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Inclusive Place-Making in Spartanburg, SC: Amplifying Latinx Voices through Community- Based Research

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INTRODUCTION TO PROJECT

In response to a growing local interest in “place-making” work, our team developed and carried out a research project centered on the ideas of inclusive place, community, and health, with a focus on the inclusion of the growing Latinx community in the Spartanburg area. The project is a first step in what we imagine to be a long arc of community-based research and is in response to the desire of community collaborators for better information to inform their decision-making, particularly with regard to inclusion of Latinx residents. The long-term arc of the research will be shaped by ideas from community partners related to inclusivity; thriving and welcoming community spaces; health equity; and food access and is adaptable to a focus on particular areas or demographics within Spartanburg County.

The goal of the present phase of research was to generate qualitative data (1) to inform the implementation of upcoming community projects; (2) to be available to community leaders as a complement to existing quantitative data about areas related to the research focus; (3) to inform the scope, design, and methods of other groups interested in doing related research work, including program evaluation or assessment. Our qualitative approach has sought to respect the “Don’t do anything for us without us” imperative for inclusive community work and aims to create a way to include and amplify the voices of those who will be affected by coming community projects, in informing the implementation of those projects.

Overview of Methods

There were two primary methods for gathering data:

1. phenomenological observations by researchers as participant-observers or bystander-observers in community spaces.
2. semi-structured interviews by researchers with community members (ages 18 and older) to elicit narratives around questions such as:
 - What makes a community space *sana* (Spanish for safe, healthy, wholesome; a place where families and children are out-and-about) for you and your family? (For English-speaking respondents, the question was phrased as “What makes a community space welcoming and thriving for you and/or your family?”)
 - Tell me about a time you and/or your family felt that a community space was *sana*.
 - Tell me about a time you and your family did not feel that a community space was *sana*.

- What aspects of a community space or building send the message to you that you and your family are welcome?

Data was analyzed using established qualitative methods, and from that data and analysis this written report was prepared. All names of individuals have been changed to preserve anonymity. The report and findings are being shared with community collaborators whose interest sparked the project and will shape further research.

Major themes identified in the data

The following themes consistently emerged from the observation and interview data, and these themes serve as the organizing structure of this report.

Spaces and relationships

- Families, Children, Youth, and Relationships (as Priority)
- Multi-use spaces
- Sensory appeal of a place

Communication

- Non-Verbal Communication and Pleasantries
- Informational & Promotional Materials

Practical concerns

- Security and safety
- Distance, Location, and Accessibility
- Balancing Price and Quality

Appendix: Existing Bright Spots in Our Community

SPACES AND RELATIONSHIPS

Families, Children, Youth, and Relationships (as Priority)

In our observations and interviews, one of the most important themes noted was the association of *a comunidad sana* with places and events that allowed community members to enjoy time with loved ones and to deepen relationships, primarily family relationships. Even for those individuals who were living apart from other family members, this theme was present in an aspirational way. Family, children, youth, and relationships—in particular, the affirming of values shared in those relationships, in spaces that permitted or fostered relationship-building— was a recurrent theme.

Regina, a member of the community who works in the service and retail private sector, noted that what makes a community space healthy for her are “places to do recreational activities. Like parks, theaters, or museums, things like that. Because you can involve your children with those fun things, and distract them, and you can take them ... so that they can explore.” Comments like that of Regina were consistent for all those who identified as having children. For example, in response to the question “What aspects [of a place] are important to you when you spend time with your family?” Juliana, who also is employed

in the service and retail private sector, responded, “To have my kids feel like we are a happy and whole family, so that when they grow up they continue feeling like they are a part of a family.”

Nicole, who is a professional in the non-profit and education sector, gave a similar answer: “I always, always, instill in [my children] family values. At the end of the day, the only thing you have and the only people you can trust is your family. Of course, every family is different, but I try to tell them that we are like a closed fist. Because the day that I am no longer here, the one who has most can help the one who has the least. That is the way I raise my children, especially being a single mother. They know they do not have everything they want, but they have everything they need.”

Men, too, gave similar answers. In a conversation with Alan and Luis, fellow diners at a restaurant, a researcher asked: “What in a community helps families thrive?” Alan believed a good school and families that encourage each other to be the best. Luis said that having a good, stable job to put food on the table is what his kids need most to thrive. Luis shared that his parents struggled to put food on the table so he makes sure that it is the number one thing his children have each day. In a similar conversation, Javier, who works in the service and retail private sector and reported that his family still lives in his country of origin, expressed his desire to share the *comunidad sana* he had found in Spartanburg with them: “I would take them out to the mall, go out to eat in a restaurant, buy a car so that I can take them out. Enjoy time with them as a family.”

