



Community Engagement & Engaged Journalism

Winter 2018 • J 463 • Engaged Journalism

Emily Poole • Journalism

Andrew DeVigal • Instructor
Agora Journalism Center
School of Journalism and Communication

Acknowledgements

We want to take the time to thank everyone who helped the Engaged Journalism course with the La Pine project. We appreciate all the hard work you contributed to our project. We give thanks to the La Pine residents who participated in interviews, surveys, and community events and the faculty at La Pine's Senior Center. Our project wouldn't have become what it did without any of you. We would like to thank a few individuals who helped drive the project forward.

Cory Miskey, City Manager, La Pine

Dennis Scott, Mayor, La Pine

Don Greiner, City Council, La Pine

Joe Page, Senior Center Board Director, La Pine

Deborah Ensor, Internews' Senior Director of US Programs

Jesse Hardman, Internews' Community Media Developer

About SCI

The Sustainable Cities Initiative (SCI) is a cross-disciplinary organization at the University of Oregon that promotes education, service, public outreach, and research on the design and development of sustainable cities. We are redefining higher education for the public good and catalyzing community change toward sustainability. Our work addresses sustainability at multiple scales and emerges from the conviction that creating the sustainable city cannot happen within any single discipline. SCI is grounded in cross-disciplinary engagement as the key strategy for improving community sustainability. Our work connects student energy, faculty experience, and community needs to produce innovative, tangible solutions for the creation of a sustainable society.

About SCYP

The Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) is a year-long partnership between SCI and a partner in Oregon, in which students and faculty in courses from across the university collaborate with a public entity on sustainability and livability projects. SCYP faculty and students work in collaboration with staff from the partner agency through a variety of studio projects and service-learning courses to provide students with real world projects to investigate. Students bring energy, enthusiasm, and innovative approaches to difficult, persistent problems. SCYP's primary value derives from collaborations resulting in on-the-ground impact and expanded conversations for a community ready to transition to a more sustainable and livable future.

SCI Directors and Staff

Marc Schlossberg, SCI Co-Director, and Professor of Planning, Public Policy, and Management, University of Oregon

Nico Larco, SCI Co-Director, and Associate Professor of Architecture, University of Oregon

Megan Banks, SCYP Manager, University of Oregon

About La Pine

La Pine is a small Central Oregon community located in Deschutes County. In the foothills of the Cascade Mountains, La Pine is surrounded by open meadows, lakes, and rivers. It has a long history dating back to French fur traders in the 1800s, but it was not until 2006 that the city formally incorporated. The seven square miles of La Pine represent the newest city in Oregon, and are home to a population of around 2,000 residents. According to the La Pine Chamber of Commerce, Deschutes County has experienced the most rapid growth of any county in Oregon over the last decade. La Pine itself is experiencing significant growth in both population and economics. Key industries contributing to this growth include technology and biotech, recreational and outdoor gear manufacturing, brewing and data centers. As an emerging Oregon city, La Pine is in a unique position to develop and enact sustainable practices for its future.

La Pine is the first ever Small City Pilot for the University of Oregon Sustainable Cities Initiative's Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP). Through this partnership, multiple university courses in areas such as journalism, business, architecture, and more have provided tangible recommendations for the city of La Pine to incorporate into its future development plans. As a small city, La Pine balances day-to-day needs and long-range planning, making it an ideal location for the infusion of energy and new ideas.

The SCYP Small Cities Pilot is made possible in part by a grant from The Ford Family Foundation. These initiatives and outcomes from participation with SCYP will help develop ideas that are cost-effective to build and operate, provide safe and convenient access, and achieve sustainability goals while supporting La Pine's projected growth in population and employment.

Course Participants

- Aaron Alter, Journalism Undergraduate
- Samuel Bass, Journalism Undergraduate
- Payton Bruni, Journalism Undergraduate
- Kelsie Evans, Journalism Undergraduate
- Madeline Groh, Journalism Undergraduate
- Brooke Kaneshiro, Journalism Undergraduate
- Emily Poole, Journalism Undergraduate
- Cecilia Saiuw, Journalism Undergraduate
- Sierra Webster, Journalism Undergraduate

Table of Contents

About SCI	3
About SCYP	3
SCI Directors and Staff	3
About La Pine	4
Course Participants	5
Executive Summary	7
Introduction	7
Some Highlights	8
Background and Media Landscape	9
Ages	9
Occupations	9
Media Landscape	9
KTVZ or News Channel 21	9
The Newberry Eagle	10
Information Ecosystem Findings	10
Facebook–What’s Really Happening in La Pine	11
Local News sources	12
National News Sources	13
Trust	14
National News Outlets	15
Key Findings	15
Recommendations	17
Methodology	19
Conclusion	20
Appendix A: The Listening Post Collective Playbook	22
Appendix B: North Omaha Information Ecosystem Assessment	48
Appendix C: Information Needs Assessment Survey (Version One)	74
Appendix D: Information Needs Assessment Survey (Version Two)	79
Appendix E: Information Needs Survey Flyer	85
Appendix F: Coded Survey Responses	86

This report represents original student work and recommendations prepared by students in the University of Oregon’s Sustainable City Year Program the City of La Pine. Text and images contained in this report may not be used without permission from the University of Oregon.

Executive Summary

Nestled along U.S. Highway 97 in Central Oregon lies the city of La Pine. With a population of around 2,000, La Pine is a smaller city in Oregon. It is also one of the state's newest cities: La Pine was incorporated in 2006 as a part of Deschutes County. La Pine is an emerging city that is experiencing population and economic growth. Since 2000, the average income has jumped nearly 30 percent, from \$29,859 to \$38,308; though it is still lower than the state median of \$59,532. In juxtaposition to the city's relative youth, the population itself trends in the older direction. The average age of the La Pine population is 42.6 years old, compared to 39.2 years old for the state of Oregon.

For such a small city, La Pine residents have a number of choices when it comes to local media outlets, including a local paper (the Newberry Eagle), two radio stations (KNCP 107.3 and KLBR 88.1), and a local television channel (KTVZ Channel 21). Residents also have access to a wide variety of national and internet-based outlets, including CNN, NPR, Fox News, and others.

With hopes to better understand the community's information needs, the University of Oregon School of Journalism and Communication (SOJC) J463 Engaged Journalism class conducted an information needs assessment.

Our objectives were to find out what media is consumed in La Pine, and how it's consumed; which outlets are doing well with the community and why; and finally, how the media can better serve the needs of La Pine.

We began with a visit to La Pine, where we surveyed residents and introduced our project. Shortly thereafter, an online survey was made available to any residents interested in participating. Our final step was a second visit to La Pine, where we hosted a workshop in order to find out what media outlets can do to gain the trust of the people of La Pine. In total, we surveyed over 70 residents, both in person and via an online survey.

Introduction

From early January to March 2018, the Engaged Journalism class at the University of Oregon carried out an information ecosystem assessment with residents in La Pine, Oregon to gauge the current information needs of the community. The assessment included:

- Several community engagement events;
- Interviews with La Pine residents, representatives from local and regional media, and government officials.

Nearly 100 surveys were completed by residents both online and in-person. The surveys were modeled off a Playbook created by The Listening Post Collective, a local media engagement project from the international nonprofit organization Internews (See Appendix A). The Listening Post Collective Playbook served as a guideline for how the student journalists would listen to and engage with the La Pine community.

Our assessment indicates that the city's residents have clear and specific media consumption habits, as well as a thirst for more hyper-local information that addresses issues of concern to them and their community.

This assessment was also used as a term-long class assignment and the means to launch the first ever Engaged Journalism class at the University of Oregon. The Engaged Journalism class is one of four departments participating in the Sustainable City Year Program, and efforts to continue this project will extend into spring term.

Some Highlights

Based on our interviews, surveys and community engagement, we established the following highlights of La Pine residents and their engagement with news media.

1. **There's trust in the local news**
 - a. Most people trusted local news outlets (65.8%), with the KTVZ being the most trusted (63.3%).
 - b. Many survey responses indicated they do not trust national media due lack of transparency and accountability (20%).
2. **Residents want access to more community information and breaking developments**
 - a. Survey respondents wanted to see more information on the Highway 97-Wickiup Junction overpass, employment and business opportunities, and housing information.
3. **The community values information that relates to the youth**
 - a. Forty-one percent of survey participants wanted information about education and schools. Some residents want more development of youth activities.
4. **What really happening in La Pine?**
 - a. Sixty-three percent said that when something happens in their community, they hear information from the "What's Really Happening in La Pine?" Facebook group (WRH in La Pine FB).
 - b. There may be a lack of access to information, prompting the start of this Facebook group.



Figure 1: Megan Banks (SCYP Manager) and student Kelsie Evans interview La Pine residents to collect data about the information ecosystem of La Pine.



Figure 2: La Pine residents participate in a trust workshop and also fill out the information needs survey, which are collected once completed and the responses are recorded.

Background and Media Landscape

Ages

The demographic trend in survey participants is toward an older population. We have found that the residents of La Pine who are over 55 make up the majority of the age percentage. Out of the total respondents, 63 percent were 50 or older. The age demographic of the survey participants reflects the average age of the La Pine population, which highlights the amount of visibility given to that age group.

Occupations

In terms of occupation, 24 responses answered retired. Almost a third of the survey participants were retired, which emphasizes the high percentage of retirees in La Pine. The high number of retired residents reinforces the age distribution within La Pine. However, since 2000 La Pine has seen a 133 percent population increase, which has help balance the age distribution.

Media Landscape

The two most frequently cited local media sources in survey responses were KTVZ, with 50 respondents and The Newberry Eagle, with 29 respondents. The next highest was Wise Buys with 14. However, over 60 percent of respondents reported that when something happens in their community it is not local media they turn to first, but instead a Facebook group titled “What’s Really Happening in La Pine.” The group has over 4,000 members, which is more than double the population of La Pine.

KTVZ or News Channel 21

KTVZ is located in Bend, Oregon and heralds itself “Central Oregon’s News Leader.” The media source is composed of a 17-person news team and produces both television broadcasts and written articles available online. KTVZ reports primarily on Bend and other larger cities in Central Oregon, but also reports on key news and events in La Pine.

The Newberry Eagle

Produced and located in La Pine. In addition to a three-person team of volunteer staff writers, one social media personnel, and a general manager and editor, the monthly publication features contributions and submissions from community members. Each monthly issue is available in both print and digital versions. Each issue is 24 pages long with seven pages of civic news. Various other sections include veterans, fishing, business, food, adventures, house and home, and a monthly event calendar. The paper is 33% advertising; the past three issues averaged approximately eight pages of advertisements. Issues are archived back to January of 2016.

Information Ecosystem Findings

An information ecosystem is an in-depth analysis of the information systems within a community to address the dispersal and abundance of viable information, the relationship between the information systems, and how the information systems influence the community. Overall, researching the information ecosystem helps provide a snapshot of how information moves through a community. It can identify what the trusted sources are, who the major influencers are, what issues are most important to residents, and how to expand the news conversation to a diverse audience. An information ecosystem assessment will examine the connectedness of a community to sources of information, professional media or otherwise, and relational trust between the community and those sources of information.

To begin to understand the information ecosystem of La Pine, students collected data from local residents by circulating digital surveys and interviewing residents in person; over 70 responses were collected. The class modeled their assessment after Internews' North Omaha Information Ecosystem Assessment (See Appendix B). The Omaha Assessment strived to identify the most important issues to the community and gauge how connected the local people felt to information systems.

Using Internews' North Omaha Information Ecosystem Assessment as an example, the students attempted to understand which issues were of high importance to community members, evaluate the current media landscape and information flow in the city, and assess trust between the community and media producers. Survey questions asked residents to identify community information sources and trusted news sources (See Appendix C).

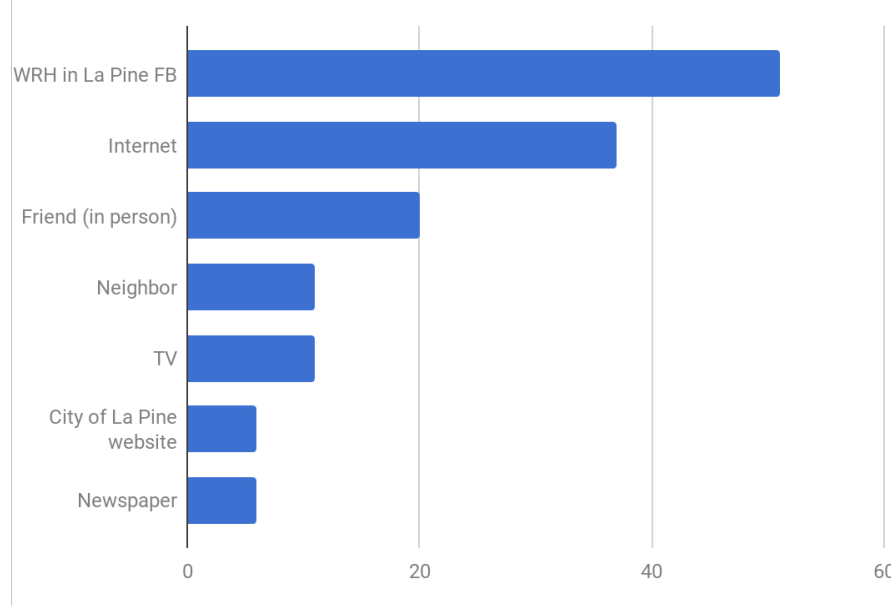


Figure 3: When something happens in your community, where do you hear about it first?

Main Sources of Information

La Pine residents rely on several main sources of information, with Facebook being the most popular, followed by The Newberry Eagle and Fox News (See Figure 3). The following provides details of these information sources and how they are used.

Facebook–What’s Really Happening in La Pine

‘What’s Really Happening in La Pine’ is a closed Facebook group for the people living in the La Pine area to network, encourage local involvement, and strengthen the community. Although the population of La Pine is just under 2,000 people, there are over 4,000 members in the group, with three volunteer administrators who moderate the page to ensure that content does not violate community rules.

Common posts include recommendations for services such as best cell phone company to use, recommendations for attorneys, clubs to join, etc. It is also common to see posts about general information that seems to be lacking in news coverage. One example is an incident on February 28 at La Pine High School when it was rumored that a student threatened to harm others. While answers were still not given, the Facebook page gave the community a space to discuss information heard around the school community.

As with many social media pages, one drawback is that information may not always come from credible sources, and due to the nature of the page, it can be difficult to distinguish facts from rumors. When asked, “When something happens in your community, where do you hear about it first?” community members overwhelmingly indicated on our survey that they receive that information from the ‘What’s Really Happening in La Pine Facebook group’ (51 respondents – 63.7 %).

The La Pine community Facebook page has guidelines about what types of content are allowed to be shared. The following guidelines have been taken from the ‘What’s Really Happening in La Pine’ Facebook page.

Acceptable content to post includes:

- Events
- Missing pets (1 post per pet, update when found)
- Missing Kids
- Local Fundraisers (groups)
- Feel Goods
- Local Construction
- Encouragement
- Upcoming Classes
- Cool local photos
- Local news
- Traffic Alerts
- Local Jobs
- General scanner/accident/emergency type stuff is okay, just no identifying people, vehicles, etc. without it first being released to the media.

Prohibited Content

The Facebook page also specifically limits users from posting certain types of content, which is explicitly listed in the page description. Prohibited content includes:

- Negativity (Including Foul Language/Swearing)
- Hate

- Rants of ANY kind - this is NOT an opinion column
- Threats
- Selling of ANY kind - including Garage Sales
- Business promoting of ANY kind
- Solicitation of minors (obtaining monetary assistance for a minor)
- Individual Fundraisers
- Politics - take it to town hall - meetings are posted at <http://www.ci.la-pine.or.us/calander>
- *NO posting rentals or jobs unless it's your property or business and you must be able to answer all questions in a timely manner*

In-Person

36 survey respondents indicated that they first hear about news in their community in person, either from friends or from their neighbors (a combined 45.1 %). The top three physical locations where community members say they come together and share information were church (30 respondents – 49.2 %), grocery stores (23 respondents – 32.9 %) and restaurants (24 respondents – 34.3 %).



Figure 4: From left to right, *The Bend Bulletin*, *The Newbery Eagle* and *Wise Buys* are all newspapers available for the La Pine community. Both *The Eagle* and *Wise Buys* are free, while *The Bulletin* is not.

Local News sources

KTVZ

KTVZ is a local news broadcasting station that serves Central Oregon, including Deschutes, Jefferson, and Crook counties. It serves as the main source of local broadcast news for the residents of La Pine. KTVZ is an NBC, Fox, CW, and Telemundo affiliate station. It is similar to other local broadcast stations in that it covers local hard news and occasionally does feature pieces.

Because the station covers all of Central Oregon, in-depth coverage of the La Pine community is not always available. Some La Pine community members have expressed that they think KTVZ only covers La Pine if it is negative. One response that reflected this sentiment stated, “KTVZ [doesn’t] highlight La Pine unless it’s to put us down.”

In our survey, 13.8% of respondents indicated that they first receive information about their community from TV in general, with further survey responses indicating that KTVZ is the primary source of trusted broadcast information for the La Pine community.

Newberry Eagle

The Newberry Eagle is a local monthly periodical that serves the city of La Pine and the surrounding area. It focuses on community reporting and feature stories. The Newberry Eagle has downloadable online versions of their newspaper. The Eagle is available for free around the city of La Pine and it subsists primarily on ad revenue. Only 7.5% of our respondents indicated that they primarily receive their community information from newspapers; however, a 36.7 percent of respondents indicated that they trust The Newberry.

