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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Neighborhood Empowerment Council (NEC) is Newark's implementing organization of New Jersey's Urban Coordinating Council (UCC), a statewide council created to coordinate local community development efforts. NEC operates in Newark's West Side Park community, which is the UCC-designated neighborhood for the city of Newark. Utilizing the resources of Rutgers' Community Outreach Partnership Center (RCOPC), NEC has begun a comprehensive multidisciplinary strategy for the revitalization of the West Side Park neighborhood. RCOPC, a project of Rutgers' Center for Urban Policy Research (CUPR), involves other units of the University under CUPR's direction. As a first step in this strategy, NEC's Health and Social Services Task Force approached RCOPC to identify faith-based and social service assets of the community through a process known as asset mapping. Graduate students in a community development studio course conducted a research study in West Side Park to identify these assets.

West Side Park is a 120-block area located in West Central Newark with a population of approximately 20,000 people. Once a solid, working-class neighborhood, West Side Park has suffered disinvestment, population loss, and de-industrialization for more than thirty years. The neighborhood has above-average numbers of people receiving public assistance and incomes are 20 percent less than the rest of the city and 60 percent below the state's median.

The mission of this project was to identify faith-based and social service assets in the community. Based on NEC's objectives, we structured our research around six key program areas: after-school programs, continuing education and training programs, facilities, computers, childcare, and social services. Research goals included: types of after-school and continuing education programs offered, if these programs under or over capacity, what facilities are available to these organizations, expansion plans and the barriers they face, computer resources and needs, available childcare services and costs, and existing social services.

To answer these research questions, a survey was developed and mailed to approximately 100 neighborhood faith-based and social service organizations. Additionally, telephone interviews, in-person interviews, and site visits were used to gather information. The survey results are based on information received from 21 organizations. From this research the team was able to produce a directory of neighborhood service providers, a report on the survey findings, and maps identifying services in West Side Park.

The findings in this report provide an initial assessment of faith-based and social service assets in the community. It is important to note that this report is based only on the responses of 21 organizations. Further, the research was only conducted on the supply, or provider, side and no research was done on the demand, or user, side. This report does provide an initial benchmark of social services available in West Side Park and should be considered a first step for continuing research in the neighborhood.

Among the more significant findings of the research are:

- *Computers are important.* Half of the respondents reported having at least one computer and many expressed interest in adding or expanding computer resources. Though the PC-based Pentium II is the most common computer reported, however, this is due to recent upgrades in two organizations' computer labs. Most organizations lack adequate hardware, software, and training.
- *Agencies see demand for social services and would like to expand.* Almost 75 percent of the organizations surveyed provide some type of social service and would like to increase these services. Other organization also have expansion plans and desires, but face barriers of funding and capacity.
- *Strong community leadership concentrated in a few organizations.* The neighborhood is fortunate to have several leaders who have an impressive enthusiasm for and commitment to revitalizing West Side Park. This leadership is concentrated in a few organizations. There is a need for greater communication among all service providers in the neighborhood.

West Side Park enjoys a wide range of resourceful and dedicated service providers. As they seek to grow and offer more services to residents, many face challenges of funding and capacity. While further research is needed to determine specific strategies for expansion, many of these challenges can be met by maximizing limited resources through coordination and sharing. The community leaders' enthusiasm is one of West Side Park's most valuable assets and will be instrumental in increasing the coordination and capacity building among the organizations. The assets that exist in this community are building blocks that provide a strong foundation for meeting residents' needs now and in the future.

INTRODUCTION

The Rutgers Community Development Studio Course (studio) is designed to provide graduate planning and policy students with the opportunity to undertake applied research and analysis to benefit a community based client in meeting their mission and objectives. The West Side Park community, Newark's target area in New Jersey's Urban Coordinating Council, was selected as the site for the class project. The sponsor is the West Side Park Neighborhood Empowerment Council (NEC). The Health and Social Service Task Force of NEC is the liaison with the Rutgers students and faculty. The studio was asked to identify services, counseling resources, and after-school programs offered by local churches, human service agencies, and schools. The studio course complements a multi-year technical assistance and research effort sponsored by Rutgers' Center for Urban Policy Research (CUPR). CUPR was selected in a nationwide competition to receive a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) contract through HUD's Community Outreach Partnership Center (COPC) initiative, to provide technical assistance to the West Side Park NEC. Both NEC and CUPR approached the studio course to undertake research that would be used by the community as well as provide baseline data for the COPC project. Both organizations agreed to commit individuals and resources to support the project.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT OF WEST SIDE PARK

The detrimental effects of de-industrialization and suburbanization that most industrial cities experienced in the second half of this century were greatly exacerbated in Newark. The West Side Park area serves as a particular example of these large-scale institutional changes and illustrates both the vibrant past and hopeful future of Newark. For the purposes of this study, the history of West Side Park can be divided into two periods: pre- and post-1967 riots.