For those interviewed who did not have children as part of the household, there was an appreciation of spaces that they could enjoy as couples. For example, Paula, a professional in the non-profit and education sector, noted that “I love to spend time with my husband since most of the time it’s just the two of us now, and we always spend time together. On the weekends we go out and walk and do a little bit of exercise. In the summer we like to go hiking. We like to go walk at McMillan Park and go on mountain trails and ride motorcycles. We love to go out and eat. Go to the supermarket, everywhere that a family would go to.” Ariana, another professional in the non-profit sector, noted that “On the weekends . . . we’ll usually go on longer walks on trails within nature where we have more personal time to spend together where we actually talk. Uninterrupted conversation is what matters to me and for both us where we can’t get on our phones like at home, and when we are walking, we’re not on our phones. In nature, hearing the birds ... the green space, the trees, and running into people.” Similarly, Emilia, also a non-profit sector professional, noted, “We ... go on a daily walk, maybe like two or three miles on the Rail Trail and that is a time to unwind after dinner, especially when it gets darker out ... For us, that is very important, that time spent walking.”

Multi-use spaces

Our interviews and observations revealed that the importance of time spent in relationships and the preference for multi-use spaces were often intertwined. By multi-use spaces, we mean spaces that both (1) accommodate a variety of activities and (2) invite people of different generations to be together, even if they are doing different activities. Many interviewees mentioned specifically places they enjoyed spending time in the Spartanburg area, and we have noted these comments in the Appendix, “Existing Bright Spots in Our Community.” In the section that follows here, we have noted more general comments about multi-use spaces, both outdoor and indoor.

When asked, “What is important to you during family time?” Regina replied that her family had recently gone “to a lake, and we spent all day there. There were places to make barbeque and to have a good time.” Juliana noted that she wished there were more spaces for different activities, like hiking, bike riding, water activities, and play, all in the same location, commenting that “when we do go to places like that we have to travel all the way to North Carolina and go further away from Spartanburg.” In the conversation with Alan and Luis, the researcher asked about their favorite place to take their children, and they said it was the park because there the children can enjoy the sprinklers and the playground at the same time.

Multiple interviewees also mentioned the importance of indoor spaces conducive to visits or use by more than one generation in a family; these places included malls, theaters, restaurants with play areas, and bowling alleys. It is important to note that indoor spaces are valued and used if they are open to being shared by people of different ages, such as parents and children, even if these spaces were not originally designed to be accommodating of children. When the research team visited a community class, one researcher observed: “As we sit down at the table, I see that the room mostly consists of old furniture ... In the far back corner of the room there are a couple children’s toys and most of the children are playing with one another in that area, while one or two older girls watch over them. The children run freely around the room laughing and screaming and the adults do not seem to mind.” Of the same event, another researcher noted that “I see that there are young children also present, their ages ranging from toddlers to one or two female teenagers. As [the teacher] is instructing I take notice that she has to talk louder; this is because the small children are playing with each other and running around the room. Nonetheless, the mothers are intently listening to [the teacher].”

Sensory appeal of place

Whether consciously or unconsciously observed, the sensory appeal of a place had an impact on our interviewees and our own observations. Some of those we spoke with articulated important aspects of visual appeal. When asked what makes a space welcoming, Ariana said, “I think a lot about green spaces and I think of the openness of the green spaces and not having a clear entrance where it feels like it’s trying to keep people out and allows people to flow in and out.” When observing the space in a non-profit restaurant, one researcher said: “The café is beautiful and full of plants around it and I notice that everything is clean and appealing to the eye.” At a Mexican restaurant in town, a researcher observed: “The restaurant itself looks higher-end than most Mexican restaurants because it is using the Mexican architecture and has paintings on the walls.”

Not only visual appeal but smells and sounds can make a difference, too. One researcher observed at a market: “As I arrive at the parking lot I see an old run-down market and there are not a lot of cars around. The space is not appealing to the eye. It smells like old shoes and as we walk up toward the people the smell changes to fresh produce.” The juxtaposition of smells did not set a mood for wanting to shop for food. At a different market, a researcher noted: “As we continue to walk around the market, I hear and see live music being played by a man with a guitar, which adds to the light atmosphere... the sun is out and I can breathe in the fresh air. I smell different scents and coffee is an overpowering one that catches my attention and leads me to where the coffee is being sold.” At yet another market, a researcher observed: “One of the produce vendors has a fairly spacious area with a variety of produce. In the background, I can also hear music coming from the stereo playing a cumbia song which adds some sense of comfort to the area.”