Wise Buys

Wise Buys is a weekly advertising publication that provides community classified ads. Wise Buys has an online website and a digital archive that goes back almost a decade, but the publication is primarily distributed as a free physical paper. There is no reporting that is published in the paper, but community members and groups use the publication to advertise fundraisers, meetings, and other events that are relevant to the community.

Bend Bulletin

The Bend Bulletin is a local daily periodical that serves Bend and the surrounding communities. It has been in publication since 1903, and limited access is available for free online and in print, and in full for a subscription fee. The paper has a circulation of 26,986 readers for its weekday editions. The Bulletin is a well-established and reputable news source; however, with its focus on the Bend community, residents of La Pine expressed The Bulletin lacked detailed reporting for their community.

KNCP 107.3

KNCP 107.3 is a local FM radio station that serves the La Pine community. The station hosts 14 individual shows throughout the week, with all shows being hosted by local community DJs. One show, the La Pine Chamber Connection, provides news and programming from the La Pine Chamber of Commerce specifically. The KNCP website has a curated news section that provides links to outside reporting on topics such as world news, food, health, entertainment, sports and driving conditions. Very few of our survey respondents indicated that they used radio as a primary source of information (only 1.3%).

National News Sources

Fox News

Fox News is an international news provider. Fox has national and international broadcast television reporting and digitally published written reporting. The station is owned and operated by the Fox Broadcasting Company, which controls 17 stations and has affiliation agreements with 177 other local stations. Fox was the most watched cable television network in the country in 2017, reaching 1,501,000 viewers. Fox News is widely known be right-leaning. Fox News was the station of choice to be on air for customers in establishments such as businesses, restaurants, and laundromats.

NPR

National Public Radio (NPR) is a not-for-profit publicly owned radio station and online news source. The parent station NPR has regional and local affiliate stations across the country. For the city of La Pine, the public radio stations are Oregon Public Broadcasting (OPB) and KLCC,

which broadcasts in Bend on KLBR 88.1 FM. The national NPR station provides national and international reporting and coverage, while the regional and local stations provide more community targeted programming. Members of the La Pine community indicated that they appreciate the first-hand reporting that happens through NPR and its affiliates. One respondent shared, “NPR interviews people. Other news shows have discussion with lawmakers or their peers, but NPR focuses on actual citizens and how things are affecting them.”

CNN

CNN is an international news provider, with both nationally and internationally broadcast television reporting and digitally published written reporting. The station is owned and operated by Turner Broadcasting System and reached an audience of 1,055,000 views in 2017. Contrary to Fox, CNN’s news coverage is generally viewed as left-leaning.

Trust

Local News Outlets

Residents of La Pine were asked the question, “Which LOCAL news outlets do you TRUST the most?” Out of all 81 responses, we found the most trusted local news outlet in La Pine is KTVZ (Figure 5). The second most trusted local news outlet was the Newberry Eagle. The city of La Pine has a lot of trust in local media, and respondents attributed their trust in local news to two factors. First, respondents emphasized the locality and availability of KTVZ and The Eagle as a means for trust. Responses ranged from, “This is what I have access to,” to “Truly local.”

The second aspect respondents focused on was how accurate and unbiased these local news outlets were. One respondent said, “They listen and aren’t too biased.” Another said, “As far as local news goes, KTVZ seems to be less biased than say, the Bulletin,”

After KTVZ and The Newberry Eagle, the top four local news outlets residents of La Pine trust are: Wise Buys (15 respondents), the Bend Bulletin (9 respondents), KNCP 107.3 FM (5 respondents) and OPB (5 respondents).

Local News Outlets Residents of La Pine Trust

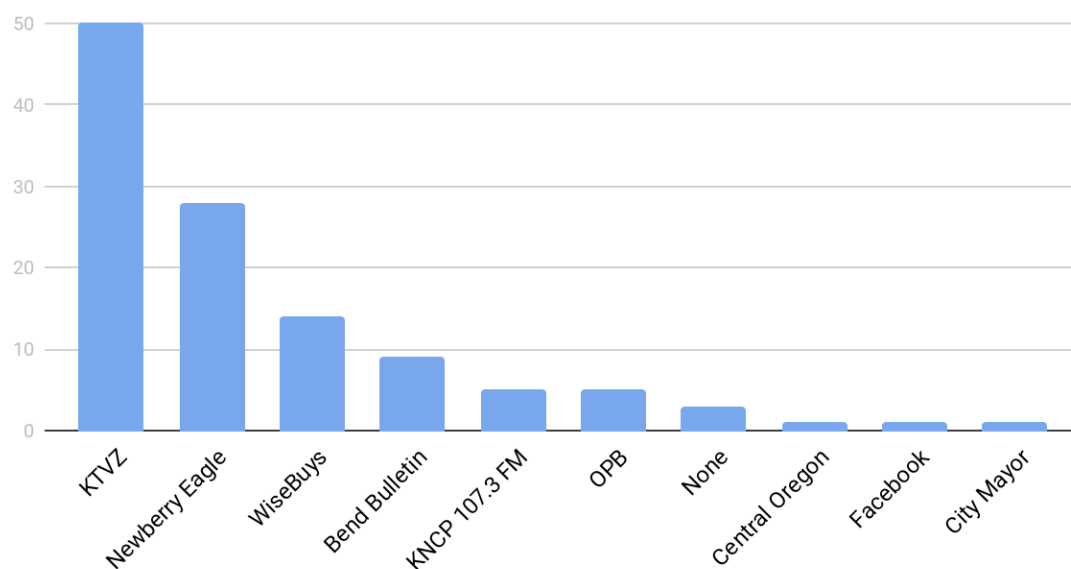


Figure 5: Results from survey question “Which LOCAL news outlets do you TRUST most?”

National News Outlets

On the other hand, there is a lack of trust in national news media outlets. Residents of La Pine were asked the question, “Which NATIONAL news outlets do you TRUST the most?” Fifteen respondents stated they didn’t have any trust in national news outlets. The main factor residents cited for the lack of trust is that national news outlets have biased journalists who have their own agenda. As one response said, “Media is no longer neutral and is run by interest groups who slant the news their way.” Another emphasized the difficulty distinguishing between fact and opinions, “There’s so much lying how can you know when the truth is being said?”

We did find that the most trusted national news outlet in La Pine is Fox News (Figure 6). Some factors that respondents said contribute to their trust in Fox are that they feel Fox provides “evidence rich content” and that the information they provide aligns with their political views. Responses of this nature include: “Most likely to tell the facts without too much spinning,”; “I can relate to its views,”; “Conservative news,”; “No fake news,”; and, “Seems like they cover stories more in depth.” Other than Fox News, these are the top eight national news outlets residents of La Pine trust: NPR (9 respondents), CNN (7 respondents), MSNBC (6 respondents), the Washington Post (5 respondents), the New York Times (4 respondents) and the Wall Street Journal (4 respondents).

National News Outlets Residents of La Pine Trust

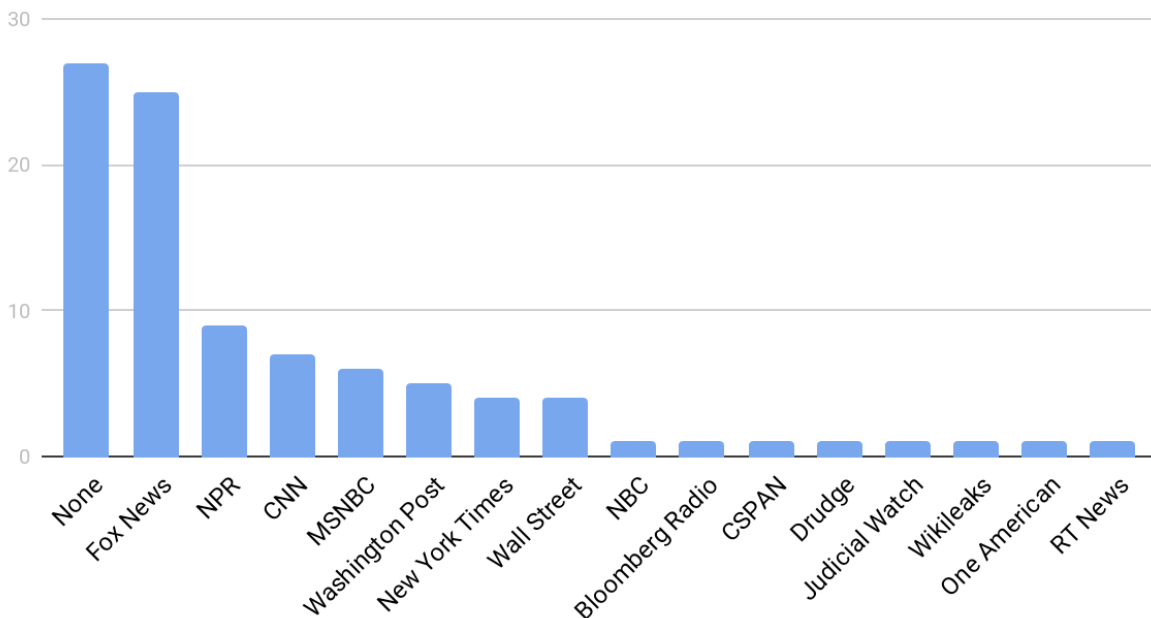


Figure 6: Which NATIONAL news outlets do you TRUST most?

Key Findings

La Pine is one of the newest cities in Central Oregon. La Pine was incorporated in 2006, and the city has focused on community development and engaging its residents ever since. The information needs of La Pine reflect a community that values local news coverage and expanding issues for news coverage.

Local news is paramount. Access to local news and news on local development was the most important type of information to La Pine residents (71%). They prioritize issues of housing and business, and employment growth, so breaking news on local development is important. La Pine residents also want to see more information about local issues offered in media. The most frequent suggestions were to cover the development of Highway 97, employment and

business opportunities, housing issues, and plans for the Wickiup area. One response said, “When business property is purchased, I’m not always sure what will be happening.” And another said, “The ODOT-Wickiup Junction Overpass work was halted. It was months before information was published to explain why.” With La Pine being a new city, information about these topics is essential to the community’s trust in city expansion and development.



Figure 7: Many of the responses mentioned the lack of information about the Wickiup area and what is going to be done with it. There was concern about the development of this area.

Local news outlets are the most trusted. The residents of La Pine have more trust in local news outlets than in national. La Pine residents indicate that locally focused news and the lack of political polarization in local media production earns their trust. Most of the surveyed participants said they do not have trust in national media, and blame the national media’s tendency to be biased, inaccurate, and political. “They have their own agenda they push. If you watch all of them they twist the small details to their own needs,” said one survey participant. The most trusted local news outlets are KTVZ (63.3%) and the Newberry Eagle (36.7%). When asked about what made those news outlets trustworthy, the overwhelming response was because they are local. The community of La Pine values news about their community and feels that KTVZ and The Newberry Eagle represent and prioritize the local community. As one La Pine participant said in their survey response, “Local people delivering local news.”

1. Coverage of youth issues is important. The residents of La Pine also want more coverage on development for their youth. The second most important type of news to surveyed participants was education and schools (41%). The La Pine population has an average age of 42 years old and is known for being a retirement community, so La Pine residents would like to see more available options for youth engagement and representation. A 15-year-old survey participant touched on the lack of options for youth: “Kids and teens do not really have a real place to hang out.” Many surveyed participants explained that they blame the crime and drug use among the youth in La Pine on a lack of opportunity for them. One surveyed participant said, “Giving our youth quality things/ activities to do to help keep them out of trouble.” Information about and for the youth are central to expanding the La Pine audience and balancing the representation in media.

Sixty-three percent of the total respondents were 50 or older, which highlights the lack of representation for the youth.

- 2. The “What’s Really Happening in La Pine” Facebook page is main source of information.** The dominant platform used among the surveyed participants to gather information was Facebook. Individuals 50 years and older are nationally one of the fastest growing user demographics for Facebook, and the data set reflects that in La Pine as well. When asked about other social media platforms used for information, the only person to use Snapchat, a platform dominated by users between the ages of 12 and 24, was 16. Sharing information only on Facebook risks isolating a part of the La Pine community that is already underrepresented. Information is shared on the “What’s Really happening in La Pine” Facebook page. With Facebook being the most commonly used social media platform in La Pine, and the “What’s Really happening in La Pine” Facebook group being as popular as it is, this information hub has been acting as an informal news source for La Pine residents. Our assumption is that this informal news hub came about because La Pine community members were struggling to find the information they were most interested in. Without an alternative information source, La Pine residents took it upon themselves to create/find their own community news source.
- 3. Residents like to gather at civic locations.** The most popular community gathering locations include city-sponsored buildings and food centers (68% of total responses). These public spaces allow the community members to connect with one another and share information about local issues. The community can discuss the issues relevant to their experience and learn from fellow community members.

Recommendations

After spending time within the La Pine community and reviewing our collection of survey data, our team agrees that the information ecosystem of the La Pine community has potential for growth. It is important to emphasize that the overall civic health of any city is directly tied to the community’s access and trust in local information. However, beyond access and trust, we believe it is important that the community, government, and local journalists maintain community conversations and collaboration with one another. In order to address some of the issues and ideas voiced by the La Pine community, such as access to more information on the local community, we suggest that information producers and consumers continue to interact. With this mind, we have come up with a few recommendations for the community that can bolster the information health of La Pine.

Recommendations for the local government

Leverage community information networks

In order to better understand and serve the community members of La Pine, we would recommend that city officials utilize the information channels that are most commonly accessed by residents. For instance, based on our finding about the popularity of the “What’s Really Happening in La Pine” Facebook group, it would be beneficial to have a city official dedicated to monitoring the page.

There are several reasons why this approach could be worthwhile:

- Respectfully meeting and engaging with community members in their own spaces can help to build positive relationships between the community and their local government.
- Having someone provide official opinions and answers for questions and concerns voiced by community members can help to reduce the spread of unfounded information and rumors, especially on the Facebook page.

- Due to the high volume of Facebook followers, more people will see information that is posted on the group page in comparison to information that is posted on the official city of La Pine website.
- Over time, monitoring community information sources will reveal community trends and topics that can be utilized by the city for projects and city development ideas. These benefits in general hold true for leveraging any community information network.

Recommendations for local news outlets

Build relationships with community members

If La Pine is to have a healthy information ecosystem, local news outlets should strive to build stronger relationships with the people they cover. The people of La Pine want more access to breaking news, stories that reflect their interests, and news that welcomes a two-way conversation. To achieve this, crowdsourcing story ideas, inviting community members along for the reporting process and hosting community discussions are possible methods. Potential tools for implementing these ideas include Hearken and GroundSource. Hearken is a platform that offers consulting services to newsrooms about how to listen to the public as a story unfolds. Hearken's model is called public-powered journalism and generates high performance journalism through deep community engagement. GroundSource is another platform that focuses on community engagement, but through mobile communication. GroundSource understands that audiences prefer to communicate on their mobile devices, so they have developed a method for building and maintaining relational mobile interaction.

Examples of projects that succeeded in using the previously mentioned engagement techniques include The 32 Percent Project and Hey Area. Both examples use engagement techniques to successfully generate community conversations and involvement. The majority of respondents indicated that they were interested in collaborating with local media, so if a local news publisher, such as KTVZ, incorporated these ideas into their reporting process, the overall information health of La Pine could significantly improve as well as the relationship between the community and local media outlets.

Recommendations for La Pine community members

Create opportunities for youth experience

Content and opportunities for youth in La Pine were stressed in the survey responses. We recommend that La Pine encourage their youth to remain active in the community by organizing a radio station, newspaper, or a blog that is run by the students of La Pine High School. We believe providing the La Pine youth more internship opportunities with local businesses could encourage youth involvement and participation. Internships would allow students to work alongside professionals to gain experience that could help them build their careers in La Pine. For example, The Newberry Eagle could offer internships to students who have an interest in journalism. The students would get hands-on experience and be a part of the reporting process, which benefits a newsroom's credibility and increases audience trust.

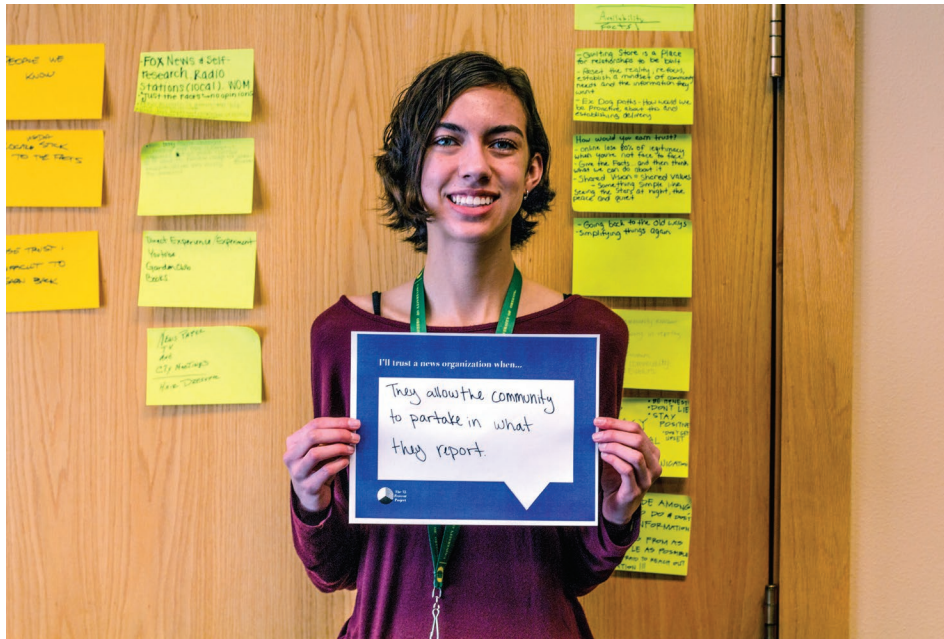


Figure 8: This is Rylee Butterfield, one of the few youth participants in our survey and the only one to come to our workshop.

