

Report to Center of the Square
Needs-Assessment Study of the Clinton School Catchment Area
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The Community Development Class

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Introduction

This document reports the results of a needs-assessment study conducted in the “Southside” of the City of Poughkeepsie, between January and April 2005. Commissioned by the Center of the Square, a community center spun off from the Christ Episcopal Church in 2000 to offer recreational and social-service programs for the city’s population, this study was conducted by the students and professor of a Spring 2005 Vassar College class entitled Community Development. The study serves two functions. First, it provides information on the social-service needs and concerns of the Poughkeepsie population—in particular, the residents of the Gov. George Clinton Elementary School catchment area—that the Center of the Square (hereafter “the Center”) can use as it plans to expand its existing programs and develop new ones. Second, the study represents the centerpiece of a semester-long collaboration between the Community Development class and the Center to provide the students an opportunity to study at firsthand the practical issues that community development organizations face. The students and professor of the course (hereafter, the “we” who narrates this report) thank the Center for the opportunity to take part in this crucial planning stage. We also thank the residents of Poughkeepsie for their time and interest in participating in the study.

Our goals with this report are to explain the results of the needs-assessment survey we conducted and to propose ideas that the Center might consider as it further develops its programs and activities. Below, we first describe how we organized the study. Next, we introduce the area we studied, the Clinton School catchment area, and describe our survey respondents’ perceptions of its problems and promise. Then, we examine the kinds of programs and activities that other social-service organizations currently offer and describe how respondents evaluate these. Having established this context, we then report the kinds of programs that residents and institutions indicate they want and would use at the Center. We conclude by highlighting issues that the Center might consider as it moves forward in its planning, and offering our suggestions for the Center’s future priorities.

The study

The research we conducted for this needs-assessment study entailed two general methods. First, we designed and administered a survey to a sample of residents in the Clinton School catchment area to inquire directly about their needs and concerns for social-service programs that the Center might offer. Second, we conducted extensive fieldwork in institutions and neighborhoods of the City of Poughkeepsie as well as at the Center itself. Below, we describe these methods in detail and explain how they inform the analysis we offer in this report.

The survey

We designed a 9-question survey by adapting a fairly generic survey template published by a reputable social-work/community-development nonprofit (Bryan Samuels et al, *Know Your Community*, rev. 2d ed., Family Resource Coalition: 1998). The lack of originality in our survey has its virtues. The questions we adopted have been used by many other organizations and researchers in many other settings, which vouches for the questions' reliability in generating responses that best address the issues motivating the survey—a key concern in this kind of research. We intentionally limited ourselves to a relatively small number of questions in order to inconvenience respondents as little as possible. Our survey combined closed-ended questions to which respondents answered from a fixed set of responses with open-ended questions that respondents answered in their own words; the former increased consistency and comparability in respondents' answers (another aspect of survey reliability), while the latter often stimulated respondents' interest in participating in the survey by soliciting their direct opinions. In order to identify and fix any problems with the questions or the larger survey before we went door-to-door, we first tested the survey among staff and clients at Poughkeepsie's Family Partnership Center; their responses are not incorporated in the quantitative results we report in this document. After this pilot survey, we revised our questions one last time to produce a final version of the survey, which can be seen in its entirety in Appendix B.

We designed our survey (technically, a “structured interview”) to be administered verbally by the Community Development students to respondents, in order to encourage respondents’ participation by doing away with the need to read the questions themselves. Students conducted the surveys in pairs; one read questions to the respondent, while the other wrote answers down. Generally, the survey proceeded as follows. We introduced the survey as part of a larger needs-assessment study undertaken by the Center, which (we told respondents) was “planning to create a new community center for the Clinton Elementary School area and set up new programs for the community.” After respondents gave their informed consent to take the survey, we read the survey questions to the respondents. Two questions (#1 and 3) had more than a dozen specific issues that required response; to make answering those questions easier, a hand-out was available for respondents to follow along with while the student read the question aloud. After all the questions were answered, we asked respondents if they wanted a brochure with more information about the Center (47 brochures were given out) and if they wanted copies of our report when it is finished (49 respondents requested a copy).

