



# Final Report

July 2023

**NEXT STAGE** 





## THE BRIDGE: CONNECTING RESIDENTS TO CARE

Community Health in America is at a significant crossroads.

Across the country, the COVID-19 pandemic was a significant stress test for local infrastructure of community-based health care. This held true in Mecklenburg County, where health disparities for Black and Hispanic-Latino residents were pronounced throughout the pandemic, particularly those in disinvested neighborhoods.

As a result, health systems, municipalities, nonprofits and community-based organizations are more attuned to the need to work more collaboratively to achieve shared goals.

In 2022 and 2023, eight Charlotte-based institutions came together to pilot a new way of working **better together**. The partners involved in this community-based health care initiative sought to demonstrate a new approach to increasing access – one that centers trust, relationship-building, resource-sharing and collective effort.

The result is the demonstration of a new supply-chain of health care delivery, where collaboration brings the very best of each institution to the table.

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This project is supported by **Next Stage**, a Charlotte-based social impact company committed to working “at the intersection of social good.” Next Stage previously supported the first phase of this project in 2020 and 2021, publishing [an assessment report](#) for Care Ring detailing findings from engagement with CrossRoads Corporation and UCITY Family Zone.

Next Stage is represented in this initiative by **Josh Jacobson**, Founder and CEO, and **Helen Hope Kimbrough**, Senior Director, Community Voice.

The following report represents data and research compiled as a part of primary and secondary exploration. Onsite engagement and ongoing participation in initiative meetings augmented this data.



## Primary Research

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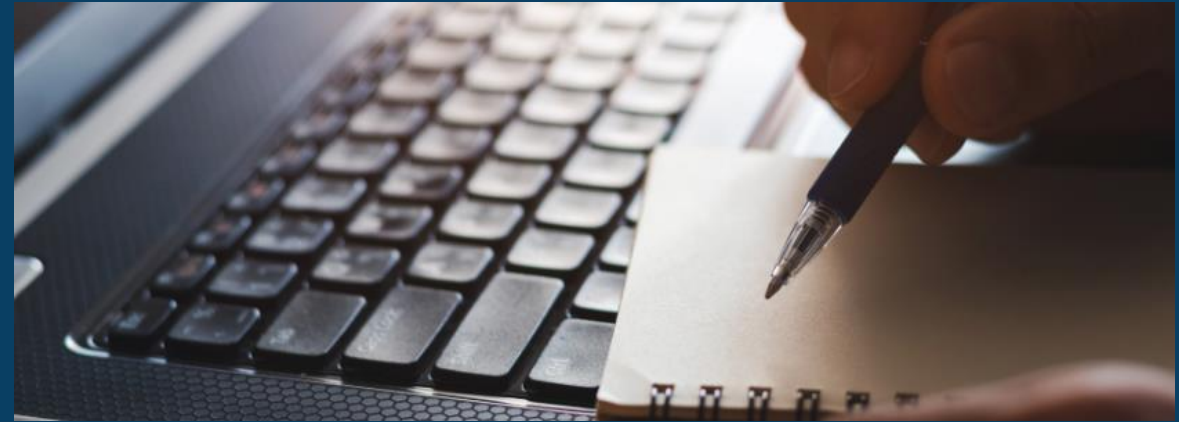
Next Stage is dedicated to high-quality qualitative research, balancing quantitative analysis with insights gathered from stakeholders.

Stakeholder interviews are a key part of the discovery process, sourcing perspective from those closest to the work. A diverse cross-section of individuals engaged in this initiative provided input for this report:

- Angela Barnes, Social Worker, Care Ring
- Hannah Beavers, Executive Director, Freedom Communities
- Gemini Boyd, Co-Founder & President, Project BOLT
- Georgette Caldwell, RN, BSN, Nurse Case Manager, Care Ring
- Tiffany Capers, Executive Director, Crossroads Corporation
- Norika Fisher, Project Manager, Care Ring
- Rodney Gaddy, Executive Director, One Charlotte Health Alliance
- Miguel Garcia, Community Health Worker, Care Ring
- Emily Lancucki, Operations Director, ONE Charlotte Health Alliance
- David Langford, Interim Department Chair, School of Nursing, UNCC
- Stephanie Malloy, Program Director, Care Ring
- Tchernavia Montgomery, Chief Executive Officer, Care Ring
- Kaaren Sailer, MD, Medical Director, Care Ring
- Sunday Shobowale, Community Health Worker, Care Ring
- Mark Talbot, Director of Economic Development, Freedom Communities
- Dr. Jerome Williams Jr., Senior VP, Consumer Engagement, Novant Health

In addition to these interviews, Next Stage reviewed data sourced from the needs assessment process and patient information captured by staff engaged in deployment of the mobile unit.

Next Stage's Helen Hope Kimbrough was on-site during the community needs assessment process and the six-month initiative deployment in Grier Heights.



## Secondary Research

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Next Stage conducts comparative and trend research to inform its analysis. Key resources that informed this report include:

- [Building A Community Health Worker Program](#), AHA/NUA, 2018
- [Building a Workforce for Health in North Carolina](#), NC Medical Journal, 2022
- [Care Ring Impact Assessment](#), Care Ring, 2021
- [Charlotte COVID-19 Recovery Plan](#), City of Charlotte, 2022
- [Charlotte Mecklenburg Quality of Life Explorer](#), UNCC Urban Institute, 2023
- [Community Health Needs Assessment](#), Mecklenburg County, 2019
- [The Demographic Drought](#), Emsi Burning Glass, 2022
- [FAQ City: What Happened to Grier Heights?](#), WFAE, 2021
- [Meck60+ Community Needs Assessment](#), UNC Charlotte, 2020
- [Mecklenburg County Pulse Report](#), Mecklenburg County, 2023
- [Mobile Health Care Impact Tracker](#), 2023
- [Mobile Health Clinics in the United States](#), Int'l Journal for Equity in Health, 2020
- [North Carolina County Health Rankings State Report](#), 2022
- [North Carolina COVID-19 Dashboard](#), NCDHHS, 2023
- [Opportunity Compass](#), Leading On Opportunity, 2023



## Project Background

## Community-Based Health Care Initiative Pilot Design

As outlined by recent local, state and national strategic plans, ensuring equitable access to affordable care and addressing social determinants of health (SDoH) is an ongoing priority, particularly for those entities serving vulnerable populations.

