

Who did we hear from?

Feedback was solicited by a third-party consultant (Strategic Consulting & Coaching) via surveys, one-on-one interviews, and focus groups

45 Youth Service Nonprofits
Established and smaller community-based organizations

60 Youth and Young Adults
Ages 12-24

15 FCPS Representatives
Community Liaisons, Principals, Directors, & Interpreters

8 Policymakers
County/City Government Officials & Division Directors

12 Philanthropic Leaders



What did we learn?

- **A Youth Center is a means to an end**, not an end in itself
- A youth center could be the **catalyst for the Frederick wcommunity** to rally around our youth and work together toward a dynamic and responsive collaboration
- **Two paths forward emerged from our findings:**



Community Youth Center with creative co-locations



Formation of a **support network** with youth leadership and providers

- **The success of both will require youth leadership**



Coming Together for Frederick Youth

As part of the Downtown Safety and Services Initiative, the Frederick County Services and Coordination Committee was charged with examining the landscape of human services in the Frederick community, identifying the current needs and gaps, and investigating options for services in response to those needs. **One of the final recommendations of the committee was to establish a youth center** in Frederick where young people feel safe dropping in anytime – a place designed to be culturally responsive, one that fosters love and belonging, and ensures participants have what they need to thrive.

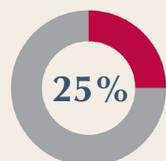
In response, Ausherman Family Foundation, Frederick County Government, and The Community Foundation of Frederick County collaborated to conduct **a comprehensive community assessment to inform a preliminary vision for a collaboration to benefit vulnerable youth**, which includes the development of a youth center in downtown Frederick.

Our goal in this study was to understand **how we could come together as a community to further improve outcomes for youth and young adults ages 12-24**. A particular focus was placed on those who are most vulnerable to becoming disconnected, not graduating from high school, and/or lacking connections post-high school graduation to propel them to careers or college.

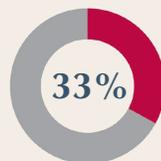
KEY FINDINGS

What are the Needs?

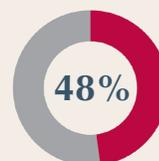
Multiple data sources show **significant groups of Frederick youth who are at high risk of poor educational and employment outcomes**. A recent survey of Frederick County High School Students found that:



don't have a trusted adult in their lives



currently use marijuana



felt sad or hopeless

About half of youth in Frederick **have experienced or are currently experiencing trauma**, also known as Adverse Childhood Experiences, or ACEs.



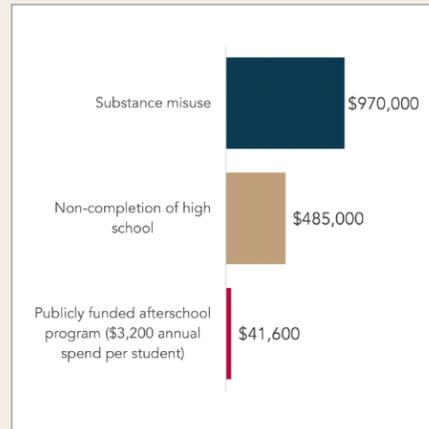
KEY FINDINGS

What are the Opportunities?

- Youth who have experienced multiple adverse childhood experiences, and those without caring adult connections are at the highest risk for not graduating from high school and for developing substance use disorders. **They stand to benefit the most from the more coordinated and accessible programming and services that a youth center and collaborative activities will offer.** Our youth are the future of our community.

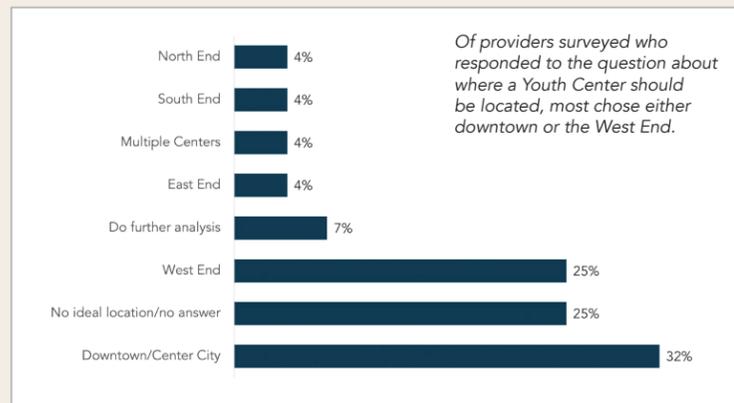
Supporting our youth will generate social return on investment and net gains in community health and prosperity, sustaining the community into the future.

Cost of afterschool programming vs. cost of non-completion of high school vs. substance misuse cost



Source: <https://networkforyouthsuccess.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/Return-on-Investment.pdf>

- There is broad support for creating a **holistic or comprehensive model and programming with opportunities for social, emotional, and physical activities** for youth of different ages at different times
- Most providers are excited about the prospect of a youth center,** especially one that provides support for their operations



Of providers surveyed who responded to the question about where a Youth Center should be located, most chose either downtown or the West End.

Who should provide input along the way?

For transparency, engagement, clear decision-making roles and effective flow of information, there must be broad involvement from community organizations and youth, along with site-based leadership. Recommended leadership structure includes:

LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Develops and approves strategic plan and budget, oversees strategic plan implementation

COMMUNITY ADVISORY COUNCIL

Puts forward recommendations and formal input to leadership council

YOUTH COUNCIL

Puts forward recommendations and formal input to leadership council; creates youth-led initiatives and events



“There are pockets of great services to some youth, but no overarching community plan for how to provide access to opportunities to those most likely to be on the margins; the hardest to engage and serve.”