The respondent sample

In the needs-assessment survey, we targeted the population of residential households in the catchment area for the Gov. George Clinton Elementary School. We describe the geographic boundaries and social composition of this territory shortly, in the section entitled “The Clinton School area.” At this point, let us acknowledge that this is not necessarily the only or even ideal area we could have studied. In the Center’s mission statement and the board’s communications, this territory (sometimes called the “Academy Street area”) has been identified as the focal area for the Center’s activities. However, Center documents also indicate an interest in serving population from the greater City of Poughkeepsie, something their programs do to some extent already. Additionally, there are compelling reasons for the Center not to let its programming rules and eligibility reinforce Northside/Southside distinctions that pervade many ideas about Poughkeepsie and its problems. Nonetheless, we opted to survey the Clinton School

catchment area for practical reasons: as a smaller area, it is relatively more feasible to sample comprehensively and go door-to-door with our surveys.

To define the Clinton School catchment area, we obtained from the Poughkeepsie City School District a list of all the streets in the city from which students of the Gov. George Clinton Elementary School are drawn. To operationalize the population of residential households in this area, we excluded institutional residences (e.g., hotels, group homes) and commercial buildings. By doing this, our findings may underestimate the social-service needs of transient and elderly populations, two particularly “at risk” groups; to compensate somewhat, we interviewed the program director of a senior citizens group home to account for the elderly population’s needs (see “Fieldwork,” below). Next, with no pre-existing list of residential addresses in this area to consult, we created our own by walking each street of the catchment area and recording each address, counting multiple doorbells or mailboxes as multi-unit housing. In the multi-story towers with doormen, we inquired about the number of units and the agreeability of the management to let us survey tenants; through this procedure, one building of approximately 135 units (the Executive Towers on Academy Street) was excluded from our study. In total, we estimated a population of 2,499 remaining residential households in the Clinton School catchment area from which we could survey. This estimate assumes all these households are currently occupied, which in fact we discovered they are not.

With 18 students to administer surveys over 4 weeks, we opted to randomly sample households from the target population of 2,499 households with the hope of ultimately securing 335 completed surveys. The latter figure is the minimum number of households needed to generalize our findings to the larger target population with 95 percent confidence levels and a 5 percent margin of error—the conventional ideal in survey research. About a week before we visited any randomly sampled address, we mailed a flyer (reproduced in Appendix C) briefly describing the survey and notifying residents of our upcoming visit. We generally visited the households on the days of Fridays, Saturdays, and Mondays. If no one answered the door, we came back a second

time on another day; if still no one replied, then we marked “no response” for that household and randomly sampled another address to replace it. Overall, we estimate we had 362 “no responses.” Households that declined to participate were also replaced with another randomly sampled household. Overall, we had 107 declines.

Ultimately, we were only able to secure 93 completed surveys by the end of our research, for a response rate of 16.6 percent and a 3.7 percent sample of the target population. Consequently, the margin of error in our survey results is higher than we hoped for: 9.97 percent. To explain what this means for our study, allow us a brief detour into sampling methodology. A 9.97 percent margin of error means that on questions for which the population’s responses are quite varied (or, in survey jargon, for which the response distribution approaches 50 percent), the response percentages we obtained from our sample correspond to a percentage of the target population that may be as much as 9.97 percent higher or lower. For example, when 37 percent of our respondents say they turn to clergy for help most often, then we can infer with 95 percent confidence that from 27 to 47 percent of all households in the Clinton School area turn to clergy for help most often as well. On questions where respondents answer with much more consensus (or, in survey jargon, where the response distribution is skewed), then our 9.97 percent margin of error drops accordingly. For example, when 81 percent of our respondents say they would attend if services, programs and activities were offered at a new community center in the Clinton School area, then our margin of error drops a little over 2 points (to 7.82 percent), and we can infer with 95 percent confidence that from 73 to 89 percent of the Clinton School area would likewise attend.

Since Poughkeepsie has a substantial population of Mexican immigrants, we translated our survey into Spanish for when we encountered households where no one spoke English. Six of the students could read these surveys in Spanish and translate respondents’ answers on the fly; the rest of them brought addressed and stamped envelopes so that Spanish-speaking respondents could fill out the survey and return on their own time. Unfortunately, by going door to door we only completed four surveys in Spanish, and we received no Spanish-language surveys in the mail. As is well known by

Census administrators and researchers who study immigrant populations, immigrants are especially reluctant to participate in surveys because of language barriers and reasonable concerns (particularly for undocumented migrants) about revealing themselves to unfamiliar authorities. To compensate for our poor response rate, we visited a Spanish-speaking mass at Christ Episcopal Church on Sunday, April 17. During the mass, our survey was announced to the congregants in Spanish, and afterwards we obtained four more surveys, bringing our completed surveys among Spanish-speaking households to eight total (or 8.6 percent of our sample). We further discuss how the Center might address issues of outreach to Spanish-speaking immigrants near the end of the report, in the section entitled “How to reach out.”