While diligent efforts have been made to effectively confront and resolve these issues, the COVID-19 pandemic created new challenges for individuals seeking care. As a result, already existing health disparities for low-income and at-risk populations have widened.

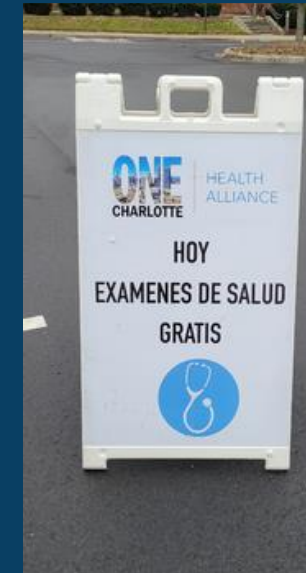
Through the mobilization of an interdisciplinary team in strategically identified communities, this pilot initiative seeks to extend health services directly to underserved populations. For residents who continue to face disproportionately poorer health outcomes, this effort will support the provision of equitable, culturally sensitive and holistic care.

Operating at a fraction of the cost of a traditional brick-and-mortar setting, mobile health clinics provide quality care at a lower cost than that of traditional healthcare delivery modes.

To realize this effort, eight institutions joined forces to explore the potential for a new approach to community-based care. Features include:

- Trust-based approach to building neighborhood engagement and buy-in
- Agile deployment and iterative model of on-site research and learning
- Expansive exploration of SDoH in a neighborhood setting
- Blended staffing model across collaborating partners
- Deployment of pre-service UNC Charlotte nursing students

This report covers the design and deployment of services to serve the Grier Heights neighborhood from July 2022 through June 2023.







**CROSSROADS**  
Project Contact:  
Tiffany Capers,  
Executive Director

## Dedicated to the Revitalization of Grier Heights

**CrossRoads Corporation** is a faith-based, nonprofit organization that through partnerships honors the history and supports the collective vision of rejuvenation, economic stability, healthy living, and educational achievement within the Grier Heights community.

Formed in 2008 with an initial \$1.5 million donation from Myers Park Presbyterian Church, the organization’s vision is that Grier Heights will be transformed residentially and economically, and the quality of life dramatically improved with a constant focus on justice to its residents throughout the process.



Project Contact:  
Rodney Gaddy,  
Former  
Executive Director

## Improving Health in Underserved Communities

**ONE Charlotte Health Alliance** was formed following the police shooting of Keith Lamont Scott with a desire to address healthcare disparities. Novant Health, Atrium Health and the Mecklenburg County Department of Public Health formed the partnership to work collaboratively to improve health and well-being for all residents in Charlotte.

On June 30, 2023, ONE Charlotte Health Alliance announced it would cease operations July 1 following six years of service advancing health equity across the Charlotte region. The organization was an essential partner to realizing The Bridge collaboration and leaves a legacy of impact.



**CARE RING**  
Project Contact:  
Tchernavia  
Montgomery,  
CEO

## The Heart of Community Health

Founded in 1955, **Care Ring** is a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing health services for the uninsured, underinsured or those lacking access to affordable, high-quality preventive health care. The organization annually serves more than 7,600 people in Mecklenburg County and is a leader in collaborative efforts to improve community health.

Programs include a low-cost clinic focused on preventative care and chronic disease management; Physicians Reach Out (PRO) which utilizes a network of volunteer healthcare providers; A Guided Journey, a maternal and child health community health worker initiative; and Nurse-Family Partnership, an evidence-based nurse home-visitation program.



Project Contact:  
Gemini Boyd,  
Co-Founder &  
President

## Building Outstanding Lives Together

Founded in 2018, **Project BOLT** is a grassroots organization on a mission to construct trust-built relationships between marginalized residents and the systems with resources that want to serve them. The 501c3 nonprofit organization aims to meet individuals where they are, and places an emphasis on listening, building relationships, and cultivating their voices.

In doing so, Project BOLT believes individuals will become hopeful, develop trust for the community, and ultimately see their worth. And when individuals feel hope, trust, and worth, neighborhoods and communities grow to feel and believe that, too, creating momentum for much-needed change.



**UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
CHARLOTTE  
SCHOOL OF NURSING**

Project Contact:  
David Langford,  
Interim Dept. Chair

## North Carolina's Urban Research University

UNC Charlotte is a diverse and inclusive institution with local-to-global impact that transforms lives, communities and industries through access and affordability, exemplary undergraduate, graduate, and professional programs, scholarship, creative work, innovation and service.

The **UNC Charlotte School of Nursing** prepares excellent, well-qualified professional nurses for positions locally, nationally, and internationally. Graduates practice in a variety of settings including community health agencies, home health care, advanced practice settings such as clinics, and acute care settings usually found in hospitals and medical centers.



**NOVANT  
HEALTH**

Project Contact:  
Ylida Roberson,  
Dir. Prog. Mngmt,  
Population Health

## Caring for People Through Remarkable Care

**Novant Health** is a leading healthcare provider with 15 hospitals and more than 350 physician practices offering advanced medical treatment in North Carolina.

