

Early Childhood Education Needs Assessment

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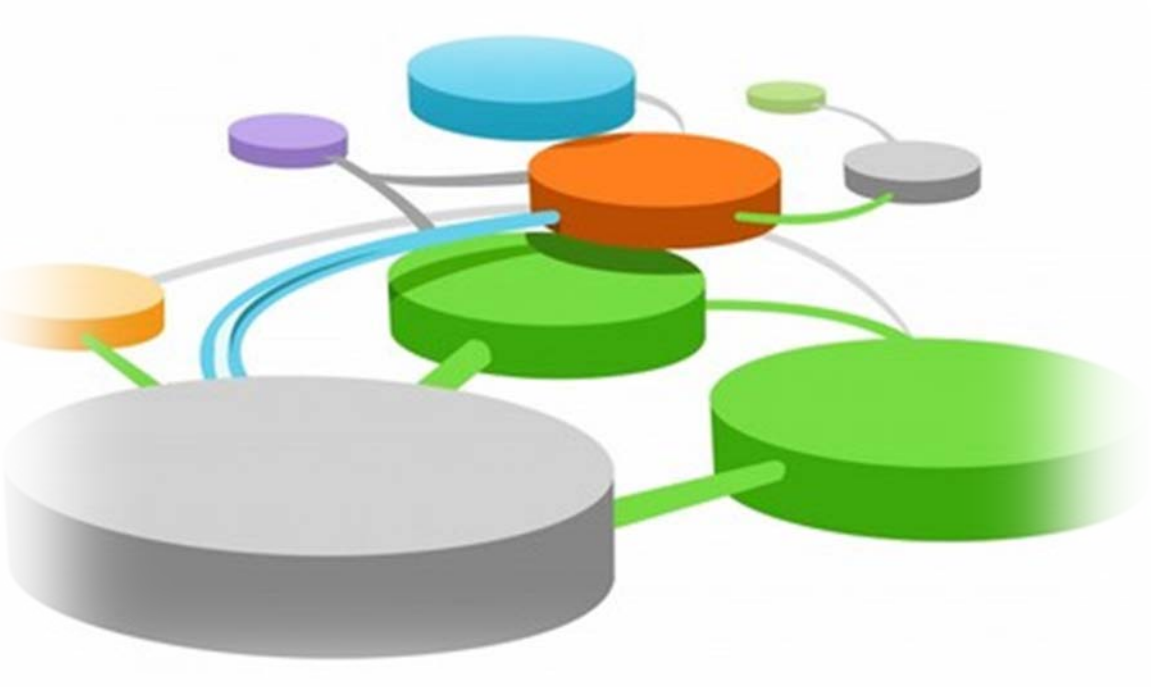
Project Overview

Goals

- Determine feasibility of new preschool program for South Omaha location
- Identify needed supports for early childhood education

Challenges

- Varied stakeholder interests and investments in programming
- New trends in early childhood education and shifting regulatory environment
- Political nature of decisions, and evolving understanding of organizational dynamics