-Frederick Youth Service Provider



What should a Youth Center look like?

There was universal alignment between the providers and youth about the importance of an **attractive, light-filled, clean, and respectful space.** Based on this feedback, to meet the identified needs articulated by youth and program providers, the building at a minimum should include the following:

- Welcoming and safe entry area with front desk
- Program spaces that can accommodate one-to-one services and meetings, such as mentoring, and peer support
- Art Room/Music Studio
- Gym for basketball/other indoor sports
- Lounge areas, separate for different age groups
- Multi-purpose office/co-working space for smaller nonprofit use
- Offices for youth center staff
- Kitchen (for cooking instruction)
- Conference/meeting room
- Outdoor space appropriate for recreation and relaxation
- Multi-purpose Classrooms

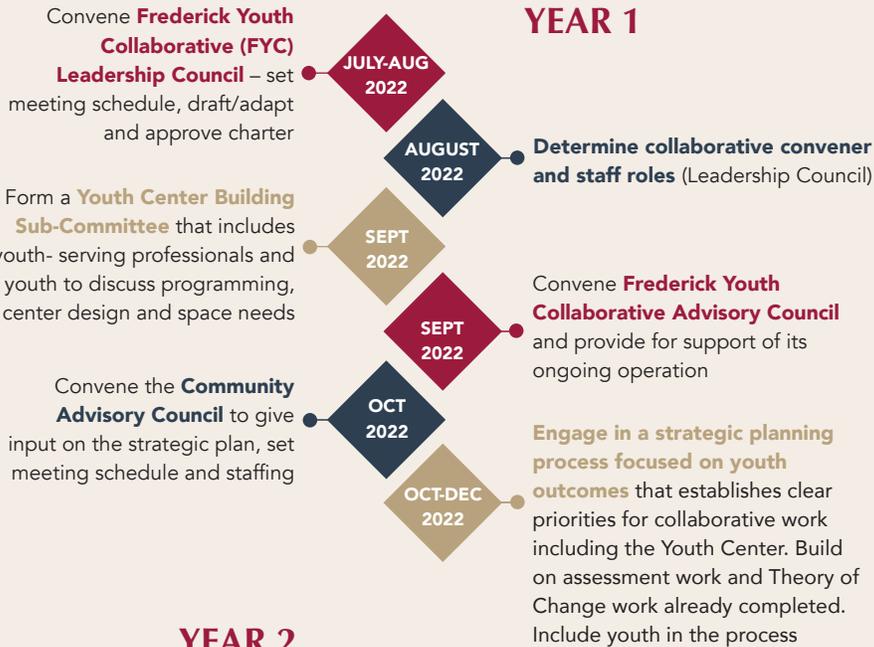
RECOMMENDATIONS

- Expand Collaboration** → Establish **formal collaborative structures that build trust** – ensure all decision-making is fully transparent, through a joint charter that ensures representation and has a clear decision-making process.
- Cultivate Transparency** → Make all meetings public and **allow for public input on agenda items** within a specified time limit. Keep explicit focus on youth outcomes, metrics of success, consider alignment with the established priorities of local government and schools
- Create Structure** → Devise a **clear governance and administrative structure that includes a fiscal host** and an administrative backbone independent organization with paid leadership providing supervision of building staff and management of evaluation and data systems.
- Build Trust** → Keep racial equity at the forefront of this work. Build trust through **an intentional effort to include and honor voices and work from BIPOC communities**, especially those that have not previously been included. Gather disaggregated data to drive efforts to reduce disparities caused by systemic racism.
- Invest in the Future** → Invest in tools and processes for continuous improvement. Foster a culture of ongoing growth and development among providers through adoption of a **culture that provides tools to support continuous improvement, evaluation, and program innovation.** Strategic investment can result in enhancements to program evaluation, coordination, information sharing, and program accessibility throughout the county.
- Share Data** → Work towards **data sharing agreements and data integration.** Looking at community, system, program, and individual level data in relation to collective goals is imperative to being able to meaningfully measure progress.
- Prioritize Relationships** → An emphasis on **developmental relationships between youth and caring adults is critical** to achieving outcomes. Recruiting and retaining quality staff who can provide these relationships will depend on being able to pay them competitive wages with benefits.
- Sustain Youth Leadership** → Create and support a Youth Council that can provide **formal and informal input and leadership to strategy, programs, and initiatives.** Incorporate youth and young adult representation on Advisory and Leadership Council.

PROPOSED IMPLEMENTATION STEPS & TIMELINE



YEAR 1



YEAR 2



YEAR 3



TOGETHER, WE CAN BUILD A BETTER FUTURE FOR FREDERICK YOUTH.

Creating a dynamic and responsive network for the youth of Frederick will require commitment, contributions and collaboration from multiple stakeholders.

How you can get involved:

- **Youth and Young Adults:** Help determine what the Youth Center will look like and what programs and services will be offered by serving on the Frederick Youth Collaborative Advisory Council
- **Youth Service Providers:** Be open to collaboration with other providers. Serve on the Leadership Council or Youth Center Building Subcommittee
- **Friends and Neighbors:** Spread the word. Donate. Provide feedback on the strategic plan. Volunteer to serve on committees
- **Community Leaders:** Advocate for policies and funding that support the vision of a collaboration to benefit Frederick youth
- **Public Officials:** Help remove barriers that may impede progress on the project
- **Business Leaders:** Encourage employee volunteerism. Share your knowledge and experience. Offer mentorships, exposure to workforce opportunities, internships, etc.

Want to learn more?

View the full assessment report at:
AushermanFamilyFoundation.org/frederick-youth-center-report



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