Methodology

With the localized social ecosystem of La Pine it was critical to understand how people received and shared their news and information. It was also critical in this study to find out who La Pine residents trusted as a resource of community and national news, and why they did or did not hold trust in them.

The information ecosystem of La Pine is dominated by the “What’s Really Happening in La Pine” Facebook page. In addition to this community page, people also searched the internet for their news or relied on neighbors, friends, and relatives. Our goal was to also find out where people gathered to share local needs and discuss local matters.

We made two visits to La Pine to assess the residents’ needs. After the first visit, we were able to codify the process by analyzing the initial assessment from the first round of surveys. The initial survey was refined in order to directly address some of the concerns mentioned in first set of survey responses (Appendix D). The second visit gave the class an opportunity to distribute the refined survey and gather a clearer picture of La Pine’s information needs with a larger sampling of data to pull from. On the second visit, the class dispersed fliers that included a QR code, a scannable barcode that can direct you to a browser, so La Pine residents could easily access the survey link (Appendix E).

- Created a survey to analyze the information practices of La Pine community members.
- Hosted two community engagement events in La Pine. The first event was a discovery needs assessment. We gathered data about how the La Pine community was accessing, sharing, and interpreting information and news. The second event utilized the knowledge gained from the first visit by recognizing and addressing specific information concerns within the community, such as trust.
- Interviewed and surveyed community members, leaders, and organizers. During the first visit, the class broke into teams to survey the La Pine community. The teams surveyed the community at key public locations, such as the Post Office and laundromat, in order to maximize outreach. With the second trip, we expanded on this method and visited key locations that were previously missed.

Two students organized the data from the initial survey into codes, which categorized answers with similar signifiers and recorded their relative frequencies. We were able to codify the process after analyzing the first assessment and refined the initial survey accordingly.

- We published and digitally sent out the refined survey to La Pine community members. This engaged the community at large and allowed a larger pool of people to engage with the project.
- Developed an information needs assessment report for the city of La Pine based on the synthesized data from the surveys and interviews.
- Verbally delivered the report to Cory Misley, La Pine City Manager, in March 2018.

Notes on limitations

All assumptions listed within this information assessment are based on our personal observations on the local community, which come from several visits to the community, as well as two community engagement meetings and a collection of 81 informational surveys submitted by residents of La Pine.

It should also be mentioned that the vast majority of our surveys came from residents who found the survey online through Facebook. As a result, this may have affected some of survey totals where Facebook was listed as a possible response.

Our listed percentages and conclusions do not speak for the entirety of La Pine but represent the main demographic of the city. Minority groups such as the youth population are not thoroughly represented within our collected data.

Percentages have been calculated after coding the survey responses into specific verbiage (Appendix F). For example, the category “breaking news” refers to respondents who cited a desire for more access to information and news on community development as a whole. Codifying the data allowed the class to recognize themes within the data sets and have more representational analysis.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the Engaged Journalism project for La Pine was successful in engaging residents through conversation and community events. The La Pine community was very willing to share their information experiences with the students and participate in community events. From this, the class was able to gather a lot of data about information practices within the community. Rather than accumulating external information about La Pine, the class looked to the La Pine community for answers. The students considered the community members to be information consumers as well as information producers, which is why engaging with them was so important. Understanding the information practices of La Pine from the people themselves gave the class an opportunity to authentically expand on these practices and serve the local community. Over the course of the term, the class was able to recognize where information gaps were in La Pine’s information ecosystem and address them through focused surveys and a workshop. The class learned that La Pine is a locally focused community that prioritizes information about local news and development. With La Pine being such a young city, information about local news and development is crucial to the overall development of the city. People in La Pine were eager to engage with the students and participate in conversations about how to better La Pine’s information ecosystem.

The class was able to develop an information needs assessment report for the city of La Pine, which highlighted where there was trust and where information gaps were and provided suggested recommendations. The aim of the report was to synthesize all the data collected over the term and produce a report. The La Pine community is active and willing to continue the conversation about their information ecosystem. The recommendations the report provides

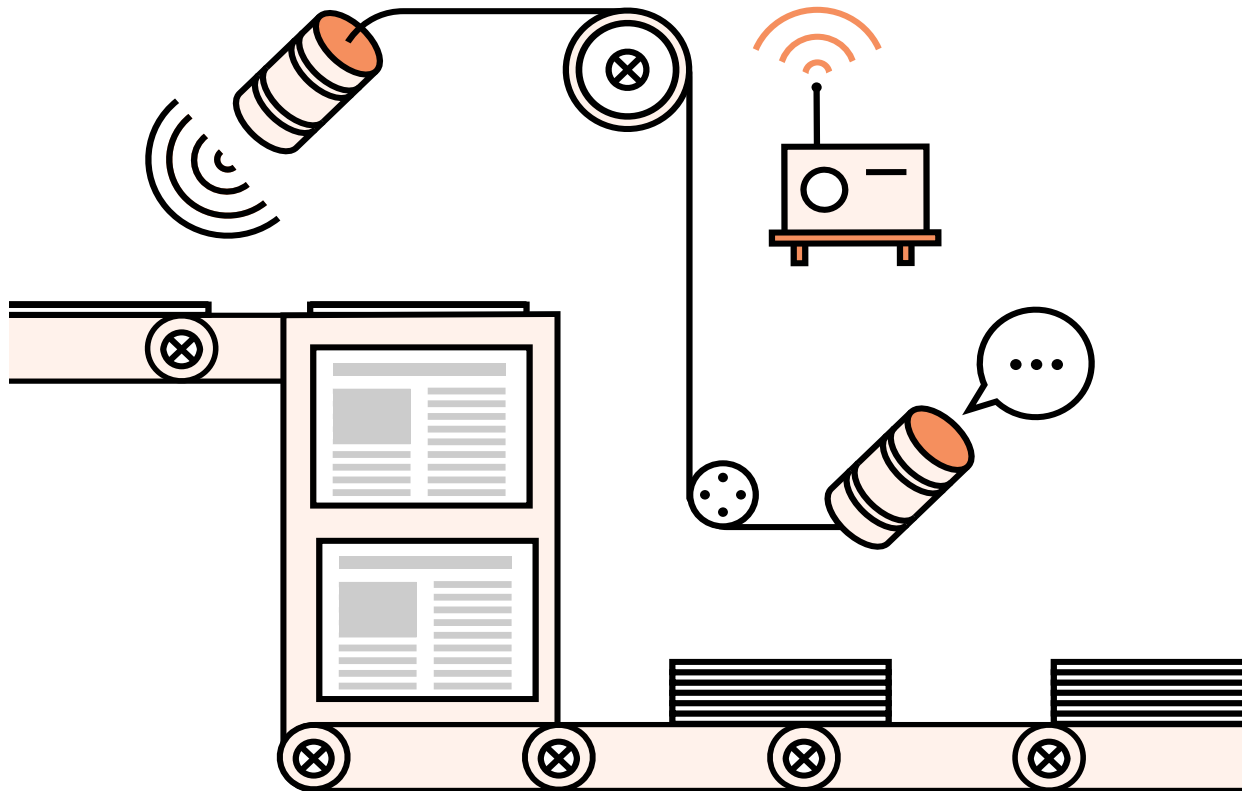
would help satisfy some of the information needs of residents, but it is up to La Pine city officials whether or not the recommendations would be appropriate and well-executed in La Pine. This report is the result of community collaboration, data analysis and university academia, with hopes to promote sustainability and livability in La Pine.



Figure 9: The engaged journalism class outside La Pine’s Senior Center after the SCYP La Pine Kick-off.

Appendix A: The Listening Post Collective Playbook

The Engaged Journalism class used the Listening Post Collective Playbook as a guideline for their La Pine project. The playbook offers a step by step process for community engagement, building relationships, and collecting data.



THE LISTENING POST COLLECTIVE PLAYBOOK

This playbook is designed to help journalists, newsroom leaders, and community groups listen to and engage with their communities.

STRATEGIES

OVERVIEW	PG 3
1. CHOOSE A COMMUNITY	PG 4
2. VISIT AND LISTEN	PG 6
3. SURVEY AND DOCUMENT	PG 8
4. CRAFT QUESTIONS	PG 11
5. ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS	PG 13
6. CREATE CONTENT	PG 16
7. KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING	PG 18

TOOLBOX

OVERVIEW	PG 21
KEEP ORGANIZED	PG 22
DATA ANALYSIS	PG 24

TOOLS

Whether you are a journalist, media outlet or civil society group, these steps will get you into a flow of listening to your community, creating stories that resonate, and fostering an ongoing conversation with people.

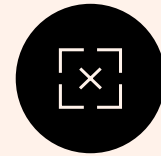
This playbook is designed to help journalists, newsroom leaders, and community groups:

- Listen to and engage with their community
- Better understand the needs of residents who aren't getting the information they need or whose voices aren't being heard
- Create sustained two-way conversations with citizens around essential news and information.
- Create journalism that highlights a diverse range of voices and experiences and makes local media representative and accountable to the community it serves.
- Collect and analyze project data that helps track trending topics and citizen engagement.

Walk through the playbook at your own pace. Check out our toolbox of resources and learn how partners across the country have used these strategies in their own communities.

STRATEGY 1

CHOOSE A COMMUNITY



Which neighborhoods or populations in your community are covered by the media in a one dimensional way or not at all? Which areas are accustomed to journalists parachuting in, extracting a few quotes, and then leaving? These are the neighborhoods that most need news they can use, sustained engagement, and a platform to voice concerns, needs, and goals.

TACTICS

- **Research a community:** Take a look at a map of the area you're interested in. Note defining features like parks, schools, restaurants and bars, main avenues, community venues, places of worship, transport hubs, health clinics, grocery stores, and libraries you'd like to check out. Identify local organizations, activists, charities, meetings and community events. Check out local government websites and social media (twitter, facebook, instagram) to get familiar with local leaders, their thoughts, and their initiatives.
- **Identify** local leaders. Think broadly, everything from a city council member to a barber and trusted organizations in the community. Let them know you'd like to stop by and say hello and learn more about information needs in the community.
- **Question** your own motivation. Take time to establish relationships with people in the community who share your vision and who can confirm that there is a real need for such a project. If there's an existing project with similar goals, ask how you can support their work first, before exploring your own ideas.

**IN ACTION****Minneapolis**

Minnesota has the largest Somali diaspora in the United States, but there is a lack of understanding between the broader population and the refugee community. The Star Tribune, the state's largest news outlet, wanted to find a way to build a dialogue with Somali Americans to hear their perspectives and learn about issues they'd like to see covered. The news organization also wanted to explore new ways of delivering news to the Somali community, including publishing some content in the Somali language.

Through their reporting, a group of news staffers, including a newly hired Somali reporter, made inroads the community and into a neighborhood that has come to be known as "Little Mogadishu." It held community conversations with local Somali leaders, and at one they debuted a Listening Post to allow people to share their thoughts in their own words. After President Trump signed an executive order restricting immigration and travel from several Muslim-majority nations, including Somalia, the Star Tribune brought the Listening Post to a local Somali-owned café to hear their takes on the travel ban.

STRATEGY 2

VISIT AND LISTEN



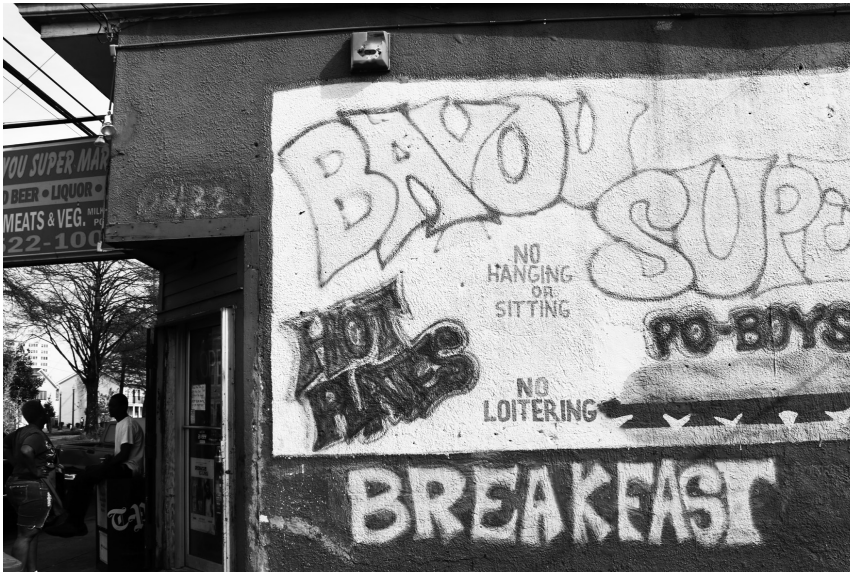
Go for a walk in the community, but leave your microphone behind. Pay attention to where people hang out and how information is shared in popular locations like churches, grocery stores, libraries, community centers, and government offices. Sit down at a restaurant, strike up a conversation, look for local signs posted in the neighborhood. Search for community bulletin boards. The point of all of this is to catch people in their daily comfort zones. Eventually you'll find ways to share important information through these spaces and networks.

TACTICS

- **Observe information flow.** Where and how is information being shared? Do you see the local newspaper? Do you hear people listening to the radio? Are people on their cell phones? What community messaging do you see—signs, billboards, public art, official government notices? What are they referring to?
- **Meet with community leaders** and ask about what they are hearing from residents about their needs and priorities. Ask leaders how they get the word out in their area.
- **Go to events.** Neighborhood watch meetings, religious services, community markets, festivals, etc. What's the focus of the event? What's the turnout? How did people hear about the event?
- **Go online.** Where is a community sharing information with each other online—Facebook groups? Non-profit websites? Community connector websites like Next Door? Email newsletters?
- **Notes,** take lots of them, and get contact details from people!
- **Photos,** take lots of them, especially images of the various ways information is getting shared e.g., photos in peoples windows, flyers at a local grocery store, community signs on telephone poles, newspapers on stoops, or messages on local church signs.

Examples

[Photo archive from Baltimore](#)



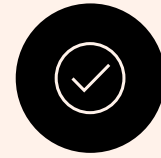
IN ACTION

New Orleans

The day after reporter Jesse Hardman arrived in New Orleans, he went on a walk through the Central City neighborhood without his microphone, and without his notepad. Central City is a tight-knit, historic community in the heart of New Orleans. Hardman stopped into an old barbershop and bought some peanuts, the establishment's side-hustle, chatting with the barbers about the neighborhood. He walked past a row of blighted homes, stepping around potholes filled with stormwater. He chatted with the owner of a dance studio about her Mardi Gras dance team. And he talked to customers at a corner store, down the street from a slew of recent shootings. Later that week he went back to the neighborhood and sat in on a church service. The pastor, who had recently died from cancer, was a local advocate for stopping gun-violence, and his death was a big loss to the community, where shootings happen sometimes daily. After the service he spoke about this with the interim minister and congregation members. Later, after all the walking, Hardman entered all of his mental notes in a Google document.

STRATEGY 3

SURVEY AND DOCUMENT



Once you've got a basic understanding of the community landscape, it's time to get a deeper understanding of how local information flows. Craft an [information needs survey](#) to explore how people access and share information, which local sources they trust, and which issues they feel most passionate about. The results of the assessment will serve as a blueprint for your engagement work.

TACTICS

- **Download** our [information needs survey template](#).
- **Localize your survey.** Not all questions are appropriate in all communities. Edit and insert questions that will resonate in your area.
- **Collect contact information!** The information needs survey is the first exercise in trust and community building for your project. Make sure you collect names, emails and cell-phone numbers if people are open to that. This enables you to get back in touch with your growing network.
- **Reconnect** with community leaders and organizations you visited on your walk. Ask them to help you develop and distribute the survey and offer to share the results as part of that partnership. Ask them to connect you to community events or meetings where you can distribute the survey.
- **Revisit** locations from your walk where people were hanging out and connecting (eg. corner stores, barber shops, coffee shops, health centers). Be prepared to engage people in conversation and fill out the survey for them while they are talking; that's often the easiest, and fastest way to get the work done.
- **Create a team** to help you collect surveys. Local organizations interested in your work may help distribute and collect surveys. Check with local high schools or universities to see if there are groups interested in helping.
- **Host a meetup** and invite local media, civil society leaders and interested citizens. Workshop your survey questions. This is a good way to inform your project and build a community of future partners, collaborators and participants.
- **Leave your comfort zone** and find residents who are not part of your known

audience. Make sure your results are representative of the entire community.
Translate your survey into multiple languages if need be.