Novant Health has demonstrated a long-standing commitment to improving the health of our communities, one person at a time, by improving access to care, investing in the community and supporting economic mobility. In Charlotte, this has included opening two Novant Health Michael Jordan Family Medical Clinics and deploying mobile health units to priority zip codes.



**NEXT  
STAGE**

Project Contact:  
Josh Jacobson,  
CEO

## Working at the Intersection of Social Good

Bringing people together to work complex initiatives requires trust, consensus and connection between partners. Charlotte-based **Next Stage** is a social impact company dedicated to high-quality collaboration management.

Next Stage partners with nonprofits, private sector companies, government agencies, faith institutions, philanthropy and community leaders to find common ground at the intersection. The company listens first, centers community voice and builds effective strategies to mobilize movements that fuel social impact and ESG initiatives.

# An Evolving Human-Centered Brand



## CENTERING COMMUNITY AT THE HEART OF THE BRAND

This initiative has had several names during its deployment over the past year, mirroring learnings that have informed how the collaborative shows up in the neighborhoods it aims to serve.

When it was first established, the effort was called a Community-Based Healthcare Initiative, shortened to CBHI by the partners working to realize it. During Q3 and Q4 of 2022, the partnering organizations met several times each month to design what the CBHI pilot would entail. It was expected that the name of the initiative would undergo a transformation as it neared launch.

In January 2023, the effort was rebranded to Better Together, reflecting the unique collaboration between several organizations coming together to make a

difference for the health of people in disinvested neighborhoods. The CBHI tag was maintained to suggest the purpose of the collaboration.

As the effort launched in Grier Heights, it was clear to the partners that the special connection happening with residents was the main idea, rather than the collaboration between institutions. What had previously made sense before the project began serving people no longer did, and the group set about rebranding it to match these learnings.

In April 2023, the partners collaborated to identify a name that would suggest the role trust-building had been playing in connecting with residents. The resulting new name - **The Bridge** - highlights the important underpinnings of health equity. It requires providers and residents to come together, forming a trusted bridge, that leads to positive health outcomes.





## Data & Research

## Background: Grier Heights \*

One of the oldest neighborhoods in Charlotte, Grier Heights formed as a Black farming community in the 1890s, when Sam Billings, a formerly enslaved man bought 100 acres - the first recorded Black land purchase in Mecklenburg County.

Later, in the 1940s, the neighborhood was named for prominent African-American businessman Arthur Grier, who built 100 homes for Black soldiers returning home from World War II.

The area became a well-established suburb for middle-class Black families and over time residents added two churches and the Rosenwald School, which now serves as a community center.

In the 1970s, Grier Heights began experiencing drastic changes. The reasons are complex and intertwined, but factors included the integration of schools, student bussing, increased drug use and public policy relating to urban renewal.

Longtime residents began to move out of the neighborhood, in part because the end of segregation and redlining meant they had more options. The neighborhood's backbone and identity remained, but it was influenced by an increasing number of renters who were less connected to the community.



These factors contributed to the overall decline of the quality of life in Grier Heights and the neighborhood regularly ranked at the very bottom of outcome measures in several areas. Most striking, the average resident of Grier Heights will experience a lower life expectancy than their peers in nearby neighborhoods.

Despite its challenges, Grier Heights retains its identity, resiliency and a strong sense of community pride.

As one resident noted when interviewed by Next Stage in 2021: "The people are amazing. Because it's been created behind such historical notions, the people are some of the most prideful people I've ever met. Neighbors really lean in on each other to ensure that others are taken care of. I've lived in numerous communities, but I've never seen this level of family structure."

## Grier Heights: By the Numbers

The following data was compiled using the Charlotte/Mecklenburg Quality of Life Explorer for Grier Heights (Number Planning Area 370) and includes information as of 2020:

Category	Grier Heights	Meck County
Avg. Age of Residents	24	35
Population Youth	44.5%	23.5%
Race - Black	74%	29.1%
Employed	81.1%	95.2%
Avg. Household Income	\$16,738	\$69,240
Food & Nutrition Services	65.7%	14.9%
Bachelor's Degree	6.8%	45.8%
Avg. Age of Death	54	72
Medicaid or NCHC	72.4%	14.8%
Adequate Prenatal Care	44.8%	57.6%

\* Excerpted from *Care Ring Impact Assessment 2021*, the report Next Stage developed in the first phase of this project



## Needs Assessment Design

The needs assessment for this initiative was spearheaded by Project BOLT and its co-founder Gemini Boyd. The nonprofit organization aims to bridge the divide between historically marginalized communities and the systems that seek to provide support.

Founded in 2018, Project BOLT is a grassroots nonprofit uniquely positioned to help bridge that gap by partnering with organizations to assist them in establishing an authentic relationship with those they serve and produce greater outcomes.

Trust is at the heart of everything that Project BOLT seeks to accomplish. The organization's trust-built framework is comprised of an approach that involves relationship-building, establishing trust, and utilizing that trust to bring about change.

Building trust capital with the community is the differentiator that sets Project BOLT apart from other organizations. Success comes from ensuring voices are heard and relationships lead design.

For the **Better Together Initiative**, Project BOLT was involved from the beginning, providing insight into project design and leading early efforts to engage neighborhood residents.

Project BOLT deploys a three-phase process:

### 1. **Building Relationship & Establishing Trust**

The first step involves building relationships with the people partners seek to engage. While this may seem obvious, too often organizations leap to engaging in listening before establishing a framework of kinship. Project BOLT utilizes meals, child-engagement and community events to establish rapport that can be leveraged further.

### 2. **Listening to Community**

Listening to community is not about "just another survey," but more intimate and creative settings including one-on-one discussions, community meetings and hands-on projects where the people closest to the problems are given an opportunity to voice them and offer solutions. Project BOLT documents this feedback which includes both quantitative and qualitative data to share with partner organizations.