Methods

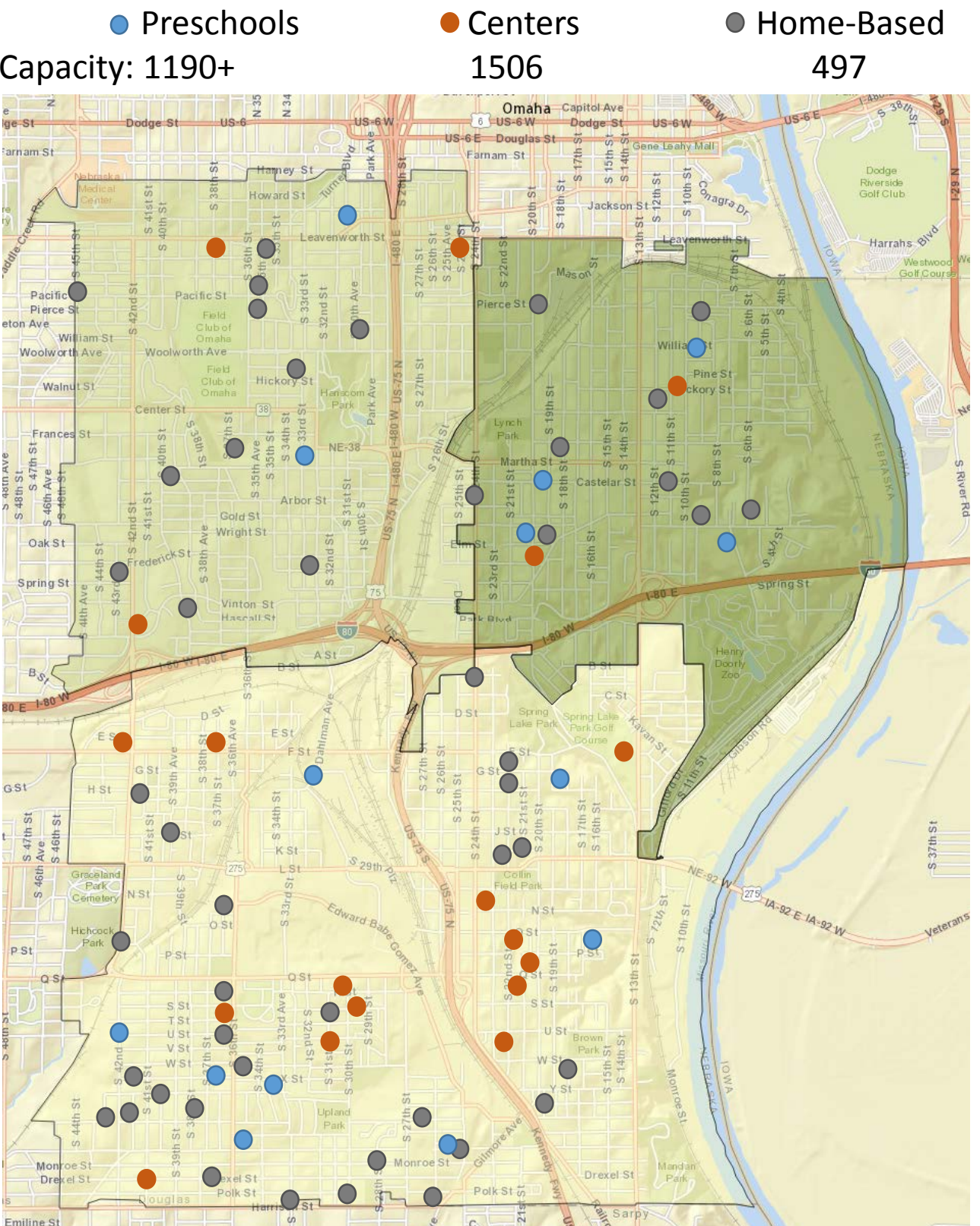
System-wide

- Literature Review**
 - Best practices for early childhood education
 - Parental decision-making
 - Quality and licensing standards
- Expert Interviews**
 - Higher education faculty
 - Policy experts
 - Program consultants

Program Specific

- Stakeholder Interviews**
 - Program staff
 - Program administrators
 - Funders
- Demographic Analysis**
 - Analysis by number of licensed preschool-aged children, ethnicity, race, and income
- Competitive Analysis**
 - Broken down by licensed center-based, preschool, and home-based care
 - Focus on surrounding zip codes and visual mapping

S trengths	W eaknesses
Common Ground Partnership of program and funder organization Strong reputation Help families in need Curriculum	Common Ground Low enrollment Facility (size and amenities) Keeping qualified staff Funding/cost
O pportunities	T reats
Common Ground Working with other organizations and to support families Increase the exposure of the program Let people know the value of preschool	Common Ground Changing neighborhood demographics Competition Finding qualified staff Funding/cost



Key Findings

- Organizational consensus on mission and goals**
 - Funders, administration, and program staff agree on the challenges and strengths of operating a preschool program
 - Mission and vision of all involved seek to help families in poverty gain access to quality education and community supports
- Decision-making factors for parents by income and race**
 - Parents of all income levels want quality early childhood education, and their definitions of quality instruction match state and national standards
 - Low-income parents make decisions on programs more quickly, with more attention to program hours and location
 - Low-income parents and African-American parents value positive interactions with staff over licensure
 - Hispanic parents and new immigrants are more likely to use home-based care
- Additional barriers to quality early childhood education**
 - Transportation
 - Schedules for parents with irregular work hours
 - Understanding of new education pedagogy like *learning through play*
 - Cultural competence and language skills of program staff

Implications for Research and Practice

Staffing	Family Supports	Community Supports
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training in multicultural education • Priority of language skills for programs serving immigrant populations • Improvements in staff retention and pay • Increase educational and licensing opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Further development of two-generation approach to education is needed • Education of parents about pedagogy • Assistance with transportation • Quality centers with evening and late-night hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved job market will allow parents to access higher quality early childhood education • Facilitate access to supplemental community resources (food, housing, job training/education) • Development of models that integrate early childhood education and other community supports at a central location