- **Create an online version** of the survey as well (SurveyMonkey, Google Forms, Google Surveys). Circulate it on social media and via like-minded local organization websites.

Examples

Mapping your community's information ecosystem

TOOLS

**INFORMATION NEEDS
ASSESSMENT SURVEY**

Download, adapt and distribute this survey to better understand how people access and share information, which local sources they trust, and which issues they feel most passionate about.

SEE TOOLBOX



IN ACTION

Baltimore

After an initial walk, and a series of conversations with local leaders in Baltimore's Barclay neighborhood, a team of local journalists and journalism students interested in creating a Listening Post project began to draft a basic information needs assessment. Questions centered on identifying spaces in the community where people traditionally share news and information, what kinds of topics are most on the minds of community members, and the extent of people's access to technology (i.e. smart phones, computers, regular cell phones, etc.).

After the survey was finalized, copies were made, and a small team of five community members were hired to help get the survey into Barclay residents' hands. They took the survey home to their families, brought them to work, passed them around at church and were able to get a wide range of responses from more than 80 participants, a good sample size considering only 3,000 people live in the Barclay neighborhood.

STRATEGY 4

CRAFT QUESTIONS



This step is crucial to the engagement process. Make sure you set aside some quality time to focus on what you really want to know from the community you're engaging. Your goal is to make questions simple, inclusive, and relevant to the experience of residents. Here's a [guide to crafting good questions](#).

TACTICS

- **Pick an issue** that was mentioned frequently in the information needs survey and initial listening process.
- **News peg.** Research any current conversations or happenings related to this topic; a city council debate, a forum, a new law, an effort by a local non-profit, a recent report or release of data that pertains to the topic, either nationally, or locally.
- **Develop 2-3 questions** for each topic that will get people sharing their own experience and anecdotes. Start simple with a question anyone can answer, and work your way towards something a little more in depth. See examples [here](#).
- **Make it personal.** Get responders to share personal anecdotes and speak from experience. Not, "What do you think?" as much as, "What did you experience? The goal is to get participants sharing personal examples, representing what they witness in their own lives.

Examples

[Planting Questions in New Orleans](#)

TOOLS

GUIDE TO CRAFTING GREAT QUESTIONS

Use these tips to craft simple, inclusive and relevant questions that get community members speaking from experience and foster meaningful conversation.

SEE TOOLBOX



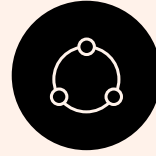
IN ACTION

Macon

A Listening Post project in Macon, Georgia wanted to find a way to make the national debate around gun control and gun violence feel local and tangible. Conversations around gun control online often devolve into emotionally driven arguments between folks at extreme ends of the spectrum. To contrast these conversations, they used Listening Post strategies to ask residents to share their experiences rather than their opinions. They did this by asking simple and straightforward questions (Do you or someone in your family own a gun? What have you experienced that has shaped your opinion towards guns?). By approaching the questions in this way the project in Macon was able to gather deeply personal stories about fears and hopes around gun ownership and violence and received nuanced and varied answers. They heard from hunters who'd grown up with a deep reverence for guns and young mothers who'd lost children to gun violence. Regardless of experience or opinion, responses were well thought out and respectful.

STRATEGY 5

ENGAGE WITH COMMUNITY MEMBERS



Now it's time to get back out into the neighborhood and ask your questions. Get creative, get offline, and make sure people have a way not only to answer your questions, but also to let you know how best to get back in touch with them. SMS is ideal.

TACTICS

- **Revisit your survey and walking notes.** What stands out? Who do people trust to deliver information? Where do people go to share or receive local information, offline as well as online? Use these findings to establish your outreach methods.
- **Pick outreach methods.** We recommend a mix of face-to-face opportunities, online outreach and mobile messaging. Check out our [Listening Post activities list](#) for some other ideas.
- **Develop partners** in the community to help you promote the project and bring your questions to their networks.
- **Create a rolodex.** Make sure you build in a way to stay in touch with participants in your project. Your surveys and ground research gave you a nice head start on gathering some contact data for community members. Create a system for organizing your contacts and make sure you update it as more people join.
- **Follow up with especially active participants,** get a coffee with them, and establish their interest in being an ongoing source. They can help you expand your project and alert you to important things happening in the community.
- **Be patient.** Community engagement doesn't happen overnight—it takes relationship building, trust, consistency, and time. Not everything is going to work, so don't be afraid to experiment and try new creative ways to get out into your community.

TOOLS

**ENGAGEMENT
ACTIVITIES GUIDE**

This guide features engagement activities for you to try in your community. Highlights include setting up recording devices, hosting events, posting public signs, messaging via SMS, and more.

SEE TOOLBOX

SMS GUIDE

There are a number of inexpensive options for sending out SMS messages to your community, hearing back from them, and collating and analyzing all their feedback. Here's our comprehensive guide to some useful SMS platforms.

SEE TOOLBOX

RECORDING DEVICE BLUEPRINT

Want to build your own Listening Post community recording device? Here are the blueprints that outline the specs, and a form if you'd like to order a custom built device.

SEE TOOLBOX

COMMUNITY SIGN TEMPLATE

Want to design and hang up signs around your community? Download and adapt our sign template to start building a physical presence in your neighborhood.

SEE TOOLBOX

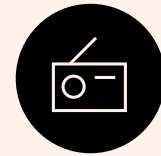
**IN ACTION****Macon**

Meeting people where they are is a crucial part of good engagement. One way to do that is partner with established and trusted community groups. The Listening Post project in Macon, Georgia was looking to grow participation in its community media initiative. It decided to team up with one of the city's most beloved annual civic events, April's Magnolia Soap Box Derby, and pitch a mutually beneficial engagement collaboration.

Thousands of locals come to see fellow residents race homespun cars. The Listening Post project wanted to tap into that audience, so they offered event organizers the opportunity to use a cell phone based platform to facilitate voting via text message for the Best in Show prize. As Derby goers voted via their phones, they also received a text message asking them for their feedback on the event. The Listening Post Macon team shared that valuable information with the Derby organizers. Participants then received a short text description of the Listening Post and were asked if they would like to participate in the ongoing project. 400 new participants joined via the Soap Box Derby event, and stayed part of the project, giving them access to conversations on topics ranging from education to gun control.

STRATEGY 6

CREATE CONTENT



The questions, comments, and experiences you are hearing from your community are a great source of material and story ideas. Use community feedback to identify new leads or new angles on trending issues—or ones lacking media attention—and produce items for your outlet that speak to the concerns and questions you are hearing.

TACTICS

→ **For traditional media, digital content creators and other citizen journalists:**

We believe it's most powerful if community participation is framed within actual journalism, as opposed to a stand-alone vox-pop, and that the citizens that engage with you can be considered not only sources but also experts when it comes to their specific experience with a particular issue in the neighborhood.

→ **For non-journalists:** If your job involves advocacy or other kinds of public outreach to media, local government or policy makers – the community voices you tap into can provide you with great material for your outreach. Depending on the focus of your community work, a Listening Post Project can be a great way to crowd-source data regarding employment, health needs, housing issues, and more. This can help you determine how effective some of your work is, and help you either shift your efforts, or confirm that you're on the right track.

→ **Make a point of challenging stereotypes** about topics and communities in your target area by highlighting the voices of residents who are experiencing these issues. If a neighborhood is being generally cast in a negative light, reach out to people who live there, and see how they define and experience where they live.

→ **Based on what you have heard,** seek out other sources and experts on the topic to learn more about the issues. Whatever you hear can be featured in your stories, advocacy outreach or shared with project participants.

**IN ACTION****New Orleans**

When the Listening Post project in New Orleans wanted to tackle the increasingly contentious issue of affordable housing, it was important to avoid retreading the established narrative—that white outsiders were buying up neighborhoods and pricing long-term residents out. They placed a trio of community recording devices in neighborhoods with varying real estate costs, and asked, “What percentage of your income goes to housing?” And, “What would you miss most if you were priced out of your current neighborhood?” To balance out this community feedback, project members went on a ride-around with a local housing expert and real estate agent, an expert in a more traditional sense. They also followed up with a community member who sent the project a text message. She shared her unique example of home-ownership in a neighborhood that is rumored to be the landing spot for families priced out of their traditional areas. The end result was an informative radio segment that was journalistically sound, and reflective of the experience of community members.

STRATEGY 7

KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING



Stay in touch with your citizen networks. Make it a priority to provide them with information on the topics they said mattered most. Providing feedback to your participants is a key step to building trust and sustaining a conversation in a widening constituency of Listening Post participants. The community needs to see that their contributions are utilized.

TACTICS

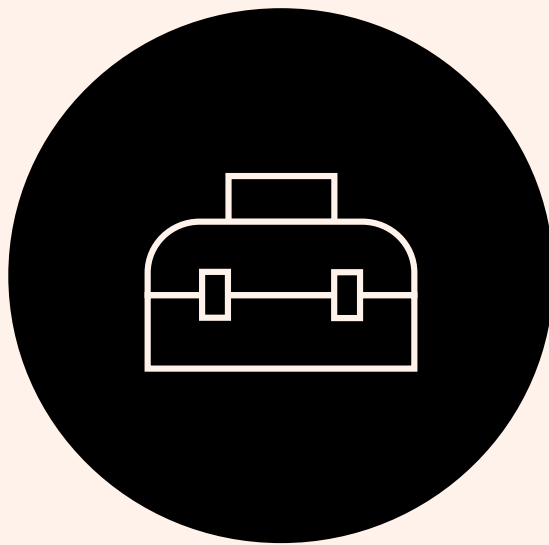
- **Partner and collaborate** with other media (community radio, alt-weeklies, neighborhood groups with Facebook pages) who might have a direct connection to the communities you are looking to work with. If it's a print article, make copies and pass them out at a community meeting. Make them available in the community spaces that you identified in stage 2 of this process.
- **Community Data to Power.** Look for opportunities to share your findings more widely (local government, elected officials, corporations, nonprofits) and ask them for their feedback that you can then share with your participants. It is important to lower the barrier for people's ability to access the results of the news conversation you start.
- **Use a variety of methods for sharing your work.** If you are a media outlet, share it online, on the air (TV or radio), or in print. If you are an individual or organization: use Twitter or Facebook to spread your finding and ignite new conversations and inputs! If you have a print article, make copies and pass them out at a community meeting. Make them available in the community spaces that you identified in stage 2 of this process. If a non-news media outlet, e.g. music radio station, has substantial audience ratings, and reaches a wide group of people, find a way to partner with them.
- **Information Needs Assessment.** Return to your survey, look at the list of media people shared, and what modes of information sharing were listed as most effective. Make sure you employ a few of these in your attempt to connect back to the community.
- **Be consistent.** Make sure you keep an eye on the conversation you started, and have some kind of regular check-in with your audience so they know you are on top of things, and that you are professional. This may mean texting new questions every Wednesday at 2pm, or having monthly meetings with local neighborhood associations. Whatever engagement methods work best for you, make sure you stay consistent.

**IN ACTION****New Orleans**

This is an ongoing process! Every time you set out to inform and engage your community, try to incorporate something you learned from the previous attempt. The best way to make sure you are improving is to check in with the community to be sure you are doing right by them. Put out a call to communities and project participants every few months asking them what's on their mind. Keep a running list of topics and questions that the community shares with you, and work those into your project. Let the community know when you use one of their ideas. And keep trying new and creative ways to engage offline with residents first, before trying to communicate with them online.

As part of its reporting on incarceration rates in Louisiana, the Listening Post project in New Orleans partnered with a youth media organization, Re-Think, to brainstorm community questions around the query, "What do jails and prisons do?" Some of the workshopped questions included, "How do we begin to heal and transform trauma violence in our communities? Would you invest in this community? Why and How? Why does the mass media criminalize black youth?" Students then brainstormed where in the community they would plant these questions. If you engage the right people, they will help you expand the conversation organically.

TOOLBOX



Our toolbox includes guides and templates you'll need when creating your own project as well as resources to help you keep organized and learn from your work.

As you take steps to establish your project, we recommend you keep organized and conduct data analysis for the following reasons...

- **Track evolving community insight:** Once your assessment is done, and your content production and engagement phases are underway, your network of contacts is going to start growing. The information moving back and forth between you and your participants will be happening through a mix of channels, will grow in volume and will likely diversify in content as new angles and topics arise in the conversation.

Rather than keep multiple lists and logs that may become confusing over time, try using a simple spreadsheet or two that can capture and track this matrix of contacts, channels, topics, questions, answers and other outputs from the start.

- **To share with local stakeholders:** Your recorded responses, produced content, and data will show the full picture of your project. Having this information at your fingertips will be important when you're looking for funding for your project, finding new partners or interest groups, or sharing your results with local stakeholders and decision makers.
- **Adaptive project management:** What worked and what didn't? What topics resonate with the community? Who are you hearing from and who is still left out? Your data can uncover answers to these questions that can help you make informed project adjustments in the future. Learn more about how to analyze your data in the Data Analysis section.
- **Community engagement learning:** Your experience implementing this project is incredibly useful to other people establishing Listening Post projects across the country. We want to know what you're working on, what you're capturing, what's working and what's not so the community of Listening Post projects can learn with you along the way.

TOOLBOX

KEEP ORGANIZED



The key to successful data organization is preparation. As you roll out your own project, we suggest keeping track of the following:

- **Photos:** These will remind you of the various ways information is getting shared on the ground in your community and will serve as inspiration for your engagement strategies throughout the project. See examples from Baltimore [here](#).
- **An ongoing list of community topics:** As described in the playbook, prior to engaging with your community you will survey your community and determine what issues, concerns, or topics may be of importance or relevance to potential participants. Make a list of these findings and keep it accessible. As you begin to map out and plan your approach to engage the community with questions, your list of issues concerns topics will be the baseline of your organizational approach. For more tips on crafting questions please see the [Guide to Asking Good Questions](#).
- **Survey results:** Your survey will uncover important topics, ways that people receive and exchange information, and who they trust. After completing the survey, write up an executive summary of your findings. This will continue to inform your project design throughout implementation.
- **Contact management:** Your participants are the most important focus when building a community engagement project. Make sure that you collect contact information in a formalized manner that will allow you to grow your list and reach out efficiently. Many SMS platforms/services offer Contact Management Software (CSM). For more information on SMS platforms, see our [SMS Guide](#).
- **Questions asked:** Keep track of the questions you ask your community. You can do this in the Keep Organized template attached. When tracking questions on your data collection sheet, we suggest tagging each question with a topic under which you can collate all responses, stories, conversations and other materials. This will help you track your topics and trends over time.
- **Community responses:** You will be receiving community responses from a number of different channels (SMS, audio, social media, in-person). Organize this information together, this is your rich community content. Tips for organizing this data can be found in the tips section below.

- **Community engagement methods and results:** How are you reaching out to people and asking questions? How many responses do you receive per outreach method? Collecting this information each week will help you refine your outreach methods and tune into what resonates with your community.
- **Content created:** What content has your Listening Post project produced or contributed to the production of by any of the partners (media, bloggers, other content creators) in your network of partners? Keep track of this important content.
- **Learning and results:** Has your engagement produced any new initiatives or dynamics in your community or changed your own organizational approach? Track this learning and share it with our community so that we can all improve our work.

Keeping it together:

We recommend organizing your incoming data and responses by topical folders and subfolders. These folders will contain a general aggregation of all data collected for each question within the duration of the project. A folder structure might look like this again, with all materials associated with a given question located within the subfolders:

Top Folder- Government

Subfolder 1- Question 4.22.17- Mayors Wish List

Subfolder 2- Question 5.12.17- Voting Registration

Subfolder 3- Question 6.24.17- What Would You Ask City Council

TOOLS

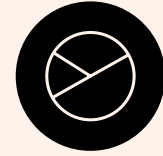
KEEP ORGANIZED TEMPLATE

This data collection template is an example of how you can collect and organize your work. Adapt it to your inputs and needs.

SEE TOOLBOX

TOOLBOX

DATA ANALYSIS



Want to learn from all the data you are collecting? Here are some tips on how you can organize and analyze data to inform your project.

The following items are meant to provide a basic foundation for analysis in the absence of other analytic tools that may be available. Many SMS platforms in particular provide robust analytic utilities (SMS Guide), but if you are not using such a platform or if you want to do a baseline analysis on participant contributions such as audio or in-person interviews, you may find these suggestions useful.

These are columns or items you can add to your original template to support your data analysis process:

- **Completed responses**—This figure specifies how many times participants answered each of the questions within a given post (only applicable to posts that contain more than one question).
- **Completed responses to participants' ratio**— divide the number of completed responses by the number of unique participants to get a ratio that illustrates what percentage of participants took the time to answer each of the questions you posed within a given post.
- **Average number of responses per participant**— This figure shows how many times participants are responding to posts with multiple questions. Ideally this figure should be compared with the number of questions within the post to gauge the level of participation.
- **Quits**— this figure simply shows how many respondents indicated that they are no longer interested in participating in the project or initiative. Posts that contain a high number of quits should be closely analyzed to determine what could have been done differently. Note that certain topics (such as children/education) may not appeal to all respondents. Quits apply in particular to SMS engagement as it is unlikely that someone being interviewed or contributing audio or social media information would quit during the process of relaying feedback. However, should that occur, it's important to ask the participant why they are declining to participate further so that you can gather information regarding how better to engage your community in the future
- **Level of engagement**— this can be somewhat subjective, but can give you a good idea of which posts are generating the most engagement. Read the responses and

other inputs that you've collected to gather a loose impression of just how often participants are contributing valuable feedback. Those posts that are deemed to have high engagement (as opposed to medium or low), should be further scrutinized in an effort to determine what exactly resonated with the participants. It can be the question type, the topic or other variables that should be noted and remembered for follow-up questions or lessons learned as they pertain to other posts.

