# CITY OF TULSA YOUTH COUNCIL:

## 2026 YOUTH IMPACT STATEMENTS



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alina and marylove




presentation day



hard at work

- 20 students
- 8 schools represented
- 8 City Council districts
- 8 proposals

- 236 interviews during the listening campaign

- 15 sessions from January to June
- 18 adults attended various meetings

# POST-PROGRAM SURVEY:

- 100% enjoyed the program
- 100% are committed to making positive community change in the future
- 92% feel more connected to youth in Tulsa
- 100% feel the sessions helped them utilize new skills
- 100% know how to connect with city leaders when they need to
- 92% learned the role the city plays in their everyday life
- 100% would recommend the program to other youth

# WHAT IS THE MOST IMPORTANT THING YOU LEARNED IN THE PROGRAM?

- “A really important thing I learned is how the city works and how we youth can help our city and community, no matter what, and I have gotten better at my networking skills during this program!”
- “The most important thing I learned during the program was to fight. Fight for what you believe in and never stop until you accomplish your goals.”
- “[I learned] How to reach out to and connect with city leaders! I'll be using those emailing skills forever!”
- “Persistence is key to making change happen. I’ve learned this through many meetings leading up to final presentations and in regards to every meeting we held on Tuesdays. This program helped me learn to never ever give up and keep reaching out.”
- “Este programa me gusto mucho porque nos enseño como participar de una manera mas activa en nuestra comunidad. Nos mostraron a quien contactar si queremos desarrollar un proyecto propio y tambien nos motivaron a involucrarnos en iniciativas ya existentes. Ademas, a pesar de la diferencia de idioma, me sentí muy cómoda trabajando con todos los participantes. Fue una experiencia que me permitio aprender nuevas habilidades, conocer personas con diferentes perspectivas y ganar mas confianza para involucrarme en mi comunidad.”

# HOW COULD WE IMPROVE?

- “One of the biggest flaw in the program would be the timing. I believe it should be earlier in the school year because in the last weeks finals happen, people get burnt out, and it’s just not the same feeling as when you’re fresh and ready to learn.”
- “I wish we had more meetings with the city councilors or could just observe and talk about bills[...]”
- “You could try and have a city councilor at EVERY meeting.” [AND] “The program would be better if they went to more city hall meetings.”
- “Longer sessions would be great, I loved meeting every Tuesdays but I would've loved staying for longer.”

# NEXT STEPS

- Continue communication with city leaders about viability of projects
- Meet with the City Auditor’s office to learn more about their community listening and data analysis to determine alignment
- Create pathways for City of Tulsa Youth Council alumni to lead subsequent councils for true near-peer facilitation, leadership, and co-creation

# TULSA'S YOUTH CURFEW

*Presented by Margaret Hope-Hernandez*

## WHAT IS THE CURFEW?

Youth under eighteen must be accompanied by a parent or guardian when within the Inner Dispersal Loop (downtown Tulsa) between the hours of 9 p.m. to 6 a.m. on Fridays and Saturdays. Violators will receive a fine of ⩽$200 excluding cost fees

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

The city of Tulsa made a decision that focuses on the punishment of youth rather than on the factors that may cause youth to loiter downtown in the first place. This decision was made with very little input from youth organizations in Tulsa, and in some cases, was made against expert advice. The enforcement of the curfew has, according to one Councilor, fined only Black youth in Tulsa.

## WHAT WE'RE ASKING

I will be meeting with and talking to different City Councilors to discuss this curfew and possible alternatives to keep our youth safe while listening to youth opinions and ensuring equal enforcement of Tulsa's youth. Ask your city councilor to vote against the continuation of the curfew when they meet in October 2026!



# FOOD DESERTS AFFECTING TULSANS

*Presented by Elizabet Cruz, Abeni Murage, and Jhogan Marrufo*

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

According to the Tulsa planning office Neighborhood Condition Index (NCI), there are 20 certified neighborhoods in north Tulsa. However, only 4 have a dedicated fresh-food grocery stores within a half-mile radius. For the other 16 neighborhoods, in their half-mile radius are small box stores (Dollar-Tree or Dollar General). Though they offer variety of food, they are limited with fresh food needed for a healthy diet.

## WHAT IS THE DATA?

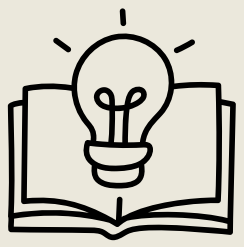
The grocery stores from these neighborhoods are 1.3-- 4.5 miles radius. Additionally, there are struggles of getting groceries. According to National Institute on Aging, 63% of people use the bus to get to the store, and heading to the grocery store is between 45-60 minutes.

## WHAT WE'RE ASKING

Establishing a grocery store in the North Tulsa area will directly combat this issue by providing a reliable source of nutritious foods, promoting better dietary habits, and reducing health disparities within the community. This initiative is not just about food; it's about investing in the health and future of North Tulsa. Beyond addressing the immediate need for food access, it can create jobs for local residents, stimulate economic activity in the area, and attract further investment. Potential locations:

- 906 E 36th St N
- 4734 N Peoria Ave
- 46th St North & N Lewis Ave

# FUNDING LITERACY IN TULSA



*Presented by Brayden Tottress, Allison Gomez, Cynthia Espinoza, Weston Hood, and Elisa Villalobos-Zuñiga*

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Oklahoma ranks 47th in the nation in childhood literacy. Lack of literacy causes daily problems, but also, according to Paper Tutors, hinders economic development by restricting broad access to the labor market and suppresses overall civic engagement. According to the Oklahoma Council of Public Affairs (OPCA) in the Spring of 2025 State Testing cycle, 27% of third grade students ranked “proficient” or better in English, and 43% of students ranked below “basic”.