Pre-1967

Up until the late 1960's, the West Side Park area was a solid, blue-collar, multi-cultural area, enjoying a thriving commercial base along Springfield Avenue. The residential housing patterns exhibited racial integration and a balance of income levels. There was a balanced mix of residents including African-American, Irish, and Jewish families. Many old time residents recall the existence of butcher stores, bakeries, produce stores, and other important community businesses. Shoppers had a variety of options and could serve their basic needs without leaving the area. Likewise, there were a variety of employment opportunities ranging from manufacturing jobs to professionals and merchants. The mix of incomes ensured high levels of homeownership and well-maintained properties. Finally, people had access to a wide range of recreational activities and parks.

Post-1967

The riot of 1967 represents a turning point for Newark. In addition to inflicting physical damage on the community, the riot also accelerated the demographic and economic shifts that Newark was experiencing. These trends included suburbanization ("white flight"), de-industrialization, discrimination in federal housing policy, and other macro-level events. The riot contributed to further economic disinvestment, underfunded public schools and services, and a shortage of jobs and housing. The West Side Park area has been struggling with the aftermath of the riots and these larger trends for more than thirty years.

Today, the West Side Park area is comprised of 120 square blocks and approximately 20,000 residents. The following table outlines selected data for West Side Park, the State of New Jersey and the City of Newark. The statistics show that West Side Park has higher than average numbers of people receiving public assistance and incomes that are 20 percent less than Newark's and 60 percent below the median for New Jersey. It also shows relatively low levels of educational attainment. Finally, the West Side Park area has a fairly high level of racial homogeneity with African-Americans making up 92% of the population. When compared with the pre-1967 picture of Newark, the community has changed dramatically.

Table 1: 1990 Census Data for New Jersey, Newark, and West Side Park

<i>Race</i>	<i>New Jersey</i>	<i>Newark</i>	<i>West Side Park</i>
Black	13%	59%	92%
White	79%	29%	2%
Asian/Pacific Islander	3%	1%	1%
Other race	4%	11%	3%
<i>Educational Attainment</i>			
Less than High School	23%	47%	49%
High School Graduate (or GED)	31%	28%	31%
Some College or higher	68%	24%	20%
Median household income in 1989	\$40,927	\$21,650	\$17,251
Households with Social Security income	27%	24%	22%
Households with public assistance income	6%	22%	36%

Source: U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census

The Newark Empowerment Council and Its Plan

Our mission for this project was to work with the Newark Empowerment Council's Health and Social Services Committee to identify social service assets in the West Side Park community. The project is therefore part of an on-going community revitalization effort in West Side Park, Newark, and New Jersey, as summarized in the following section.

Despite the large number of challenges this community faces, there has been strong community action to meet these challenges. Many of the determined organizations invested in this area have helped to rebuild West Side Park in an enterprising example of bottom-up activism. With the help of several Community Development Corporations (CDCs), social service organizations, and a growing faith-based community, West Side Park brings together many of the elements necessary for revitalization, not the least of which is sheer will.

Community development efforts in New Jersey received a boost in 1994 when Governor Christine Todd Whitman approved the creation of the Urban Coordinating Council (UCC). Placing emphasis on resident participation and comprehensive planning, this neighborhood revitalization effort seeks to create social change through a participatory process. This measure created both a state level UCC (made up of officers from each state administrative agency) and local Neighborhood Empowerment Councils in particular cities.

The State UCC designated Newark in 1997 to receive resources for this plan. In turn, the city designated 120 blocks in West-Central Newark as the UCC zone. The UCC also selected a sponsoring organization to create the local NEC in the area. This Council is made up of residents, city officials, and local nonprofit organizations. It meets regularly in rotating locations in different parts of the community. Meetings last approximately 1-2 hours and range in size from 20-75 participants. The West Side Park Community Action Plan, created by the NEC, identifies eight priority areas as subcommittees in this collaborative planning process: Economic

Development, Education, Environment, Housing, Public Safety, Recreation, Health and Social Service, and Youth and Young Adult Issues.

Working with the NEC through the Health and Social Services Committee, the Rutgers Community Development Studio, in conjunction with CUPR, has taken on the challenge of asset mapping the faith-based and social service organizations in West Side Park. Our particular interests are in the areas of After-school Programs, Continuing Education and Training Programs, Facilities, Computers, Childcare, and Social Services. Our inventory and assessment should provide information for those interested in the outreach process regarding existing services provided by faith-based and community organizations in the West Side Park Community. This initial step should prove an important benchmark on which to build: not only in strengthening programs, but also in knowing where the needs lie.

