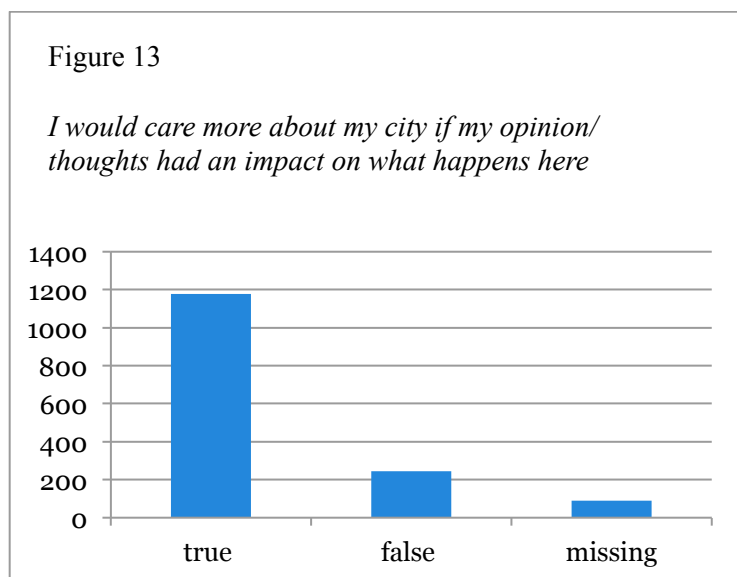___ *is a place I would pick in EC.*

From the data analysis and results we can assume that a soccer field, a skate park, and an ice skating rink are much wanted in East Chicago. East Chicago does have facilities and parks where the youth hang out. As shown in Table 3, 66.2% of the youth in East Chicago visit the parks, however, the parks do not offer facilities for soccer, ice skating, or roller skating. After we analyzed the data we concluded that the youth in East Chicago ages 11 through 21 are interested in sports, and would benefit from facilities that meet these needs.

Theme 4: What do East Chicago youth want to see in their community?

Understanding what East Chicago youth want to see in their community may lead to a decrease in crime. Providing safe spaces for youth to express their thoughts and opinions may give them alternatives to crime. Often times, as cities develop new infrastructure, they forget about its future residents. If youth were engaged in this process they may have a better understanding of how to interpret the future of East Chicago, and they may gain experience in civic leadership, a vital component to civic health of communities.

When asked to respond to the statement "I would care more about my city if my opinion/thoughts had an impact on what happens here", 77.9% of respondents marked "true" (see Table 14). It should be noted that 6.0% of collected responses were missing.

Table 14

I would care more about my city if my opinion/thoughts had an impact on what happens here

Response Item	Frequency	Percent
true	1177	77.9%
false	243	16.1%
missing	91	6.0%

Figure 13

I would care more about my city if my opinion/ thoughts had an impact on what happens here

When asked, "If you could create an elective what would it be", 9.3% of total participants chose "sports" as the response (see Table 15). This was followed by "performing art" (9.1%), "driver's ed" (5.0%), and "gym" (4.6%). The responses in Table 15 do not represent all responses to this question, only those with the most frequent response rate. It should be noted here that 0.3% of respondents did not answer this question.
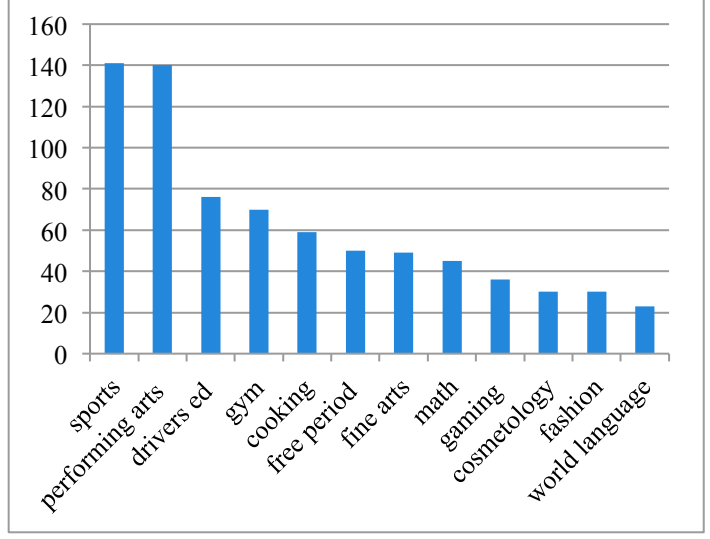
Table 15		
If you could create an elective what would it be?		
Response Item	**Frequency**	**Percent**
sports	141	9.3%
performing arts	140	9.2%
drivers ed	76	5.0%
gym	70	4.6%
cooking	59	3.9%
free period	50	3.3%
fine arts	49	3.2%
math	45	3.0%
gaming	36	2.4%
cosmetology	30	2.0%
fashion	30	2.0%
world language	23	1.5%
Total	749	

