

CSNA 2023-2024



Community Strengths & Needs Assessment

1626 Taft St.
Brownsville, TX 78526

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INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Community Strengths and Needs Assessment (CSNA)

The Community Strengths and Needs Assessment (CSNA) serves as a critical tool for identifying and addressing key issues within the 78520 area. Through this annual assessment, our community gains valuable insight into local challenges, resources, and needs. The CSNA provides essential data that directly informs strategic planning at Good Samaritan Community Services, helping us prioritize service areas that will most effectively contribute to the positive development of youth and families in the region.

This process not only identifies immediate needs but also tracks emerging trends and social issues that may impact community well-being in the future. By gathering input from local residents, service providers, and community leaders, the CSNA empowers us to refine our programs and services to ensure that we are meeting the evolving needs of the 78520 community.

The information collected will guide our programmatic decisions and assist in shaping our approach to creating protective factors that promote the well-being of youth. By strengthening community engagement and supporting collaborative efforts, the CSNA plays a pivotal role in our ongoing mission of "Empowering Communities to Thrive."

Overview of Methodology and Assessment Tools

This assessment aims to target the resources and needs of the 78520-zip code. Methods used to collect this information include:

- Data was gathered through various sources, including the U.S. Census Bureau, Texas Education Agency, and Cameron County Juvenile Probation.
- Resource information was gathered from 2-1-1 Texas and City-Data.com.
- Community Feedback



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The 2023-2024 Community Strengths and Needs Assessment (CSNA), conducted by Good Samaritan Community Services, evaluates Brownsville's 78520 zip code to identify key challenges and opportunities. This assessment examines the demographic, economic, educational, health, and public safety landscape to provide a comprehensive understanding of community needs.

Key Findings

- **Economic Hardship:** The median household income (\$47,331) is well below the Texas average, with 26% of residents living in poverty and 35% of children affected.
- **Educational Gaps:** Math (20%) and reading (34%) proficiency rates in Brownsville ISD fall below state averages, with 69.9% of students at risk of dropping out.
- **Health Disparities:** 23.5% of residents lack health insurance, obesity rates are high, and teen birth rates (52.3 per 1,000) remain well above other comparable areas of the state.
- **Public Safety Concerns:** Crime, particularly juvenile involvement in property and violent offenses, continues to be an issue, along with rising domestic violence cases.
- **Digital Divide:** Limited broadband access remains a barrier to education, telehealth, and economic mobility, though infrastructure projects are underway to improve connectivity.

Community Strengths

- Expanding higher education options (UTRGV, Texas Southmost College).
- Active community engagement through local nonprofits, churches, and youth programs.
- Workforce development initiatives addressing unemployment and financial stability.
- Public safety efforts to reduce crime and enhance community policing.

Recommendations

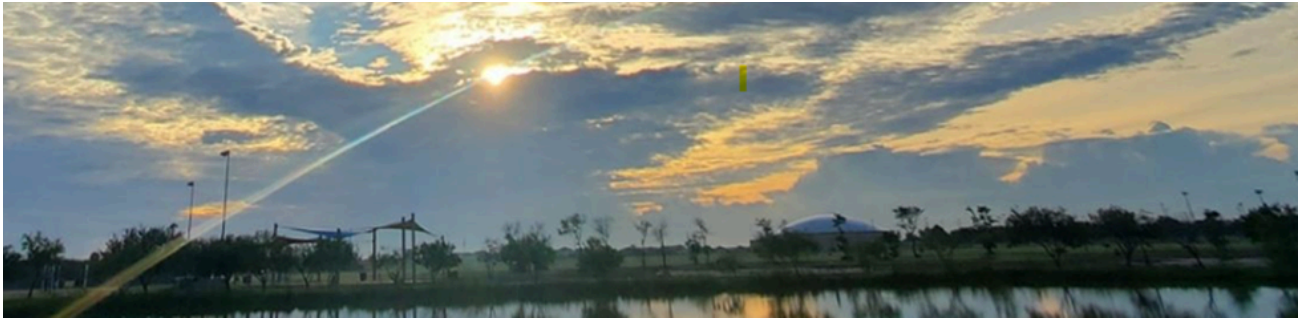
To strengthen education, workforce development, health, and digital access, efforts should focus on:

1. Boosting academic outcomes through math, reading, and postsecondary readiness programs.
2. Expanding workforce training to improve employment opportunities.
3. Enhancing healthcare access with mental health services and preventative care.
4. Strengthening community policing & youth mentorship to reduce crime.
5. Increasing broadband access to improve digital equity.

Conclusion

Brownsville's 78520 zip code faces significant socio-economic challenges but possesses strong community assets that, if leveraged effectively, can improve education, economic mobility, and public health. Targeted investments in education, digital access, and workforce development will be key to fostering long-term success.

COMMUNITY OVERVIEW



The 78520 zip code is an urban area in Brownsville, located in the southernmost part of Texas, adjacent to the Mexican border. This zip code has a higher population density than the rest of the city and is known for its economic challenges, including some of the highest poverty and crime rates in Brownsville. It lies within City Council District 4 and Congressional District 34, and it includes parts of the city's downtown area. Spanning 39.7 square miles, it is situated immediately west of Highway 77.

The 78520 area continues to face significant socio-economic challenges. With a per capita income of \$34,255, Brownsville consistently ranks among the poorest cities in the United States (U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). Although it was previously ranked the second poorest city in America in 2018, recent data confirms that Brownsville still holds one of the highest poverty rates and lowest median household incomes among U.S. cities (FRED, 2023; U.S. Census Bureau, 2023). The region also struggles with limited employment opportunities, further contributing to ongoing economic hardship and persistent poverty.

Culturally, the 78520 zip code is predominantly Spanish-speaking, with 84% of adults using Spanish at home. Additionally, nearly 29% of the population is foreign-born, underscoring the area's deep ties to the Mexican border and the cross-cultural influence of both nations ("78520 - Profile data").



<i>General Demographic Characteristics</i>				
	78520	Cameron County	Texas	United States
Population	64,949	421,017	29,145,505	331,449,281
Hispanic Population	60,878	376,680	11,441,717	62,080,044
Population Density *people per square mile	1,595	472	112	94
Median Household Income	\$47,331	\$52,210	\$75,780	\$77,719
Population Below Federal Poverty Line	26%	25%	14%	11%
Children Below Federal Poverty Line	35% *Brownsville	30%	19%	16%
High School Completion	68.7 *Brownsville	71%	85%	89%
Unemployment Rate	5.1 *Brownsville	5.4	3.7	3.8
Homeownership Rate	58.5%	66.2%	62.6%	65.2%
Spanish as Language Spoken at Home, Adults	81.9%	71.8%	28.2%	13.7%

(U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.), (Census Reporter, n.d.), (Data USA, n.d.), (County Health Rankings & Roadmaps, 2024), (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, n.d.)