At another market, sights, sounds, and smells all played a part in the experience. A researcher notes: “As soon as I walk into the market, the sweet smell of bread lingers as I make my way to the candy aisle. The air now smells like *suavitel* and I feel at ease and at home. There is a large array of sweet choices filled with color and characters. What catches my eye is the large black package filled with rockaletas and I grab it immediately with the intention to buy. As a group, we walk toward the *carnecería* that is full of red meat in an array of different spices and preparations. As the cashier greets us I hear the sound of a knife hitting a cutting board as it appears he is chopping up a pig or bull’s foot. The store is kept tidy compared to other grocery stores we have visited. There are not many flies or bugs around the store despite the heat.”

Quite often, the concepts of comfort, cleanliness, or accessibility intertwined in our interviews and observations. At a community café, a researcher noted: “I notice that the café is set in a comfortable setting with clean spaces that have potted plants and outdoor, fresh-air seating areas.” At a family-owned small business, a researcher observed: “I notice the comfortable furniture in the living area with a television that is showing cartoons. The business is clean and organized and also has a gumball machine. As I sit waiting to be served, there are pictures on the wall.” When discussing what makes her feel that she and her family are welcome in a place, Regina said, “It’s when you get to a place and they greet you, they lend you help. Or you get to a place and everything works, everything is clean, everything is accessible.” On the same topic of what is welcoming, Emilia said, “Some of the downtown events. I think that if you see different types of people with chairs outside, *conviviendo*, that sends a very powerful message.”

COMMUNICATION

Non-Verbal Communication and Pleasantries

In our interviews and observations, we consistently found that communication through non-verbal and verbal cues had significant impact on whether individuals thought of a place as inclusive and welcoming. Key nonverbal cues included: conveying an openness to people expressing themselves freely, open and warm body language, and signs of active listening. In verbal cues, an explicit invitation or acceptance of other languages, a statement acknowledging an individual’s presence and that they are welcome there, and verbal expressions of interest in an individual’s thoughts or wellbeing encouraged individuals to feel welcomed within a space and provided them a sense of comfort.

Ariana noted that when she visited Central Park in New York City, she felt welcomed when seeing others freely dressed and expressing themselves and noticed she did not feel any fear of judgment. When asked to share a time that made her feel welcomed, Ariana said, “I think when one sees all sorts of people, expressing themselves however they want to dress up and nobody looks at anybody because everyone can be however they want to be or be with whoever they want.” Ariana also noted that upon entering a place and hearing languages other than English, she is reassured that multiple cultures and people are going to be received and welcomed. She said, “language is a big thing for me and it is something that I really appreciate and that is seen in more cosmopolitan cities where you hear different languages and see a variety of cultures.”

At an observation of a community class, the research team noted that as they were trying to find the proper location, a woman working at the community center noticed them and quickly came to their aid and asked if they needed help. A member of the research team responded to her in Spanish and the

woman pointed out the way to get to the class, “with a proud expression on her face” as one researcher noted. The researcher observed, “her reaction makes me think she is happy to see college-aged students around” and that this simple gesture of happiness in helping made the whole team feel welcomed. In this situation, the friendly communication in a non-English language also seemed to bring a level of comfort to all involved.

Facial expressions and body language factored into many of our observations and interviews. At the Farmers Market, the research team noted that they were greeted with a smile as they entered or walked passed an area, even if no words were exchanged, and that this was enough to make them feel welcomed. The importance of these nonverbal cues is just as notable when they are absent. Bianca, a parent and long-time Spartanburg County resident, when asked about a time when she did not feel welcomed said, “Well there at [retail space] they just stare at you as you walk by and I don’t want to be stared at while I am enjoying my day.” She said this lack of notable welcoming added a discomfort to her shopping experience.

Bianca was asked about her thoughts of the Arcadia community as a whole and said, “Yeah I’ve been there plenty and I don’t feel *segura* (safe), around there just from looking at the people and their mad faces. I don’t like that there is a lot of people around the roads just staring and doing nothing so no I do not like riding around Arcadia even though I go there at least once a month with [my husband] to get his hair cut at [hair salon]. Now that atmosphere is a lot different from Arcadia as a whole. It has more life to it.” Again, largely non-verbal cues – stares vs. smiles, a sense of “life” in a space, make the difference between Bianca feeling a place is *sana* or not.

