

Rural Community Needs Assessment Project

Huron as a Community for Children and Families

Overview and Purpose

To deepen its understanding of rural Fresno County families, First 5 Fresno County (F5FC) partnered with Harder+Company Community Research to conduct a needs assessment of two rural communities in Fresno County, Huron and Mendota. The purpose was to learn about community strengths and challenges, provide critical information and develop recommendations to support community, and complete the assessment with a dedication to participatory research.

The full report on both communities can be found at first5fresno.org.

Methodology

A mixed-methods approach using qualitative and quantitative data from parents and service providers was used to inform the assessment. In Huron, this included:



(n=97)

Parent surveys



(n=8)

Asset mapping



(n=8)

Service provider focus group



(n=70)

Service provider surveys

Key Findings

The findings from this assessment are detailed across three key areas:



Understanding Families

- The majority of families (60%) have lived in Huron 10+ years.
- Most respondents identified as Latino/a (94%) and responded to the survey in Spanish (87%).
- The majority parents in Huron (82%) have not received a high school diploma.
- Many service providers (39%) noted economic or workforce challenges.



Community Infrastructure

- Parents identified schools as the most important community asset.
- Parents identified the lack of a local high school as a major community need.
- 1 in 4 parents identified public safety concerns as a major community challenge.



Service System

- The majority of organizations that provide services to Huron are located outside the community (54%).
- Families with children with special needs noted the lack of local early intervention services and cultural stigma.
- Both service providers and families identified transportation and distance as major barriers to accessing services.

Recommendations

The findings from the assessment informed the final recommendations detailed in the report. The recommendations are categorized into four categories:

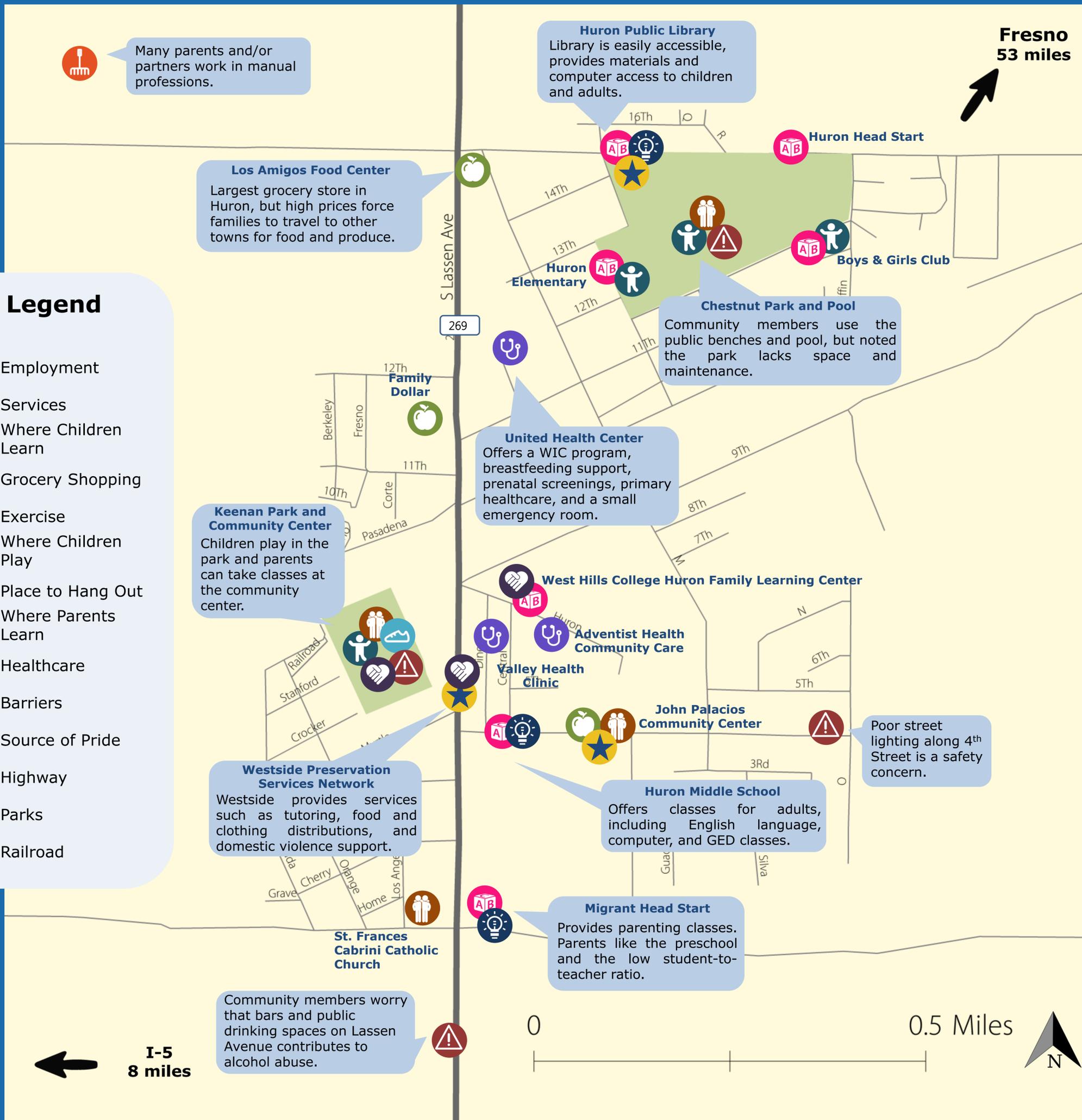
1. Raise **awareness** of the unique challenges and needs of rural communities.
2. Create **partnerships** with rural communities by engaging key stakeholders in order to build trust with local residents.
3. Address major service needs through short-term and long-term **investments**.
4. Improve service provider **coordination** by promoting greater **communication** and **information-sharing**.

