RESILIENCE AT MOBILITY HUBS

The events of 2020 provided an unplanned and unexpected window into what kind of role mobility hubs can play in producing more resilient, socially connected neighborhoods during crises.

The mobility hub pilot sites are in neighborhoods where many residents are essential workers, experienced higher numbers of COVID cases, and/or experienced loss of income during necessary public health shutdowns[1]. These neighborhoods had to simultaneously respond to trauma within communities of color after the death of George Floyd and come together to respond to new dynamics disrupting neighborhood safety.

During the 2020 mobility hub pilot, several powerful examples of neighborhood resilience emerged, coming from existing neighborhood leadership and materializing at mobility hub spaces by nature of their central location, usage, and provision of public space. If future mobility hub programs maintain and amplify the qualities that made this possible, then greater social connections, better ways to reach people during crisis, and efficient public resource distribution can occur. This is an opportunity to build this program with the next challenges in mind - fortifying existing assets and investing in new ways for communities to emerge even stronger after COVID and better able to withstand future crises.

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1   For data on Minneapolis neighborhood COVID case data, view the latest on the City of Minneapolis dashboard.

Defining Resilience

In the process of creating a resilience strategy, the City of Minneapolis has defined resilience in the following way:

"City resilience is the capacity of individuals, communities, institutions, businesses, and systems within a city to survive, adapt, and *thrive no matter what kinds of chronic stresses and acute shocks they experience.*

What does this actually mean? We are working to make sure everyone in Minneapolis has what they need to thrive in good times and in bad – especially individuals and communities who may be more vulnerable due to things such as lower wealth, environmental threats, or structural racism."
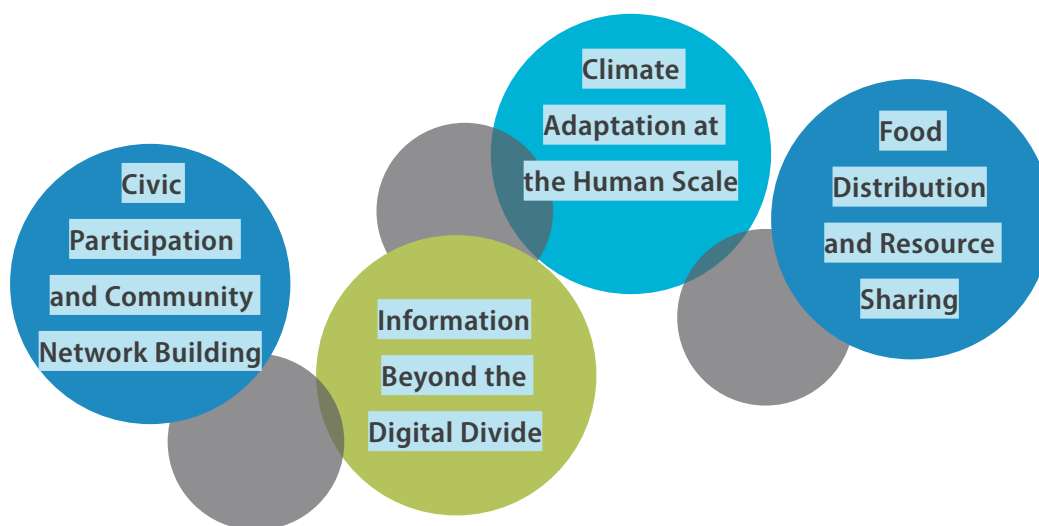
Transportation Resilience

A robust mobility hub network would contribute to resilience by increasing Minneapolis residents' accesss to destinations and contributing to redundancy in the transportation system. Redundancy means that during disruptions to one part of the system, users have the opportunity to easily fill their trip needs in another parallel way. For example, in 2020, many bus riders experienced localized service shutdowns during the unrest. With reliable, convenient additional modes that don't rely on car ownership, users are better able to navigate in times of uncertainty or sudden change.