The way a person is initially treated or greeted upon entering a space often was noted as important. These initial contacts seem to make a lasting impression. A simple recognition of a person and their presence as they enter a place has a positive impact. At a community class, a researcher observed: “We sit down at the end of the U shape setup of seats where we face the instructor, who welcomes us in warm manner asking us our names and recognizing us as Wofford students that she met at an earlier community meeting.” The team noted that having their presence acknowledged in a room full of strangers made them feel integrated and not excluded from the meeting. It was enough to make them feel included even in a room full of professionals that were older and very poised. When talking about not feeling welcomed in a place, Ariana said, “Generally in the south, people tend to be friendly, and so they might smile at you and when you pass by they say hello. And [in a space if there were] people that didn’t acknowledge or say hello or smile to me, it did not make me feel certain whether I was welcomed in that space.” Again, even a small glance or smile would have been enough to reassure her that she was welcomed and could be at ease.

A strong example of first impressions from both nonverbal and verbal cues is illustrated in one researcher’s observations when she goes to an unfamiliar place: “I walk in and receive a warm welcome from [a group leader]. I can smell a perfume but could not tell what kind. The atmosphere is isolated and not inviting as it looks under construction like the rest of the building. As the people begin to come in with happy smiles and open minds I feel more at ease. There are water and cookies on the back table which adds to my sense of the kindness of the people.” In this case, the physical space was (perhaps unavoidably) uninviting, but the people in it successfully created a welcoming atmosphere through smiles and an invitation to share food. The food also functioned as an invitation for camaraderie as people congregated around the table for snacks and chatted and got to know each other.

A combination of both nonverbal and verbal communication also was key when the research team embarked on a Sparta ride, using public transportation to get as close as they could to the Arcadia community. On their routes [North Church Street and Westgate], they observed the interactions between the commuters. One researcher observed, “We make a stop and a middle-aged white man gets on the, swipes his bus pass, and high-fives a middle-aged black man. They exchange a few words. The black man asks if the white man is doing alright, and the white man responds ‘I’m here today, aren’t I?’ He nods to the other passengers and takes a seat across from us. From their body language, I get the feeling that they all know each other and see each other regularly on the bus.” Witnessing this friendly exchange made other riders see the bus as a friendly place.

In a community meeting, the research team noted the care of some individuals to convey active listening and respect: “As the talk is going on I also pay attention to the leader as she stands quietly in the middle, not doing anything with her hands or getting distracted by anything, just being still and listening. Most people are not on their phones and are also actively listening to whomever is speaking.” In this case, it may be that the leader set an example in modeling attentive listening through her body language and attention, showing respect regardless of who was doing the speaking.

Information and Promotional Materials

As we observed more places and interviewed more people we noted the recurring theme of information and promotional materials. Any lack of communication between Spartanburg and the Latinx community can create a pathway for misinformation, as well as a lack of success in promoting events and materials. With a lack of information given to the Latinx community, turnout of an audience and the use of a community space may be much lower than it could be.

Bianca, for example, states that “there was a time where I could not read posters and flyers to know what was going on in this community because it was all in English. I also know that it is that same concept with other families that are new to the area, the lack of communication is why there is not as strong a turnout of Latinos at the Farmers market or other social gatherings in Spartanburg.”

The research team attended one series of community meetings and noted that community members who attend use these meetings as a gateway for information and to distribute information, but it was not clear how some of the information would be conveyed to the larger Latinx community. Attendees who spoke on behalf of their organizations passed out cards, flyers, or brochures, and some were using Facebook to reach those not attending the meetings.

At another meeting of a large group of Latinx women, the researchers noticed that the leaders took time to give information and context to those attending before getting into more detail on the topic at hand. Throughout the meeting, the leaders consistently focused on how the information conveyed was applicable for each woman and her family, and those attending seemed to find this approach very helpful. One aspect of the meeting that stood out was that the leaders made sure the attendees knew ways of keeping themselves informed after the meeting, through apps and government sources of information. Thus the attendees had a way to take away what they had learned and expand upon it. Researchers noted that in subsequent meetings of this group, the same women returned and seemed invested in the program, wanting to learn more. Turnout was consistent, presenting evidence that the attendees found the meetings valuable and informative. The leaders also made sure every attendee left contact information so that they could be directly informed of future meetings.

Before taking their bus ride to Arcadia, the student researchers gathered information on the routes and noted what information was easy or difficult to access and understand. One researcher reported: “We are relying mainly on the Sparta website for information regarding the bus routes...We’re unsure if this is the right spot...We finally see a bus, but it is coming the opposite direction. We try to wave at it, but it doesn’t stop. We are confused again, so we consult the map and realize we were looking at the wrong route. We wait another 10 minutes, hoping the bus will arrive.” An understanding of the entire route was necessary to select the correct side of the road on which to wait for the bus.