Huron Asset Map

During the asset mapping session a group of Huron parents worked together to identify a range of assets. This summary map represents Huron's assets and challenges from the perspectives of families in Huron.

Key Findings:

- Local health care providers provide several services to residents, including perinatal care and primary health care. However, families reported long-waiting times and limited waiting room space. Parents with young children shared that the waiting rooms are not kid-friendly. Often families travel to Hanford, Coalinga, or Fresno for routine and specialized care due to their negative experiences in Huron.
- Families identified Chestnut and Keenan Park as important community assets. However, many acknowledged park maintenance and surveillance could be improved. The cost of Zumba classes offered at the Keenan Community Center and the lack of sufficient benches at Chestnut, makes it so many parents prefer to exercise and gather at home.
- Safety is an overarching concern. In addition to the drug and gang activity in community parks, the lack of public infrastructure, such as sufficient sidewalks, street signs, and street lighting, make walking around the community difficult and unsafe. Children often play at home and in the streets, but fast drivers can pose a serious safety risk.



Legend

- Employment
- Services
- Where Children Learn
- Grocery Shopping
- Exercise
- Where Children Play
- Place to Hang Out
- Where Parents Learn
- Healthcare
- Barriers
- Source of Pride
- Highway
- Parks
- Railroad

Many parents and/or partners work in manual professions.

Los Amigos Food Center
Largest grocery store in Huron, but high prices force families to travel to other towns for food and produce.

Huron Public Library
Library is easily accessible, provides materials and computer access to children and adults.

Fresno
53 miles

Chestnut Park and Pool
Community members use the public benches and pool, but noted the park lacks space and maintenance.

United Health Center
Offers a WIC program, breastfeeding support, prenatal screenings, primary healthcare, and a small emergency room.

Keenan Park and Community Center
Children play in the park and parents can take classes at the community center.

Poor street lighting along 4th Street is a safety concern.

Westside Preservation Services Network
Westside provides services such as tutoring, food and clothing distributions, and domestic violence support.

Huron Middle School
Offers classes for adults, including English language, computer, and GED classes.

Migrant Head Start
Provides parenting classes. Parents like the preschool and the low student-to-teacher ratio.

Community members worry that bars and public drinking spaces on Lassen Avenue contributes to alcohol abuse.

I-5
8 miles