For more on how mobility hubs functioned as substitute transportation options and could improve as a service during a pandemic, see the Engagement Deep Dive.

Examples of Resilience at Mobility Hubs

Mobility hubs, as key connection points in the public realm where people come to access transportation modes, have the potential to serve broader resilience goals as well. There are numerous ways this could unfold, but rather than list out potential solutions, the following section illustrates scenarios that are already occurring.

Climate Adaptation at the Human Scale

Civic Participation and Community Network Building

Food Distribution and Resource Sharing

Information Beyond the Digital Divide

CIVIC PARTICIPATION AND COMMUNITY NETWORK BUILDING

Increased civic participation improves the ability of community members to shape the outcomes of issues that affect their lives and builds localized networks of information. In a similar respect, resilient communities have spaces where people can run into each other and keep up the kind of loose community connections that become critical when organizing a response to a crisis.

Neighborhood Resilience at Mobility Hubs Grant

Funded in part by a micro-grant within the Mobility Hub pilot, the Native American Community Development Institute (NACDI) hosted two of their Make Voting A Tradition (MVAT) events - socially distanced - at the Franklin and Bloomington mobility hub. NACDI has been using MVAT events in the neighborhood for seven years to build strong relationships with Indigenous residents and increase voter registration and turnout, making their voices heard in the democratic process. This year they also promoted the importance of completing the Census in their community to ensure equitable distribution of resources.

Informal Voter Information Distribution

Throughout the leadup to the 2020 election, voter information packets and educational signage on how to vote during the pandemic were seen at South Minneapolis Mobility hubs.

Parklet Painting at Penn and Lowry

Led by a Northside Mobility Hub Ambassador, this event served to build capacity among youth in executing community arts events and serve as a platform for their voice and vision to shape the design of the space there. Residents of the neighborhood also joined in the process painting the parklet.

FOOD DISTRIBUTION AND RESOURCE SHARING

Mobility hubs became natural destinations for food distribution to occur in the wake of several local grocery destinations closing down. In real time, residents were responding to emerging needs during crises. Because of the hubs' central location, visibility and availability of space, people took the opportunity to operate there.

This occured in spaces as small as the top of the mobility hub furniture and as large as a distribution event that filled a whole vacant lot at the hub. While food distribution can be logistically complex, shelf stable and hot meals were distributed at these sites.

FRANKLIN + CEDAR HUB MEALS

COMMUNITY FOOD SHARING

FRANKLIN + CEDAR HUB MEALS (II)

NORTHSIDE AMBASSADOR RESOURCE DISTRIBUTION

NORTHSIDE AMBASSADOR COAT DRIVE

INFORMATION BEYOND THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

In our increasingly digital age, a significant amount of information related to critical resources, service changes, and other elements of dynamic communication in crisis is transmitted online and via smart phones. However, according to the the most recent Census data, 15 percent of Black and Indegenous Minneapolis residents did not have home internet access along with 17 percent of Latino/a residents[1]. 21-26 percent of Northside residents did not have an internet subscription[2]. People without access to digital information are more vulnerable in times of crisis and less connected to resources for recovery. In this context, mobility hubs have the potential to become centralized, local, analog communication centers - able to distribute up to date information from the City to residents or from other neighborhood groups to residents as well.

Information already gets wrapped around poles and printed on lawn signs at these places. Examples included notices of rent relief resources, voter registration, census reminders, garage sales, and more. Neighborhood groups have shown interest displaying messages in any future message boards developed at mobility hubs. Messaging on COVID precautions occurred on a limited basis.

With more awareness of mobility hub messaging potential, hubs could serve as a more comprehensive analog communication solution. Advancment of information access at mobility hubs could include permanent kiosks/beacons, information on display in a permanent message board, or resources available in a locker system. Provision of Wifi at mobility hubs could also help boost access.