In some cases, community members take their own initiative in staying aware of events. Nicole said, “I have signed up so that I can receive notifications from the Chapman Cultural Center about the events that there are. I have also signed up to the Facebook page of the City of Spartanburg, where I get notifications of community activities. Because it is a good way to stay up to date, as a single mother the income of the household is only mine. I have to find ways to spend time with my children without having to spend too much money.” In Nicole’s case, it is good for her to know about many options for events for her family so that she can plan her time and, if needed, costs, carefully.

At one community market, researchers could find no promotional materials in Spanish or any Latinx vendors or even customers who might spread word about the market to the Latinx community. At a mobile market, researchers spoke with a cashier about how the market is promoted. The cashier explained that the truck goes to private and public places where they put out flyers, and they also advertise through social media pages. Researchers noted that in this case again, the materials were in English only, and there were not clear indicators of outreach to the Latinx community. For food markets in particular, researchers noted that Spanish-language information might be of particular interest to SNAP recipients in the Latinx community, but word of the advantages of SNAP and its usability at fresh food markets had not been conveyed to the community.

The importance of language in promotional materials and signage was expressed by Ariana, who directly linked it to her sense of a *comunidad sana*: “One of the things recently that I have noticed more, if there are signs that are directional signs or information signs, if they are in another language for many populations, I feel like it creates a sense that the place is also welcoming for others.” At a library, researchers observed clearly labeled sections for children, youth, and an informational desk for Spanish speakers. The information desk included pamphlets helpful for students going to college and in need of financial aid, along with information on FAFSA, notices asking for volunteers or showcasing job openings, and many pamphlets advertising social and community events. Almost all of these materials were in English only, with only a handful of flyers and pamphlets in Spanish.

PRACTICAL CONCERNS

Security and Safety (including Psychological Safety)

We found in our observations and interviews a recurring focus on security and safety, including a sense of psychological safety and well-being. Many of the individuals we interviewed had previously lived in a variety of locations, including Mexico, the Midwest and West Coast of the United States, and major cities in the Southeastern United States. Those interviewed often compared their previous locations and their relative degree of insecurity to Spartanburg, and it was clear that their previous experiences colored their judgment of their sense of safety in Spartanburg.

Javier, whose family currently lives in his homeland, Mexico, described life in Mexico in comparison to Spartanburg: "This country is safer than Mexico." When the researcher asked what aspect made his current location feel safer for him and potentially for his family he said, "It would be a matter of crime that dictates whether or not I would have my family here. As of right now, I have not seen crime occur while on the other hand in Mexico there is too much of it where there is not much trust in whom you can talk to or who they will tell your business to and they could go and talk to a bad guy." Javier in this statement correlates crime, or a lack thereof, to what makes a community *sana*. Similar to Javier, Paula, who is originally from a South American country and lived in a major Southern city before moving to Spartanburg, said, "Well for me, I used to live in my country that was very insecure and here I moved to [major Southern city] and now my son is a lot older than you girls. So when I moved to that city, it was not a very safe city. Two years ago, when I moved to this area, I feel like it is a safe place for people who have kids, small kids, and I think that it is a good place for people to live. But since I don't have smaller kids, in the neighborhood where I live it is very safe up to now. When it's bigger city, it can be more insecure."

Javier and Paula stressed the significance of security in the lack of crime here in Spartanburg compared to their previous experiences. Similarly Nicole, a single mother originally from another South American country, talked about living in the Midwest before coming to Spartanburg. "I come from the Midwest, we moved here almost a little while ago. The city we lived in before, there was much more crime there, I do not see as much here, the truth is that I like it, I feel safe, I feel calm. More than once I have left the door unlocked, and we have slept through the night like that, and there is no problem."

Interviewees gave a variety of examples as to what they did not like about the previous areas they lived in; they mentioned fear of robbery and the presence of drugs and prostitution. Javier said that he did not feel safe at home while in Mexico: "I lived with my wife and you couldn't even feel safe in your own house because robbers could come in and steal things from your house. One can't feel safe where you go out in the streets and people steal your money. People will even check when you go to bank and will wait for you." Licia, who moved to Spartanburg from Mexico, had similar things to say. Licia said that the city she is from in Mexico had become very urban and highly populated. She felt anxious to walk even with a group of friends at night for fear of being robbed. She also said that the town to which she moved first from Mexico was very small but that she enjoyed the community-friendly and welcoming ambiance that came from everyone being familiar with each other. Now that she has moved to Spartanburg, she likes the mixture of that small-town feel with the advantages of a growing city. Nicole brought up the desire to avoid any presence of prostitution and drugs. When she was asked what a *comunidad sana* was for her she said, "where you do not see points where drugs are sold or prostitution is present. I don't even know if there are places like that here."