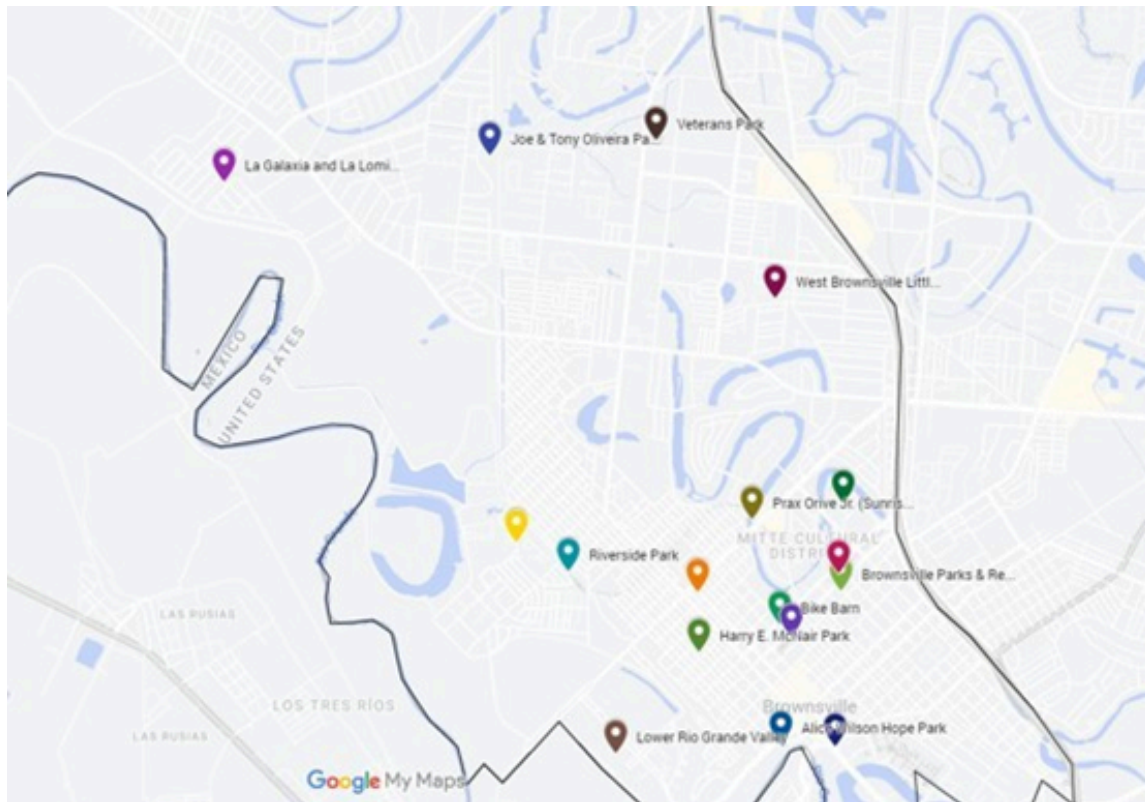
Notable Locations and Assets

Brownsville Country Club	Fort Brown	Brownsville Police Department	Stillman House Museum	Historic Brownsville Museum
Southern Pacific Railroad Passenger Depot	Brownsville Fire Department Central Station	La Nueva Libertad	Brownsville Public Library	Brownsville Museum of Fine Art
Miguel Fernandez Hide Yard	Brownsville Fire Department Stations 2,4,7	Cameron County Sheriff's Office	Cameron County Courthouse	Gladys Porter Zoo
La Madrilena	Manautou House	Celaya-Creager House	Charles Stillman House	Sam's Memorial Stadium

(City-Data.com, n.d.)



LOCAL PARKS



Park Name	Location
14th Street Plaza	1400 E Washington St
Alice Wilson Hope Park	1300 E Levee St
Bike Barn	624 E Madison St
Brownsville Parks & Rec	1338 E 8th St
Dean Porter Park	Dean Porter Park Dr
Harry E. McNair Park	350 E St Charles St
Joe & Tony Oliveira Park	104 El Paso Rd
La Galaxia and La Lomita Park	1501 Calle Espacio
Lower Rio Grande Valley	325 Mexico Blvd
Monte Bella Trails Park	2485 W Alton Gloor Blvd
Prax Orive Jr. (Sunrise) Park	1245 Palm Blvd
Riverside Park	15 Riverside Blvd
Rosa G. Allala Park	309 N Park Dr
Southern Pacific Linear Park	East 6th St & E Ringgold St
Veterans Park	2500 Central Blvd
Washington Park	700 E Madison St
West Brownsville Little League Park	1295 Cottonwood Dr
Xeriscape Park	International Blvd

EDUCATIONAL LANDSCAPE

Institutions of Higher Education

South Texas Vocational Technical Institute - Brownsville	2144 Central Blvd, Brownsville, TX 78520	(956) 554-3515
Southern Careers Institute Brownsville	Southwinds Shopping Center, 935 N. Expy	(844) 783-6569
The University of Texas Rio Grande Valley	1 W University Blvd.	(956) 882-4026
Texas Southmost College	80 Fort Brown St	(956) 295-3600

Charter and Private Schools

Brownsville Montessori Academy	36 S. Coria St	(956) 548-1952
Episcopal Day School	34 N. Coria St	(956) 542-5231
First Baptist School	1600 Boca Chica Blvd	(956) 542-4854
Harmony Science Academy	1124 Central Blvd	(956) 574-9555
IDEA Riverview Academy & College Prep	30 Palm Drive	(956) 832-5900
Kenmont Montessori School	2734 N. Coria St	(956) 542-0500
Maria's Montessori School	128 W Jeffersont St	(956) 541-2269
Raul Yzaguirre School for Success	2255 N. Coria St.	(956) 542-2404
Saint Joseph Academy	101 St. Joseph Drive	(956) 542-3581
St Mary's Catholic School	1300 E. Los Ebanos Blvd	(956) 546-1805
Triump Public High School	944 E. Los Ebanos Blvd	(956) 372-1433

Public High Schools

Brownsville Early College High School	343 Ringgold Rd	(956) 698-1476
James Pace Early College High School	314 W. Los Ebanos Blvd	(956) 548-7700
Veterans Memorial Early College High School	4550 U.S. Military Hwy 281	(956) 574-5600

Public Middle Schools

Manzano Middle School	2580 W Alton Gloor Blvd	(956) 548-9800
Stell Middle School	1105 Los Ebanos Blvd	(956) 548-8560
Stillman Middle School	2977 W. Tandy Rd	(956) 698-1000

Public Elementary Schools

Benavides Elementary	3101 McAllen Rd	(956) 350-3250
Breeden Elementary	3955 Dana Ave.	(956) 554-4730
Garden Park Elementary	855 Military Hwy	(956) 982-2630
Keller Elementary	2540 W. Alton Gloor Blvd	(956) 547-4400
Longoria Elementary	2400 Van Buren Street	(956) 982-2700
Martin Elementary	1701 Stanford Avenue	(956) 982-2730

Ortiz Elementary	2500 W. Alton Gloor Blvd	(956) 698-1100
Pullam Elementary	3200 Madrid Ave	(956) 547-3700
Putegnat Elementary	730 E. 8th Street	(956) 548-8930
Russell Elementary	800 Lakeside Blvd	(956) 548-8960
Sharp Elementary	1439 Palm Blvd	(956) 982-2930
Skinner Elementary	411 W. St. Charles Street	(956) 982-2830
Villa Nueva Elementary	7455 Old Military Road	(956) 542-3957
Yturria Elementary	2955 W. Tandy Road	(956) 698-0870

Churches and Places of Worship

Brownsville Community Fellowship	2414 Central Blvd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-544-4248
Centro de Fe Internacional	102 E. Elizabeth St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-518-5232
Church of the Advent, Episcopal	104 W. Elizabeth St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-542-4123
Cristo Jesus-La Luz Del Mundo	1900 Pecan St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-541-1677
Cross Church- Brownsville	351 E. Los Ebanos Blvd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-399-5590
Divine Providence Church	1175 W. Price Rd #1 Brownsville, TX 78520	956- 335-6499
El Buen Pastor United Methodist Church	435 Boca Chica Blvd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-542-4145
El Calvario Lutheran Church	1025 E. 12th St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-546-2350
Espiritu De Gracia	240 W. St Francis St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-546-1897
First Baptist Church	1600 Boca Chica Blvd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-542-5334
First Presbyterian Church	435 Palm Blvd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-542-3564
Good Shepherd Community Church	300 Morrison Rd Brownsville, TX 78520	956 350-8282
Holy Family Church	2405 E Tyler St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-546-6975
Iglesia Bautista West Brownsville	925 W. St Charles St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-546-3607
Iglesia Evangélica Cristiana Espiritual	207 Gilson Rd Brownsville, TX 78520	N/A
Iglesia Ministerio Cristo Es El Camino	222 E. Elizabeth St Brownsville, TX 78520	N/A
Iglesia Principe De Paz	109 Military Rd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-541-4715
Immaculate Conception Cathedral	1218 E. Jefferson Street Brownsville TX 78520	956-546-3178
Islamic Society of Brownsville	246 Gilson Rd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-546-8011