## WHAT WE'RE ASKING

The proposed solution is instating a data centers tax which should be directed to funding literacy programs for Tulsa youth, helping our youth in Tulsa with literacy programs to better their skills in reading and writing to set them up for success.

## WHY THIS SOLUTION?

If Tulsa uses a portion of the taxes generated by data centers to fund literacy programs, more students will have access to the help and resources they need to improve their reading and writing skills. This would raise test scores, reduce educational disparities between schools, and provide more opportunities for students in underserved communities. In the long run, improved literacy will contribute positively to their communities. Investing in literacy today will strengthen the future of Tulsa's youth and Oklahoma's economic development.

# LACK OF RESOURCES IN WOMEN'S HEALTHCARE

*Presented by Francesca Cuzalina*

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Women face many barriers in accessing healthcare. Healthcare inequalities have been proven to lead to delayed diagnoses and poor health outcomes, specifcally in breast cancer diagnoses. Working to improve the health of women in our community will lead to improved health all around the city.

## WHAT IS THE DATA?

Only about 50% of uninsured women report recieving a recent mammogram, whereas 83% of privately insured women have received a recent mammogram in Oklahoma. Standard mammogram costs can range anywhere between $286-$549, and in Oklahoma, 40% of unisured women pay out-of-pocket for screenings. Only 64-71% of Oklahoman women are up-to-date on their cancer screenings, even though early detecting has been proving to drastically increase survival rates.

## WHAT WE'RE ASKING

The city should devote a certain amount of money to supporting women's health clinics, specifically increasing access to breast health services and expanding maternal and reproductive care across the state. This includes expanding Telehealth opportunities to make it easier to consult with physicians without in person visits.

# DISABILITY SUPPORT IN TULSA SCHOOLS

*Presented by Aarone Smith and Lucero Laguna*

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

In Oklahoma, there is a lack of attention paid to disabled students and disability rights. This comes from a combination of lack of school resources, lack of funding, and no place to report violations of the Americans with Disabilites Act.

## WHAT IS THE DATA?

13% of TPS students have physical or mental disabilities, 15% of which are low income students and an additional 15% are in Special Education Classes. These students are protected by the Americans With Disabilities Act, but with lack of funding and resources, not only are these students' educations affected but so is every student, teacher, and support staff around them.

## WHAT WE'RE ASKING

We are asking for the city to do three things: First, to expand Tulsa's 311 line to allow students to call in violations of the Americans with Disabilties Act. Second, to create a TPS or city board focused on youth with disabilities, and third, to increase disability education both for teachers and support staff and for city officials.




# INCREASING LANGUAGE EDUCATION CLASSES

*Presented by Lin Mazariegos and Mariana Ponce*

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Communication creates opportunity. Currently, there are an estimated 55,533 immigrants living in Tulsa, which accounts for about 9% of the population. 56% of these immigrants speak Spanish at home, and 32% of these immigrants have limited language proficiency.

## WHAT IS THE DATA?

11% of Tulsan's have a primary language other than English, and 4% have limited language proficiency. This can be seen reflected in the number of immigrant entreprenuers, with only 19% of Tulsa entreprenuers being immigrants. Increasing language proficiency will broaden economic opportunity and civic engagement amoung 9% of Tulsa's population.

## WHAT WE'RE ASKING

Our solution is for the city to begin funding language learning programs open to all ages of immigrants, focusing on the main languages spoken by immigrants in Tulsa: Spanish, Burmese, Hindi, Vietnamese, and Chinese.



# MENTAL HEALTH AND THIRD SPACES

*Presented by Alfonso Palafox, Astrid Rivera, and Bailey Garcia*

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

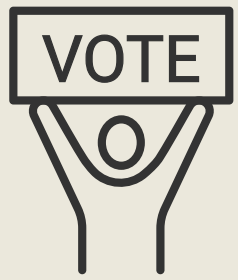
In the process of reviewing our community survey data, we realized that mental health challenges are rising among Tulsa youth, making awareness and support more important than ever. To help meet this need, we propose creating a third space where young people can connect, talk openly, and access community-based support without stigma.

## WHAT IS THE DATA?

Based on a national survey among highschool students from 2023, 40% reported persistent feelings of sadness or hopelessness. 20% reported seriously considering suicide, and 16% reported making a suicide plan. This shows that mental health struggles are rising nationally, and in Oklahoma, the percentage of youth with anxiety or depression is three percentile points higher than the national average.

## WHAT WE'RE ASKING

Our solution is for the City of Tulsa to fund the creation of a third space devoted to youth mental health in the Promenade Mall. This space would serve as a community center, and would offer weekly mental health check-ins and support groups, tutoring, sports, e-games, and overall community engagement.




# REVERSING THE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT CRISIS

*Presented by Alina Siddiqui and Marylove Kumah*

## WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?

Many high school students lack direct exposure to local government processes. This limits young people's minds and decreases the understanding  youth have of civic engagement and public service careers. This gap presents an opportunity for the City to work to connect with youth through real-world and hands-on experience.

## WHAT IS THE DATA?

Oklahoma has one of the lowest voter turnouts across the nation. This is caused in part by lack of exposure to government processes and lack of understanding in civic engagement. Only 33% of voters age 18-29 participated in the 2024 election, and the numbers for local elections are much lower. Low participation reflects a lack of civic exposure and engagement opportunities.

## WHAT WE'RE ASKING

We are requesting that City of Tulsa begins a High School Internship Program, partnering with highschools across Tulsa, Owasso, Jenks, and Bixby. In this program, students would partner with City Council members and departments, providing real world civic engagement opportunities and education.