



# Community Themes and Strengths Assessment

Arlington Department of Human Services  
Public Health Division

Destination 2027 is Arlington County, Virginia’s community health improvement process. Its goal is to improve health and equity over the next decade (2017-2027) through systems change.

The Community Themes and Strengths Assessment (CTSA) is one of four assessments that are part of the Mobilizing for Action through Planning and Partnership (MAPP) framework used in this process. It uses a community survey and interviews with health system partners to ask:

- What would most improve the quality of life for the entire community?
- What are the most important health-related issues for the entire community?
- What are the greatest strengths of the entire community?

## Community Survey

The Community Survey helps to understand the opinions and perceptions of adults who live, work, and play in Arlington regarding the quality of life and health in the community. The Public Health Division collaborated with County agencies and community organizations to develop the survey based on focus group input, and distribute the survey in paper and electronic forms at locations including libraries, community centers, health facilities, and government offices. It was translated into the County’s top five most-spoken languages aside from English: Spanish, Mongolian, Bengali, Arabic, Amharic. We also looked at the results for different subgroups, such as veterans and households with children, to see if their responses differed from the overall responses.

## Key Informant Interviews

Interviews were conducted with representatives from thirty-three partner organizations in business, education, faith, medical, social services, legal, government, and nonprofit sectors. They provided dialogue about community strengths, areas of improvement, and potential assets to improve health and health equity from the perspective of those who serve and County residents.

## Results

The top selections of both the public survey and the key informant interviews were very similar. For the survey, we also looked at the results for different subgroups, such as veterans and households with children, to see if their responses differed from the overall responses. The combined results are presented here.

Opportunities for Improvement (Highlighted out of 23 options)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to affordable housing</li> <li>• Access to affordable, healthy food</li> <li>• Access to health care</li> <li>• Jobs and a healthy economy</li> <li>• Aging (a good place to grow old)</li> <li>• Educational opportunities</li> <li>• Meet basic needs (food, shelter, clothing)</li> <li>• Better collaboration between partners</li> </ul>

*“Housing IS healthcare; we need to first meet the basic need for housing to impact health in other spheres and to help people heal.”*

*“Mental health is a huge issue. Not just for adults, but for kids, too... We – and they - all struggle with a culture of not wanting to admit that they are upset or not feeling like themselves.”*

Important Health Issues (Highlighted out of 15 options)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chronic diseases</li> <li>• Dental health</li> <li>• Healthy eating and active living</li> <li>• Mental health</li> <li>• Aging</li> <li>• Alcohol and drug abuse</li> <li>• Clean &amp; healthy environment</li> </ul>

Community Strengths (Highlighted out of 23 options)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Good transportation options</li> <li>• Jobs and a healthy economy</li> <li>• Safe place to live</li> <li>• Welcomes social, cultural, and economic diversity</li> <li>• A good place to grow old (Aging)</li> <li>• A good place to raise children</li> <li>• Access to affordable, healthy food</li> <li>• Access to health care</li> <li>• Educational opportunities</li> </ul>

*“All walks of life are represented here, which gives us a cultural richness that is very unique to this area.”*