### 3. **Ensuring the Community Gets Heard**

In this phase, it is important community members understand how their voices and opinions will lead to change. Working alongside the Better Together Initiative partners, Project BOLT helps ensure trust remains a key ingredient.



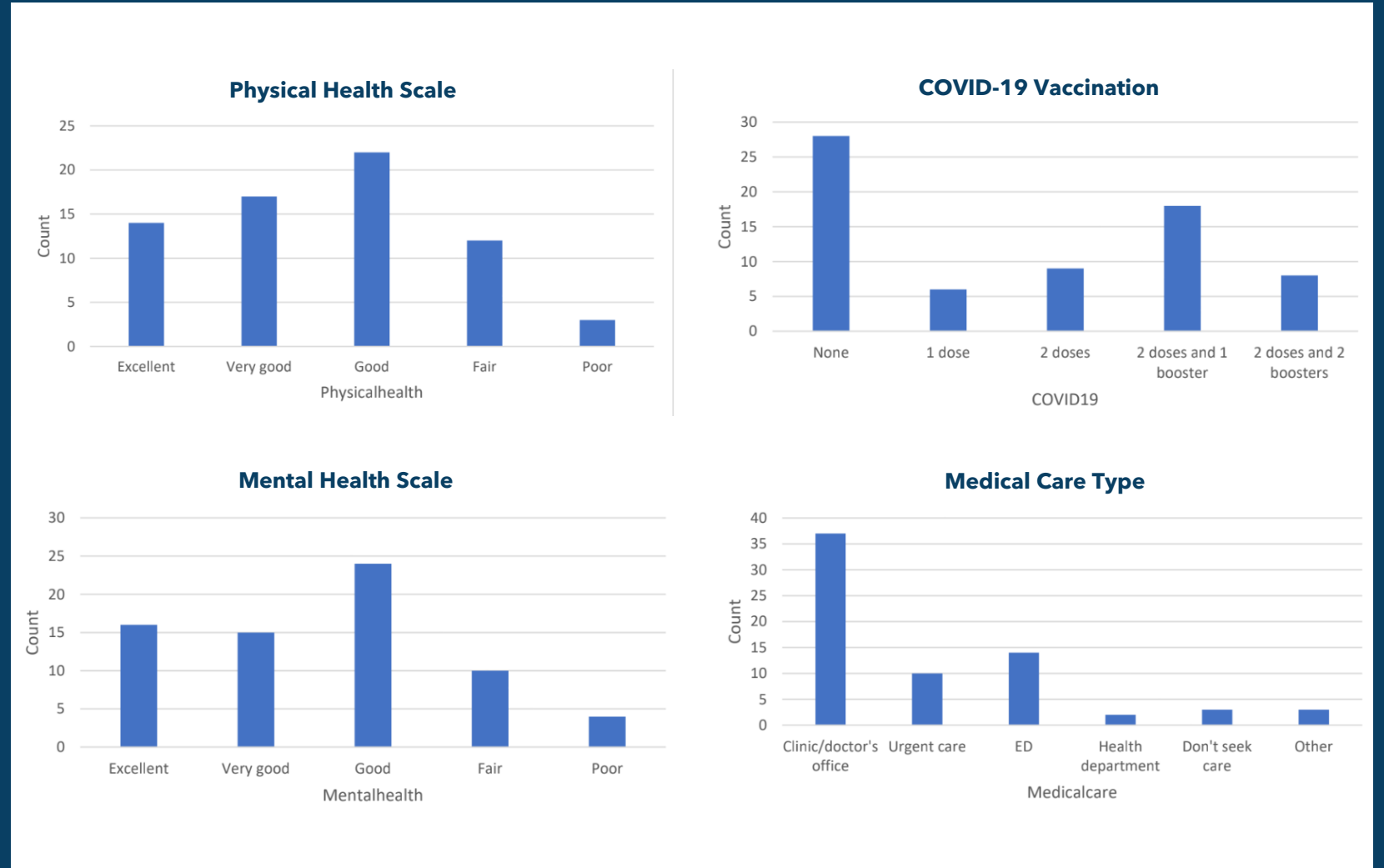


## Needs Assessment

From July through September 2022, Project BOLT conducted trust-based activities in Grier Heights, encouraging residents to participate in a survey.

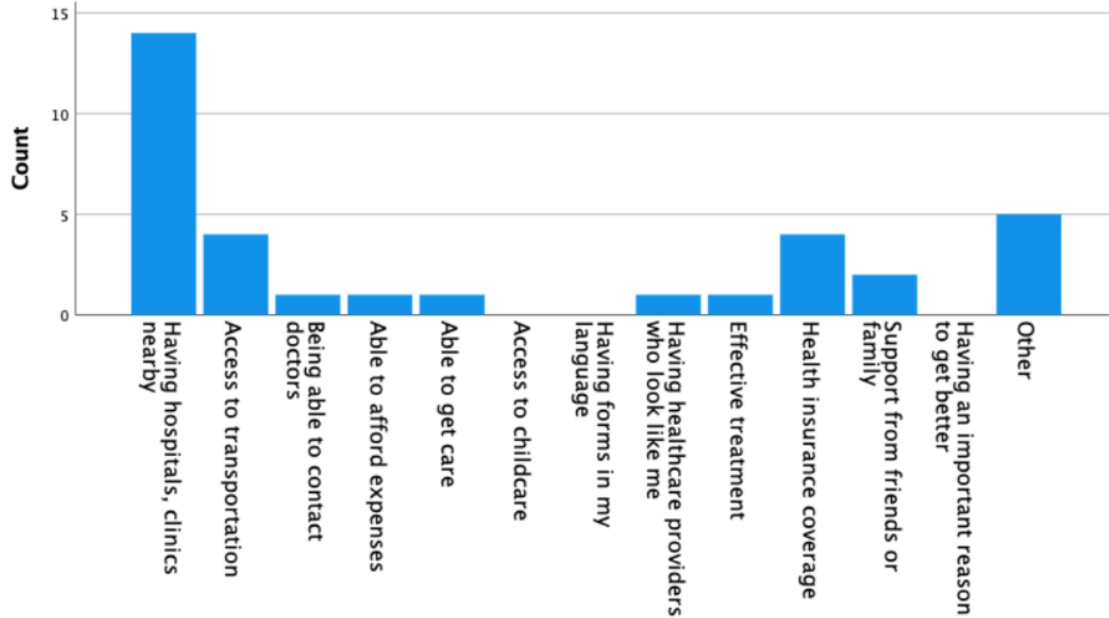
Engagement activities included:

Health and Wellness Fair	7/30/2022
Hampton Creste Love to the Community Jam Fest	8/6/2022
Community Center Weekly Event	8/10/2022
Book Bag and School Supplies Community Event	8/20/2022
Project BOLT Back to the Books Community Festival	8/27/2022
Mass Mailing	8/22/2022
Door-to-Door Canvassing	9/1/2022-9/7/2022
Labor Day Event	9/2/2022

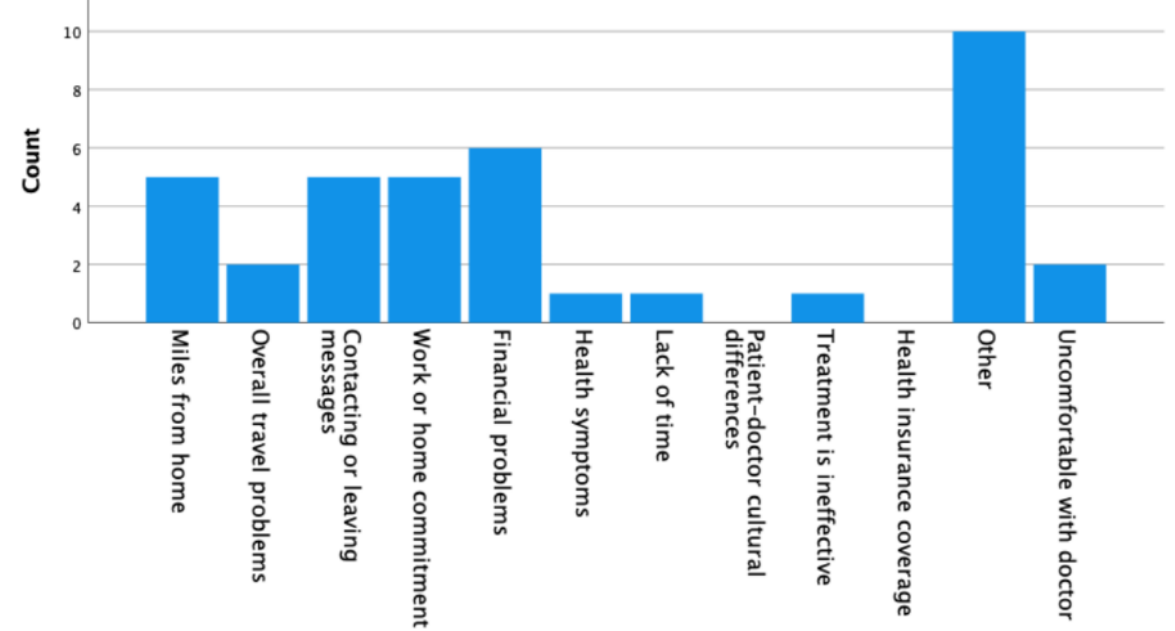


*Survey Tool developed by Sasha Zabelski, Doctoral Student and Graduate Research Assistant, UNC Charlotte*

Facilitators for care



Barriers to care



### What are the most pressing health problems you see in your community?

- Diabetes (8)
- High blood pressure (5)
- Mental illness (5)
- Transportation (4)
- Heart problems (2)
- Medicine cost (2)
- Knowledge (2)
- No insurance (2)
- Preventative care
- Children's health
- Obesity/diet
- HIV
- Drugs/alcohol use
- COVID
- Stroke
- Cancer
- Hypertension
- Financial need
- Copays
- Understanding
- None

### What would you need in your community to improve how healthy you are?

- Transportation (5)
- More resources (5)
- Health awareness (3)
- Doctors who care (2)
- Healthy places to gather (2)
- More doctor's offices (2)
- Money (2)
- More parks & recreation
- Wellness center
- Indoor gym
- Childcare
- Portable services
- Walking & biking trails
- Trust
- Visiting nurses
- Fresh vegetables
- Nutritionists
- Closer service
- Access
- More primary care
- Not sure



## Modeling an Approach to Care

Care Ring has served as the leading quarterback organization for this initiative, actively convening the partners and encouraging a multi-disciplinary approach to the work.

The initiative expands upon the services of Care Ring's Low-Cost Clinic located at Ascend Nonprofit Solutions in uptown Charlotte. Other core programs including Physicians Reach Out, A Guided Journey, and Nurse-Family Partnership provide the organization with a unique lens on the needs of uninsured and underinsured people and serve as inspiration to identify new ways to drive positive health outcomes.

This passion for addressing community health makes Care Ring uniquely well-positioned to lead this initiative. In addition to the many ways the organization directly helps individuals establish and maintain good health, Care Ring also advocates for a better system of care for all.

Working directly in communities is essential to this advocacy goal. Engaging with individuals inside their neighborhoods helps Care Ring better understand their health and well-being needs, identify barriers to addressing those needs, and provide education on the changes happening in healthcare.

By building deeper connections in neighborhoods, Care Ring aims to improve overall community health and outcomes for people with limited resources. That trust is earned through engagement that extends beyond the clinical environment.