- **Notes**— It's a good idea to jot down some thoughts or takeaways from posts while they're still fresh in your head. As posts accumulate, it's easy to lose track of which posts really worked as well as details regarding the participant responses. You might consider adding information regarding individual contributions for follow up or news stories that might be created down the road.

TOOLS

DATA ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

This template is an example of how you can organize your data for analysis. Adapt it to your inputs and needs.

SEE TOOLBOX

DATA ANALYSIS GUIDE

Examples of ways to organize and analyze your data if you are not using an SMS platform with built-in analytic functions.

SEE TOOLBOX

Want direct support and mentoring?

Our team offers assistance to help you start and sustain your community media engagement ideas and projects.

Contact us to learn more.

Send us an email

Listeningpostcollective@internews.org

Follow us

@LPostCollective

The Listening Post Collective is run and operated by Internews



LISTENINGPOSTCOLLECTIVE.ORG

Appendix B: North Omaha Information Ecosystem Assessment



North Omaha Information Ecosystem Assessment

June- August 2017

Introduction

In June 2017, staff members from the Listening Post Collective visited North Omaha to talk with residents about the news and information environment in their part of the city. This “information ecosystem assessment” set out to explore which issues are most important to local people and how connected residents feel to sources that keep them informed about city life and the policies that affect it.

North Omaha is a community with the unique distinction of having the only independent black-owned newspaper in Nebraska, The Omaha Star. For almost eight decades, The Star, founded by Mildred D. Brown, has provided a positive counter-narrative to the crime-focused coverage of North Omaha by many mainstream local media outlets.

But the paper is at a crossroads as the media landscape has changed. Residents of North Omaha are searching for other reliable sources of news to keep them informed and reflect their voices on topics like education, jobs, community development, health, housing and more.

The assessment will consider the existing media scene and other efforts underway to circulate community news and information, and share some examples of news engagement projects in other places that might be instructive to media and community groups in North Omaha.

This assessment is not meant to be an exhaustive conclusion about information flow in North Omaha. Rather, it is designed to share insights from stakeholders in North Omaha about how the city’s black community is covered and informed by local media, and to provide a snapshot of media and information flow in the city. We decided not to identify the 15 people we spoke to when quoting them in this document so that local people reading the assessment can take in the information without attaching it to specific people they know. We also realize that the 15 people we spoke to do not represent all of the folks working hard to make a difference in North Omaha on a daily basis.

This report considers some successful approaches to transmitting information in North Omaha, and it also shares ideas on some online and offline information sharing strategies being tried in other parts of the United States and the rest of the world. Ultimately, the goal is to support a richer and more useful flow of information and conversation through the community, so that residents can get the news they need, and also have their voices heard more frequently.

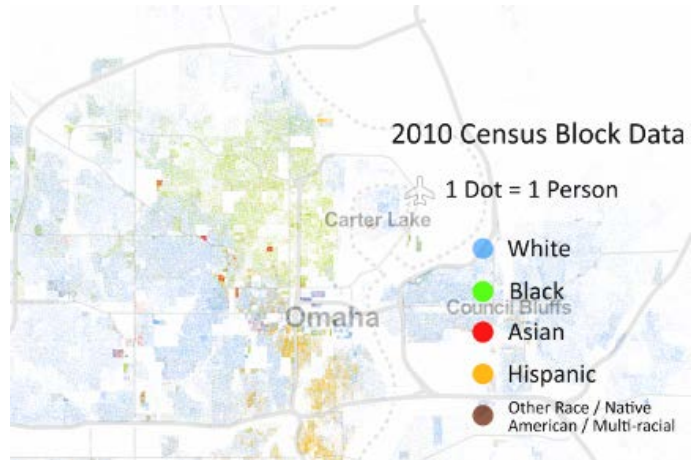
1 | The Listening Post Collective, Internews

North Omaha Overview

We heard time and again from local residents that North Omaha functions as a bit of an island from the rest of the city.

“North Omaha might as well have a wall around it,” said one born-and-raised community member, now in his 60s, who also described Omaha as a whole as having a “fairy-tale mentality,” ignoring the institutionalized issues that create disparity.

Considering race as the dominant factor in North Omaha’s isolation, one community activist referred us to University of Virginia [census map that charts racial demographics](#) around the country. The northern half of the city is entirely green, indicating African American residents. North Omaha is home to not only the majority of the African American residents in the city, but also the state of Nebraska.



Poverty is also a strong factor in North Omaha’s isolation. While Omaha has one of the lowest unemployment rates in the U.S., residents in North Omaha have a very different reality, where around 20% of people are jobless. The [poverty rate in North Omaha](#) is close to 30%, although many locals told us that percentage is much higher.

North Omaha has a rich civil rights history, and some of the first bus boycotts happened there. In the late 1960s, an Academy Award nominated documentary, [A Time for Burning](#), explored the topic of Northern racism, focusing on Omaha. North Omaha is also the birthplace of Malcolm X. His legacy lives on through the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation. *The Omaha Star* was founded in 1938 by Mildred D. Brown, the first black woman to start a paper. Over its nearly 80 years, the paper has focused its resources on “positive news and to be a vigilant champion for African-American progress.”

Based on our conversations with 15 different local stakeholders, North Omaha, where the majority of the city’s approximately [60,000 black residents live](#), is underserved in terms of regular, insightful coverage relevant to the experiences of black residents.

North Omaha is unique in media terms because it has its own storied news outlet. *The Omaha Star* was created in 1938 to share weekly information relevant to the lives and experiences of the city’s black population. The paper is searching for ways to establish its identity and relevance with a new generation of North Omaha residents. *The Star* is generally, “revered, but not read,” said one local community organizer.

According to those surveyed, prominent media outlets in the city, including the *Omaha World Herald*, the local paper of record, and local television news stations, often limit coverage of North Omaha to violence and crime. They are also less likely to spend extensive time in North Omaha as a way of developing stories and sources. *The Reader*, a city-wide weekly, which is delivered to around 50 locations in North Omaha, does make an effort to investigate issues related to that neighborhood. One [recent story](#) took a historical look at the bi-annual Native Omaha Days, a celebration when North Omaha's diaspora returns to see old friends and relatives. "People will read it (*the Reader*) if content is relevant to North Omaha life," said one local resident.

There are also a host of other home-grown news and information channels seeking to document life in North Omaha, including some new community-focused low power FM radio stations, Facebook pages dedicated to North Omaha, and local non-profits attempting to keep residents informed on specific issues. But right now, there is not one trusted go-to source of news and information for North Omaha, like the *Omaha Star* was in its heyday.

There are serious topics that North Omaha residents would like to see documented more, utilizing local voices: the lack of black teachers and high rate of student suspensions in local public schools; infrastructure issues that residents say get fixed at a much slower rate in North Omaha; the disconnect between young adults in North Omaha and local churches; outside real estate developers acquiring North Omaha properties; and why unemployment citywide is a little over 3% but in North Omaha is 20%.

Information Needs

Questions:

In order to research information needs in North Omaha, we asked the following questions to our 15 respondents:

1. What's a recent news story about North Omaha you felt didn't get covered enough?
2. How does North Omaha traditionally get covered by local media here?
3. Which media do folks in North Omaha rely on to know what's going on in their community?
4. What are all the different ways people get local information in North Omaha?
5. When you want to get news and information out to community members, how do you do it? Tell me about a time you really wanted to get the word out; what did you do?
6. What methods do folks in North Omaha use to get heard by the larger Omaha community?
7. What community spaces -- physical and online -- do people in North Omaha access to get and share information?
8. Which social media sites and websites do a good job of sharing local information for North Omaha?

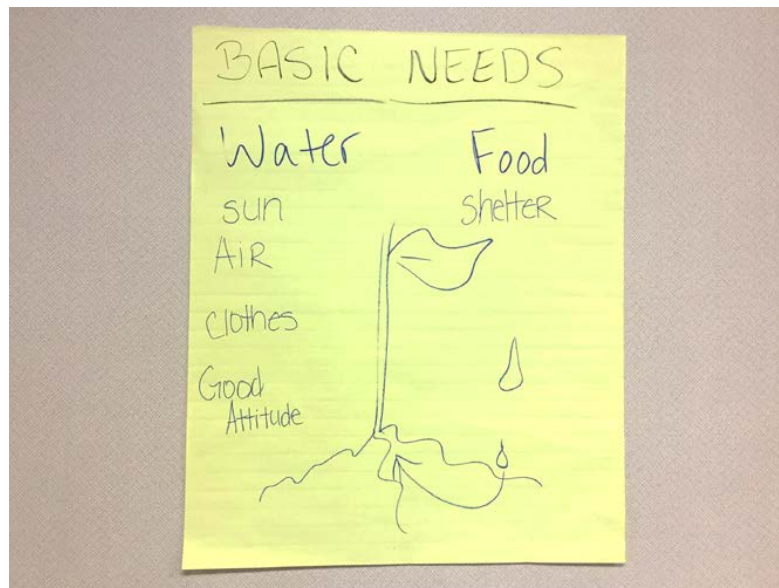
9. What news/information topics are most important/essential to living in North Omaha?
10. Do you remember a time when information sharing in North Omaha was really effective? What was happening that was different?
11. What is working now in terms of information sharing? Any positive examples of information flow?
12. What's a topic in North Omaha you would really like to see covered more in-depth?
13. What are some of the barriers to people in North Omaha being better informed?

Answers:

We heard time and again that one of the largest information gaps in North Omaha is around local government. One person said that there is a lack of information around the political landscape of Omaha as a whole, and poor civics education in the area. This person pointed to this information gap as a reason for low voter turnout. "That's why we always have below-average voter turnout, because there isn't a connection to the political realm, as well as there is a lack of understanding of what those people can do for the people of North Omaha," the person said.

Another person we spoke to suggested that civics isn't taught to kids in North Omaha and that more effort needs to be made to ensure kids understand their rights. This person said that people in North Omaha need to be informed about how local and national policy decisions will affect their community, pointing to President Trump's proposed cuts to social welfare via the budget and health care reform, as an example.

Beyond civics, one of the major themes that emerged was a need for better coverage of issues relevant to daily life in the area. Poor road conditions and other infrastructure issues came up often. Folks are looking for increased coverage of these problems, but also investigation and explanation as to why they happen more often in North Omaha than the rest of the city.



-Drawing at Malcolm X Center, North Omaha

We heard from many people that we spoke to that folks don't consume local news because they don't find that it meets their needs or that it's relevant to their lived experience. Several people mentioned education as a topic that needs better coverage. *The Omaha Star* does a good job of

covering graduations or scholarship awards, said one person, but there's a need for better understanding of systemic education issues. One person wanted to understand why suspension rates are so high in North Omaha.

Overall, folks want a meaningful exploration of larger issues challenging the community and relevant information they can actually use. We met one resident at a McDonald's in North Omaha and they said, "If the menu changed and coffee went up a buck, the old people in here would have a fit. That's relevant, that's a story that impacts people here. That's what has to happen. Stories that impact people on a day-to-day basis."

Information Landscape

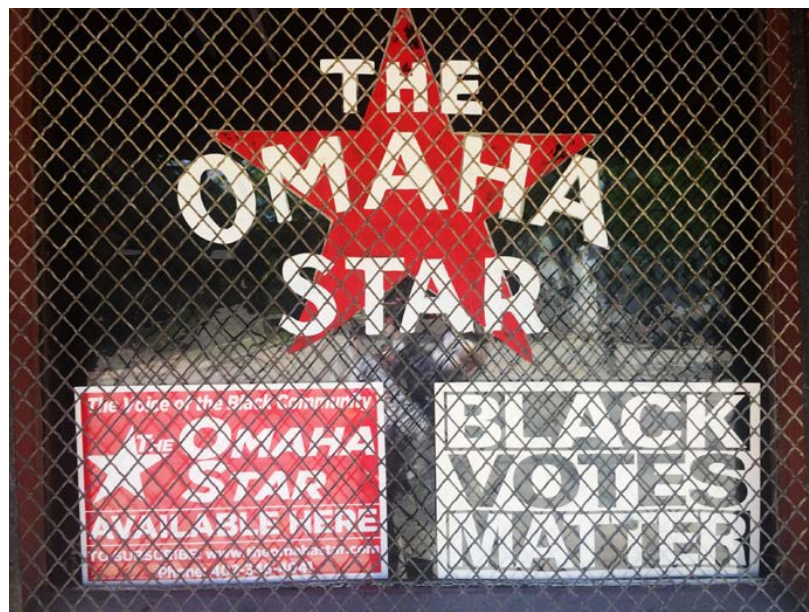
The information landscape is composed of the physical and institutional infrastructures that support information production and flow, including media outlets, distribution systems, and production units. In addition, we examine the characteristics of information providers, including the media, government, private industry, and civil society, and their capacity to support robust information flows.

This is not a complete review of all media in Omaha, but snapshots of where people are getting information for and about North Omaha.

Mainstream Media

[The Omaha World Herald](#) dates back to the 1860s. Now the paper of record in Omaha, the *World Herald* was [purchased by Berkshire Hathaway](#), the Warren Buffett-owned investment firm, for \$150 million in 2011. Like many mid-sized papers, the *World Herald* is able to develop some young talent, but by the time they begin to dig deeper into community issues and develop important sources, many head to bigger media outlets.

[The Omaha Star](#) is looking for a new chapter after nearly 80 years of publishing a weekly, and now bi-weekly, paper highlighting the accomplishments of the local black community. The paper is available in around



-Storefront window of *Omaha Star*. 24th street, North Omaha

25 locations, mainly in North Omaha, for 75 cents. The *Star* itself is for sale, and looking for an owner who knows and respects the important history of the outlet.

Opinions on the current state of the paper varied. Younger North Omaha residents did not make the *Star* a priority, and felt it didn't reflect their experiences as much as an older generation of residents. One respondent said, "nobody under 40 or 50 pays attention to the *Star*." The same respondent said they were glad the paper still existed, but that it was not able to keep pace with relevant news the community needed, instead reprinting articles from other outlets and editorials. Another respondent said in order to survive, the *Star* would need to grow its digital footprint and web revenue sources. The paper does have a website, and recently had much of its decades of archives digitized, but more up-to-date news is not regularly featured on the page. Some local residents said they still appreciate the paper's focus on positive news about Omaha's black community, a hallmark of the paper since it started. One younger community member said *The Omaha Star* wasn't as relevant now, and that many residents don't have a clear sense of what its future is. "People have thoughts about how it can reinvent itself, or reconnect itself to the masses of people. Whoever has those plans or whatever those plans are, they haven't been rolled out yet," they said.

[The Reader](#) is Omaha's free alt-weekly, with a goal of, "building the news, not breaking it." The *Reader* is delivered to around 50 locations in North Omaha; lunch spots, gas stations, and other places where at least 25 copies will get picked up.

One respondent said the *Reader* routinely gives more press to North Omaha than other local media. Another person we spoke to said, "people will read it if there's content relevant to North Omaha life." The *Reader* editorial staff traditionally look to share news content they think another local news outlet might benefit from republishing or reporting on further. The *Reader* also oversees a local Spanish-language weekly called [El Perico](#) that focuses on south Omaha, the city's Latino hub.

We did not visit any local television stations, but did speak with community members about coverage. One respondent said they had stopped watching local TV news because it didn't fairly depict North Omaha. Another person said local TV focused mostly on [violence](#). One person said even when local TV stations are invited to cover something positive in North Omaha, they rarely attend. "They have to be called multiple times in order to possibly show up for a positive event or for a positive press conference, or a serious press conference," they said. "Other than that," this person said, "it's pretty much a negative perception of what happens here."

Community Media

One of the most enthusiastic responses we got related to media and North Omaha referenced a now-defunct programming schedule at [Public Access TV](#) Channel 22. For more than two decades, Channel 22 was the grapevine for North Omaha, according to this person. It shared essential civic information about what was happening in the city, and highlighted voices of local non-profits, activists, and cultural institutions. In 2012 the Channel changed hands, but is still [community access](#).

Only one of the people we spoke to talked about local [public radio](#) and television. Their comment related to the fact that hearing black voices, either hosting programming or as part of news coverage, was rare. “There’s no public in public radio or television, nationally as well as locally,” that person said. One of the respondents we spoke with tried to rectify the lack of diversity in local public media programming by writing letters to the Omaha public radio station pointing that fact out. That effort ultimately led to that person having a community forum radio program for a few years. As of a year ago there are two new North Omaha-based low power FM stations; [101.3](#), Mind and Soul radio, which is based out of the Malcolm X Center and is focused on community news and information, with some music programming, and [95.7 the Boss](#), which plays mostly music.



-101.3 low power FM radio station in basement of Malcolm X Center, North Omaha

We spoke to a few people who have programs at 101.3 FM, which began broadcasting in October of 2016, and we also sat in on an evening community focused program. 101.3 has a morning program that shares some community news and information. They also have community hosted programs throughout the day that share history, culture, and news with listeners around the city. One of the DJs at 101.3 FM said, “I get a chance to connect to the conscious community as well as the young people, as well as a little bit of the street community, as well as a little bit of the young professional community. And then people that are outside of the North Omaha black community that have paid attention to my show. And I think every single host has a group that they come from and represent, or are connected to.”