STRATEGY

One important aspect of rebuilding a community is using and building on its existing assets. Therefore, an important first step in community revitalization is discovering and cataloging the community's assets. Rutgers Community Outreach Partnership Center (RCOPC) project of the Center for Urban Policy Research (CUPR) at Rutgers University, has facilitated the process of asset mapping for the West Side Park community. RCOPC will act as a comprehensive resource to the ongoing efforts of the Newark Network Empowerment Council (NEC) and the UCC, and will provide direct support and assistance.

The RCOPC Plan states its goals as the following:

RCOPC's primary objective is to assist and support the Newark Neighborhood Empowerment Council (NEC) in planning and implementing the revitalization of the West Side Park Community, the Urban Coordinating Council's target area in the Newark's Central Ward. RCOPC's goal is to mobilize and apply University resources to aid the development of a self-sustaining community-based capacity for neighborhood renewal in Newark. (CUPR, 1998)

CUPR has utilized studio classes in the Urban Planning Department at the Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. Our project in this particular class is part of the larger effort by RCOPC.

In order to accomplish the specific goal of mapping the existing resources, we build on the framework developed by John Kretzman and John McKnight, authors of the book *Building Communities from the Inside Out*. Their approach focuses on the *capacity* and *assets* of the communities rather than their *deficiencies* and *needs*. In our project, we focus on identifying and understanding the depth and features of community assets that relate to social services and faith-based organizations in the neighborhood. Like Kretzman and McKnight, we seek to identify assets and understand the social service structure in West Side Park.

RESEARCH APPROACH

The West Side Park Community Action Plan was prepared by the NEC in 1998 and identified several gaps of knowledge concerning activities taking place in the neighborhood. The NEC sought the services of both the Center for Urban Policy Research (CUPR) and Rutgers' Community Development Studio to identify existing services provided by community churches and organizations. After identifying research objectives with the client, the asset mapping team began to develop a research strategy. First, the team discussed and studied aspects of urban community development to better understand the dynamics at work in the West Side Park neighborhood. The team outlined the research strategies that would best provide the information based on the priorities of the NEC. CUPR provided technical assistance and advice. A survey was then developed for community churches and social service organizations. Through mail surveys, individual phone interviews and site visits, we were able to gather information to meet the research objectives behind our asset mapping.

Scope of Research

By conducting asset mapping in West Side Park, the team sought to provide community leaders with useful benchmark information on what services are being offered in the neighborhood by churches and social service organizations. A site visit was made to the community, where members of the asset mapping team toured the neighborhood and visited community organizations including the Salvation Army and International Youth Organization (IYO). The team saw abandoned public housing as well as new low-income housing units. The large number of vacant lots and substandard buildings was apparent. During the visit, the team received a list of questions that community leaders wished to have answered. A focus of our research was to assist neighborhood organizations in their attempts to network and better serve area residents. Churches and social service organizations were the primary institutions examined by the asset mapping team.

Research Goals

The research goals for this study were developed through interviews with the Newark Empowerment Council (NEC), Carolyn Wallace of the International Youth Organization and Lt. Brian Glasco at the Salvation Army. The NEC provided the team with a list of questions about the neighborhood. Readings in community development and asset mapping techniques supplemented the development of our goals. After selecting the six program areas, the team developed and researched the following questions:

- What after-school programs exist in the study area and where are they located?
- What extracurricular/training programs exist and where are they located?
- What outdoor and indoor recreation facilities are available and where are they located?
- What types of computer resources are available in the community and where are they located?
- What childcare services are available, at what cost, and where are they located?
- What social services are offered and where are they located?

- Are these programs operating at, above, or below capacity?
- Do current program operators wish to expand their programs? If so, what are the barriers to expansion?

Research Methods

A survey of churches and community service organizations was determined to be the best way to answer these eight research questions.

Survey Instrument

The research team developed a survey instrument that would serve the following purposes:

- Gauge the existing after-school programs, extracurricular/training programs, recreation facilities, computer resources, childcare services and social service programs.
- Map where current programs are in operation.
- Determine which service providers were operating under and over capacity.
- Identify the barriers facing organizations trying to expand their programs.
- Create a directory of services offered by West Side Park churches, daycare centers and other community development organizations.

The survey was designed using questions based on the client's goals and formatted as a questionnaire (see Appendix C). A spreadsheet, known as a metadata form, was also created for coding and analyzing the results (see Appendix E). We then mailed the survey questionnaire to neighborhood churches and social service organizations that were selected by NEC. Approximately 100 surveys were mailed. Individuals who had been identified by the clients as strong community development leaders were also sent a survey form.