**The Bridge** has benefitted from the involvement of Care Ring's talented staff with roles including Community Health Worker, Social Worker and Nurse Case Manager who have been boots-on-the-ground to steward trust. In combination with the institutional partnerships, it makes for a compelling approach to community care.

*"We know that the health of a community is not limited to the services they receive at a clinic. It is critical that our community is working at a neighborhood level, listening to the voices of residents and deploying the resources they need to create healthier outcomes for their families."*



**Tchernavia Montgomery,**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Care Ring



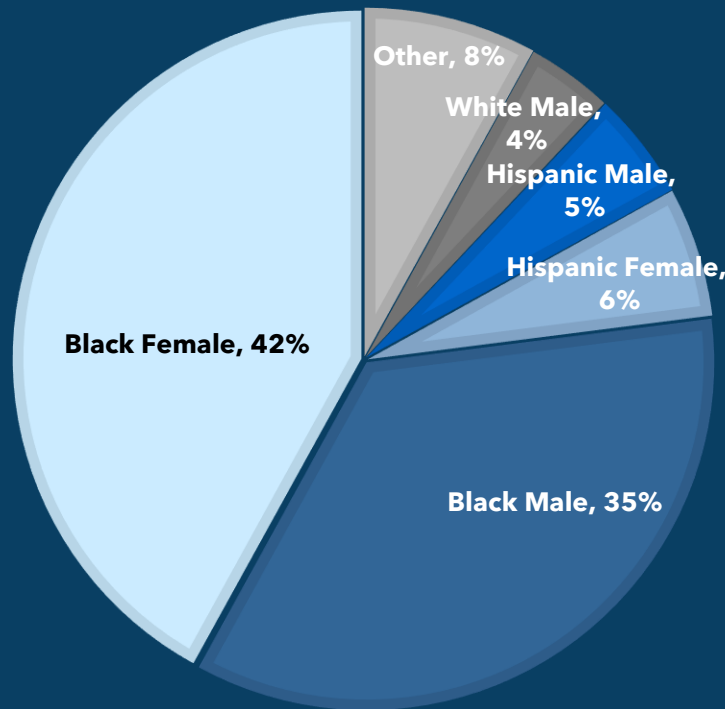
## Social Determinants of Health Screening Stats

**203** Unique Patients

**234** Total Patients

**Average Age: 46**

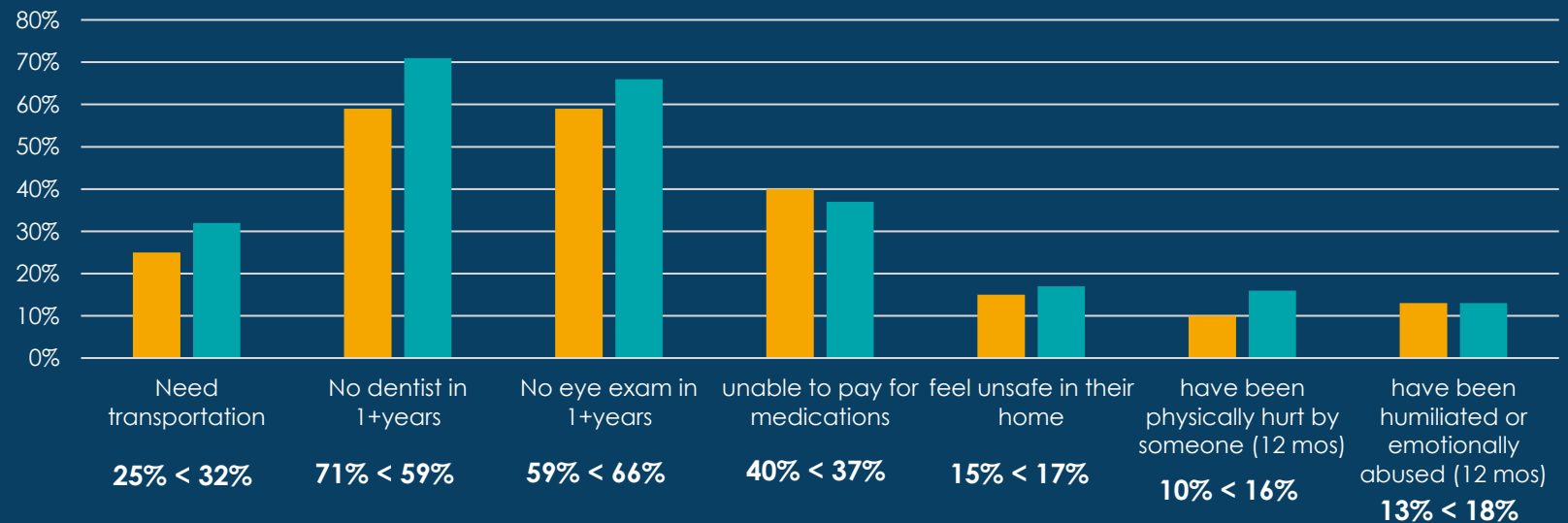
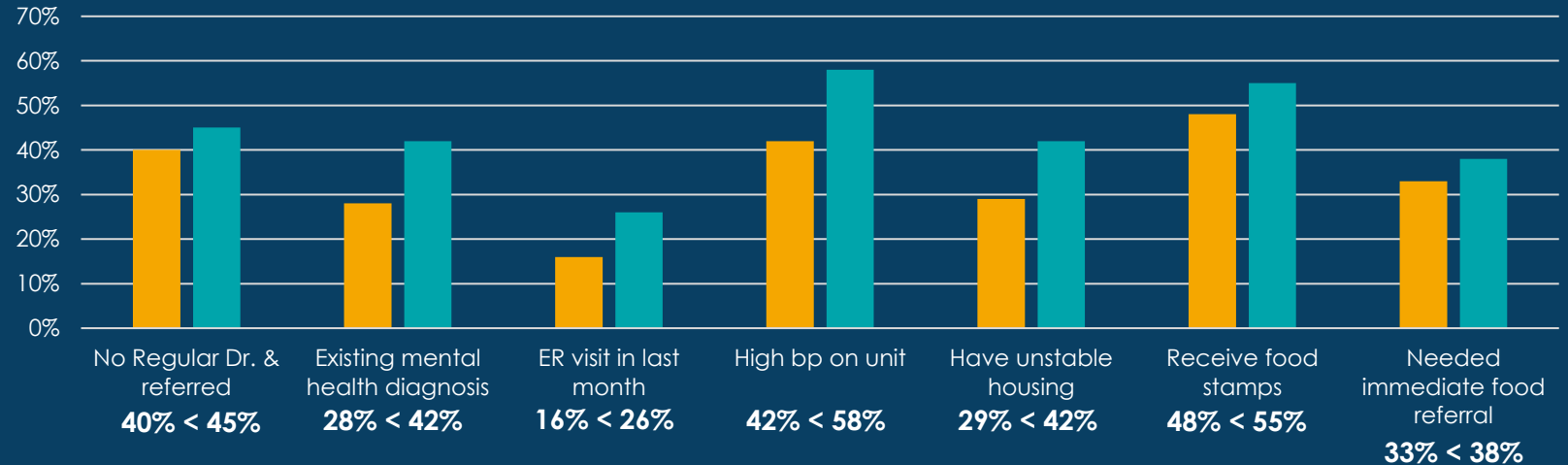
**Grier Heights Neighborhood**  
Since Dec 2022



