

Community & Social Connection

Thrive Literature Review Overview

What is Community & Social Connection? The social infrastructure, civic networks, and relational capital that enable Central Florida residents to participate meaningfully in community life.

What is it characterized by? Civic engagement, “third spaces,” cultural preservation, consistent democratic participation, meaningful economic and person-to-person connectedness across income levels, and responsible resource allocation and planning.

Critical Issues in Central Florida

Social Isolation	Economic Segregation	Low Civic Engagement
Declining Institutional Trust	Fragmented Systems	Service Gaps

Strategic Priorities & Interventions

- 1. Building Cross-Class Economic Connectedness & Friendships:** Pilot school scheduling/extracurricular models keeping diverse students together (block schedules, mixed-interest clubs, diverse team assignments); collaborate with colleges implementing cross-class roommate assignments; partner with municipalities designing parks, libraries, community centers as income-mixing spaces with accessible locations and diverse programming; scale mentorship connecting youth across socioeconomic lines through Big Brothers Big Sisters, YMCA, Boys & Girls Clubs; track economic connectedness metrics annually.
- 2. Strengthening Civic Engagement & Democratic Participation:** Launch voter registration/mobilization campaigns, especially targeting Latinos (1 in 3 not registered to vote); support local journalism partnering community news funds to build new or support older infrastructure for nonprofit newsrooms; pilot participatory budgeting for small philanthropic initiatives enabling residents to decide the direction of \$50-200K in funds.
- 3. Supporting IPV Survivors with Cash Assistance:** Advocate for local government unrestricted cash programs (\$3K-10K) enabling survivors to address safety and stability needs; embed “trust survivors” principle ensuring survivor voice/leadership; establish nonprofit programs modeled on FreeFrom’s Safety Fund; advocate debt relief and utility forgiveness partnering financial institutions and utilities; integrate DV risk assessments into women’s economic empowerment programs with referral partnerships.