Survey questions probed the availability and scale of after-school, continuing education & training, childcare, and social service programs; hours of operations and fees; and whether staff were paid or voluntary. Special consideration was given to gain an assessment of the condition and utilization of space (i.e. office and recreational) and state of the art and accessibility of computers and related services. Finally, the survey attempted to summarize the supply of services and the barriers (if any) these agencies face in expanding their services and meeting the needs of the community.

Other Techniques

Telephone interviews and site visits were conducted as a follow-up to the survey mailing (see Appendix D). The team also visited other comprehensive community development organizations. As an additional survey strategy, informational interviews were conducted with key community leaders.

Limitations of Research Methods

The research team identified the following limitations of the methods used to administer the survey:

- Lack of introduction to encourage organization leaders to complete and return the survey questionnaire.
- Mailing directory contained incomplete and incorrect addresses.
- Due to the limited hours of operation for many small churches, and their lack of telephone answering machines and e-mail access, phone interviewers were often unable to make contact.
- Coding errors occasionally took place in the course of the survey.
- Project operated within a limited time frame.

Research Products

In the course of administering the survey, the asset mapping team had the following responses:

- 18 phone interviews were conducted.
- 7 site visits were made.
- 4 surveys were received by mail.
- 7 surveys were returned due to incorrect addresses.

With the information obtained from the above surveys, interviews and visits, the team was able to compile the following research projects:

- A directory database of available resources (see Appendix A).
- A report on survey findings with accompanying analysis and recommendations.
- Geographic Information System (GIS) maps to identify the location of existing services and track the general spatial trends.

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS

This section presents findings and analysis of the survey responses from the twenty-one West Side Park community based organizations, churches and development corporations that participated in the survey.

After-school Programs

After-school activities included computer skills, tutoring/homework, clubs, religious instruction, sports, art and crafts, field trips, mentoring, and wellness and nutrition programs. Programs target school-aged children from the time schools dismiss until parents return from work. Ten of the survey respondents offer after-school programs.

Seven organizations provide some level of computer training and have an enrollment of 83 young people. This represents about one-half of the survey respondents' self-reported maximum capacity (156 slots) for this service. Fifteen paid and 23 voluntary personnel provide the instruction.

Nine organizations provide tutoring/homework assistance to a total of 316 children. This represents seventy-three percent of the maximum capacity (some 430 slots) as reported by the organizations surveyed. Thirteen paid staff and eight volunteers provide direct service to these children.

A handful of organizations (3) provide religious instruction to 30 children. Maximum capacity was reported to be 50 slots and all service was provided on a voluntary basis.

Two organizations provide music and other club activities to approximately 137 young people in the area. This service is in high demand and has exceeded, by more than 60 percent, its maximum capacity to serve 85 people. Program support was provided by four paid staffers. Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts and other traditional and major youth-oriented clubs are not available to young people in the area.

Five of the agencies provide sports activities to 95 children. As per the agency responses, these activities can accommodate 125 and therefore represent 76 percent utilization rate. Program support was provided by four paid staffers.

Five of the organizations report offering art and crafts activities to 60 children. In the aggregate, this represents an under-utilization of the local resources said to be able to accommodate some 145 children. Five paid staffers provide program support.

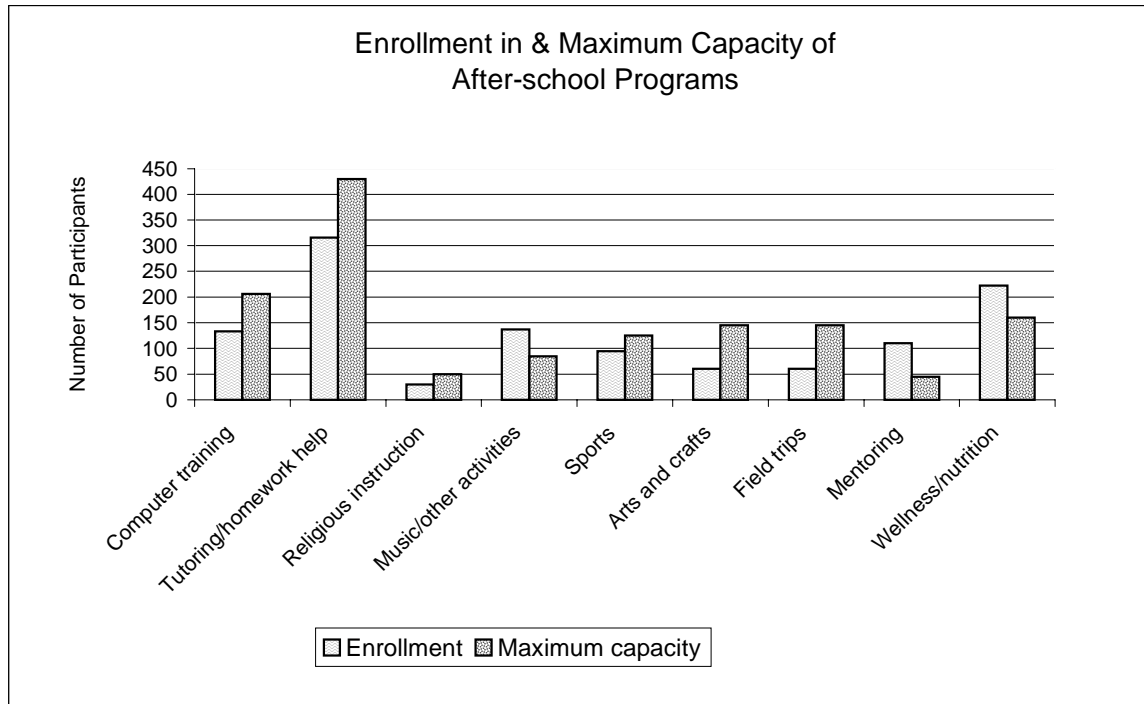
Eight organize field trips for 60 children. Total capacity is said to be 145 for this service, which is supported by four paid staffers.