## RACE/ETHNICITY BY GENDER

## Now & Then: Impact of 'The Bridge' Over Time

Since deployment its deployment in January 2023, Care Ring staff at The Bridge in Grier Heights have observed the following via health screenings:



Now (6.27.23)

Then (1.31.23)



## Findings & Analysis

### STRENGTHS

- Hands-on and consistent leadership of partnering organizations
- Collective passion of those working together
- Skill sets and subject matter expertise was considerable
- Flexibility and willingness to pivot as timelines changed throughout
- Everyone is open to listening to new ideas and insights
- A focus on the end goal of increasing access for disinvested people
- Project management has been on-point and a differentiator
- Consistent communication and engagement by the partner orgs
- Resident engagement has been strong and is growing weekly
- Centering trust as the central asset, focusing on relationships
- The collaborative framework has worked effectively
- The mobile unit is a difference-maker, increasing visibility

### OPPORTUNITIES

- Increased funding is a must, as a lack of resources suffocates effort
- Partnerships with additional agencies could be developed
- Continued follow-up on trust-built activities, deepening engagement
- UNC Charlotte student nurses will be able to learn via on-site engagement
- Position project as a workforce pipeline opportunity
- Accountability for all partners on mobile unit availability
- More canvassing is needed, with multiple canvassers engaging
- Increased marketing materials that are easy to understand
- Start planning for what comes after this pilot project
- Expansion to additional neighborhoods, deepen in current locations
- Documentation of the model, increased data and evidence
- Use existing data and analytics vs. gathering new content

### CHALLENGES

- Formal agreements/MOUs from every partner were not obtained
- Lack of financial resources impinged upon deployment
- After-hours care is needed for those who work during the day
- Residents in Grier Heights experience survey exhaustion
- Documentation and collection of information remains an evolving model
- Manpower to address social drivers of health is a challenge to solve
- More community health workers are needed to steward engagement
- Coordination of mobile unit was difficult + sourcing ideal location
- Fluctuating start dates impacted project model and potential
- Securing nursing students from UNC Charlotte was behind schedule
- Needs: pregnancy tests, women's health, flu shots, vaccines, STD tests
- Cost of testing supplies was a limiting factor
- Limitations on care due to mobile unit configuration (e.g. gynecological)
- Stigmas related to behavioral/mental health challenge some residents

### THREATS

- Ongoing limited resources minimize impact and threaten continuation
- Inflation and economic recession threaten fidelity of partner engagement
- Communities not prepared for COVID-19 and another pandemics
- Racial and economic disparities widening
- Changing neighborhood dynamics and affordable housing
- Duplication of services takes away the quality of what each org does best
- Not having the right resources will lead to resident disengagement
- Health waning as primary focus, new economic challenges dominate
- Return on investment must be quantified to maintain system involvement
- Trust as an asset can be lost - must be stewarded or will be squandered
- History repeating itself - must overcome barriers to access
- Lack of consistency leads to disengagement



## 2022-2023 PILOT PROJECT: Project Findings

As evidenced on page 15, The Bridge achieved very positive outcomes across six months of deployment. Beyond the quantitative analysis, Next Stage identified the following as headline findings from the first year of deployment:

### **Building the Critical Asset of Trust**

A compelling component of this project was the engagement of Project BOLT to conduct trust-based outreach toward the development of a needs assessment. As a community-based nonprofit led by a founder with lived experience and authenticity in the community, Project BOLT provided meaningful insights and feedback.

Project BOLT serves as a trust broker in the community. Lessons were learned about the length of the survey instrument and the need to first establish a relationship with community members before data collection can begin. Increasing connection before engaging in data collection will be a feature of The Bridge moving forward.

### **Barriers of Cost**

The initial design for this pilot included enough financial resources to fully engage partners toward the development of an effective model of neighborhood-embedded care. Expected investment from project partners did not materialize, significantly impacting the effort.

With fewer resources, Care Ring needed to deploy its own staff resources, impinging upon its operating model. Re-aligned financial support from Kate B. Reynolds Charitable Trust was critical to ensuring project success. In future iterations, more financial resources will be needed to formalize The Bridge into permanence.