Jehovah's Witness Kingdom Hall	2501 La Feria Rd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-542-4444
Korean Church of Brownsville	409 W. 2nd St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-459-5257
La Iglesia del Pueblo Pentecostal Church	1301 E Tyler St. Brownsville, TX 78520	956-541-6271
La Luz Del Mundo Iglesia Del Dios Vivo Columna Y Apoyo De La Verdad	822 E. Adams St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-621-0906
Life Works	1416 W. Alton Gloor Blvd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-350-2919
Livingway Family Church	350 W. Ruben M. Torres Blvd	956-548-2223
Mary Mother of the Church	1914 Barnard Rd Brownsville, Tx 78520	956-546-3178
New Life Center United	3665 Old Hwy 77 Brownsville, TX 78520	956-546-6403
Our Lady of Good Counsel Church	1055 Military Rd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-541-8341
Sacred Heart Catholic Church	602 E. Elizabeth St Brownsville, Tx 78520	956-546-3178
San Pedro Catholic Church	7602 Old Military Rd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-542-2596
Seventh Day Adventist	3515 Old Hwy 77 Brownsville, TX 78520	956-544-6280
Shamma Christian Center	825 W. St Francis St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-542-2782
St. Joseph's Church	555 W. St. Francis St. Brownsville, Texas 78520	956-542-2709
St. Mary's Catholic Church	1300 E. Los Ebanos Blvd	956-546-1805
St. Thomas Chapel	155 E. Jefferson St Brownsville, TX 78520	n/a
Templo Aposento Alto	555 E. Elizabeth St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-986-2299
Templo Damasco	645 W. Elizabeth St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-982-6896
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints	10 E. Elizabeth St Brownsville, TX 78520	956-542-4441
The Power House Church	1001 Ruben M. Torres Blvd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-542-2999
Trinity Lutheran Church	901 Boca Chica Blvd Brownsville, TX 78520	956-542-7024
Universal Church	1401 E Washington St suite c Brownsville, TX 78520	713-665-6115

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

Data for the 2023–2024 Community Strengths and Needs Assessment for Brownsville’s 78520 zip code was gathered through a combination of quantitative data analysis, community surveys, and stakeholder engagement.

Publicly available data sources included the U.S. Census Bureau, Texas Education Agency, County Health Rankings, the Texas Juvenile Justice Department, and other local and state-level institutions. These sources provided insight into key indicators such as poverty rates, academic achievement, health access, crime trends, and broadband connectivity.

To incorporate local voices, a parent survey was distributed to families participating in Good Sam programs. Survey questions asked about perceptions of safety, service gaps, and suggestions for community improvement. Responses were collected in both English and Spanish to ensure accessibility and inclusion. In total, responses reflected diverse experiences and highlighted several shared concerns, including park safety, youth programming, and access to services.

Additionally, Good Sam staff reviewed and reflected on data collected throughout the year from client interactions, program performance reports, and collaborative meetings with schools and community partners. This combination of data sources allowed for a comprehensive view of both the assets and unmet needs in the community, ensuring that the assessment reflects lived experiences as well as statistical trends.

DATA ANALYSIS

The chart outlines the personnel involved in this analysis and the work plan.

Role	Name	Title
Project Lead	Amanda James, LMSW	Sr. Director of Youth & Teen Services, GSCS
Research Assistant	Erica Rocha	Data Manager, GSCS
Community Feedback Lead	Abril Huerta	Program Manager, GSCS
Final Review	Simon Salas	CEO, GSCS

The report preparation and data gathering, including research, note review, data interpretation, and community feedback, took place over an 8-week period, as shown in the chart below.

Task	Week
Revisions to CSNA Community Input Survey	1
Administer Youth Surveys	1-2
Conduct CCC SWOT for Community Context	1
Begin Census/Public Data Gathering	2-4
Compile & Review Youth Survey Data	3
Conduct Trend Analysis on Historical Youth Survey Data	3
Conduct Focus Groups	4
Compile & Interpret Focus Group Data	5
Draft Report (Assigned by Report Components)	6-7
Final Review	7-8
Report Submission	8

RESULTS

Education

Brownsville has a rich history in education, with the 78520 zip code being home to the first private and public schools in the city. The Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) operates 56 schools, serving 40,765 students. Public schools in BISD report an average math proficiency score of 20%, which is lower than the Texas public school average of 37%. Reading proficiency stands at 34%, compared to the statewide average of 42% (Texas Education Agency, 2022). BISD serves a predominantly Hispanic student body, with 98.5% of students identifying as Hispanic, compared to the Texas public school average of 73% (Texas Education Agency, 2022). Additionally, 60.9% of BISD students are economically disadvantaged, and 41% are English language learners (U.S. News & World Report, 2022).

BISD is ranked #947 out of 1,196 school districts in Texas, based on combined math and reading proficiency scores for the 2020-2021 school year (Texas Tribune, 2022). However, the Texas Education Agency waived accountability ratings for the 2020-2021 school year due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Texas Education Agency, 2021). The most recent full accountability data (2018-2019) showed BISD receiving an "A" for its overall performance, with 93.8% of students graduating on time and a dropout rate of 0.4%, which is significantly lower than the national average (Texas Tribune, 2022). Additionally, 69.9% of students were considered at risk of dropping out during the 2018-2019 school year (Texas Tribune, 2022).



Brownsville also has a significant number of charter schools. There are nine charter schools in the city, serving 7,359 students, three of which are located within the 78520 zip code (Texas Charter Schools Association, 2022). In addition, the city has 13 private schools serving 2,166 students, with eight of these private schools located within the 78520 zip code (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022).

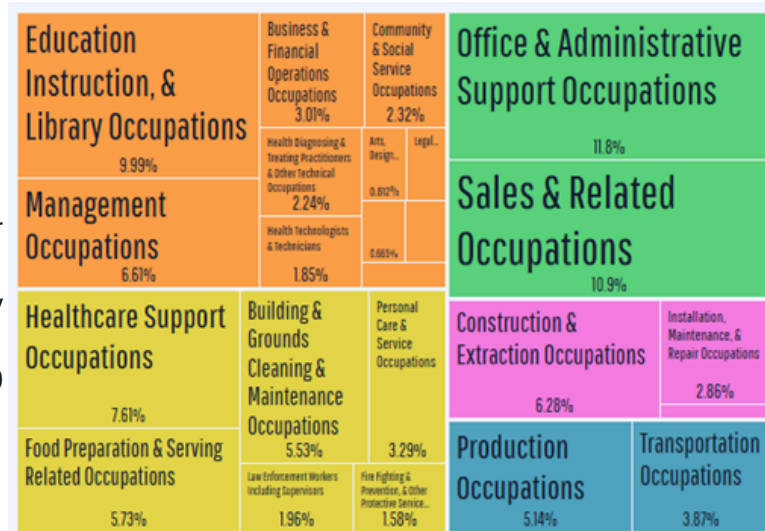
In recent years, there have been challenges, including the closure of three elementary schools in the 78520 zip code in 2019 due to low enrollment and deteriorating infrastructure (Texas Tribune, 2019). Looking ahead, enrollment in BISD is projected to decline over the next decade, potentially resulting in a \$33 million deficit in school funding due to student outmigration to charter and private schools (Brownsville Herald, 2022).

ECONOMICS

The significant income disparity and high poverty rate in 78520 highlight the economic challenges faced by its residents. With a median household income of \$47,331 substantially lower than Texas' median of \$75,780.

Residents of 78520 earn considerably less than the state average.

Additionally, the poverty rate in 78520 stands at 25.8%, nearly double the state's 13.7%. These figures suggest that lower educational attainment contributes to limited economic mobility, reinforcing cycles of poverty and reducing access to higher-paying job opportunities.



This financial strain also impacts housing choices. With a median rent of \$842, many families in 78520 may find renting a more viable option than homeownership. While the homeownership rate is 58.5%, the relatively low rental costs indicate that affordability plays a key role in residents' housing decisions. Given the income constraints and high poverty rate, many households may struggle with the financial burdens of owning a home, such as property taxes, maintenance, and insurance. As a result, renting becomes the more practical choice for many, potentially limiting long-term wealth-building opportunities associated with homeownership.

Additionally, the high child poverty rate in the Cameron County area is alarming, with 30% of children living in poverty compared to the Texas state average of 19%. This has serious consequences for children's health and overall well-being. Children in poverty face a greater risk of various health issues, including poor physical health, chronic illnesses, and mental health challenges such as low self-esteem and heightened stress levels.