There is also a steady flow of community news about North Omaha available via social media. A number of people we spoke with mentioned the Facebook group [Proud to be from North Omaha](#) as a space where they had conversations about what’s happening in the community.

Social media also came up as a conduit for rumors about local issues that pick up steam and gain credence in the community despite lacking accuracy. One example involved a rumor around area teens disappearing on a daily basis. The lack of a more formal journalism footprint in these online spaces makes it tough for people to feel confident about the information they are getting and sharing, and also more difficult to dispel rumors with professional coverage.

Grassroots Information Sources

Many people we talked to mentioned how effective more grassroots methods of information sharing were. One community member said, “it has to kind of be a feet on the ground, people in neighborhoods, people in these lifestyle areas, talking, explaining, introducing, and sharing as much as possible. Building those relationships with the community.” By lifestyle areas, they meant local businesses including barbershops, hair salons, restaurants, and grocery stores. We met one of our respondents at the McDonald’s on 30th and Ames. They said around 6:30 every morning a group of older community members meet and share news about the neighborhood.

For the past decade there has been a community conversation project called [Table Talk](#) connecting residents from all parts of Omaha. The goal is to bring people together in informal settings to get and share information on a variety of issues facing the city.

Another person said if you want to get the word out in North Omaha, head to to [Levi Carter Lake Park](#) on Sunday. “That’s one of the few times when you can find a lot of your household, every day people, and you can go and talk to them. Pass out fliers and let em’ know, hey, this is what’s going on,” they said.

List of Omaha media outlets:

<http://thereader.com/>
[101.3 low power FM radio](#)
[95.7 the Boss Lower Power FM in North Omaha](#)
<http://theomahastar.com/>
<http://reviveomahamagazine.com/>
[Omaha World Herald](#)
[El Perico](#)
[91.5 FM Omaha Public Radio](#)
[Nebraska PBS](#)
[Local NBC](#)
[Local ABC](#)
[Local CBS](#)
[Public Access TV Channel 22](#)

Facebook pages:

[Proud to be from North Omaha](#)
[Positive Community Events in Omaha](#)
[North Omaha Pride](#)
[Omaha Loves Black Business discussions and Celebration page](#)

Community Information Centers:

[Heartland Workers Center](#)
[African American bookstore](#)
[Table Talk](#)
[Do Space](#)

Production and movement

Production and movement looks at the variety of information and the diversity of content within an information ecosystem, whether from the government, community news sources, social media, word of mouth, and other local information producers. It also examines the role of internet and mobile media as new and rapidly expanding sources of information.

A number of respondents to our questions said while coverage of issues related to North Omaha have improved since Warren Buffett purchased the *World Herald*, the tendency is still to print “if it bleeds it leads” type stories, focusing on violence and crime. The paper was also singled out for two specific pieces of journalism. The first was a series from 2007 called “Omaha Black and White,” that highlighted the disparities between North Omaha and the rest of the city. That was shared as an example of insightful, deep-dive reporting that led to larger conversations, and even some action, when a group of religious organizations toured the deep South to [explore race and civil rights](#). But most people we spoke to said there hasn’t been any similar in-depth reporting about North Omaha since that series was published.

The second piece of journalism that was referenced multiple times was a more recent story about [local serial killer](#) Nikko Jenkins. When he was caught, the *Omaha World Herald* [published a pictorial](#) with 38 members of his extended family who have been convicted of crimes. One person surveyed said that anyone in North Omaha with those last names felt stigmatized by that coverage. “These headlines impact how people feel about the community,” they said.

One of the media outlets that the older guard in North Omaha are more likely to feel connected to is the *Omaha Star*, which during their lifetime has helped establish a positive, success-driven portrayal of the neighborhood that was not covered by other media. But one North Omaha resident we spoke to said that effort was not as relevant as it might once have been. They said despite focusing on the African American community, the *Omaha Star* didn’t reflect the experience of the vast majority of families that currently live in that part of town. “*The Star* caters to middle class stories; this person graduates, this person got a scholarship. People want



-Family of the Week column, *Omaha Star*

relevant stories to their lifestyle,” they said. When asked what kinds of relevant stories they’d like to see, this person pointed to a nearby abandoned factory. “That’s been empty since I was a baby. A lot of those have been empty. Why did those businesses move? Where did they go? And what’s going to replace them? If the answer is nothing, then we need to get more businesses up here.”

One North Omaha native talked about how rumors can dominate the neighborhood’s narrative because locals are not connected to active, factual media covering their area. This person gave the example of community development projects in North Omaha. They said when new projects come in, especially housing, people are afraid that gentrification is on the doorstep, and rumors start. In one case they said they met up with somebody in the community who was spreading rumors about a particular project they worked on, and tried to answer their questions. This person said some mainstream media have covered this particular North Omaha housing project, but articles are generally generic, focusing on a groundbreaking ceremony. They said the articles tend to have, “lots of words like hope and transformation, things that are kind of absent of any of the context.”

This same respondent said this kind of overly positive coverage can be great, but like focusing too much on crime when covering North Omaha, it doesn’t get at the specifics, and the nuances of important issues, like housing and development. “There are really hard questions to ask about our project. If somebody’s paying attention, the questions that should be asked are difficult for me to answer,” they said.

One of the most effective ways this person has found to share information about this community development project is by connecting with a local church that’s near the construction. “We do a lot of our community events there. And just talk to different people about what we’re doing, get feedback from folks,” they said.

Increasingly North Omaha residents are sharing community information and event notices on Facebook pages. Here’s a few of the pages people mentioned they frequent.

[Proud to be from North Omaha](#)

[Positive Community Events in Omaha](#)

[North Omaha Pride](#)

[Omaha Loves Black Business discussions and Celebration page](#)

One local media maker we spoke to said they’d like to see support and funding for more hyperlocal online news content. They referenced the active local news blogging culture that some other cities benefit from. “We seem to just not have that. I would love to see that, I would love to help seed that,” they said.

Dynamic of access

This dimension focuses on the political, cultural, time, cost, and other factors that affect information flows. In particular, it seeks to identify any barriers to inclusive interaction and participation within an information ecosystem. Broader structures that influence access, such as legal, political, economic, and infrastructural factors are also included here.

One of the more insightful conversations during our visit was with a community leader in North Omaha who broke down how younger black Omahans get their information. They divided North Omaha into three groups; black professionals, activists and community connectors, and folks working hard to simply make ends meet.

This person said upwardly mobile young black Omaha allies itself with the professional organizations like the Urban League of Young Black Professionals. This group sticks to mainstream media for information, reading the *World Herald*, *the Star*, social media, and some radio.

The next group they identified was the, “activist, conscious,” black community members who might have gone to college, although not all did, and that are a little more, “underground.”

They said this group is an active conduit of community information, putting out useful information in the community, through radio programs, live events like hip hop shows, community posters and fliers, and booths at local events. This group’s media consumption habits might include the *World Herald and Star*, but also includes a lot of grassroots information sharing.

The last, and largest group of North Omaha residents is mostly connected to community information via word-of-mouth and social media. “Maybe they’re hearing news from their peers, a barbershop, a gas station, something like that. Maybe they see a flier because we are still a city that puts up posters and passes out fliers,” said our source.

According to a few of the people we spoke to, the traditional gatekeepers of information and influence in the North Omaha are involved with [the Empowerment Network](#), a local initiative



-Lawn signs on 30th street, North Omaha

started by black business leaders in 2006 to spur increased job creation, community development, and economic prosperity in North Omaha by 2025. A few respondents mentioned police and community dialogue was improving in North Omaha thanks to Empowerment Network efforts. In general, there's a more open channel than in the past between local government and North Omaha, where local voices and concerns are more likely to be heard. One person talked about a dialogue that was created with the Empowerment Network and North Omaha residents on what people wanted to see in the neighborhood.

The Mildred D. Brown Center offers some [college scholarships](#) and a [youth journalism program](#) with a goal of developing local African American journalism talent. However, even if younger people get a media skillset, it's often difficult to get them to stick around. "I don't think young black people with options think of Omaha as choice A. Especially when you leave here and you get a sense of what else is out there," one person said. One local media worker told us that young journalism talent of any kind is likely to move on after a few years to a bigger outlet, making it tough for mainstream media to develop the kind of sources needed to really understand and document some of the important issues in North Omaha.

Impact of information

This dimension looks at the relationship between information, knowledge, and larger-scale behavior change, such as collective community action, policy change, and planning for the future. Broadly, it examines how information affects individual and community opportunity, wellbeing, and development.

Just about everyone we spoke with mentioned the impact local media has had on the perception and identity of North Omaha. The neighborhood has historically been covered in a one-dimensional way and that practice continues today. "It's pretty much a negative perception of what happens here," one person told us. "And that perception gets into the thought process of everybody, whether you're white, black, whatever. Everyone learns to buy into that perception of North Omaha being a place that you do not want to go at night. Some people tell you you don't want to go even in the daytime," they said. The people we spoke with are working to change this



-Community bulletin board at Washington public library, North Omaha

perception but many feel the media is working against those efforts. “Our media doesn't help us, because often they play right into the stereotypes,” one resident said.

One person spoke more specifically about the role of *The World Herald*. They said, “it's a good paper, but it's historically complicit with a lot of the racism that happened here, and enforced it with the narrative that was created.” They said that it's a real battle to get the media to cover the community in a positive light. “If there's going to be a story, it's going to be about a shooting in North Omaha. If there's going to be a story, it's going to be about how this black kid got out of North Omaha. Look at how tough it is here. That's the narrative. As opposed to, yeah, we have beautiful sunny days, and people playing in the park. Community gardens and stuff, people are working really hard so that their children can go to dance classes and summer clubs,” they said. We heard many times that young people from North Omaha, given the opportunity, leave. Negative media portrayal of the neighborhood surely contributes to this trend.

One of the more compelling issues that arose during our discussions in North Omaha was the beginnings of gentrification in the area. There is a feeling that, while it hasn't happened yet, gentrification and displacement are inevitable. This is largely tied to the neighborhood's proximity to downtown. As young people begin to move back into downtown Omaha, rents are rising and developers are looking for ways to expand downtown. North Omaha is one of the only “underdeveloped” areas where this expansion can happen. The process has already begun along the border of downtown and the northside. One person told us about the rebranding of this area. “There's an area now called ‘NoDo’, North of Downtown. It's North Omaha, but realtors don't want to call it that because of negative association with North Omaha,” they said.

Information, or lack thereof, will play a major role in how development, gentrification, and displacement in North Omaha will play out. Speaking about gentrification, one person told us they want to know “how it happens, is who is a part of that conversation. And who knows that information, and what are they using it for.” Those outside of the neighborhood are getting wise to the potential for profit and, according to several people we talked to, buying up vacant properties in anticipation of an influx of development. Tax evaluators are assessing these vacant properties and property values are rising. We heard from folks who said that community members need information about how to combat this process and secure their future in the neighborhood. One person said, “That's been the biggest challenge, a consistent form of communication, that is clear, that is relevant to people, and they feel like has relevance in their lives. So that people can feel equipped with information so they can do something, and make good choices. That's the ultimate goal.”

Social trust

This dimension looks at trust in information sources, medium, and content, as well as characteristics and events that influence trust around information.

According to one community activist we spoke to, the biggest barrier to creating a more trusted information flow in North Omaha is for local media to spend more time in the neighborhood. “It’s the lack of connection between them as a people, or as an organization or a business, and in the neighborhood, in the homes, with every day struggling, working class, poor working class people. There’s a complete disconnection,” they said.

Part of the struggle of creating a more lasting connection is the fact that most media don’t have or dedicate the resources to spend more time in North Omaha. “There aren’t enough reporters on the scene to have trust or a relationship with the community,” one local media person noted. And, as was mentioned before, even if a local reporter makes some inroads with the community, they often move on to a different media outlet after a few years.

And it’s not just a disconnect between media and North Omaha residents, one person said a lot of the social service providers struggle to get the word out. I don’t think that people distrust as much as they just don’t know, or are just not connected to what’s going on. North Omaha lives 90% at or below the poverty line,” they said. Meaning people are not necessarily going to have the recourse to find the service, or the news they need on their own, as they struggle to get through the day.

Another person said that rerouting existing media and their approaches to better serve North Omaha might be too difficult at this point. “You’d almost have to carve a new path, in terms of media, if you’re going to be effective,” they said. The key to sustaining better news flow in North Omaha they said is engaging the community, and partnering with some of the community connectors like neighborhood associations, churches, small businesses, and nonprofits who have already successfully built trust with local residents. “It takes a lot of in-your-face, talking to you, on and on and on, showing up all the time, in order for people to understand, oh, that’s who you are. I saw you there, I saw ya’ll there,” they said.

Some of the local information channels are fraying as well. One local nonprofit worker told us that there is a growing meeting fatigue in North Omaha. They said as they’ve tried to get more involved in community groups, they’ve noticed a desire for less discussion and more action oriented events. “A lot of membership in neighborhood associations have fallen because people are feeling like I’m not getting anything from this. I’m tired of talking. What are we doing?” they said. And a number of community members said they feel more than ever there’s a real need for awareness of what’s happening in and around North Omaha, and action around that. Many fear that a renewed interest by all Omahans of living closer to downtown will disrupt their community.

Influencers

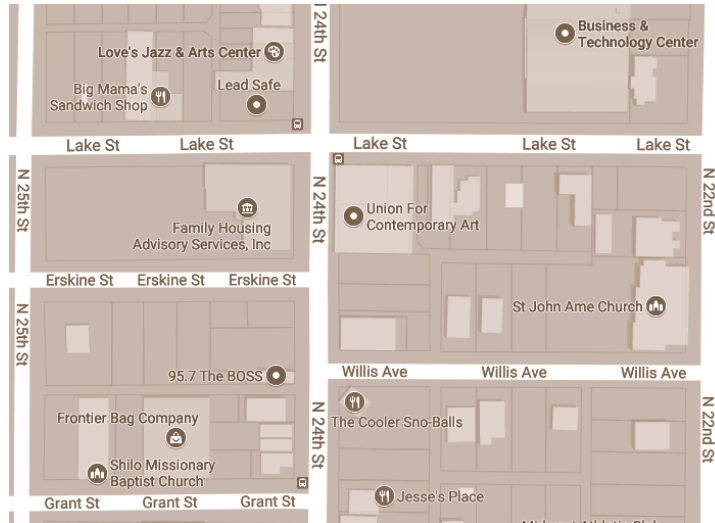
Influencers are the people, organizations, and institutions that affect how information flows throughout a community. We are also interested in seeing how influence can change overtime, especially during or after a crisis.

Business leaders

[The corridor along 24th street](#), just north of Cuming, is home to both remaining historic businesses, like the *Omaha Star*, and a growing group of new businesses and community initiatives, like Union for Contemporary Arts. This area has maintained its role as a leadership hub in North Omaha.

Another hub being created is a mixed-income housing and community development

project called [Seventy-Five North](#), off of 30th street. Built on the site of former public housing, this initiative is promising to create a space where community members can take courses, incubate business ideas, and even get healthy food.



The Empowerment Network has created a powerful presence in black Omaha in the past decade. They have established key ongoing dialogues with city leaders and local law enforcement about North Omaha. But many younger North Omaha natives we spoke to felt like there's also a gatekeeper mentality with the organization, and the older generation in North Omaha in general. One young entrepreneur said, "(among) a lot of my friends who live here, there's a reluctance to get involved because there's sort of this sense that there's no room for them at the table."

Another respondent mentioned a weekly meeting for people working and living around the 24th street corridor. They said that the first meeting they went to included a conversation with the Omaha Economic Development Corporation. "I was the youngest person in the room by 20 years," they said, noting the fact that community decisions are still heavily influenced by a small group of elders in the neighborhood.

Politicians

North Omaha's most decorated politician is state senator Earnie Chambers, who has represented the community on and off for four decades. He's been influential for so long that the *World Herald* published a [web timeline](#) of his life. Unfortunately we weren't able to get a meeting

with state senator Chambers during our visit, but every single person we spoke to referenced him in relationship to the past, present, and future of North Omaha.

North Omaha is Ward 2, and has been represented on the city council by Ben Gray since 2009. Gray is a former local TV host and photojournalist. For years he was part of a long-running local public affairs program. In the most recent city council election this past spring, one of Gray's challengers was a high school senior from North Omaha named [Maurice Jones](#). One of the local community activists we spoke to highlighted Jones as an example of a young North Omahan that will hopefully stick around and continue to try and have an impact.

Churches

There are dozens of churches in North Omaha, the largest and most influential, according to most locals we spoke to, is Salem Baptist Church. While churches still have more traditional roles as influencers and information sharers with the older generation in North Omaha, we heard from a number of younger residents that they felt less interested and connected to that institution.

We did speak to one local pastor who talked about their innovative attempts to sustain an audience in North Omaha.

That person explained that like many churches around the US, they were seeing a downturn in attendance. "Churches aren't the center of the community like they once were," they said.