Thus, it is evident that for these individuals Spartanburg is perceived as a safe place that is in many cases a welcome change from previous living experiences. One of the research team's observations noted similar points about Spartanburg and the sense of safety. On the Sparta bus ride, a researcher noted: "As we get nearer to the downtown hub and the bus empties of people, the bus driver (who is an older white man) asks us where we are going. We tell him we are trying to get to Arcadia and he tells us that we need to transfer to a different bus route. He prints us transfer tickets and carries on talking about the bus routes and tells us different locations we can go. He wants to be sure he knows the exact location we are trying to reach so that he can help us get there." The research team noted the satisfaction of the bus driver as he helped these young women on his bus, and his attention to the safety of his passengers. Having someone in that kind of service role who holds and conveys such an attitude is clearly an asset for Spartanburg.

A specific pattern that surfaced in multiple interviews is the issue of safety for women and children, who are a more vulnerable population. Javier was asked what led him to feel safe in this country he was first unfamiliar with, and he said, "here there is more respect for women while in Mexico, there are men that just yell vulgar things to women without respect." Similarly, Juliana, who has two small children, emphasized about Spartanburg, "It's calm. We don't have problems with people or anybody. Here I can go out at night with my kids and I don't fear going out." Cara, who is from Mexico and moved to Spartanburg from elsewhere in the Southern United States, currently resides in Arcadia, and says she likes her current community because there is "not too much clutter and noise." She feels safe and at home and does not worry about her young daughter going to school in the neighborhood. Nicole, as a single mother, also brought up similar points. She said that for her to live in a *comunidad sana* her priority is to "feel safe and know that my children can walk down the street safely."

Bianca states firmly how important it is for her, as a mother, to know which places are safe and which are not: "You just have to know the areas that are bad and the ones that aren't that way you won't go back. From experience for me the entrance into Spartanburg and around the Beacon are places I avoid at all costs. I have walked around there with my children and I will never walk through there again." When talking about how she judges whether a space is *sana*, Bianca explains how she looks for signs of crime: "For me it needs to be *tranquila* and without any vandalism along the buildings."

Nicole explained how the presence of public safety officers in Spartanburg makes her feel more safe: "In the area where I live, there is a place where there are many people at night and there is always police cars out there making sure everything is fine. So that is another thing that I like, because I know that the people will not try anything, because the police is right there in the parking lot. I always see them there because my daughter works beside of it in the restaurant there." Nicole added that she feels a sense of security knowing it is less likely an accident or some random act will happen that might affect her. Javier, in contrast, stated a different opinion about how police officers make him feel: "For a while, I knew an American who was a police that would come in and buy meat with his wife. Just knowing that he was a police kind of felt intimidating."

Several of our interviewees spoke about safety in terms of psychological well-being including issues of racism or bigotry toward the Latinx community. Sara, a high school student, confessed to us that in her own high school she felt the effects of racism and prejudice. "Here [Spartanburg] you go to the store or places, and you know with what is going with Donald Trump, and there are certain white people that don't like Mexicans and there are types of people that treat you differently." Javier also stated that he has experienced racism, yet for him it can be overlooked. "Racism is the only bad experience that there is here that I have had to deal with but it's just a matter of letting people talk and ignoring them without creating any more commotion than necessary. Racism is something that can be ignored while crime is not."

Another aspect of psychological safety and wellbeing was brought up by Emilia, who spoke of respect toward a variety of languages: "For me it's very important that I live in a city that will be respectful of hearing other languages. So you know, at home I speak German that is with my husband. I am here with my father so with him I speak in Spanish. So it's important that when we are walking out in the park that we won't fear to speak another language and for someone to lash out at us."

Distance, Location, and Accessibility

From our observations and interviews, we found that spaces in the community are valued or dismissed based on their distance, location, and accessibility to different groups of people. People of all ages reiterated the importance of location in reference to public spaces as a factor that either contributed to the flourishing of a community or acted as a barrier for people in their daily lives.

For example, when asked why he thinks Latinx people don't come to the Hub City Farmer's Market as often as white people, Diego, a college student working at the market, said he did not think it was because of the prices, but because of the location, that it is further away from the Arcadia community. Similarly, in general conversations about what interviewees did or did not like about Spartanburg, several mentioned that places they would like to do are too far away or not easy to get to. In particular, those in conversation with researchers mentioned wishing they had a good park closer to them.