Income and Poverty Figures for Selected Demographics

	78520	Cameron County	Texas
Median household income	\$47,331	\$52,210	\$75,780
Population Below Federal Poverty Line (FPL)	25.8%	23.5%	13.7%
Children Below FPL	35%	30%	19%

UNEMPLOYMENT

The unemployment rate in Cameron County, Texas, has seen a decrease in recent years. As of 2024, the unemployment rate stands at 5.4%, which is lower than the previously reported rate of 8.2%. This figure is still notably higher than the state average of 3.7%, indicating ongoing economic challenges within the county. (Texas Workforce Commission, 2025)

Location	Rate
Cameron County	5.4%
Texas	3.7%

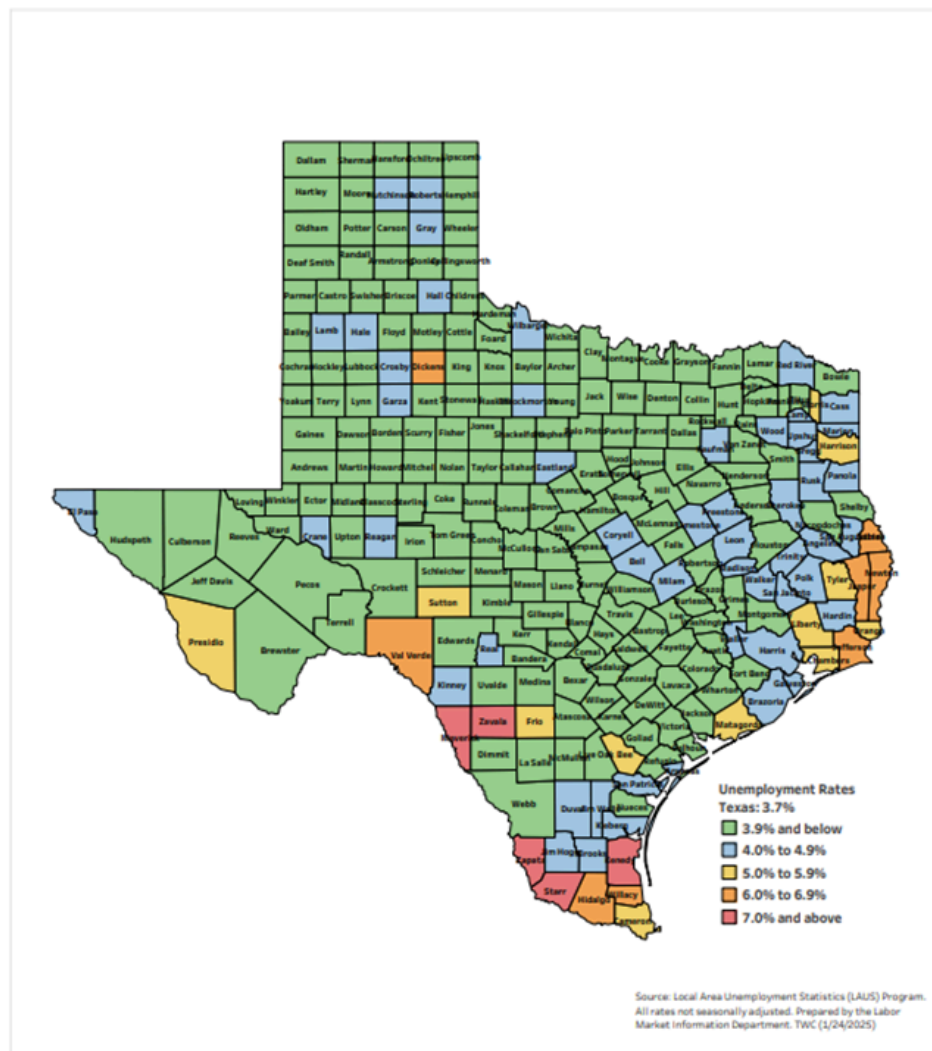
Since 2020, Brownsville and surrounding areas have experienced economic difficulties exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. Communities of color, in particular, have been

disproportionately affected, facing significant reductions in income due to layoffs and furloughs. Many households also struggled with limited access to savings, making it difficult to cover basic needs such as food, rent, and healthcare. The lack of public transportation and the closure of schools disrupted essential services like free school meals, which further strained families. This economic hardship also contributed to heightened levels of anxiety and isolation, exacerbating mental health challenges.

Unemployment Rates

Counties

December 2024



In response to the economic impact of the pandemic, the Brownsville Chamber of Commerce partnered with the Greater Brownsville Incentives Corporation in 2020 to create the COVID-19 Rapid Response Small Business Assistance Program. This initiative supported over 900 local businesses and offered educational webinars that reached more than 24,000 community members. (Brownsville Chamber of Commerce, 2020)

Looking ahead, Cameron County's economy is expected to recover in the coming years, partly due to ongoing industrial developments like SpaceX's operations in the region. However, challenges remain, particularly as the county works to address unemployment and stabilize its workforce.

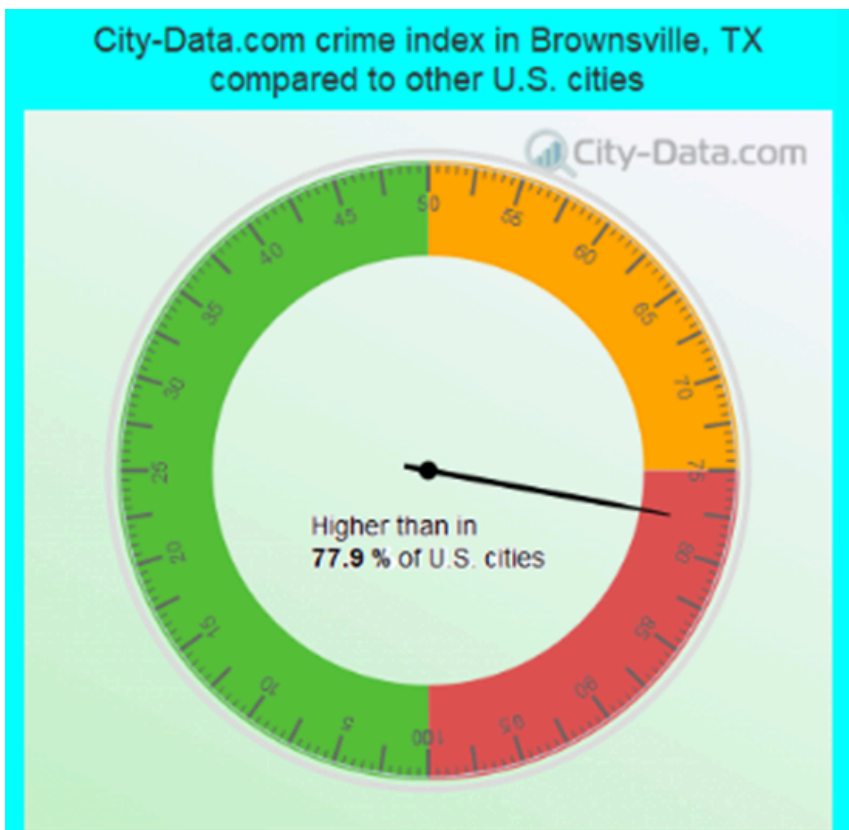
FAMILY COMPOSITION

With a population of 64,949, Brownsville's household composition reflects a significant number of families facing economic challenges. Married-couple family households make up 43.8% of all households, while the second-largest group, accounting for 36.1%, consists of female-led family households with no spouse present.

These demographics are closely tied to financial realities in the area. With a per capita income of \$23,571 compared to Texas' \$39,775, financial hardship is a reality for many families in Brownsville. Even two-person households struggle to stay afloat, and for single mothers, the burden is even heavier due to lower wages and the lack of financial support, making economic stability difficult to achieve.

CRIME

Residents of Brownsville's 78520 zip code continue to face elevated crime rates, with total crime rates significantly higher than national averages. The total crime index for the area is notably high, reflecting concerns across multiple crime categories. In 2023, Brownsville reported 752 violent crimes and 3,939 property crimes, resulting in a crime index of 24.67 per 1,000 residents, which is considerably above the national average (BestPlaces; NeighborhoodScout). Violent crime in 78520 is particularly concerning, standing at 49.4 per 1,000 residents, a figure far exceeding the national average of 22.7 per 1,000 residents (BestPlaces).



	78520 Average	National Average
Violent crime per 1,000 residents	49.4	22.7

The most common violent crime in Brownsville’s 78520 zip code is aggravated assault, which made up 78.08% of all violent crimes in 2023, showing a slight decrease from previous years (Brownsville Police Department, 2023). Although murder rates remain the same as past years, there was a notable decrease in the number of reported rapes in 2023, dropping by 51.35% compared to 2022 (Brownsville Police Department, 2023). Property crimes also remain a significant issue, with burglary rates increasing slightly in 2023 to 449 incidents, up from 402 in 2022 (Brownsville Police Department, 2023). Theft continues to be the most frequent property crime, comprising 79.10% of all property crimes in the area (Brownsville Police Department, 2023).