This pastor's approach to trying to connect with younger North Omahans has been to, "meet them where they are." They encourage parishioners to use social media during services, tweet quotes from his sermon, and even follow a Facebook Live feed of his services from home. This person also talked about sharing information relevant to the community and his church via a robocall service, email newsletters, going on 101.3, the nearby low power FM station, and local print publications like the *Omaha Star* and [Revive](#). They said conversations with his church members about life in North Omaha helped him tailor sermons to important issues like healthcare and criminal justice. They also tried to weave important topics around pop culture, like current movies and music.



-Community flier posted N. Maple Street, Omaha

Neighborhood Associations

There are a number of neighborhood associations in North Omaha that organize and do outreach for community events and information, often on social media. This group includes the [North Omaha Neighborhood Alliance](#), the [Northwest Neighborhood Alliance](#), and OIC Neighborhood Association, that work on supporting local businesses, connecting community members with each other, and improving safety and security issues in the area. The city of Omaha's planning department has a [comprehensive map](#) from 2015 of neighborhood associations throughout the city, although it does not indicate how active each group is.

Diaspora

North Omaha has a very active diaspora spread out around the country. Many people come back every other year for the [Native Omaha Days](#) celebration. People also put on similar North Omaha related events in places like Dallas, Phoenix, and California, where there are clusters of people who grew up in North Omaha and relocated.

Two famous diaspora names that came up a lot in our conversations about media were North Omahans [Cathy Hughes](#) and [Symone Sanders](#). Hughes got her start at the *Omaha Star* in the 1960s, and now runs the DC-based national broadcaster Radio One. Sanders is a 27-year-old Creighton University graduate, Democratic Party strategist, and recently served as spokesperson for the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign.

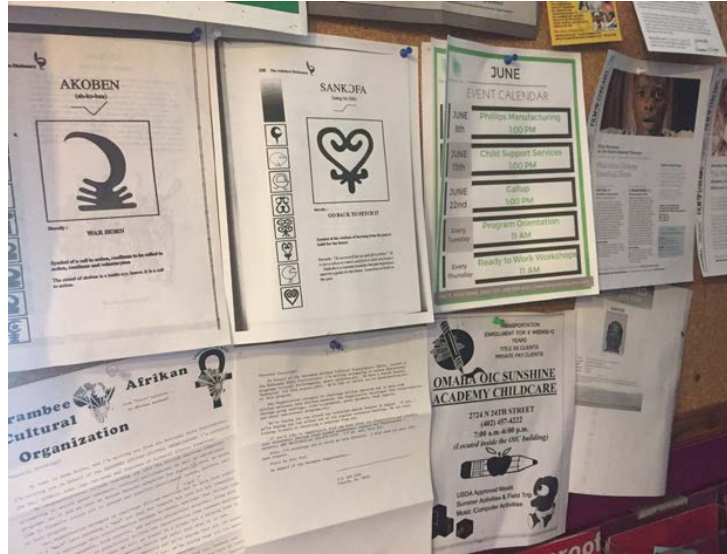
Community Hubs

[The Malcolm X Center](#) is a hub for North Omaha activity and the home of the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation. It hosts community events, classes, occasional rallies, and is also the location of community radio station 101.3 FM [KXNB/KJSO](#).

[The Union for Contemporary Arts](#) was established in 2011 in North Omaha. It occupies an iconic block of buildings that used to house restaurants, a famous nightclub, and professional offices. Those spaces now are occupied by a variety of community arts resources managed by Union staff. The goal is to strengthen the creative culture of Omaha and they believe that the arts can be a vehicle for social justice and greater civic engagement. The Union provides support for local artists such as classes and trainings, [civics](#) training and classes for community members, and has established resources like a tool library and cooperative garden space in North Omaha. A few respondents indicated that the Union is not currently being embraced by North Omaha because it's new, it occupies an iconic building, and many community members don't see it as a homegrown institution. One respondent said the building offers a lot of useful resources for North Omaha families, and eventually some people will start using it for its youth programs. But that person said, "by the time they discover it's use, the ones who really need it will be gone (displaced from the neighborhood)."

A number of people mentioned the [Heartland Workers Center](#) as an information hub in both South and North Omaha that connects people to employment opportunities, and also a variety of social services.

The [Afra American Bookstore](#) is a North Omaha based independent bookstore started in 1990. In addition to books and cultural items, the bookstore also hosts an active bulletin board of community events.



-Community events board at Afra American bookstore, North Omaha

There are three Public Library locations in North Omaha. We visited the [Charles B](#)

[Washington Branch](#) near 30th and Ames and the newly renovated [Milton R Abrahams branch](#). People were accessing the internet to apply for jobs and connect with friends and family at both locations. There were also a variety of community bulletin boards listing jobs and community events.

Key Findings

- Information flow in North Omaha is very grassroots, but there are not a lot of formal media outlets that have a grassroots approach to engaging North Omaha.
- North Omaha residents don't just want to see their community covered more often, they want to see depth to the reporting, and sustained interest in topics like affordable housing, local jobs, infrastructure, school policy, criminal justice issues, local arts, and community investment and development.
- In addition to in-depth reporting around ongoing issues, community members need more information they can use in their day-to-day lives.
- North Omahans are open to the *Omaha Star* being a continued media resource for the local black community, but it would need to expand its role beyond its current focus of editorial and promotional content, and include more news and information reflecting current realities in the neighborhood. One respondent said, "if the *Omaha Star* wants to survive, it has to be handed over to some younger people."
- If local media outlets make regular efforts, like the *Reader* does, to cover issues related to North Omaha, people will respond by consuming that news.

- There is a feeling among young North Omaha residents that, given the choice, it's best to leave the neighborhood. This has led to a lack of younger talent pushing the neighborhood forward or preparing to take over for an older generation of community gatekeepers.
- There is a generational divide in North Omaha, particularly around how information is shared and consumed. There's a need for consistent and trusted information that bridges this divide.
- There is a growing concern by local residents that North Omaha is going to change fundamentally in the coming decade. People are worried that the combination of outsiders buying up both rental properties, and vacant property and land in North Omaha, and new housing developments will price them out of their traditional neighborhoods. "Anybody who leaves Omaha today and comes back in 15 years, North Omaha is going to be all white," said one long-time community member.
- The North Omaha diaspora is influential, diverse, and growing as gentrification grows in scope. Community members who left for school and careers still feel an attachment to the area they grew up in, and participate through North Omaha gatherings in their new cities, or via Facebook groups. Also, a growing number of people are being displaced to the periphery of Omaha, and want to maintain ties with their traditional communities in North Omaha.
- There are some new community resources being developed in North Omaha (101.3 FM, Seventy-Five North, the Union for Contemporary Arts) that could be accessed and utilized as a way to stimulate information flow in the neighborhood.

Insights and Suggestions

There are some great existing organizations, resources and information channels in Omaha that are already attempting to get vital information to residents on the north side of the city. Despite these efforts, it seems like many North Omahans feel both under-informed, and at times unheard, when it comes to how they are impacted by topics like education, healthcare, housing, jobs, and more. We're interested in brainstorming some possible steps forward with the core group of individuals who were kind enough to share their insights and thoughts during our visit. For now, we wanted to share a few ideas that came out of our time in North Omaha.

Insights

Here are a few examples of existing projects around the world that have some potentially useful elements to an innovative North Omaha news effort.

[Boyle Heights Beat](#) is a bilingual community newspaper and website that focuses specifically on sharing hyperlocal information with residents of a downtown Los Angeles neighborhood. One of the innovations of this project is its training and use of community members and local high

school students to contribute as reporters. This is a news-focused media outlet of and for the community it covers.

[Outlier Media](#) is a Detroit-based news initiative that seeks to get community members important data and information related to predatory housing and financial practices. The project specifically fields questions and shares answers via text message and Facebook.

[Quartz](#) and a host of other media outlets are exploring a “here’s what you need to know” style of news gathering (sometimes called “explainer journalism”), sharing daily and weekly rundowns of a curated list of stories, often through [email subscription newsletters](#).

[DailyTalk](#), in [Monrovia, Liberia](#) is a simple, effective community information initiative that relies on a physical news presence to engage residents every day. A large billboard sits at a central traffic circle in Monrovia and shares daily headlines relevant to the lives of community members. During the cholera epidemic that greatly impacted the country in 2015, Daily Talk was a reliable source of information for people on what they needed to know during that crisis.

[East Boston, Nuestra Casa](#) is a community media project in the rapidly gentrifying East Boston neighborhood that uses postcards, mailed directly to residents, to spread information about displacement, tenants rights, and available legal resources. In addition to the postcards, there is a [Facebook page](#) and group where residents share questions, concerns and stories around housing.

Suggestions

News bulletin

- North Omahans could benefit from a hyperlocal news initiative that is platform-agnostic and gives residents a rundown of what they need to know about their community every week in print, as an email newsletter, online, on the radio, and even distributed via text message. This straightforward news bulletin would cover essential topics like housing, education, healthcare, jobs, civics, safety, and more.
- Existing community-minded media, including the *Reader*, the *Omaha Star*, and community radio station 101.3 FM could help disseminate the news bulletin as an insert, or read the weekly rundown on the radio, as both news sharing, but also to stimulate on-air conversation by hosts and listeners.
- A community engagement aspect of the project would include sharing the news bulletin in key community locations; local parks on weekends, monthly community events, neighborhood association meetings, church services (pamphlet inserts). A similar poster-sized printout of this news could be placed at local libraries, community centers and businesses (barbershops, restaurants, gas stations) interested in partnering with the project.

- There would also be a digital focus, sharing the news bulletin through North Omaha focused Facebook groups, Twitter, and an email newsletter.
- Ideally this bulletin would be produced weekly by a paid community reporter, and a few assistants (ideally local journalism students).

In-depth story investigation

- Another focus we thought made sense would be to take an in-depth, longer term reporting approach to one topic, and enlist the community's help in investigating it.
- One idea would be to create a data reporting project around home and property ownership in North Omaha, with an eye on also creating a news conversation around displacement and gentrification.
- A paid community reporter would take a two-pronged approach to this topic. They would investigate the issue as it impacts North Omaha through conversations and interviews with residents, local leaders, community organizations, and businesses.
- The community reporter would also establish a neighborhood outreach aspect to the project, potentially combining the [postcard journalism](#) model in Boston and the [Outlier Media](#) model in Detroit. North Omaha residents would get a postcard in the mail, or through community events and spaces, with a question related to their housing and a phone number they can call or text to participate. This would present North Omaha residents with an opportunity to contribute to reporting on this important issue, and give the community reporter and local media partners a way to reach out to these participants, via phone or online with the results of the reporting, and to keep the news conversation going for future topics.
- Like the [Outlier Media](#) example, community members could text in for information for who owns their specific property, and that data could go into an open sourced map that shows who actually owns property around North Omaha, and how ownership is changing on a daily basis.
- As data is gathered, and stories developed, a group of media partners can also share the reporting and important information. Partners could include the *Reader*, *Omaha Star*, and 101.3 FM.
- Over time, this project would expand to collect data and share news on other specific topics impacting the community.

Additional thoughts:

- The Union for Contemporary Arts offers a [year-long fellowship](#) that comes with an office space and a project stipend. The organization also is home to facilities that could support a news initiative, including meeting space, event space, a digital design studio, a photo shop, and even a print shop. This 24th street based organization is also uniquely positioned, geographically and economically, to connect with North Omahans of all generations. We could see developing a North Omaha focused news concept as part of the Union fellowship.

Applications are due by August 31st, 2017.

- 101.3 FM has a great opportunity, with some additional community engagement strategies, to really establish itself as a go-to information source in North Omaha. It's geographically located in the heart of the community, inside an existing community center. The radio station could partner more with other existing media that have shown willingness to cover North Omaha more in depth, like the *Reader* and *Omaha Star*. Based on conversations with a variety of community members, to develop a real trust around information, something with less history, good or bad, in Omaha, like 101.3 FM, would be an ideal way to develop a new connection with the community around news and information.



-Community print shop at Union for Contemporary Arts, North Omaha

- Whatever kind of news project develops, it needs to address the current needs of community members. Right now that seems to be keeping people up to speed on how North Omaha is changing. Also, keeping people who have already been displaced or left North Omaha connected to their friends and neighbors, and to events and news that relate to that community, whether they still live there or not.

Conclusion

North Omaha has a complicated history when it comes to media, including highs -- the *Omaha Star's* holistic coverage of the neighborhood during its heyday -- and lows, the *Omaha World Herald's* continued feast-or-famine approach to crime and feel-good stories. "You'd almost have to carve a new path, in terms of media, if you're going to be effective," said one community activist we spoke with.

Based on our conversations, it feels like this is an especially crucial moment for North Omaha, especially considering growing investment and interest in the area by both private and public outside interests. One community organizer we spoke to said, "everything we do has to change if we want to keep up." In order to "keep up," community members need to more information to better understand how they stand to benefit or not from these potential changes. Their voices also need to be covered in a professional way so they can be heard by the city at large.

A very simple news effort could ensure North Omahans have information on essential topics like housing, employment, education, safety, and health. A project partnership with existing citywide media could carry that hyperlocal conversation to a wider audience around Omaha as well.

Background

This assessment is sponsored by the Omaha-based Weitz Family Foundation. Information ecosystem assessments can help provide, through interviews with local stakeholders, a snapshot of how information moves through a community, what issues are most important to residents, and how best to expand the news conversation to a diverse audience. The goal of this assessment is to identify what kinds of existing efforts exist to both get and share news and information with local residents specific to their communities, and also share examples of news engagement projects in other places that might be useful or instructive to media and community groups in North Omaha.

This assessment is being developed by Internews, an international NGO that has media development projects in more than 50 countries. Internews has begun utilizing its extensive knowledge of helping local media around the world become sustainable and effective stewards of information on projects here in the United States. Internews has a wider mission to support healthy information ecosystems, capable of serving communities with relevant and timely news. They traditionally manage projects related to human rights and media, health and environmental information, humanitarian communications, and governance and transparency.

Jesse Hardman and Burgess Brown conducted the fieldwork for this assessment. Hardman has been a reporter for two decades, and spent the past 10 years teaching journalism, working in media development and supporting community journalism in Pakistan, Mexico, Peru, Sri Lanka, South Africa, and other countries. Hardman also created the Listening Post project in New Orleans, partnering with Internews on bringing community media engagement strategies they'd developed outside the U.S. to a domestic audience. The Listening Post has dedicated itself to spreading its lens and megaphone throughout the city by establishing recording posts in community centers and libraries where residents can record their experiences and thoughts

about important topics. That audio has been shared online and on the air through local NPR station WWNO. The project has also used creative outreach methods, partnering with relevant topic experts (nonprofits, city government, business leaders, citizens, etc.) and their networks, to reach new audiences and capture a representational perspective on issues.

Burgess Brown created a similar Listening Post project in his native Macon, Georgia in 2015. Brown is now a graduate student at The New School in New York, and is the community manager for the Listening Post Collective, a website and support network for similar media engagement projects around the country.

Process

Several months before our trip to Omaha, we began researching the information ecosystem in the area. This started with an examination of the formal network of local media entities – newspapers, radio and TV stations, and alt-weeklies. We also explored more informal spaces where information is shared online, focusing heavily on Facebook pages dedicated to North Omaha. We kept a running list of information sources that can be found in the Information Landscape section of this report. In addition to media, we researched civic organizations active in North Omaha. We started to reach out by email to folks involved in Omaha media, specifically those with an understanding of how information flows on the north side. As we set up meetings we'd ask for folks to connect us with other people who would be good to talk to and slowly filled our schedule with meetings for our visit.

Our fieldwork consisted largely of these meetings. We drafted 13 questions that we worked into each of our 15 interviews as we attempted to better understand information flow and needs in North Omaha. Our meetings were located all over the neighborhood ranging from libraries to a McDonald's. We spent time driving and walking around North Omaha, checking out shops and restaurants and looking at how information was shared in physical spaces. We were also fortunate enough to be given a comprehensive tour of the neighborhood by one of the folks we met with. They took us to community hubs where residents gather and discuss events and issues relevant to North Omaha. We made sure to research Omaha before arriving, but remained flexible in our plans while on the ground, always asking for suggestions from each person we spoke with about other people we should talk to or places to visit.

Interviewees

John Heaston is the publisher of Omaha's Alt-Weekly, *The Reader*. Heaston has also recently purchased the Spanish-language weekly, *el Perico*. He is on the Board of the Mildred D. Brown Center and was instrumental in the digitization of the *Omaha Star's* archives. Heaston is active in the North Omaha community and has a wealth of knowledge about Omaha's history.

A'Jamal Byndon is a Community Initiative Consultant at Nebraska Families Collaborative. Previously, Byndon worked at Omaha's public radio station hosting a show called *Community Forum*. He also helped start a project called *Omaha Table Talk* focused on improving race

relations through facilitated community conversations. Byndon grew up in North Omaha and his mother fought to desegregate Omaha schools and buses. He served in the Peace Corps in Botswana before returning to Omaha to start a family.

Claudette Grinnell-Davis will be an Assistant Professor of Social Work at the University of Oklahoma in August. She most recently was an Associate Professor at the Grace Abbott School of Social Work at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. Grinnell-Davis is plugged into the issues facing both the black and Native communities in Omaha.

Kevin Lytle Jr. is an educator, poet, and entrepreneur from Omaha. Lytle hosts a radio show called “Truth Speaks Lounge” on Mind and Soul 101.3, one of two low power FM stations in North Omaha. Mind and Soul is based out of the Malcolm X Center. Lytle is also the founder of AK Consulting Group and the FUTURE Foundation, where he focuses on youth outreach and development in the black community.