Fieldwork

Throughout the month of February 2005, we conducted extensive fieldwork in the Clinton School area and the surrounding City of Poughkeepsie. In teams of three, students visited different settings to observe, participate in scheduled activities, or in some cases interview representatives of important organizations. Once back from the field, each team wrote weekly fieldnotes that the rest of us read and commented on; this way, the entire class developed a collective base of knowledge and pursued our unstructured but systematic inquiry. The first general setting for our fieldwork was the Center itself. This began when a director (Barbara Harrington) and a Climb the Beanstalk volunteer (Sally Taylor) visited our classroom to introduce the organization and its programs to us (a Conocer coordinator was unable to attend). Then, to further understand the organization, its goals, and its ways of working, we attended at least three meetings of the board of directors and interviewed five directors individually. To see the programs in action, we attended and typically participated in three sessions of Conocer, two sessions of Climb the Beanstalk, and a special evening play performed by Climb students for their families. Although our study did not coincide with the season when Summercamp is held, we nonetheless attended two planning meetings for this program. To learn more about the Center’s key supporters, we attended one session of both the morning English-speaking mass and the afternoon Spanish-speaking mass. We also

attended the Center's first fund-raiser, a "murder mystery" dinner theater event, where we informally spoke with attendees and witnessed the Center's outreach in action.

The second general setting for our fieldwork was among several social-service organizations and civic institutions in the City of Poughkeepsie. We visited other community centers and social-service providers (Catherine Street Community Center, Family Partnership Center, Mill Street Loft, Family Services, several local churches), where we gathered information about existing social services and programs (compiled in Appendix A) and, whenever possible, interviewed individuals to learn how other organizations carry out their work. We visited institutions and spoke with individuals that represent potential constituencies for the Center program: Clinton School, its Parents-Teacher Association, and the Poughkeepsie City School district (children), Vassar-Warner Home (senior citizens), and Spanish-language masses at two other local churches besides Christ Episcopal Church (Latino immigrants). We investigated current local initiatives to see how other organizations try to mobilize community resources and support: the Poughkeepsie Institute's art policy forum, the response to the closing of the YWCA/Youth Resources Development Council, the campaign to stop the expansion of the county jail.

Our third general setting for fieldwork was Poughkeepsie itself. Initially, we practiced our fieldwork skills individually in 18 separate settings within and without the city; these included a library, a local Laundromat, a downtown diner, a local café, and the game-room of a suburban mall. Then, to get a sense of the physical and social environment surrounding the Center, we systematically fanned out in 3-student teams throughout the Clinton School area and recorded our observations in fieldnotes and photos. During the whole period we conducted fieldwork and administered surveys, we continued taking fieldnotes that further refined our understanding of the physical neighborhood and social geography that encompass the Center. It is to those topics that we now turn.

The Clinton School area

The Clinton School catchment area is approximately 1 square mile, or 2.4 square kilometers, in size. As Figure 1 (below) illustrates, the area extends from roughly South Cherry Street on its east end to the Route 9 arterial on its west, and from Main Street on its north end to the Springside Condos in the south. The major streets that run through this area are Hooker Avenue and Main, Church, Academy, and Montgomery Streets.

Neighborhood conditions and demographics

The Clinton School area is predominantly residential, dominated on most streets by housing structures that are sporadically interwoven with local businesses. Two pockets of the area are commercial: about four blocks of Main Street to the north and the Vassar Brothers Hospital complex to the southwest. As the 2000 Census data reported in Table 1 (below) indicate, the area has a population of 7,781 residents and is spread very evenly, with heavier concentrations in the Tubman Terrace Apartment area and the region between South Hamilton Street and Hooker Avenue. Of this population, 51 percent identify themselves as white and 38 percent as black; the other 11 percent include Asian, multiracial, and self-reported “other” ethnicities (a popular if inconsistently-used category among Hispanics). These ethnic communities are dispersed across the area, with notable black concentrations in the Tubman Terraces Apartment area, the Eastman Park region, and on the streets between Church Street and Forbus Street, and Hispanic concentrations just northeast of Eastman Park as well as in the Church–Forbus area. Although just over half of the area’s residents report themselves as being white, this area is disproportionately black compared to the rest of the city; along with the near Northside area (across Main Street), the Clinton School area houses most of the city’s black residents. With regards to age, the Clinton School area is roughly similar to the city as a whole with one exception: the proportion of the 65-and-older population is 2 percent greater than the rest of the city, most likely indicating the presence of senior citizen homes.