Juvenile crime remains a pressing concern, both locally and statewide. In 2023, there were 283 cases involving youth services in Brownsville, up from 230 in 2022 (Brownsville Police Department, 2023). The increase in juvenile involvement in property crimes, particularly theft, suggests that efforts to reduce youth crime in the area remain crucial. Additionally, statewide trends show a concerning rise in juvenile offenses involving firearms, which increased by 50% in recent years. The Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD) reported a significant rise in felony drug referrals and offenses involving weapons, with the percentage of youth admitted for violent offenses also on the rise (Texas Juvenile Justice Department). These trends reflect broader issues that likely impact communities like Brownsville, where youth are disproportionately affected by the social and economic challenges the area faces.

Domestic violence continues to be a significant issue in Brownsville. In 2023, the Brownsville Police Department investigated 327 domestic violence cases, a slight decrease from the previous year’s 406 cases (Brownsville Police Department, 2023). Despite the reduction in cases, domestic violence remains an ongoing concern, particularly for women in the region, with the Texas Council on Family Violence reporting intimate partner violence as a leading cause of death for women in Cameron County (Texas Council on Family Violence).

While the crime rates in Brownsville are troubling, efforts are being made to address these issues. The 2022-2023 Brownsville Police Department Annual Report highlights ongoing initiatives to combat juvenile delinquency and domestic violence, alongside strategies to enhance community safety through law enforcement partnerships and public education.

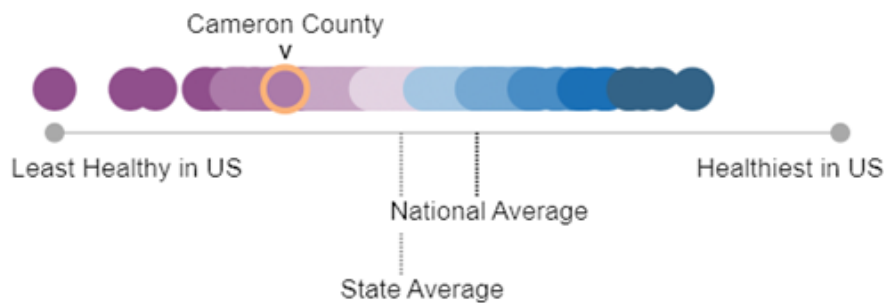
HEALTH

Cameron County faces significant public health challenges, as reported by the U.S. Census. A staggering 23.5% of the population lacks healthcare coverage, well above the Texas average of 16.4%. Obesity affects nearly half of the adult population at 45%, a concerning figure that surpasses both state and national averages. Smoking remains an issue, with 15% of residents engaging in the habit, and the county’s teen birth rate of 37 per 1,000 is alarmingly high nearly twice the national rate.

Cameron County is performing worse than both the average county in Texas and the average county in the nation when it comes to health factors.



Cameron County Health Factors - 2024



TEEN PREGNANCY AND BIRTH RATES

Teen pregnancy rates in Brownsville remain notably high, with the region experiencing a rate of 52.33 per 1,000 females aged 15-19 in the Brownsville-Harlingen Metropolitan Statistical Area, which is above both the regional average and national norms. Specifically, Brownsville's teen birth rate is 12% of all births in the area, a percentage that highlights the area's ongoing challenges with teen motherhood. The Hispanic/Latino population accounts for nearly all of these births, which mirrors the demographics of the region (Community Health Needs Assessment, 2019).

The primary age group for teen mothers in Brownsville is between 18-19 years old, though a significant proportion of births are also from younger teens. In comparison to national rates, Cameron County, which includes Brownsville, has a teen birth rate of 32.1 per 1,000 females aged 15-19, far higher than the Texas average of 20.3 and the national average of 13.9 (Healthy Futures of Texas). This data emphasizes the urgent need for continued community efforts to reduce teen pregnancies through education, access to healthcare, and increased support for at-risk teens.

In Cameron County, the percentage of births to unmarried teens has remained consistently high, with many of these births occurring in families with limited financial resources. The Community Health Needs Assessment also indicates that maternal and child health services are an area of concern, as poverty rates and lack of access to healthcare complicate prenatal and postnatal care for teen mothers (Community Health Needs Assessment, 2020). Notably, Cameron County struggles with a higher percentage of children who are uninsured, which directly impacts prenatal care access (Texas KIDS COUNT).

Efforts to reduce teen pregnancy have focused on increasing access to contraceptive education, family planning services, and healthcare resources. However, despite these efforts, teen pregnancy rates in Brownsville and Cameron County remain higher than the state and national averages, underscoring the need for sustained and targeted interventions.

HEALTH CARE ACCESS

A notable 23.5% of the population in Cameron County lacks healthcare coverage, resulting in a reactive approach to healthcare. This means individuals often seek medical attention only when serious issues arise, rather than preventing them through regular care. This leads to higher medical costs, destabilizing families financially. To address this, the Cameron County Public Health Department has implemented an indigent healthcare program and Operation Border Health Preparedness aimed at assisting with the cost of various healthcare services.

ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH RISKS

Brownsville and Cameron County, Texas, face a variety of environmental health risks that affect the well-being of residents. These risks include air pollution, mosquito-borne diseases, water quality issues, and the increased vulnerability to natural hazards. One of the primary environmental concerns in Brownsville is air pollution, particularly due to elevated levels of particulate matter (PM) and ozone. In 2020, the region experienced 129 days of elevated ozone and particulate matter levels, which can lead to respiratory issues, cardiovascular diseases, and other health complications. These pollutants primarily come from industrial emissions, vehicular traffic, and agricultural activities, exacerbated by cross-border pollution. While air quality improvements have been made, even moderate levels of pollution still pose significant health risks, especially to vulnerable populations such as children and the elderly (myrgv.com; mdpi.com).

In addition to air pollution, Cameron County is at risk of mosquito-borne diseases, including Zika virus and dengue fever. The region's warm and humid climate, coupled with standing water from rainfall, creates ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes. In 2016, Brownsville experienced its first locally acquired cases of Zika virus, leading to public health concerns, especially for pregnant women due to the virus's potential to cause birth defects like microcephaly. Although cases of Zika have decreased in recent years, the risk of other mosquito-borne diseases, such as dengue fever, remains high. In 2024, Texas reported its first locally transmitted case of dengue fever in Cameron County, which highlights the continued threat posed by mosquitoes in the area (nypost.com).

Water quality in the region is another significant concern, with frequent boil water notices issued due to aging infrastructure and potential contamination risks. Cameron County experiences an average of 2.55 boil water notices per year, which is above the national average. The notices are typically issued when there is a risk of contamination in the public water supply, affecting the safety of drinking water for local residents. In addition to concerns over water safety, the frequency of these notices points to the region's aging water infrastructure, which requires significant improvements to prevent further contamination risks (goodsamaritancommunityservices.org; tceq.texas.gov).

The environmental risks in Brownsville and Cameron County are compounded by their vulnerability to natural hazards. The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) assesses communities' risks through the National Risk Index (NRI), which measures the risk of 18 natural hazards, including floods, hurricanes, and wildfires. While specific NRI scores for Cameron County are not available, the region is highly susceptible to hurricanes and flooding, especially along the Rio Grande. This vulnerability increases the risk of property damage, displacement, and loss of life during severe weather events. Cameron County's susceptibility to these hazards highlights the need for better disaster preparedness and more robust mitigation efforts to protect residents from these natural risks (fema.gov).



***(CLIMATECHECK, N.D.)**



***(CLIMATECHECK, N.D.)**

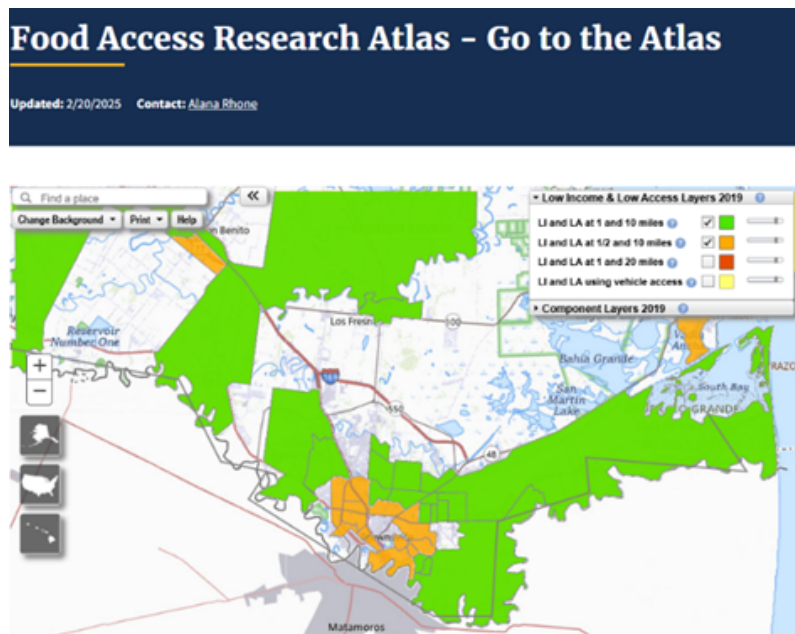
Access to healthcare for residents is crucial in mitigating the health impacts of these environmental risks, but Cameron County struggles with a high uninsured rate. In 2015, 38% of women of childbearing age in Cameron County were uninsured, limiting their access to prenatal care and other health services. This lack of coverage exacerbates the risks associated with poor air quality, mosquito-borne diseases, and water contamination, as uninsured individuals are less likely to seek treatment for conditions exacerbated by environmental factors. Improving access to healthcare is essential to reducing the negative health outcomes caused by environmental risks in the region (everytexan.org).

