



DRIVING The State of Black Arizona Vol. V
LOCAL INVESTMENT
IN BLACK ARIZONANS

Community Conversation | January 26, 2021
Executive Summary

Voices from African American leaders and residents in Arizona is a critical element to the State of Black Arizona (SBAZ) fifth publication, **Driving Local Investment in Black Arizonans**. The experiences lived by these leaders, provide impact and context to the key topics and data around education, economy, infrastructure, healthcare, and civic participation.

With over 100 attendees on the evening of January 26, 2021, SBAZ convened a 90-minute virtual Community Conversation, that presented data on the status and condition of African Americans in Arizona on the five topics. The breakout groups were virtually dispersed for a deeper dive into each key area with spirited discussions. Insights were shared, including:

- “We all didn’t come out of the previous recession the same way.”
- “What would culturally sensitive mental healthcare look like?”
- “School to prison pipeline is real.”
- “Focus on early outreach to parents.” (to stay engaged with students through high school)
- “If public transportation was more adequate and available, money could be diverted to other (household) needs.”
- “Voting and showing up! You have to know that you have a voice.”

There was a strong interest and desire to continue to engage in civic dialogue to identify priorities and find solutions were demonstrated in each breakout, and upon reconvening the entire group at the close of the evening.

Examining the challenges of the African American community through data and conversation deepened the reason for understanding; also, it was revealed through three live polls during the evening which included eleven choices. Participants overwhelmingly ranked these issues at the top to improve lives and provide guidance on where to focus future efforts:

- Pre-K and Elementary Education
- Educational Attainment
- Housing Affordability
- Good Paying Jobs

The awareness and publication of **Driving Local Investment in Black Arizonans** will no doubt stir the desire to move to action and seek systemic solutions to bring equity and economic sustainability to Arizona’s African American community. Recommendations from this initial Community Conversation include connecting key partners and community with tools and resources to address issues of concern and building on this outreach platform to keep community members informed and engaged about progress.

SBAZ is proud to partner with the Arizona Black Chamber of Commerce, Arizona Center for Economic Progress, Center for the Future of Arizona, Greater Phoenix Economic Council, and Greater Phoenix Urban League and many other leaders to bring the publication to fruition.

The State of Black Arizona (SBAZ) fifth publication, **Driving Local Investment in Black Arizonans** is supported by these sponsors.



Project Steering Committee

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Dr. Amanda Burke | Center for the Future of Arizona

Attendees were asked to reflect on two questions and provide one-word answers through an online poll. The results were shared in real time with participants in the form of a word cloud. The following are the word clouds:



One Word that you love or what connects you to your community?

One Word that is a challenge your community is facing?

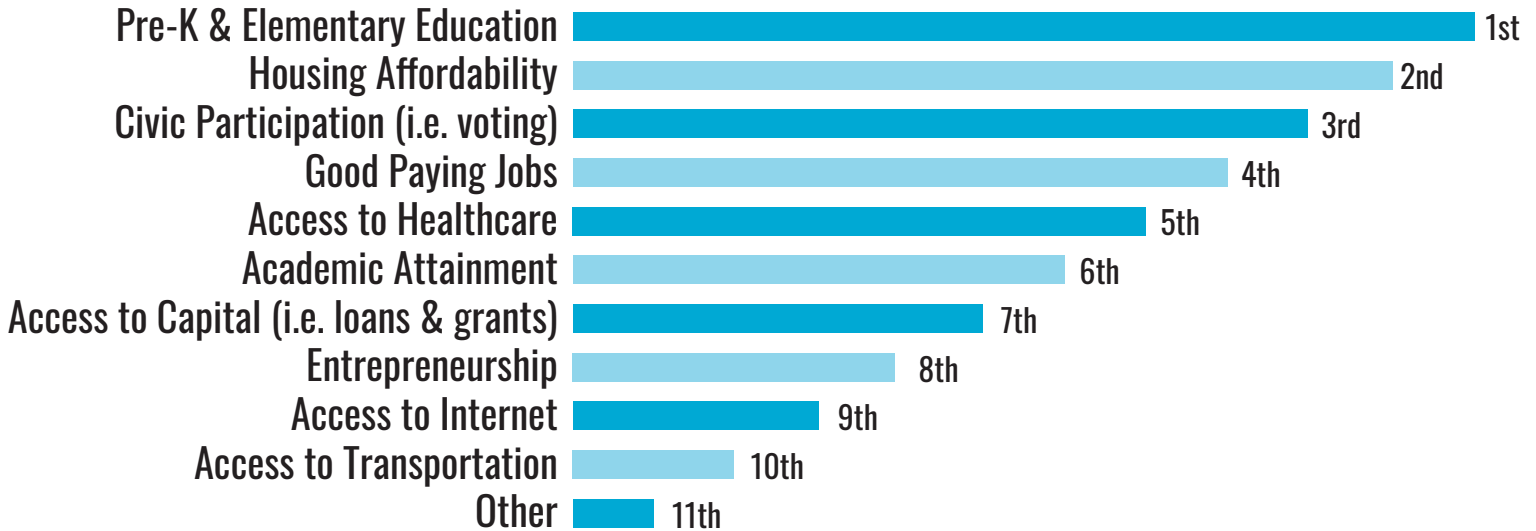


Attendees were asked to rank a set of priorities during the session. The purpose was to identify what issues were top of mind for participants at the beginning of the community conversation and to provide an opportunity for them to revisit those priorities following a review of data and further discussion.