The researchers encountered their own frustration with location and accessibility when they tried to reach Arcadia via public transportation. One researcher noted, "At this point, we ask the bus driver to drop us off, as we are as close as we are going to get to Arcadia. From the tone of her voice, I can tell she is concerned that we are getting off here and walking to Arcadia. She gives us very specific directions of how to walk there and we thank her and exit the bus. We pull up google maps and follow the walking directions to Arcadia. I see that there are no sidewalks and the road is very windy and curved, which makes it quite dangerous to walk on." Juliana noted the burden of traveling outside of Spartanburg for recreational activities. In a conversation about outdoor activities in other cities, Julia said, "I wish we had more of that, there isn't places like that. And when we do go to places like that we have to travel all the way to North Carolina and go further away from Spartanburg."

Aside from being a barrier to daily life, we also found that location dictates major life decisions. Bianca responded to the question, "What about schools, was that a big factor in choosing where to live?" saying, "Oh yes, for example, here at [Spartanburg County location] all the schools are together, so if need be my children would not have to walk as far as I once did to get to school. The school system with Arcadia is too spread out and not as organized to me. Since I could not drive and go from one place to another, I wanted to make sure my son and daughters could be close to each other." Even those who live in Arcadia and enjoy it are restricted by a lack of accessibility to other spaces. Cara says that she feels "safe and at home" in Arcadia. However, she mainly stays in Arcadia and avoids taking the bus because "I hear they take IDs and I am not supposed to be here."

Location and accessibility were also talked about in positive terms as something that can establish a feeling of community and pride in one's space. Emilia noted, "We really like our neighborhood. We like how we can walk a lot in our neighborhood, where there is a lake. And we spend every day at the Rail Trail, in downtown Spartanburg, eating out, or at a Cafe, or at the bookstore, the Hub City Bookstore." Ariana carefully detailed how locations that even are somewhat distant from each other can ideally participate in a sense of connectedness in the community: "Usually...when we stay local, we go to the Drayton Trail and there is a trail that connects to the Mary Black Hospital and to Drayton Mills. There is a trail behind that connects the two. And it's also behind the new elementary school that is being built in the fall called Drayton Mill Elementary School and so you can start at the mill and go the hospital. Then once you get to the mill, cross the street to Drayton road and then on the other side there is a loop where you can walk as well. Then the other one is the Mary Black Trail; it's the one that starts at Two Samuels YMCA. There is trail behind there and it is really popular if you want to run into people. It goes 1.8 miles. But there are plans to connect it to Glendale Shoals in the upcoming years."

Balancing Price and Quality

Good quality. Right pricing. Desired and varied goods. Colorful advertising. These are a few factors that many Latinx consumers told us they look for when buying their goods. Most of the families we spoke with prefer to use fresh produce for their meals rather than going out to restaurants.

From our observations, we noticed some markets did have reasonable prices for the goods provided. However, the goods at these markets are of top quality and the income levels in key parts of Spartanburg are low, so some potential consumers told us they are likely to choose the cheaper options to buy fresh produce whether it is the flea market, BI-LO, La Unica or Aldi. These grocery stores also happen to have the produce that is sought after, as Bianca explains: “There is nothing that we want at those other markets! It’s not as much the high prices there, they just don’t have what I am looking for, guavas, tomatillo, chiles.” Similarly, some community members said they will go to markets where there is more variety so they are more likely to find what they are looking for.

Some of the Latinx customers we spoke with pay more attention to the quality of the goods without looking too much into the price. A researcher asked Bianca, “Comparing the Farmers Market to other cheaper markets, do you think that if there was a Latino vender there more from the Latinx community would come there, even if the price is a little higher?” Bianca responded, “Look what us Latinos want is better quality we do not care as much about the price as long as we are getting the best that there is. I would rather pay a higher price for something good than for beat up tomatoes at 20 cents a lb. That’s why I shop at the better markets and not so much the cheaper ones anymore.”

SUMMARY FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Findings

1. Latinx residents express strong positive feelings about the Spartanburg community, particularly with regard to quality of life, safety, and the warmth and humanity of residents.
2. Individuals in the Latinx community express a valuation of family over all other considerations; respondents value spending time together as family in places that are open to their use of those spaces as family units (couples; parents with children; extended families).
3. Latinx residents value multi-use spaces (those that allow for playing and eating, or learning by adults and play by children) and events that offer multiple types of activities (for example, listening to music outdoors while children play and adults converse with others, with the possibility of picnicking or dining nearby).

Recommendations

1. Create multi-use spaces, indoors and outdoors, and/or adapt existing spaces for use by families and/or people of different ages and interests.
2. Design events conducive to participation by families, even if different ages are engaged in different activities or stations/activity zones.
3. Educate staff and volunteers about the power of pleasantries and nonverbal communication in the promotion of a welcoming and inclusive atmosphere for all.
4. Recognize that physical safety (and perception of physical safety) and psychological safety are important to Latinx residents. Pro-social verbal and non-verbal communication is a signal of

psychological safety; aesthetic appeal and the absence of visible (or previous) criminal activity (for example, littering or graffiti) are read as markers of physical safety.