Three agencies provide mentoring programs to 110 young people. The demand for this activity/service far exceeds the reported capacity of 45 slots. This service is provided by ten paid staff members and four volunteers.

Three organizations provide wellness and nutrition services to 222 children. The demand for this service far exceeds the supply of some 160 slots. Personnel include twelve staff and four volunteers.

Overall, there appears to be some under-utilization of existing services. Additionally, two agencies indicated that all their staff and volunteers come from the surrounding neighborhoods. No information was reported for the others. As expected, organizations providing training, childcare, and social services are open at least eight hours each day from Monday to Friday (and occasionally around specific weekend activities). Church hours (with the exception of those providing childcare) tend to be in the afternoons during the week and during religious services in the evening and weekends.

Barriers to increase services stemmed from inadequate resources (funding and capacity). These barriers include the condition and amount of physical space, and ability to hire staff. Agencies are also hampered by inadequate equipment and have difficulty finding new volunteers.



Program and Recreation Facilities

Eight of the 21 reported having recreational facilities available to them. Seven reported having outdoor space and two had indoor space. Of these organizations, six reported inadequate space – two specifically mentioned a lack of parking. The most common type of facility was an outdoor playground and the least common was gymnasium space. Facilities are primarily available to daytime clients (i.e. children in day care, etc) from Monday through Friday. Specific information on early evening space and costs (i.e. for gymnasium) was not available.

More generally, two reported that their space was accessible to people with disabilities and two others indicated it was not. Two agencies reported that their meeting space might be under-utilized. And three reported their classroom space might also be under-utilized.

Barriers to accessing recreational space included security and resources to secure this space included rent fees and insurance. Both owners and would-be users mentioned this.

Continuing Education and Training

At least eight agencies provide some type of continuing education and training programs. Included in these programs are reading assessment, computer literacy, GED, career counseling, leadership training, financial management, parenting skills, stress management, legal services, self defense, and senior citizen programs.

Three agencies reported that they provide computer skills training. Fifty-two people (presumably adults) are enrolled in programs that have a maximum capacity of 64. Instruction is provided by one paid staff person and one volunteer.

Four organizations provide GED assistance to some 60 people. Their collective capacity is 82, and agencies rely on two paid and two volunteer staff for this service.

Three organizations provide career assessment to some 67 persons in the community. The total capacity is said to be 89 slots, and three paid professionals provide the guidance.

Two agencies report providing financial management assistance. Total enrollment varies considerably over time, but is estimated to be about 80 persons. Demand for this assistance exceeds the current capacity, which allows for some 30 participants.

Six agencies offer parenting skills to seventy-four people, in an environment that can accommodate 90. Three agency employees and eleven volunteers provide this assistance.