The polling was done using an online polling tool that required each participant to go to a web link and manually move each topic up and down until it represented their concerns from most important on top, to least important on the bottom. Below are the polling results.

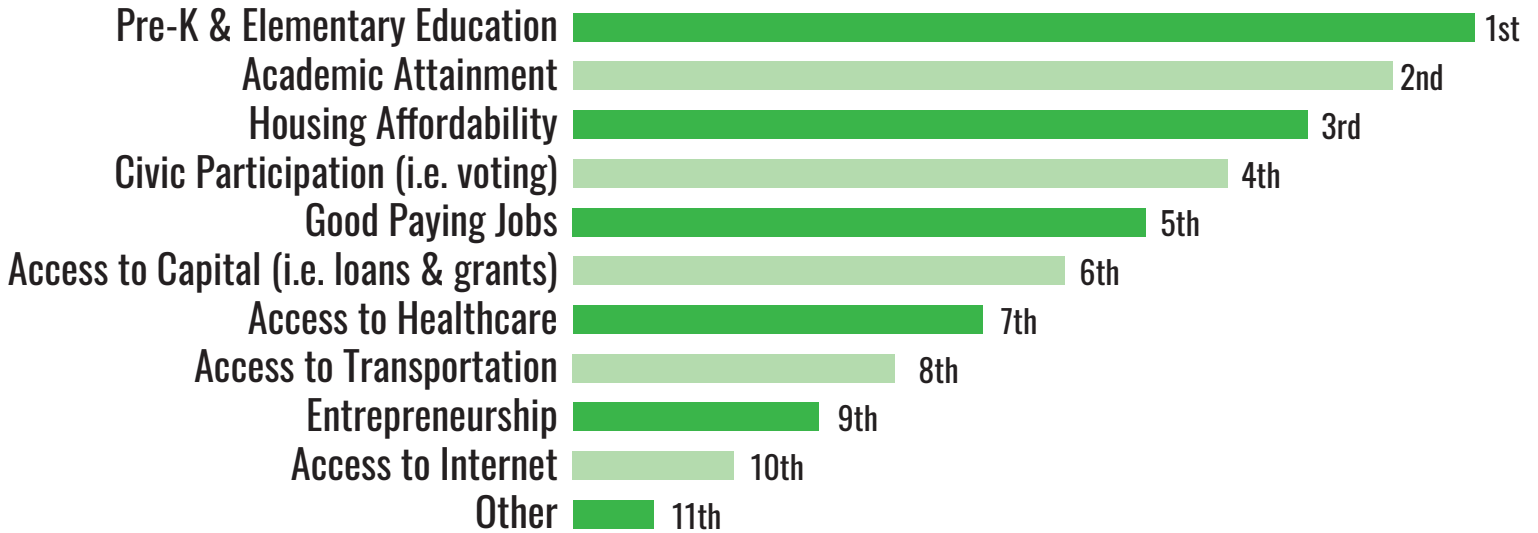
Poll of priorities before seeing any data (32 responses):

Please rank the top issues on which Arizona leaders should focus to improve equality for the African American community.