Phyllis Hicks is the Director of Advertising & Marketing for the Omaha Star newspaper, the first black female founded newspaper in the country. Hicks also has written an opinion column for the *Star*. She founded and remains a mentor of the local drill team “The Stepping Saints.”

John Pierce is the President of Board of Directors of the Mildred D. Brown Study Center. Pierce spent 35 years as a counselor and administrator at Creighton University, focusing on Affirmative Action and access to higher education for low-income students.

Tonya Cooper is the subscription coordinator for the Omaha Star and is the president of the OIC Neighborhood Association in North Omaha.

Tony Sanders is an author and the Senior Pastor at Koinonia and Friends of Christ church. Sanders believes in meeting people where they are with his message and is creative in his delivery. He regularly engages with parishioners on social media and live-streams his sermons.

Othello Meadows is the Executive Director of Seventy Five North Revitalization Corp. and is overseeing a mixed income development project in North Omaha’s Highlander neighborhood. Meadows is from Omaha and returned to his hometown to lead a non-partisan voter registration drive that registered over 10,000 new voters in eastern Omaha prior to the 2008 presidential election. He previously practiced law in Atlanta, GA.

Leo Louis, a native of North Omaha, is an activist and entrepreneur. Louis has been politically active especially surrounding police shootings of black men. He organized town hall style meetings and marches after the deaths of Trayvon Martin and Michael Brown.

Dawaune Hayes is the communications manager for the newly-opened Union for Contemporary Art, housed in the historic Blue Lion building on N. 24th Street. The Union uses the arts as a vehicle for social change and civic engagement. Dawaune, a recent Creighton

University graduate, is tasked with getting the word out about the mission of the Union as well as the resources available to those in North Omaha.

Walter Brooks, a native of Seattle, has lived in Omaha for 40 years. Brooks cut his teeth writing for the *Omaha Star* and spent 35 years working in communications and public relations for Mutual of Omaha, ConAgra, and University of Nebraska. Brooks is on the board of the Malcolm X Memorial Foundation, and hosts a weekly show on 101.3 FM.

Rose McGee works for the Minnesota Humanities Center as the Program Officer for their Omaha Public School programs. McGee is also nationally known for her [Sweet Potato Comfort Pies](#) project where she delivers homemade sweet potato pies to folks mourning tragedies like the killing of Philando Castile or the Orlando night club shooting.

Denise Chapman is the Associate Director of the Performing Arts Collective at the Union for Contemporary Art. Chapman is a graduate of Creighton's theatre program and an adjunct professor at Metro Community College.

Appendix C: Information Needs Assessment Survey (Version One)

Information Needs Assessment Survey

The La Pine Engaged Journalism Project seeks to establish a conversation with the citizens of La Pine, OR, where people contribute comments or thoughts on issues of importance in their neighborhood as well as receive news and information about local communities. The project is managed by the Agora Journalism Center, the gathering place for innovation in communication and civic engagement, at University of Oregon's School of Journalism & Communication.

_____	_____
Name (optional)	Neighborhood where you live/stay
_____	_____
Age	Relationship with neighborhood

When something happens in your community, where do you hear about it, first?

<input type="checkbox"/> Radio	Friend / neighbor / other (on my phone):
<input type="checkbox"/> TV	<input type="checkbox"/> Text
<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat
<input type="checkbox"/> Internet (specific) _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook Messenger
<input type="checkbox"/> Neighbor (in person)	<input type="checkbox"/> WhatsApp
<input type="checkbox"/> Friend (in person)	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
<input type="checkbox"/> Church	
<input type="checkbox"/> Library	<input type="checkbox"/> Someone specific in the community
<input type="checkbox"/> Community center / business	<input type="checkbox"/> Flyers / signs (specific where) _____
	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (specific) _____

What local news outlets do you TRUST the most? Why?

What local news outlets do you USE the most? Why?

What are the different spaces in your community where people come together and share information and talk about life in the neighborhood?

What local issues do you wish you had more information about?

Have you ever been to a community meeting? Why/why not? What was the meeting about? When was the last attend a community meeting?

Tell me about a time when something happened in the community that was important to you, but you couldn't find good information to help explain it.

What would you envision for the Wikiup Junction area?

Out of the following, what type of information is most important to you (choose your top 3-5)?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information about new development in the area | <input type="checkbox"/> Who to go to if there's a problem in your neighborhood |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Parole & Probation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education / Schools | <input type="checkbox"/> Policing and Public Safety Issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs / training programs | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Re-entry from Prison | <input type="checkbox"/> Housing rights |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Courts and legal issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Trash services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business Opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing Vacancy | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature? Environment? |

If you hear something important, who do you share that news with?

- | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Friend | <input type="checkbox"/> Neighbor |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ |

If you hear something important, how would you share that type of news?

Do you ever have a strong opinion or idea that you want to be included in local media?

About what subjects?

Where do you wish it would be included?

Do you feel like there is anything you are able to do to make your voice heard in local media?
If so, what?

How often do you go online?

How do you normally access the internet?

<input type="checkbox"/> Cell Phone	<input type="checkbox"/> Smart Phone
<input type="checkbox"/> iPad or Tablet	<input type="checkbox"/> Laptop
<input type="checkbox"/> Desktop	<input type="checkbox"/> Library
<input type="checkbox"/> Other _____	<input type="checkbox"/> I don't

What websites do you use to get or share information?

What's the best way to keep in touch with you?

_____	_____
Cell Phone	Facebook
_____	_____
Email	Other

Appendix D: Information Needs Assessment Survey (Version Two)

Information Needs Assessment for La Pine, OR

The La Pine Engaged Journalism Project seeks to establish a conversation with the citizens of La Pine, OR., where people contribute comments or thoughts on issues of importance in their neighborhood as well as receive news and information about local communities. The project is managed by the Agora Journalism Center, the gathering place for innovation in communication and civic engagement, at University of Oregon's School of Journalism & Communication.

Name (optional)	Age	Occupation
-----------------	-----	------------

Neighborhood where you live/stay

<input type="checkbox"/> Bear St	<input type="checkbox"/> Roseland
<input type="checkbox"/> Cabin on the Deschutes	<input type="checkbox"/> Shaw Pine
<input type="checkbox"/> Cam De Oro	<input type="checkbox"/> Sprague Loop
<input type="checkbox"/> Crescent Creek	<input type="checkbox"/> Stearns Rd
<input type="checkbox"/> Forest View	<input type="checkbox"/> Tall Pines
<input type="checkbox"/> Huntington Meadows	<input type="checkbox"/> Wild River
<input type="checkbox"/> N Burgess/E Day	<input type="checkbox"/> William Foss Road
<input type="checkbox"/> Oregon Outback RFPD	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Ponderosa Pines	<input type="checkbox"/> _____

How long have you been a resident of La Pine?

<input type="checkbox"/> Moved to La Pine less than five years ago	<input type="checkbox"/> Born and raised
<input type="checkbox"/> Moved to La Pine more than five years ago	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Current home status

<input type="checkbox"/> Owner	<input type="checkbox"/> Renter
<input type="checkbox"/> Houseless	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Local News & Information

When something happens in your community, where do you hear about it, first?

<input type="checkbox"/> Newspaper	<input type="checkbox"/> Internet
<input type="checkbox"/> Radio	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook
<input type="checkbox"/> TV	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook Group
<input type="checkbox"/> Neighbor (<i>in person</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> Church
<input type="checkbox"/> Friend (<i>in person</i>)	<input type="checkbox"/> Library
	<input type="checkbox"/> Community center / business
	<input type="checkbox"/> City website
<i>If friend / neighbor (not in person):</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Someone specific in the community
<input type="checkbox"/> Text	Who: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Snapchat	
<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook Messenger	<input type="checkbox"/> Flyers / signs
<input type="checkbox"/> WhatsApp	Where: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Where else do you get your information?

Which LOCAL news outlets do you TRUST the most?

<input type="checkbox"/> Bend Bulletin	<input type="checkbox"/> Newberry Eagle
<input type="checkbox"/> KITC 106.5 FM	<input type="checkbox"/> OPB
<input type="checkbox"/> KNCP 107.3 FM	<input type="checkbox"/> WiseBuys
<input type="checkbox"/> KTVZ	<input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____

Why?

Which NATIONAL news outlets do you TRUST the most?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Fox News	<input type="checkbox"/>	The New York Times
<input type="checkbox"/>	CNN	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Washington Post
<input type="checkbox"/>	MSNBC	<input type="checkbox"/>	The Wall Street Journal
<input type="checkbox"/>	Breitbart	<input type="checkbox"/>	NPR
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:	<hr/>	

Why?

What are the different spaces in your community where people come together and share information and talk about life in the neighborhood?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Band of Brothers	<input type="checkbox"/>	Harvest Depot
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chamber Breakfast	<input type="checkbox"/>	Laundromat
<input type="checkbox"/>	Chamber of Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/>	Library
<input type="checkbox"/>	Church	<input type="checkbox"/>	Park & Rec
<input type="checkbox"/>	City Center	<input type="checkbox"/>	Quilting Group
<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Center	<input type="checkbox"/>	Restaurants
<input type="checkbox"/>	Council Meetings	<input type="checkbox"/>	Senior Center
<input type="checkbox"/>	Garden Club	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	Grocery Stores	<hr/>	

What is the one issue in the community that you care about the most?

Community

Have you ever been to a community meeting?

Yes

No

What was the meeting about?

Why not?

When was the last community meeting you attended?

Within the last month

It's been years

Within the last year

I've never been

Tell me about a time when something happened in the community that was important to you, but you couldn't find good information to help explain it.

What would you envision for the Wikiup Junction area?

Out of the following, what type of information is most important to you (choose your top 3-5)?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Access to local news | <input type="checkbox"/> Info about new development in area |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Business opportunities | <input type="checkbox"/> Jobs/training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Courts and legal issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Local government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education/Schools | <input type="checkbox"/> Nature / Environment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Health Issues | <input type="checkbox"/> Policing and public safety issues |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Houselessness | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing affordability | <input type="checkbox"/> Who to go to if there's a problem |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing rights | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Housing vacancy | |

If you hear something important, how would you share that type of news?

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Face-to-face | <input type="checkbox"/> Contact the newspaper |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Facebook | <input type="checkbox"/> Call the radio or television station |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | |

Have you ever engaged with your local media?

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes | <input type="checkbox"/> No |
| How did you engage? | Why not? |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Call | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Write | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Respond to survey | |

Digital Habits

How often do you go online?

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Often everyday | <input type="checkbox"/> Once a month |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once a day | <input type="checkbox"/> Rarely |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A few times a week | <input type="checkbox"/> Never |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Once a week | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

How do you normally access the internet?

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cell Phone | <input type="checkbox"/> Laptop |
| <input type="checkbox"/> iPad or Tablet | <input type="checkbox"/> Library |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Desktop | <input type="checkbox"/> I don't |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Smart Phone | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ |

What websites do you use to get or share information?

What's the best way to keep in touch with you?

_____	_____
Cell Phone	Facebook
_____	_____
Email	Other

Appendix E: Information Needs Survey Flyer

What are your information needs in La Pine?

Do you want to join the conversation?

If so, here is what we are talking about...

Students and faculty from the University of Oregon's School of Journalism and Communication have partnered with Sustainable City Year Program (SCYP) to create an engagement plan for the information needs of La Pine. We are coming together to facilitate an opportunity for community members to share their concerns about the information needs of La Pine through an Information needs survey.

We want to hear from you!

Take our information needs survey below:

Scan this QR code to access our survey or type the link into your internet browser



bit.ly/lapine-infoneeds



Figure 10: This is the flyer that the Engaged Journalism class distributed around La Pine to promote their online

Appendix F: Coded Survey Responses

Two students coded the survey responses and listed their relative frequencies to establish patterns in the data. The codes represent responses that had a similar focus. Coding the information allowed the class to address issues that reflect more of the community.

Second Survey Data Codes: Responses 2 – 30

Shout-out to Emily for making the word doc template

Question One: “How long have you been a resident of La Pine?”

<u>Code:</u>	Frequency:
-Moved to La Pine more than five years ago	- 21 --44
-Moved to La Pine less than five years ago	- 6--13
-Born and raised	- 2

Question 2: Current home status

<u>Code:</u>	Frequency:
-Renter	- 1--6
-Owner	- 28--53
-Houseless	- 0

Question 3: When something happens in your community, where do you hear about it first?

<u>Code:</u>	Frequency:
-Word of mouth	- 13--21
-Social Media/Internet	- 22--51
-Print	- 5
-Broadcast	- 5--7
-Public Spaces	- 3--6

Question 4: Based on the question above, if friend / neighbor / other (on phone), which app?

<u>Code:</u>	Frequency:
-Snapchat	- 0--1
-Facebook messenger	- 13--22
-Whats App	- 0--1
-Other(Phone call and SMS)	- 8 (all text message)---14

Question 5: Where else do you get your information?

<u>Code:</u>	Frequency:
-Print	- 3---6
-Public Spaces	- 2---8
-Broadcast(TV and Radio)	- 4---13
-Word of Mouth	- 5---11
-Internet(FB/Social Media/Web)	- 3----7

Question 6: Which LOCAL news outlets do you TRUST the most?

<u>Code:</u>	Frequency:
--------------	------------

-Wisebuys	- 5----12
-KTVZ/Channel 21	- 18----36
-Newberry Eagle	- 14----25
-Bend Bulletin	- 2-----7
-Radio	- 6---2
-No trust	- 0----1
-Other	- 2---1

Question 7: Why?

Code:	Frequency:
-Consistency	- 3----6
-Journalists/Staff	- 2----
-Unbiased	- 5----7
-Accurate	- 3---8
-Local	- 7---11
-bo trust answers	-2

Question 8: Which NATIONAL news outlets do you TRUST the most?

Code:	Frequency:
-Fox NEWS	- 11-----8
-CNN	- 2---4
-NPR	- 3---5
-Wall Street Journal	- 0---3
-MSNBC/NBC	- 3--6
-Washington Post	- 0---4
-NYTimes	- 1---3
-None	- 6---12
-Other	- 0---4

Question 9: Why?

Code:	Frequency:
-Accuracy	- 3---8
-Good Motives/Unbiased	- 6----12
-No trust	- 11----22

Question 10: What are the different spaces in your community where people come together and share information and talk about life in the neighborhood?

Code:	Frequency:
-Local Groups/Clubs	- 10---14
-Church	- 13----25
-City Sponsored Buildings/Spaces	- 19----31
-Food Centers(Restaurants/Grocery)	- 11----29
-Local Businesses	- 1----13
-Senior center	- 7----17

-Other - 2----5

Question 11: What is the one issue in the community that you care about the most

Code:	Frequency:
-Crime/Drugs and Public Safety	- 13
-Education	- 1
-Healthcare/Accessibility	- 2
-Youth Issues/Activity	- 9
-Local Infrastructure Development	- 9
-Overgrowth	- 7
-Economic Business/Employment Growth	- 10
-Community Image	- 2
-Overall City Health	- 8

*****SKIPPED QUESTIONS ABOUT CITY MEETINGS*****

Question 16: Tell me about a time when something happened in the community that was important to you, but you couldn't find good information to help explain it.

Code:	Frequency:
-Highway 97 Bridge/Overpass	- 4----7
-Road/Traffic Concerns(speeding)	- 2-----3
-Fires/Fire season	- 1-----3
-New City Development	- 1---2
-Septic/Sewers	- 0--1
-Breaking Public News	- 0----4
-No Response	- 18-----35
-all the time	-1

Question 17: What would you envision for the Wickiup Junction area?

Code:	Frequency:
-Aid Highway 97(overpass,traffic,safety)	- 11----16
-Business Development/Attractiveness	- 9-----21
-Access	- 4-----7
-Angry at Tax Money Spent	- 2-----4
Not sure/ no response	-10

Question 18: Out of the following, what type of information is most important to you (choose your top 3-5)?

Code:	Frequency:
-Housing Issues	- 13-----24
-Access to Info/Local News on Development	- 19-----42
-Health	- 6-----13
-Jobs/Business Opportunities	- 14-----32
-Education	- 5-----24

-Local Govt./Justice System(courts and legal issues)	- 10-----15
-Nature/Environment	- 11-----18
-Policing/Public safety	- 14-----26
-Transportation	- 6----13
-Where to go with a problem	- 2-----6

Question 19: If you hear something important, how would you share that type of news?

Code:	Frequency:
-Face to Face	- 17----32
-Facebook	- 20-----40
-Contact News Organization	- 3-----5
-Phone (call or SMS)	- 2-----4
-Other	- 1-----2

*****SKIPPED YES/NO QUESTION*****

Question 21: If so, how did you engage with the local media?

Code:	Frequency:
-Write/Email	- 10----16
-Call	- 4----9
-Media Interaction(surveys and interviews)	- 10----16

Question 22: How often do you go online?

Code:	Frequency:
-Daily	- 28-----30
-Often	- 0-----
-Rarely	- 1-----

Question 23: How do you normally access the internet?

Code:	Frequency:
-Personal Computer	- 20----33
-Phone	- 18----31
-Library	- 0-----
-Ipad/Tablet	- 9-----12

Question 24: What websites do you use to get or share information?

Code:	Frequency:
-Local Website	- 4----24
-State Website	- 16----20
-National Website/Platforms	- 28-----30