5. Develop Spanish-language informational and promotional materials. When appropriate, move beyond simple translations of existing English-language materials to original messaging that acknowledges shared values (for example, hope for a positive future for youth, the importance of family) in Spanish-language materials.
6. Understand that schedules and routes for public transportation, combined with the lack of public infrastructure (like sidewalks), severely restrict the ability of many residents to access events and services or to access them safely.
 - a. Identify the bus stop, including the route, closest to your location on your promotional materials, including digital material.
 - b. Have a staff member attempt to access your location from a neighborhood you would like to include and make recommendations with regard to planning as it relates to your services or event, including timing of events.

APPENDIX: EXISTING BRIGHT SPOTS

In this section, we note comments made by residents about existing “bright spots” for them in the community we share.

Area in General: Community Assets and Atmosphere

Nicole: “I like Spartanburg because without it being a big city it is not a town either. We have, in my opinion, everything we need in terms of schools, universities, there are several universities and colleges here. There are also banks and shopping centers, and we have downtown. For me all that makes a good community to finish raising my children.”

Regina: “I come from Miami, and it is different, very different. Here it is quieter, people are kinder Here, people are nice. Whether they are American or Latino, in this state especially people are very human.”

Places and Events

Emilia: “I really like what Downtown Spartanburg is doing like the Jazz the Friday evenings.... I like that in Downtown Spartanburg ... [that there are] these restaurants that are not chains. I like that I also hear other languages Another important factor for us is that there be green spaces, spaces to be able to go and walk, festivals, I really like what the Chapman Cultural Center does I like that a lot of the nonprofits in Spartanburg really want to include the Latinos in their missions.... I really liked what Mezcal the restaurant did I love that they were planning the Cinco de Mayo fiesta and I visualized it, I just did not expect a lot of Latinos to be there . . . they pulled off this wonderful, exuberant, big fiesta where there were people of all cultures, there were Aztec dancers. For me too, it was important that there was salsa music there even though we do not associate it with Mexican culture, but I just thought that a lot of the Latino families that came out who were not necessarily Mexican, that they felt it was a celebration really of Latino culture.”

Paula: “We love going out to the music concerts on Thursdays in downtown.”

Ariana: “Cleveland Park [is] a place where I see people from all over that look different, and that is a place where [my child] plays with kids that don’t look like her I think that cities that have more green spaces are not only good for that environment but for the community interaction.”

Nicole: “We like to go to Barnet Park. I actually had my grandchildren here last month and I took them there, for them to play in the water and such. ... festivals, like the kite festival. I think it was in April when there is a transition from cold weather to warmer weather, when the air currents collide which makes it ideal for the flying of kites... I can give [as an example of a welcoming space] the library...that is the public library, which I love. I love everything it has to offer ... It has many free things, many free classes, I actually took a class this past spring actually [The library] has what is called the Spark Room. The Spark Room offers everything that has to do with crafts... sewing classes, among other ones which are offered at no cost. Oh, actually recently I had a good experience, too, ... [for some time] I have received notifications that you can suggest a book, but I did not imagine that it was true. I said, well, it’s one of those things that they say but do not really carry through. So I decided to suggest some books, two books, and within a week, no it was less ... I received an email that said thanks for suggesting books, and that they had already ordered them, that when they were ready to be picked up they would let me know ... Before the two weeks I received a notification that the books were available. I loved that. I even sent an email to the person, and I told them directly that I appreciated everything they had done to fulfill what they had to offer. That gave me the certainty that they were not just words. If they offer something they fulfill it.”

Bianca: “I was a mother that could not drive, and most days I would stay at the Spartanburg public library and stay there all day until [my husband] got out from work. You know, the people were nice to me, but I just still did not feel as comfortable not having transportation for myself at that time.” (Sandra López, Interview with Bianca, 7/19/18, 7:45 pm)

The student researchers noted the welcome for young people that they felt at Hispanic Alliance Spartanburg. They observed: “Besides the four of us, the only other young people in the room are three Hispanic students who we hear have joined the meeting in an effort to connect the Greenville Hispanic Alliance group. When we introduce ourselves, and when these three other young people introduce themselves, I notice a subtle shift in the adults’ expressions and reactions. I feel especially welcomed as a young person at this meeting because I see the adults nodding their heads, giving more focused eye contact, smiling with a proud expression, and looking to one another with appreciative and impressed body language.”