### **Role of Mobile Health**

With clinics and urgent cares being deployed by health systems, the future of mobile health in Charlotte is a problem to be solved. While mobile units are often deployed in rural settings where transportation is a challenge, residents in cities like Charlotte benefit from the trust-building and preventative care potential of neighborhood-embedded mobile units.

This project centered the potential of relationship-building as the key to more equitable access to care. Mobile units are important to that equation. With the winding down of ONE Charlotte Health Alliance, along with increased brick-and-mortar clinics associated with health systems, the future of mobile health is in question.



## 2022-2023 PILOT PROJECT: Project Findings

### **Importance of Location**

As a pilot effort, The Bridge had an opportunity to test variables to increase resident engagement, including the mobile unit deployment location.

On May 2, The Bridge moved the location of the mobile health unit to the 7-11 parking lot at the corner of Marvin Rd. and Wendover Rd. The change in location noticeably increased foot traffic as an increased number of people engaged with the deployment team. Shifting the location just a few blocks also attracted the attention of two other service providers who happened to be in Grier Heights - WellCare and Legal Aid. Partnering together, the three organizations were able to develop a presence that resulted in more energy and excitement.

### **Training Platform for Pre-Service Nurses**

One of the more compelling aspects of the 2022-23 iteration of The Bridge was the opportunity to engage pre-service nursing students from the UNC Charlotte School of Nursing. Under the direction of Angela Lamb, Assistant Clinical Professor, students experienced delivering care on-location in a mobile unit setting.

At a time when healthcare systems are experiencing a significant workforce shortage, with the road ahead even more challenging, The Bridge served as a platform to provide meaningful experiences that can augment academic learning. Engaged students expressed enthusiasm to see healthcare integrated outside of a typical clinical space, meeting residents where they are and are more comfortable.

### **Medicaid Expansion**

Once thought unlikely, the North Carolina State Legislature voted to approve Medicaid expansion in March 2023. The move promises to increase coverage for hundreds of thousands of low-income adults across the state, including many in the Greater Charlotte region.

Understanding how the expansion of Medicaid will impact access for residents was explored in real-time by the pilot partners. In addition to helping patients explore their own Medicaid eligibility, outreach within Grier Heights allowed community health workers to informally gauge likely eligibility. Expansion will raise the maximum allowed income to 138 percent of the federal poverty level, or about \$20,120 a year for a single person who is older than 19 and has no children. Continued research is needed to develop a full picture of how this will impact need.





## 2022-2023 PILOT PROJECT: Stories of Impact

### **Timely Communication Key to The Bridge**

Sometimes text messaging is more than a simple communication tool - it can unlock potential for impact and lead to health care access. Such was the case for Mark Henderson, a Physicians Reach Out (PRO) client at Care Ring who received a text message about The Bridge's mobile unit being in Grier Heights on March 21, 2023. PRO is a network of doctors that offer dignified care for patients who lack health insurance.

Once Mark arrived, Care Ring learned that he was already a patient in their system. He arrived to get his blood pressure and A1C checked and received an HIV test from the Health Department. While providing the care, it was learned that he was going to have surgery on his shoulder soon and would need a recliner. To support him, Care Ring extended a referral to Crisis Assistance Ministry for this additional service. The power of mobile health care matched by trust-built communication channels was clearly evident.

### **Collaboration a Hallmark of the Bridge**

The Bridge not only connects people to immediate care but also helps set residents up for future success.

In May, resident Darren Wright, a father-to-be, was interested in completing a Medicaid application. The Bridge was able to provide guidance on the application and a referral for additional support was made to Loaves and Fishes and A Guided Journey for expectant fathers would be needed.

WellCare, which also partners with Care Ring at The Bridge, was able to secure a car seat for the family which will be useful in transporting the baby home and to wellness checks. These stories of holistic, partnerful care were a regular feature of the deployment of The Bridge.







## Next Steps



## Next Steps

With the pilot year of The Bridge now complete, the partners are evaluating the data from the first year and working together to continue their collaboration in 2023-24.

### Financial Support for Year Two

Care Ring and its partners have launched a second year of the initiative beginning in July 2023. The absence of steady operating revenue for The Bridge was a significant detractor. It was a challenge that needed to be overcome if the initiative was to continue. Luckily, the strong outcomes of the pilot impressed grantmakers in the Greater Charlotte area and encouraged investment. Financial support from Mecklenburg County, Mecklenburg County ABC Board, LISC Charlotte, and United Way of Greater Charlotte is making it possible for The Bridge to expand its services to additional neighborhoods, bringing this winning combination of health and human services to more people lacking access to care.

### New Partnerships & Locations Sourced

In addition to continuing service to the Grier Heights neighborhood, which was the location of the pilot project, The Bridge will support two additional deployments in 2023-24:

- **North End Community Coalition** - Like Grier Heights, the Druid Hills neighborhood north of Uptown Charlotte has a long history of civic engagement and community development. The Bridge is partnering with the **North End Community Coalition** (NECC), led by co-founder and Executive Director Melissa Gaston, with deployment anticipated in August 2023. Learnings from the pilot year will support strong deployment design, including sourcing an ideal location and service partners to amplify impact.
- **Homeless Community Coalition** - In partnership with community-based organizations **Block Love Charlotte** and **Hearts for the Invisible Charlotte Coalition**, The Bridge will also bring its mobile health outreach to individuals experiencing homelessness. This effort is an opportunity for The Bridge to better understand the health needs of unhoused individuals and how best to build trust with a population that is transient in nature.

Both deployments are new partnerships that extend the collaboration team that continues to be captained by **Care Ring**, with **Project BOLT**, the **UNC Charlotte School of Nursing**, **Novant** and **Next Stage** returning to the innovative partnership.