Addressing these environmental health risks requires coordinated efforts from local, state, and federal agencies to improve air quality, manage mosquito control, ensure safe drinking water, and strengthen disaster preparedness. The ongoing challenges in Brownsville and Cameron County highlight the need for comprehensive public health policies and community-based interventions to protect residents from these environmental threats.

FOOD AND NUTRITION

Food insecurity remains a significant challenge in Cameron County, where approximately 33,780 children 27.2% of the child population struggle with inadequate access to food, according to 2022 data from Feeding America. While 76% of food-insecure individuals qualify for federal nutrition programs like SNAP and WIC, 24% do not meet eligibility requirements, leaving many without assistance.

Increasing this issue, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food Access Research Atlas identifies many rural areas surrounding



Brownsville, as well as parts of the city itself, as low-income with limited access to supermarkets. In these areas, residents often live miles away from the nearest grocery store, making it difficult to obtain fresh, affordable food and further exacerbating food insecurity in the region.

ACCESS TO TECHNOLOGY

Access to technology, particularly high-speed internet, has been a persistent challenge in Brownsville and Cameron County, Texas. Historically, these areas have lagged behind in terms of broadband connectivity, significantly affecting education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. As of 2016, only 69% of rural Texans had access to high-speed internet, and Brownsville ranked among the least connected cities in the country. This digital divide posed a barrier to accessing critical services like telemedicine, online education, and remote work (Texas Comptroller).

However, recent initiatives have made notable progress in addressing these issues. In 2023, the City of Brownsville launched the Lit Fiber - BTX project, a middle-mile fiber optic network designed to connect key public institutions such as schools, hospitals, and government offices. The network will eventually expand to serve tens of thousands of homes and businesses, with initial connections expected to be operational by mid-2023, and full completion slated for 2026 (Brownsville City Government).

Cameron County has also prioritized improving broadband infrastructure. In early 2024, the county partnered with VTX-1 to expand fiber optic services to rural areas, starting with Bluetown. Other areas, including San Pedro, Lozano, and Isla Blanca, are scheduled for upgrades by 2025, while wireless service expansion is underway in locations such as Santa Maria and La Feria (Texas Border Business). Despite these advances, a 2023 study estimated that achieving countywide broadband coverage could cost as much as \$100 million, reflecting the financial challenges of completing such a comprehensive infrastructure project (myRGV).

Beyond broadband access, telehealth has also faced barriers in Cameron County. Many healthcare providers in the area lack the technology, financial resources, or staffing necessary to implement robust telemedicine systems. Additionally, language and literacy barriers hinder many patients from utilizing web-based healthcare platforms effectively, limiting the benefits of telehealth for the local population (PubMed Central).

While significant strides are being made to bridge the digital divide, continued investment and partnerships are crucial to ensuring that all residents in Brownsville and Cameron County can fully participate in the digital age, with access to the same opportunities as other communities.

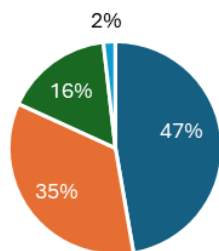
COMMUNITY FEEDBACK

Youth Surveys

Below are some facts regarding the youth survey responses

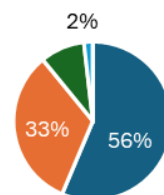
- 55 responses were collected from youth
- 100% live or go to school in 78520
- 60% were female, 33% were male, 7% prefer not to answer

1. I have friends who set good examples



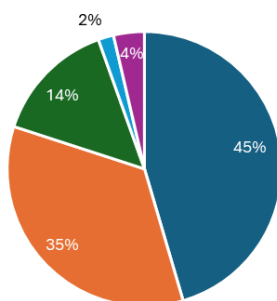
■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree
■ Neither Agree or Disagree ■ Disagree
■ Strongly Disagree

2. I have adults who are good role models for me



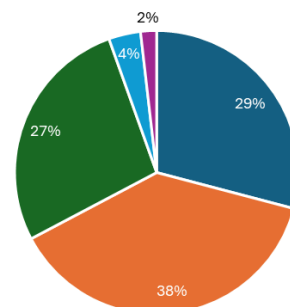
■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree
■ Neither Agree or Disagree ■ Disagree
■ Strongly Disagree

3. I have a safe neighborhood



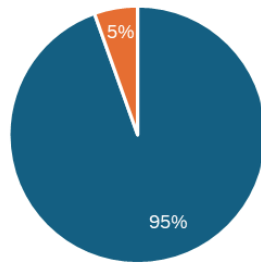
■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neither Agree or Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

4. I have good neighbors who care about me



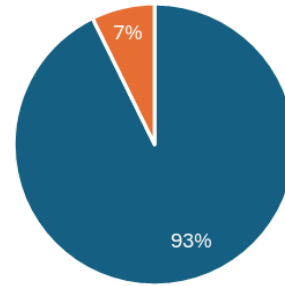
■ Strongly Agree ■ Agree ■ Neither Agree or Disagree ■ Disagree ■ Strongly Disagree

5. Does your school care about you and help you learn?



■ Yes ■ No

6. Does your family set clear rules for you?



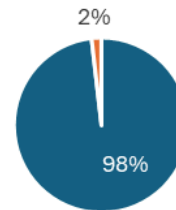
■ Yes ■ No

7. Do your parents talk to you about doing well in school?



■ Yes ■ No

8. Do you feel your family gives you love and support?



■ Yes ■ No

PARENT SURVEYS

Below are some facts regarding the parent survey responses

- 15 responses were collected from parents between the ages of 18-55 years old
- 100% live or their child goes to school in 78520
- 87% were female, 13% were male

1. What do you appreciate most about your community?



- 24% Friendly Neighbors
- 19% Safe Environments
- 18% Good Schools
- 19% Community Events
- 19% Parks and Recreation

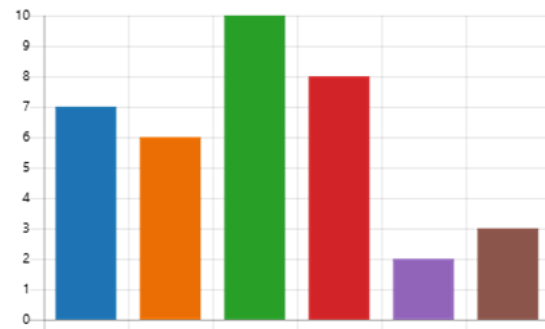
2. Which of the following community resources do you find most useful?



- 45% Schools and Educational Programs
- 12% Housing and Food Assistance
- 21% Healthcare Services
- 15% Public Transportation
- 6% Immigration Assistance

3. Which of the following challenges do you believe our community faces the most?

- Schools and Educational Programs
- Housing and Food Assistance
- Safety and Crime Prevention
- Healthcare Services
- Public Transportation
- Immigration Assistance



4. What services do you feel are missing or need improvement in our community?

Parents in Brownsville's 78520 zip code expressed a strong desire for improvements in parks and recreational spaces, with many highlighting the need for better maintenance, increased lighting, and more family-friendly areas, including community pools for the summer. Safety was another common concern, with requests for better neighborhood security and improved lighting in public spaces. Several parents emphasized the importance of stronger community leadership and outreach efforts to ensure families are aware of available resources and services. Education and youth development were also key themes, with some advocating for more investment in public schools, enhanced after-school programs, and additional educational support, particularly for migrant families. While a few parents expressed satisfaction with current services, others recalled past parent workshops and emphasized the need for more resources to support their children's success. Overall, there is a collective call for a more engaged and supportive community that prioritizes family well-being, youth development, and public safety.