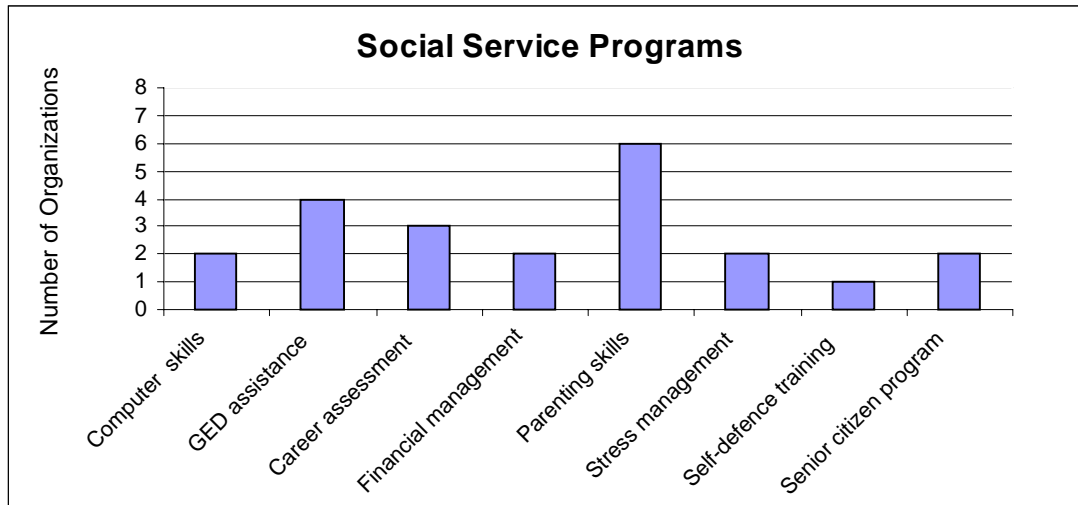
Two organizations provide stress management to 19 people. Thirty people can be accommodated and this assistance is provided by one paid staff and one volunteer.

One agency provides self-defense training to 29 people. It can accommodate about 70 people, and one agency employee and a volunteer provide the training. Participants are charged a small monthly fee.

Two organizations provide senior citizen programs. Their capacity is 126 people and they currently serve 84 seniors. These programs are staffed with three paid professionals and numerous volunteers, almost all of whom live in their neighborhood.

Unless it was included under their respective after-school programming, no agency reported providing leadership training, legal assistance or reading under the auspices of this category that presumably targets adults.

Overall, there appears to be some under-utilization of existing services. Organizations providing training, senior care and social services are open at least eight hours each day from Monday to Friday (and occasionally around specific weekend activities). Church-based services, for the most part, are offered in the afternoons during the week and during religious services in the evening and weekends. Program participants must meet certain eligibility requirements.



Computers

The survey also produced a community computer equipment and service inventory. Eleven of the agencies reported using computers in some facet of their work. Four reported having a computer lab. In total, there are 115 computers in use by the respondents, but at least 22 of them are either not working or lack parts (e.g., monitor, keyboard, etc.). PC-based Pentium II's are the most common machines, followed by 386's and 486's. The most common printers are dot matrixes, followed by ink jets, with only one laser printer reported. One agency reported multi-media capacity.

Overall, four agencies make this equipment available to the general public. Some have Internet access. Almost all want to expand their capability. Barriers to expansion include the cost of computers and related equipment, the cost of maintenance and repairs, and the need for volunteer instruction and training.

Childcare

Eight organizations provide childcare services in the community for infants and toddlers. Three provide service only for toddlers and five serve both. In total, infants fill 150 slots, and toddlers fill 158 slots.

Operating hours are almost standard, from Monday to Friday. The earliest center opens at 6:00 a.m. One center closes at 6:00 p.m. Most centers provide meals and snacks. In total, the centers employ some 85 persons and utilize 5 volunteers to provide this service (full- and part-time distribution is not known). Caretaker to child ratios range from 1:4 to a high of 1:10. First aid, CPR and other training is not uniformly required of the staff of the centers.

Three of the eight centers offer a curriculum. Four are non-profit agencies. Four centers charge flat weekly rates and the others provide services on a sliding scale (ability to pay) basis. Fees range from a low of \$30 per week to a high of \$85 per week.

Overall, at least half the centers have toys, a library, TV/VCR's, kitchens, outdoor playground and educational materials. Fewer have libraries or an indoor playground.

Social Services

Fifteen of the 21 agencies provide some type of social services, which include a compilation of individual/family counseling, shelters, halfway houses, "meals-on-wheels", and transportation services.

Five agencies offer both family and individual counseling, while another two provide family counseling services exclusively. Five provide health services, targeting young mothers and their children. This includes certain health screening services during various times of the year.

Three agencies offer support programs (e.g., Alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous), four provide transportation services, and one provides substance abuse counseling. None of the agencies interviewed provide hospice care, halfway housing or "meals-on-wheels" types of activities.

Additionally, three of the agencies provide domestic violence services, six provide housing counseling (3 of which also develop affordable housing), six offer a food pantry, and four others provide emergency assistance to needy families.

Among the community services are a number of non-traditional and unique programs. Such programs include a church-organized security service for hire at special activities, and a number of free and low cost clothing services for needy individuals and others seeking to improve their working attire.

