

Education, Health & Neighborhood Initiatives to Advance Community Change
A Community Forum Hosted by Project 20/20
April 19, 2011, 4:30 – 6:00 p.m., Burnham Brook Community Center

After presentations by Kathy Szenda-Wilson of the Battle Creek Community Foundation's Neighborhood Programs, Rod Auton of Project GRUB (Gardens Raised in Urban Backyards), Jean Krohn of the Elementary Enrichment Program and Pastor Rosalind Mathis of New Beginning Damascus Church/Hope Meets Christian Center, attendees (50) were asked to work in small groups to answer the questions below. A discussion question was assigned to each table (each question was discussed by 2-3 tables). A recorder wrote down ideas from individuals in each small group. Below is a compilation of each group's notes separated by question. Participants were also asked to identify their group's top two responses to their discussion question.

1. WHAT IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE (IN NEIGHBORHOODS) THAT COULD BE DUPLICATED IN OTHER NEIGHBORHOODS?

Top responses identified by groups:

- Social connections with seniors
- Mentoring/tutoring/recreational programs
- Gardening/Project GRUB
- Getting to know your neighbors (communication/relationships)
- All programs could be duplicated
- Smart committed people but improve systems and partnering

Compilation of Notes (in no particular order)

- Youth councils
- Washington Heights, New Level Sports
- Basketball courts/recreation centers – free, available to community
- Big Brothers Big Sisters Mentor Program – 35 minutes, 1 time per week during lunch
- Schools open at night – play badminton, basketball, volleyball, might have to pay some money
- 21st Century Program – before and after school if on reduced/free lunch - expanded
- Neighborhood houses – expanded
- Community gardens
- Tool exchanges
- Neighborhood – walk abouts, find homes and property clean-up/fix up
- Neighborhood seniors – social connection
- Clean-ups (including gutters)
- Church led efforts
- Fun activities
- Watching out for the neighborhood kids (safety)

- Walking clubs
- All programs could be duplicated
 - Challenge is sustainability
 - When led by a single person, it is driven by their passion and momentum. They leave; lose interest, the initiative falls apart.
 - Therefore, consider partnerships to improve sustainability – create a group of people that are involved; partner with other groups interested in “duplicating” the program. This helps improve leverage for resources, increased efficiencies, increased likelihood of sustainability, provides a support network and opportunities to share best practices and lessons learned.
- Remember (and consider) engaging businesses. They may be around for a while, have a vested interest in community outcomes, and share valuable business perspective. They are an untapped resource
- Neighborhoods getting together to provide supplies, volunteer in schools – all neighborhoods are attached to schools
- Student led initiatives
- Urbandale Family Day to get together – organized by neighborhoods
- Neighborhoods build floats – judging funniest neighborhood
- Good/bad – neighborhood identities, not city identity – schools closing, identity may be compromised
- Faith community – looking for things to do, all value youth

2. HOW CAN THE COMMUNITY SUPPORT RESIDENTS IN THEIR EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THEIR NEIGHBORHOODS?

Top responses identified by groups:

- Use schools as the way in to develop more neighborhood connections
- Find out what works well, even from other communities – let’s copy success
- Volunteers who are willing to support projects
- Support ideas, more people spur follow-on ideas – need people with professional skills
- Collaboration and communication
- Involve youth

Compilation of Notes (in no particular order)

- People need to learn names of neighbors, build trust
- NPCs not well attended – encourage more attendance from residents
- Block parties
- More front porches and sidewalks
- Need to overcome perception of high crime, lack of safety
- Can internet be used to help connect people in neighborhoods? Facebook?
- Can parks be a center for more connections?
- Spread word about what works as existing neighborhood events
- Can now vacant schools be used as walk to centers for neighborhoods

- Have police dept. representatives at meetings like this and at other community events, meetings and activities
- Plant flowers, take care of the lawns
- Project GRUB – community gardens can be a neighborhood activity center
- Hard to get passionate about getting “involved”
- Ask people to get involved
- Let others know
- Wellness Fair at Prairieview
- GETTING THE WORD OUT
- Neighborhood/NPC festivals
- More programs focused on youth employment
- Older youth helping with Elementary Enrichment Program (Jean Krohn)
- Grants make known to more community members (Facebook, email) – BCCF neighborhood grantmaking
- Miller College to make service-learning available to student and KNOW about grants/partnerships, ex: adopt-a-neighborhood for student projects
- Recognizing “best” homes in a neighborhood (in NPCs)
- Businesses (donate supplies and funds) and neighborhoods (NPCs) collaborating to improve conditions
- Need a “village” kind of thinking to accomplish things (also individual and family responsibilities as well)
- Put more emphasis on listening, when helping. Be less critical
- Question of: communicating with young people. Make sure to reach them
- Having specific conversations about the group’s dream (sit and dream)
- Connecting (having a “hub”? How to do this?) residents to resources/services/nonprofits to help them address issues in the neighborhood, the Healthy Neighborhoods in Schools is a good start

3. HOW DO WE CONNECT, ENGAGE AND MOTIVATE RESIDENT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Top responses identified by groups:

- Find people’s passions and help them pursue it, help them persevere
- Use BCCF as a clearing house to connect programming
- When asked people feel valued, community norm, compel people to step forward

Compilation of Notes (in no particular order)

- Tell people the need
- Going out; flyers; keep informed; media
- Relate to them and make them responsible
- Battle Creek Shopper
- Keep trying; perseverance
- Encourage parent/youth involvement
- Create multiple levels for involvement (once, weekly, just give money, etc.)
- Put a face to names or people you’re helping

- Clearly state a reason why to help
- Make people comfortable, not intimidating
- Find youth to encourage – they will tell others
- More talk and marketing; tell everybody and encourage others to get involved
- Find people's passions and give them plenty of opportunities to pursue their goals
- Encourage yourself
- Connect through:
 - Their children – school activities
 - Churches
 - Bringing students to neighborhood council meetings
 - Social media/local media
 - Community website (churches, schools, non-profits, public meetings, outdoors, environment, children, what you could help with)
- Need to coordinate making the connections
- Motivate and Engage – have to feel worthwhile/have passion for/feel that it is going to make a difference, change something