5. Do you feel safe in your community? If not, how can that be addressed?

Many parents expressed feeling safe in their community. However, some parents raised concerns about safety issues, particularly regarding immigration-related risks and the potential for individuals to be vulnerable in certain situations. Others mentioned that stray dogs roaming the streets make it difficult to go on walks, suggesting better control of this issue. A few parents noted that while Brownsville is generally safe, there has been an increase in car thefts, and they believe more police patrols could help deter crime. Additionally, some respondents emphasized the need for increased neighborhood surveillance to enhance overall safety. While the majority of parents feel secure, there is a clear desire for more proactive community measures to maintain and improve safety in their neighborhoods.

6. In what ways do you think Good Sam could improve its services for the community?

Many parents expressed high satisfaction with Good Sam's services, with some stating that they believe the organization is doing a great job and that everything is great as it is. However, others provided suggestions for further improvement. Some parents emphasized the need for more outreach services and community events to increase engagement and awareness of available resources. Others suggested utilizing public parks and nonprofit partnerships to create more family-oriented activities. Several parents highlighted the importance of healthier lunch options and transportation services for children who do not have access to a family vehicle. There was also a request for expanding availability to other zip codes, as well as offering more camps, since children enjoy the experience and the opportunity to make friends. Additionally, parents recommended continuing to innovate with children's programming, holding conferences on relevant community topics, and ensuring a safer process for child pick-up at the end of the day. While overall feedback was positive, these suggestions reflect a desire for expanded accessibility, enhanced programming, and stronger community outreach to further support families.

YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE (YAC) FOCUS GROUP

Date Conducted: 03/26/2025

of Youth Present: 8

Facilitator: Abril Huerta

Question	Answer
What is the best thing about our community?	The greatest strength of our community lies in its people. In a small town like ours, the sense of connection is strong, and distance is rarely a concern, although it's worth noting that traffic is beginning to increase. One of the standouts features of our town is the welcoming atmosphere, especially at Good Sam, where both the activities and the staff create a warm and inclusive environment for everyone. We also appreciate the overall positivity that flows through our community, which encourages a spirit of kindness and support. It's a place where we can come together to help others, and that sense of giving back makes it a truly special place to live.

YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOCUS GROUP CONT.

Question	Answer
<p>What can the community do to proactively set youth up for success?</p>	<p>There are several ways the community can proactively set youth up for success. One important step is to spread awareness about key topics that impact young people, ensuring they are well-informed and equipped to make thoughtful decisions. Additionally, the community can foster a positive atmosphere by actively looking out for youth, guiding them to understand right from wrong, and offering mentorship. Giving youth a voice is also crucial, not only allowing them to express their ideas but ensuring those ideas are truly heard and valued. Furthermore, providing guidance on college preparation, application processes, and offering practical life skills training can help youth navigate both their academic and personal futures with confidence.</p>
<p>Who do you think plays an important role in the community? (people/places/organizations)</p>	<p>Youth Advisory Committee recognizes the significant influence that family members and teachers have within the community. These individuals serve as foundational pillars, offering guidance, support, and fostering a sense of belonging. In addition to these personal connections, organizations such as Good Samaritan play a crucial role in strengthening the community. They not only provide valuable opportunities for youth to engage in volunteer work but also create safe spaces where young people can grow, connect, and make meaningful contributions. These organizations are instrumental in promoting social responsibility, personal development, and community cohesion, allowing youth to positively impact their surroundings while gaining valuable experiences.</p> <p>Furthermore, places like Friendship of Women provide essential guidance on important life issues. Through mentorship, resources, and counseling, they help youth navigate challenges, make informed decisions, and develop key life skills. Organizations like these empower young people by fostering resilience and offering the support needed to successfully face life's complexities. Together, these families, educational, and community organizations create a strong foundation for youth, encouraging personal growth and promoting a healthier, more connected community.</p>

YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOCUS GROUP CONT.

Question	Answer
<p>What are the biggest threats in the community, and why?</p>	<p>The biggest threats to our community stem from several factors, including individuals who make dangerous decisions that put others at risk, whether through violence, reckless behavior, or other harmful actions. These bad decisions can have a ripple effect, negatively impacting not only the individuals involved but also their families and the larger community. Insecurity, addiction, and a lack of adequate support programs for immigrants further contribute to the challenges we face. Without proper resources, immigrants often struggle to adjust and find stability, which can lead to feelings of isolation, frustration, and even criminal behavior in some cases.</p> <p>Gun violence and gang-related activities also pose significant dangers, creating an environment of fear and instability. These issues often arise from a lack of positive role models, opportunity, and access to education, leaving some youth vulnerable to the lure of gangs and violence. Additionally, unsafe drug abuse remains a major concern, as substance misuse can destroy lives and contribute to a rise in criminal behavior. The easy accessibility of smoking products, particularly among younger individuals, increases health risks and sets a harmful precedent for the future.</p> <p>Another serious issue is the lack of comprehensive sex education, which leaves many young people uninformed about safe practices, consent, and the emotional aspects of relationships. This lack of education can lead to unintended pregnancies, sexually transmitted infections, and emotional distress. Moreover, the absence of safe spaces and after-school opportunities limits the ability of youth to find positive outlets for their energy and creativity. When youth have nowhere productive to go, they are more likely to engage in risky behaviors, which can ultimately harm their well-being and futures.</p> <p>Addressing these threats requires a collective effort to provide education, resources, and support for individuals, especially youth. By focusing on prevention, offering guidance, and creating opportunities for growth and positive engagement, we can help reduce these threats and create a safer, more supportive community for everyone.</p>

YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOCUS GROUP CONT.

Question	Answer
What improvements would you like to see at Good Sam?	<p>Some improvements we'd love to see at Good Sam to make it even better for the community. First, we would like to see more support on college applications and FAFSA, ACT/SAT guidance.</p> <p>Personalized projects that allow us as individuals to explore our unique interests and talents would also be a great addition, as we can make other members feel more involved and invested. Additionally, there should be more effort put into promoting Good Sam, finding new and creative ways to spread the word and encourage more people to get involved. We believe more community service projects, such as beach cleanups, volunteering at nursing homes, and helping out at animal shelters, would not only benefit the community but also provide meaningful experiences for those involved. These changes could help strengthen the sense of connection and purpose within Good Sam, making it an even more impactful and vibrant part of our community.</p>
What is your opinion of the educational system?	<p>Youth Advisory Committee believes that the education system requires significant improvement, particularly in terms of equitable funding and the expansion of programs that cater to diverse learning needs. Members feel strongly that schools should offer more resources to support students across all grade levels, ensuring that different learning styles and abilities are adequately addressed. Additionally, there is a call for a more inclusive approach to education, specifically with better support and specialized programs for children with special needs, so they can thrive alongside their peers.</p> <p>Another area of concern highlighted by the committee is the need for improved health education. Including comprehensive health classes in the curriculum could benefit students greatly by fostering better awareness and understanding of physical and mental well-being. By prioritizing these changes, the education system would not only be more inclusive but also better equipped to nurture the diverse needs of all students.</p>

YOUTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE FOCUS GROUP CONT.

Question	Answer
Do you feel your school meets your needs?	Our schools generally meet our needs, offering solid educational support. However, one area for improvement is the size of some cafeterias, which can feel too small to accommodate the growing number of students. On the positive side, in terms of academics, our schools provide excellent options for dual enrollment classes and Advanced Placement (AP) courses, allowing students to pursue more challenging and college-level work. Overall, while there are some challenges, the education system does a good job of supporting our academic growth and providing opportunities for advancement.
How should we address crime and juvenile delinquency among youth?	Crime and juvenile delinquency among youth should be addressed through education and by providing positive outlets, such as sports, where they can channel their energy and develop discipline. It's also important to be honest with us as young people by telling the hard truth, so youth understand that there are real consequences to their actions. Equally important is explaining why certain behaviors are unacceptable, helping youth see the impact of their choices, and outlining the potential negative outcomes of their actions. By combining education, honesty, and opportunities for personal growth, we can guide youth toward better decisions and prevent involvement in criminal behavior.

COMMUNITY SWOT ANALYSIS

This SWOT analysis was conducted to gather valuable insights into the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats within the community of Brownsville. We collected responses from 10 community members across various sectors, including Brownsville Independent School District (BISD) and several organizations affiliated with United Way of Cameron County. The feedback provides a comprehensive understanding of community dynamics and highlights key areas for growth and development.