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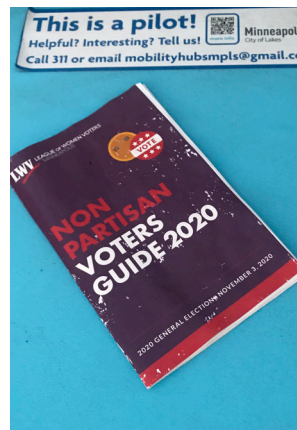
1   To access visit the US Census Bureau's online data portal.

2   To access visit the US Census Bureau's online data portal.

CLIMATE ADAPTATION AT THE HUMAN SCALE

Infrastructural climate adaptation is often envisioned on a large capital scale - updating aging infrastructure, building in redundancies to protect from future outages, etc. At mobility hubs, we have the opportunity to build in small-scale adaptation that people can use to control the comfort of their experience despite less predictable weather.

An example of small scale adaptation took place when person at the Franklin and Bloomington mobility hub was observed waiting for the bus. Due to the summer heat, they had moved the furniture into the shade of a nearby tree. This tiny action is, at a very human and immediate scale, the kind of adaptation that will help people stay comfortable as extreme weather conditions occur more frequently in the coming years. In the winter, seating can go in areas protected from wind, in the warmth of the sun. In the summer, it can be moved to areas best shaded for comfort.

OTHER RESILIENCE CONCEPTS FROM ENGAGEMENT

Residents have shared a broad range of ideas that connect to a resilience strategy during engagement on what features were most important to improving their trip. If tested and implemented, they could contribute to surrounding communities to thrive, be more connected and be more prepared to respond during crisis.

» Invest in access to organic produce through partnering with local farmers who have excess produce

» Produce carts like in Brooklyn, NYC - could be fresh food, food truck

» Place for celebrations of community successes, a center of community gathering

» Centering location decisions around increasing access to economic opportunity

» More activities - safe house to play cards, pool table, horse shoes

» More trees for shade

People-Centered Resilience Strategies at Mobility Hubs

Mobility hubs became sites of spontaneous acts of neighborhood resilience during the overlapping crises of 2020. Based on these innovative uses, next year the mobility hub program will explore the following approaches to foster access, programming, and community connection:

At the core of a resilient community is social capital. It's people knowing what the needs are and having the skills and access to resources to do something about it. To invest in resilience is to invest in social capital. Growing leadership and building capacity within communities is an asset that will translate to almost any type of challenge or crisis a community may face.

Build community partnerships and connections that build awareness of the opportunities to utilize the mobility hub for community based activities. As regular activations become more well known in the community, people will develop an awareness of the mobility hubs as a place to go to "plug in" with their neighborhood. At a mature mobility hub, there could even be emergency plans developed for how sites could operate for food distribution, shuttle locations or neighborhood response launch sites.

Establish space for programming to occur. Physical environments can be developed mobility hubs to serve as social infrastructure and provide space for the ongoing programming that can make mobility hubs the nexus of a thriving, resilient community. Programming spaces should be accessible to both project partners and welcoming toward other members of the community utilizing the spaces.

Keep programming spaces available and create simple systems to support use. It is important that as spaces grow and evolve, they still operate as fundamentally public spaces, able to be programmed in a dynamic and responsive fashion to evolving community needs. Through clearly communicating and simplifying the process of using public space.

Continue to center neighborhood identity and build in opportunities for localized control and capacity development through the mobility hub program. Opportunities to influence the design, operations and programming of mobility hubs will be an important component of scaling the program up from this pilot stage. Consistent avenues for participation in and control over the spaces will help ensure that residents feel well served by mobility hubs and feel ownership of spaces.

> Coordination with staff advancing resilience work through Minneapolis Forward, the Resilience Hubs program, the Green Infrastructure program and Cultural Districts in the city is ongoing. As much as possible, mobility hub sites can become platforms for cooperative advancement of shared goals within the City enterprise.

Minneapolis
Public Works

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