Figure 14

If you could create an elective what would it be?

Based on the data we analyzed, the youth expressed an interest in things that are already available in East Chicago. The most frequent spatial requests from participants were for a soccer field, which is already something that is accessible to East Chicagoans. However, as we dug deeper and examined this question across other variables we observed that there is one public soccer field in East Chicago (and this field also serves as a football field). This field is located on the far side of town, where youth from this neighborhood did not express an interest in soccer. The areas of Southside and Northside expressed the largest interest in a soccer field and these two neighborhoods are furthest away from the current public soccer field. While no neighborhood in East Chicago expressed safety concerns regarding travelling outside of their neighborhood (at a rate above 50%), these two neighborhoods had the highest rates of feeling unsafe travelling outside of their neighborhoods when compared to the rest of East Chicago (40% and 43% respectively). That being said, residents from Southside and Northside may not travel to the Harbor to play soccer.

The data also demonstrates that East Chicago youth would care more about their city if they were more involved in decisions that were made. If youth were engaged in this process they may have a better understanding of how to interpret the future of East Chicago and they may gain experience in civic leadership, a vital component to civic health of communities.

Recommendations

The following section contains a list of recommendations based on our findings. It is in our hopes that city officials, stakeholders, residents, and youth can create action plans based on these recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Anyone in a position to create change in East Chicago should engage youth to participate in these decision-making processes.

This would allow the youth of East Chicago to take leadership roles within their community. As the city of East Chicago moves in the 21st century it is important that the city engages its future residents; it can start by engaging the youth of the city.

Recommendation 2: The city of East Chicago should conduct a more thorough investigation related to the needs and wants of youth in East Chicago.

While this survey reached a large population of East Chicago youth, it did not inquire with all youth of East Chicago. Students attending schools outside of the city, students that have dropped out and been pushed out of school, and home-schooled youth were not engaged in this process and should be. Future studies can look at the specifics of this survey's findings and expand them to include new questions.

Recommendation 3: School officials should find ways to unify students while they are in school.

Schools are one of the few places in East Chicago where youth from different neighborhoods are forced to come together. School officials can use this unique opportunity to their advantage, creating programs and activities that break down neighborhood barriers, help youth identify root causes of conflict in East Chicago, and take action to unify the city.

Recommendation 4: Instead of creating opportunities in every neighborhood (i.e. building a soccer field in every neighborhood of East Chicago), city officials should find ways to create more neutral spaces for all youth of East Chicago to come together collectively.

Creating neutral places for youth to interact with one another may drastically improve community relations. For example, Greenhouse Fellowship opens its office once a month for local youth to showcase their performing arts talents or to watch and support friends and East Chicago residents. What is unique about this event is that it draws talent and residents from all parts of the city with no conflict. East Chicago could utilize this program, and other programs like it, to create opportunities for youth to come together across geographic boundaries.

Recommendation 5: Adults in East Chicago should humanize youth.

Although adults may feel that youth lack decision-making skills, this survey exemplifies the opposite. Adults can utilize the unique experiences of youth in East Chicago to create change with them, not just for them. Greenhouse Fellowship is an example of just that. We position youth alongside adults to create community change because we believe that their experiences are valid and important.

Recommendation 6: Adults in East Chicago should develop ways to collaborate across neighborhood boundaries.

Adults of East Chicago should invest in the future, not the present, of the city by utilizing the community's assets, not its deficits. Investing in the now will only sustain the current issues of East Chicago, not necessarily improve them. An overwhelming amount of youth that took this survey believe that East Chicago can solve its problems over time but they may not see these come to fruition if adults exacerbate current stereotypes and misconceptions.