Survey Questions

To gather insights from the community, we asked a series of targeted questions designed to assess both the current state of the community and opportunities for future growth. The questions were structured into four key areas: Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (SWOT). The questions asked were as follows:

COMMUNITY SWOT ANALYSIS CONT.

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1. Strengths:

- What do you believe are the greatest strengths of our community?
- What resources or programs in the community do you feel are most effective in supporting residents?

2. Weaknesses:

- What challenges or gaps do you see within our community that need to be addressed?
- Are there services or resources that you feel are lacking in the community?

3. Opportunities:

- What opportunities do you see that could help improve the quality of life for people in our community?
- What new programs or services would you like to see offered in the community?

4. Threats:

- What do you see as the biggest obstacles our community could face in the coming years?
- What concerns do you have about the future of our community and its ability

Feedback from Community

Community Strengths

The community is proud of its unity, cultural pride, and shared values. Many highlighted the strong sense of connection and support, with notable resources and programs like Good Samaritan being valued for their impact. Residents appreciate the collaborative efforts in providing consistent support and services that help improve the community.

Community Weaknesses

Despite the strengths, several challenges persist. A recurring theme is the impact of family dysfunction and financial instability, which affects residents' well-being. There is a sense of a need for more programs aimed at parental education, especially on how to foster better involvement in children's lives. Additionally, there is a shortage of personnel to meet the growing needs of local organizations, which limits the community's capacity to address these issues effectively.

COMMUNITY SWOT ANALYSIS CONT.

Opportunities for Growth

There are numerous opportunities for growth, including increasing parental involvement in youth programs and expanding services aimed at reducing crime and improving public safety. Many participants expressed enthusiasm for new initiatives, such as incorporating drones and sports activities into local youth programs. Others highlighted the importance of expanding family awareness programs, which can help strengthen the foundation of the community.

Community Threats

The community faces threats from ongoing challenges, including drug abuse, violence, and political barriers. There is also concern about the limited access to educational resources, particularly in regard to social media's impact on youth. Many expressed concern about the future, particularly around rising poverty levels and the barriers to securing resources or programs that can address these persistent issues.

COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

Service Agencies

Within the physical boundaries of the zip code, there are 21 community resource centers, 18 city parks, 42 churches, 31 schools, and 4 higher education institutes.

Community Resources

Name	Address
Cameron County District Attorney's Office	964 E Harrison St
Cameron County Victims Unit	964 E Harrison St
Cameron-Willacy Counties Community Projects, Inc.	864 Central Blvd., Ste. 2500
CASA of Cameron & Willacy Counties	1740 Boca Chica Blvd.
Catholic Social Services	955 W Price Rd
Come Dream. Come Build	901 E Levee St
Community Action Corporation of South Texas	519 E. Madison St.
Garden Plaza WIC Clinic	1225 Frontage Rd.
Good Neighbor Settlement House - Food Pantry	1254 E. Tyler St
Homeless Youth Connection Project	708 Palm Blvd, Rm 214
MHM Wesley Nurse	1225 Boca Chica Blvd
Our Lady of Good Counsel - Food Pantry	1055 Military Rd
Region One Education Services Center	405 E. Levee St
Serving children and Adolescents in Need (S.C.A.N.)	705 W. Jefferson St.
South Texas Immigration Council	4 E. Levee St
Texas Rio Grande Legal Aid	1206 E. Van Buren St.
Tips of Texas Family Outreach	455 E. Levee St
Tropical Texas Behavioral Health	861 Old Alice Rd
University of Texas Rio Grande Valley Counseling and Training Clinics	2168 E. Jackson
Valley Baptist Medical Center	1040 W. Jefferson St.
Workforce Solutions Cameron	700 Ruben M. Torres Blvd, 3rd Floor

GAPS IN SERVICES

Despite the availability of educational institutions, nonprofit organizations, and other community-based supports, families in Brownsville's 78520 zip code continue to face critical service gaps. Survey feedback and local data highlight several unmet needs. Many parents report a lack of awareness about available services and resources, pointing to the need for increased outreach and communication. Access to mental health services remains limited, especially for youth experiencing anxiety, stress, or trauma.

Transportation is another notable barrier, with some families unable to access youth programs due to the lack of a family vehicle. While some youth programming exists, families expressed a desire for more camps, afterschool activities, and community events that are culturally relevant and accessible. Infrastructure issues—such as under-maintained parks, inadequate lighting, and concerns about neighborhood safety—also limit the usability of public spaces. Furthermore, technology gaps continue to affect access to educational and workforce resources for many families, particularly those without reliable broadband or digital literacy skills.

IMPLICATIONS OF FINDINGS

The findings from this assessment reveal several critical implications for program design and service delivery in the 78520 community. Educational data reflecting low proficiency in reading and math, along with a high percentage of at-risk students, suggest that many youth require targeted intervention and academic support. Without additional services to bridge these learning gaps, youth may fall further behind, impacting their long-term educational attainment and career readiness.

Limited access to mental health support and high uninsured rates may contribute to ongoing cycles of stress and instability for families. Without intervention, youth may experience unaddressed trauma that affects school engagement, behavior, and social-emotional development. Safety concerns, including community violence, juvenile crime, and stray animals, can further isolate families from public spaces that would otherwise offer safe, supportive environments for recreation and connection.

Parents' calls for greater outreach and service awareness point to a need for more inclusive communication strategies to ensure that families, especially Spanish-speaking and immigrant communities, are informed and empowered to seek support. These gaps, if not addressed, may widen disparities in health, education, and economic mobility for vulnerable youth and families in Brownsville.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2023–2024 Community Strengths and Needs Assessment provides a detailed snapshot of the current conditions, challenges, and assets within Brownsville's 78520 zip code. The data reveal deep-rooted needs in areas such as education, health, safety, and youth development, while also highlighting the strength of the community's cultural identity, institutions, and potential for growth.

Through parent surveys, public data, and internal program analysis, this assessment confirms that while some services are meeting community needs, others are falling short—particularly for families facing poverty, transportation barriers, or limited awareness of available support. Brownsville’s families are resilient and invested in their children’s success, and the findings from this report will guide Good Samaritan Community Services in developing more accessible, inclusive, and impactful programming.

This CSNA will be used to inform planning, support strategic partnerships, and advocate for additional resources to address identified gaps. It also serves as a foundation for engaging the community in collaborative solutions that uplift youth and strengthen families.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research, community input, and trends identified in this assessment, the prioritized list of service needs for the 78520 area includes:

- Academic intervention to improve youth reading and math proficiency, particularly through consistent summer support
- Expanded access to youth mental health services, including early intervention and trauma-informed care
- Culturally and linguistically inclusive outreach to ensure families are aware of available programs and resources
- Enrichment opportunities for youth, especially during out-of-school time and summer months
- Transportation support for families with limited access to reliable vehicles
- Greater safety and accessibility in parks and community spaces
- Continued investment in digital access and literacy to bridge the technology divide

To apply these findings, Good Samaritan Community Services will:

- Explore options to reintegrate the summer reading tutor position to provide consistent academic support during out-of-school months
- Explore partnerships with local mental health providers to increase access to youth-focused counseling and wellness programs
- Enhance outreach efforts through bilingual materials and engagement strategies to reach under-informed families
- Expand enrichment and leadership programming for youth, including more options for summer camp and afterschool programming

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DISSEMINATION PLAN

The 2023–2024 Community Strengths and Needs Assessment for Brownsville will be finalized on April 15, 2025, and shared with key stakeholders through multiple avenues to support transparency, strategic alignment, and community engagement. This CSNA will be released to the public on or after May 1, 2025, and will be available for digital download at goodsamtx.org. Printed copies will be available upon request. A summary version will be presented to the Good Samaritan Board of Directors, shared with Youth Advisory Council (YAC) members, and used to guide staff planning and outreach. Findings will also be shared with school and nonprofit partners to promote collaboration and support data-informed decision-making. A bilingual summary will be developed for families and community members, and key insights will be integrated into presentations, funding proposals, and community meetings to ensure the voices of youth and families continue to shape future programming.



Dissemination Plan This CSNA will be released to the public on or after April 15, 2025. It will be available for digital download via goodsamtx.org, printed copies will be available upon request, a summary of the CSNA will be provided to Good Sam Board, YAC youth and CCC on April 2025.