Most agencies see a demand for their services and would like to expand their ability to meet that demand. Among the desired programs are those that would provide after-school employment for young people, intensification of employment training, peer counseling, peer adjudication, child care, and increased homeownership. Expanding and/or developing such programs requires additional financial and technical resources.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following conclusions and recommendations are based on the analysis presented in the previous section. The conclusions and recommendations in this report should be considered as part of an ongoing project of information gathering and dissemination. It is a dynamic situation where needs and resources are constantly changing. In various instances, organizations expressed a desire to expand programs and program offerings. Aside from the main financial barrier to expansion, other barriers include staffing capacity, inadequate facilities, and long-term viability. Also included below is a section of recommendations for future research projects.

The conclusions are divided into eight primary sections. The first five sections reflect the areas that were investigated, with information about facilities integrated into these areas. The last three sections are conclusions and recommendations directed towards specific groups, although they also have general applicability.

- After-school Activities
- Continuing Education and Training
- Computers
- Childcare
- Social Services
- Newark Empowerment Council
- Faith-based organizations (FBO)
- Community-based Organizations (CBO)

After each conclusion, where appropriate, recommendations are made. The research team recognizes the limited resources and time available to many of the organizations. The recommendations are intended to offer suggestions and open a dialogue for future investigation and information sharing.

After-school Activities

The after-school programs run the gamut of activities from educational to recreational. Because of the range of activities and types of organizations covered, it is difficult to generalize the services being offered. A key finding is that all of the after-school programs offered homework and tutoring assistance. Furthermore, the mentoring programs are oversubscribed. Another commonality is that the programs are being operated with a combination of paid and volunteer staff.

Recommendations

- Network with higher education institutions in Newark such as Rutgers-Newark, Seton Hall, NJIT, UMDNJ, and Essex County College to establish mentoring programs between students at these institutions and youth in West Side Park.
- Explore additional volunteer opportunities for residents and parents to participate in activities that their children are involved in as a mutually beneficial arrangement between the parent and the community organization.

Continuing Education & Training

The programs geared towards adults cover a wide variety of subjects but fall under two main categories. One is personal development programs such as parenting skills and personal financial management. The other category is directed towards career development and education programs such as GED and computer classes. Generally, the career development, GED, parenting, self-defense and senior programs were operating under-capacity. However, the ability for some

agencies to meet the high demand for certain programs is impeded by inadequate equipment, specifically computers.

Recommendations

- Explore ways to increase participation in under-utilized programs through greater outreach to neighborhood residents and coordination among community organizations.
- Coordinate and shift resources from persistently underutilized programs to programs with excess demand.

Computers

The survey revealed a general awareness by both community- and faith-based organizations, of the importance of computer training for residents. All of the organizations that have a computer laboratory and are providing classes seek to expand or upgrade their equipment. Only a third of the computer equipment available contains Pentium II processors. The remainder of the computers run the spectrum of outdated equipment (486, 386 computers and printers) and in the worst cases non-functioning computers or just parts. Organizations that do not currently provide computer-related services would like to. There is a discrepancy between the number of organizations offering after-school computer programs (6) and the number of adult computer learning programs (2).

Recommendations

- Investigate opportunities to upgrade equipment, especially computers operating at 486 or below (approximately 65% of all computers), to handle Internet and multi-media capabilities. The ability to navigate through the Internet is a growing necessity and skill to develop for employment, yet only a few agencies report Internet access. The development of both Internet and multi-media skills opens up potential entrepreneurial, employment and educational opportunities for residents of West Side Park.
- This is an area that warrants more investigation into the resources available to obtain computer equipment through donations or networking with companies or educational facilities that are upgrading their systems.

Childcare

The childcare facilities identified in the survey, while located in the West Side Park neighborhood, appear to be drawing children from throughout the City of Newark. These daycare centers tend to be clustered around Springfield Avenue, which may not be easily accessible to all West Side Park residents. According to survey responses, the centers lacked ample indoor and/or outdoor recreation space.

Based on our conversations with daycare facilities, several reported operating under capacity. These also charged a flat fee rather than a sliding scale. This underutilized capacity could be a result of several factors including comfort and familiarity with the service provider, distance

from residence, and price sensitivity. Church sponsored daycare programs tend to have waiting lists and several CBO's indicate an interest to expand their services to include daycare programs.

Recommendations

- Encourage the development of childcare providers that provide affordable daycare in the area. Assist community organizations with identifying funding sources for developing daycare programs or expanding facilities.
- An option community organizations can explore is offering programs that assist in-home childcare providers in obtaining training and other supportive services.

