VoiceGR is an annual, broad-scale, community survey that aims to assess Greater Grand Rapids residents’ perceptions and experiences on a variety of topics. Each year, VoiceGR strives to survey a sample of residents with demographic characteristics that match those of the Greater Grand Rapids population. In 2016, 4,639 residents responded to the survey.

The primary goal of VoiceGR is to provide open, accessible, and objective community data to residents, nonprofits, governments, businesses, and other local decision-makers. In this data brief, we explore the responses to open-ended questions about strengths and problems of neighborhoods.

What do you think is the biggest strength of your neighborhood?

- Community & Cohesion: Responses included references to:
  - Activities
  - Commonality & similarity
  - Sense of community
  - Engagement & connection
  - Family- & children-friendly
  - Pride
  - Familiarity (30.2%)

- People: Responses included references to:
  - The people
  - Positive demeanor
  - Diversity & inclusion
  - Resident stability (28.2%)

- Location & Physical Infrastructure: Responses included references to:
  - Beauty & aesthetics
  - Nature & green space
  - Close to downtown
  - Cleanliness
  - Location
  - Parks
  - Rural (22.4%)

What do you think is the biggest problem in your neighborhood?

- Crime & Undesirable Activities: Responses included references to:
  - Crime
  - Drugs & alcohol
  - Gangs
  - Noise
  - Road traffic
  - Undesirable commerce (24.6%)

- Location & Physical Infrastructure: Responses included references to:
  - Bad roads
  - Lack of bike lanes
  - Poor lighting
  - Lack of parking
  - Lack of cleanliness/littering
  - Property maintenance
  - Rural or isolated
  - Not walkable (18.7%)

- Lack of Community & Cohesion: Responses included references to:
  - Lack of activities
  - Lack of sense of community
  - Lack of connection
  - Negative demeanor
  - Lack of familiarity
  - Not family- or children-friendly
  - Political or cultural world views (17.4%)
The data in this brief demonstrate not only that residents of different neighborhoods report different strengths and problems, but also that residents of the same neighborhoods have different experiences of their neighborhoods. For example, while many residents of Richmond-Oakleigh identified strengths related to community and cohesion, Richmond-Oakleigh residents also frequently reported problems related to lacking community and cohesion. Similarly, Midtown residents identified both strengths and problems associated with location and physical infrastructure. In a small percentage of cases, the same resident reported both a strength and a problem that fell into the same category. For example, the same resident could have identified “close to downtown” as a strength and “lack of parking” as a problem.