Figure 1

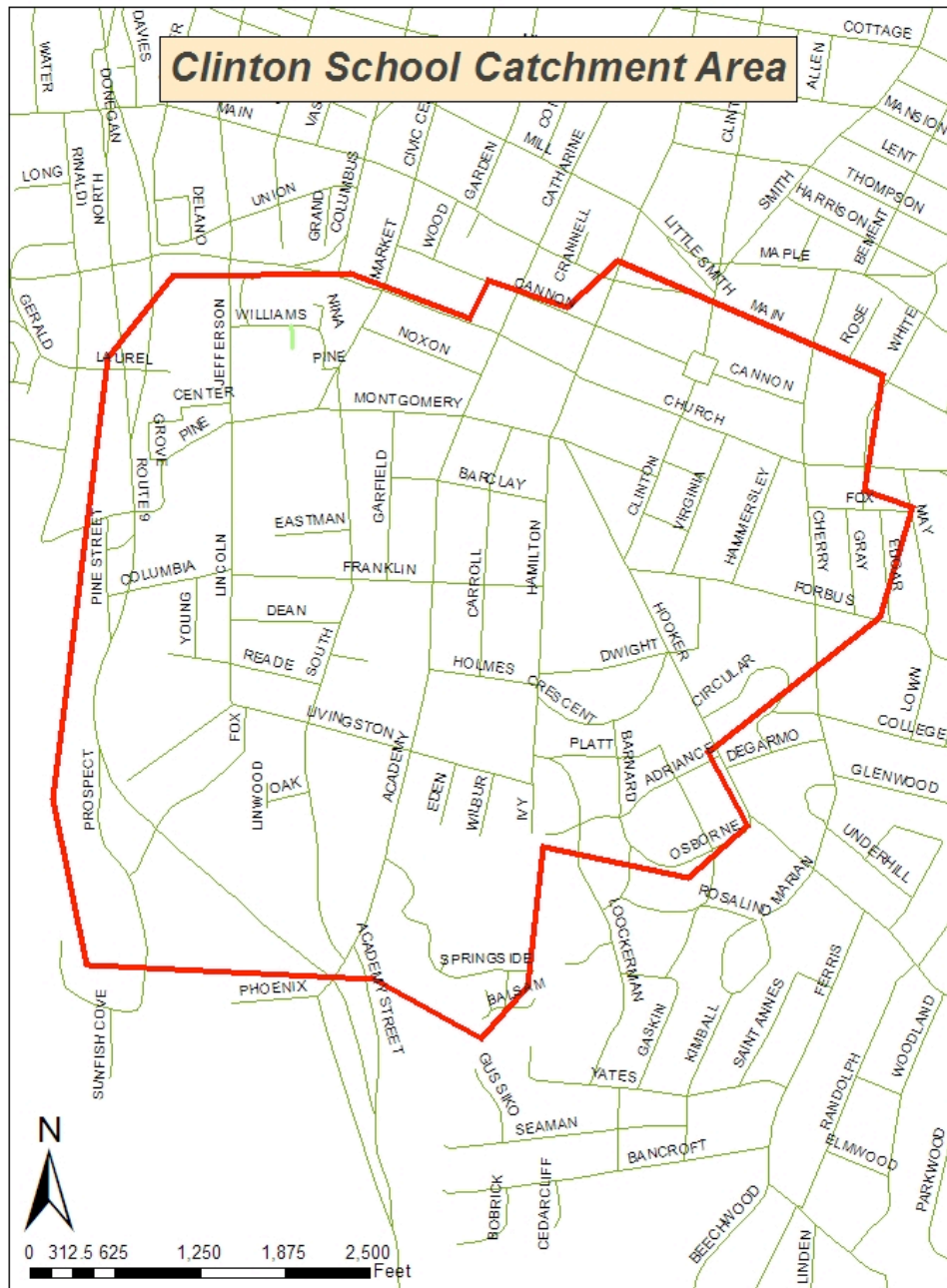


Table 1: Population characteristics of the Clinton School area compared to the City of Poughkeepsie

	Clinton School area	City of Poughkeepsie
Population	7,781	29,871
White	50.7%	75.1%
Black	38.2%	12.3%
Other	11.1%	12.6%
Hispanic (of any race)	11.4%	12.5%
Under 5 years old	8.0%	7.7%
5-17	18.1%	18.2%
65 and older	15.5%	13.6%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