Social Services

Numerous programs are offered within the social services categories to address the varying needs of the neighborhood residents. The variety of programs indicates that the needs in West Side Park are not homogeneous. Organizations have created innovative programs to address the needs of youth, adults and elderly, while working under numerous constraints. However, these and other agencies are continuously looking for ways to expand or create new programs to provide resources to the residents of West Side Park.

Newark Empowerment Council

1. Regular Communication

There is a need for the existing organizations to have regular communication with each other to share resources and ideas. Several strategies to accomplish this are:

Recommendations

- Maintain an updated directory of organizations. A directory is provided as part of this research project, however, it will be important to maintain it as an evolving document that gets revised periodically and expanded (see Appendix A).
- Develop a newsletter that highlights accomplishments of organizations and provides a forum for organizations to discuss issues. This can be a project VISTA volunteers can undertake, and also be a useful skill for them to develop.

2. Develop a Volunteer Clearinghouse

In our discussions with the organizations, individuals were identified that have special skills (such as computer, and musical) and are willing to volunteer their services in the community. But some organizations indicate they have difficulty attracting volunteers.

Recommendations

- Develop a clearinghouse for volunteer services to match volunteers with organizations. This can include organizations that are either seeking volunteers with specific skills or organizations that have facilities to sponsor the volunteer-led activities.

3. Facilitate Identification of Service Providers

NEC's continued efforts to identify service providers that currently operate outside of the neighborhood, to operate in West Side Park.

4. Coordinate Interaction Among Community Leaders

NEC's continuing role in supporting the activities in the community is a source for community leaders to gather.

Recommendations

- Sponsor events, such as monthly breakfast meetings, that promote interaction among West Side Park's community, religious and business leaders.

Faith-based Organizations

Several conclusions can be made from the discussions with religious leaders and the lack of response to the survey. First, with the exception of a few more established churches, most of the churches in the West Side Park neighborhood are small, with less than 100 members. Many of these smaller churches see their mission as mainly to provide religious support. They rely on the community organizations to provide the social services. Churches that are interested in expanding into the social service realm face numerous barriers such as financial, physical facilities, and human resources that prevent them from exploring this option.

Recommendations

- Outreach is needed to identify faith-based organizations that currently are, or are interested in, providing social services.
- Faith-based organizations can assist outreach efforts by publicizing their services and programs, maintaining contact with community groups such as NEC or NCDN.

Community-based Organizations

Several well known, long established community organizations operate in the West Side Park neighborhood including International Youth Organization (IYO), United Community Corporation (UCC), Tri-City Peoples Corporation, and New Community Corporation (NCC). While these organizations are active in West Side Park, several also operate citywide programs. The activities of the established community organizations are being supplemented by programs and services offered by emerging CBOs, and emerging CBOs are looking to expand their programs and services.

Recommendations for Future Research

1. Use More Targeted Survey Instrument

The survey instrument utilized in this research project sought information on six major categories of activities. There are several difficulties with attempting to cover many broad categories with one survey, including requiring a substantial amount of time to complete. Many survey recipients failing to see the applicability of the categories to their activities.

Recommendations

- Simplify the survey instrument and provide a general “roadmap” cover sheet to guide the recipient through the survey. For example, the coversheet could ask, “Do you provide childcare? If yes, go to page 2.”
- Provide an incentive for survey recipients to complete and return the survey since there are competing demands on the recipients’ time. Incentives can be emphasizing the value of the finished product to their organization’s needs.

2. Importance of Personal Contact

The data collection for this research project was greatly enhanced when personal contact was made with survey recipients, and community leaders provided introductions. It is difficult to achieve an adequate response when relying solely on mail responses. The most productive information gathering was when in-person interviews were arranged.

Recommendations

- Meet key community leaders at the beginning of the research project and enlist their support in conducting outreach to neighborhood institutions. This can include obtaining a letter of introduction to send with a survey, or an introductory phone.
- Recruit community leaders to publicize the research effort to facilitate the initial contact by researchers and community groups.

3. Recognize “Non-business” Operating Hours

This is particularly important when attempting to reach faith-based organizations. Many of the religious institutions were staffed only on Sundays and on occasion one weeknight. In order to reach these organizations it is important to recognize their limited operating hours and be sensitive to their time constraints.

Recommendations

- Be flexible when conducting outreach with faith-based organizations.
- Recognize the limited operating hours of small faith-based organizations. To compound the situation, many of these organizations do not have answering machines or other ways to make contact, so be creative.

It is evident that the West Side Park neighborhood contains many valuable assets in its residents, community leaders, faith-based organizations and community organizations. It is also apparent that these assets are maximizing the limited resources they have, but are continuously seeking to

identify additional resources. The conclusions and recommendations included in this report reveal the breadth of activities that currently exist in West Side Park, and the need to support existing organizations and encourage the development of new activities.