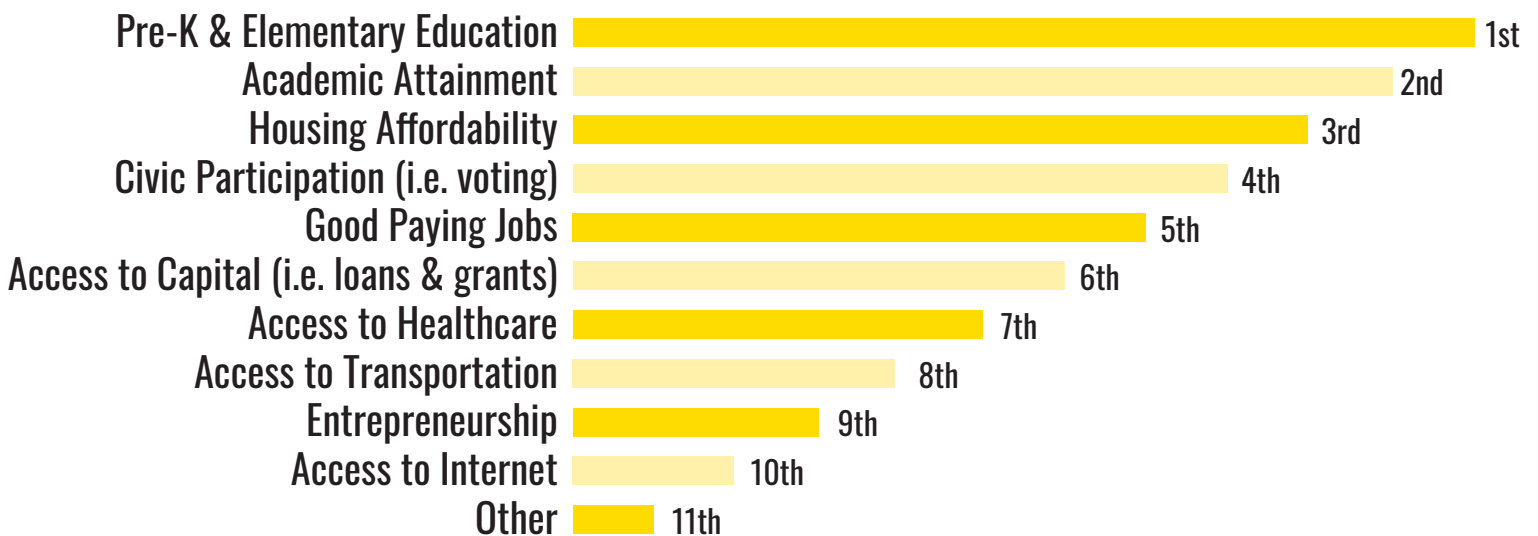
Poll of priorities after seeing the data, with no discussion (27 responses):

Please rank the top issues on which Arizona leaders should focus to improve equality for the African American community.



Poll of priorities after 20 minutes of discussion and hearing a summary of the discussion from all groups (18 responses):

Final Test: Please rank the top issues on which Arizona leaders should focus to improve equality for the African American community.



Break Out Discussion Summary

Presented with data on the status and condition of African Americans in Arizona on the five topics, breakout groups were virtually convened to enable attendees to have more discussion on specific key areas. Each breakout session was facilitated and had a notetaker. The full group of attendees gathered virtually at the end of the meeting for a report out from each breakout group. Captured below are the key takeaways from each issue-specific breakout discussion.

Education

As highlighted during three polls over the course of the Community Conversation, education was selected topic of most importance to improve equity for the African American community. The education breakout discussion reflected that sentiment in terms of emotion and energy. With the data highlighting opportunities for improvement for Black students compared with other populations, attendees considered many aspects of education from root causes to potential solutions, including support for teachers and counselors, parental involvement from pre-K through high school, need for male teacher role models, and questions about student assessment. Participants were keen to improve student performance and motivated to move to action.

Economy

Data presented on labor force participation, unemployment, household income and home ownership between the African American community and other population groups depicted disparities and the need to change the trajectory. The economy breakout discussion honed in on jobs and homeownership as key factors to improve conditions for the African American community. Participants discussed hiring and promotional practices in public and private sectors which may address gender, but still do not consider diversity in the broadest sense. With regard to homeownership, past and lingering redlining processes continue to cause ownership barriers. Current and future opportunities for improvement in employment could include combinations of mentoring, networking, job and skill development, entrepreneurship support, and individuals taking advantage of a robust community college system.

Break Out Discussion Summary

Infrastructure

There were no surprises when the infrastructure breakout group discussed the data regarding lower rates of African American access to home internet compared to other populations. Internet, computers, and phones are not permanent items for families and individuals who may only be one disaster away from losing all. The group also focused on where people lived and where jobs were located. Oftentimes owning and maintaining a vehicle are cost prohibitive. Limited public transportation for individuals who live in particular areas, e.g., south Phoenix, can make it difficult to get to where their jobs are located. Exploring solutions, the breakout group surfaced and discussed ideas such as the City (Phoenix) working with employers to locate closer to an employee base and thinking about what the future could bring in terms of transportation infrastructure, new economy jobs, and other smart city innovations that meet the needs of employers and employees.

Healthcare

The healthcare breakout group pointed to the 11% of African American Arizonans that did not have insurance. They discussed contributing factors including lack of education on options, lack of cultural sensitivity within the healthcare system and by healthcare providers, and affordability. There was an interest in seeking more data on mental health issues impacting the community. Although health was not one of the primary topics of importance during the event polls, the group recognized that health was linked to having a good education, a good job, a home, and good health insurance and better health outcomes.

Civic Participation

The civic participation breakout group generated enthusiasm on exploring ways to activate members of the African American community to become more engaged on issues of importance to the community. Examples of how included voting, gaining an understanding of how government works, knowing your elected representatives (local, State, and Federal), and participating in how issues and policies are resolved. Although a lack of leadership and mentoring from seasoned advocates were mentioned as hindrances to achieving more involvement, the discussion also highlighted local individual actions were impactful, nonetheless. There was an understanding that moving to action required collective ownership by members of the community particularly those in attendance.