When it comes to household type, Census data reveal that the Clinton School area differs from the rest of the city in important ways, as Table 2 (below) shows. The proportion of residents living in family households—of which there are four types: married with children, married no children, male-headed with children, and female-headed with children—is smaller in the Clinton School area than the city as a whole. Conversely, non-family households are disproportionately larger: 3 percent more householders living alone, and 8 percent more non-family households (i.e., non-relative roommates and institutional residences, the latter of which includes a substantial number of elderly). To put this another way, only around 29 percent of households in the Clinton School area include children, compared to about 37 percent in the city. A second interesting finding relates to female-headed family households, a group often linked in the common wisdom to a pernicious cycle of poverty: in the Clinton School area, the proportion of this group is about 4 percent *smaller* than in the city (and indeed the nation as a whole). Finally, we note that the Clinton School area is heavily composed of renters: two thirds of the whole population, or about twice as many as in the city as a whole. Much of the renting is concentrated in the Tubman Terrace neighborhood and between

Church Street and Forbus Street, while most of the owned residences are south of Livingston Avenue down by the Springside Condos.

Table 2: Household characteristics of the Clinton School area compared to the City of Poughkeepsie

	Clinton School area	City of Poughkeepsie
Average household size	2.52	2.4
Householder living alone	38.2%	35.4%
1 male	17.6%	n/a
1 female	20.6%	n/a
Other non-family household	18.0%	10.0%
Married with children	11.5%	12.6%
Married no children	15.3%	17.2%
Male-headed with children	2.8%	5.1%
Female-headed with children	14.3%	19.7%
Vacant	9.2%	9.0%
Owner-occupied	24.4%	66.2%
Renter-occupied	66.4%	33.8%

Source: US Census Bureau, 2000.

In regards to the area's socioeconomic status, the Clinton School area is rather diverse. Although there certainly are visible separations of more and less affluent residences, one can easily find a poorly upheld multi-unit building located around the corner from an impressive string of high-end houses. Since income and housing value data are available only at the larger Census tract level, and the Clinton School area lies over parts of five Census tracts (2204, 2205, 2208, 2208, 2209), it is difficult to calculate specific socioeconomics statistics for our study area. Nonetheless, the contrasts are suggestive. Consider the difference between two neighborhoods, one to the north of Montgomery Street (Census tract 2204, which extends north to Mansion Street) and the

other to the south of Franklin Street bounded by Hooker Avenue, Academy Street, and Adriance Avenue (Census tract 2208). From the former to the latter, median household incomes range from about \$16,000 to \$36,000; the population living under the poverty line varies from 44 percent to 16 percent; foreign born residents who are not citizens range from 19 percent to 4 percent; residents over 25 years old without a high school degree varies from 43 percent to 20 percent; and the population who has lived in the same residence for five years range from 27 percent to 48 percent. Moreover, the socioeconomic diversity *within* each tract suggests that the far ends of these ranges are even further apart than these figures suggest. In sum, these patterns suggest the population includes a substantial number of people living near or below the poverty line. Of this group, many may be “at risk” due to their apparent social isolation, living in households without family or others to depend on. Renting and residential transience are two traits further associated with lower income, reducing the amount and strength of residents’ long-term ties to their neighborhood.

As for the Clinton School area’s physical environment, housing types include single-family houses, multi-unit structures, apartment buildings, and pricey Victorians. Visually, the area contains an assortment of sites, ranging from large parks and sweeping views of the Hudson to abandoned buildings and run-down gardens. The area is rich in parks and outdoor amenities, including the large Eastman and Lincoln Parks to the south of Clinton Elementary School and Bartlett Park, located along Hooker Avenue by Circular Road. Among the area’s cultural institutions are the Bardavon Opera House and the Adriance Library, both located on Market Street. The area includes a handful of group homes for senior assisted living, and the Vassar Brothers Hospital can be found along Route 9. Finally, the Clinton School area is also home to a large number of religious organizations, including a synagogue and churches of various Christian denominations.

Needs and hopes for the neighborhood

Through surveying this economically, culturally, and socially diverse area, we found evidence of a wide expanse of perceived needs—ranging from more cultural

programs to greater safety on the streets. Although certainly not all of the issues cited by survey respondents are within the realm of the Center’s capability and expertise (such as healthcare provision or city services), much of the information in their answers—all expressed in respondents’ own words—can help the Center better understand the concerns of the target community and in turn help to shape current and future program development.

On our survey, we asked respondents the open-ended question, “What do you believe are the three most urgent needs in the Clinton School area?” Respondents gave us a broad range of answers. The most commonly identified need (20 percent of total responses) concerned new or existing children’s programs other than childcare (which was addressed separately in 3.5 percent of responses). The next most common need (11 percent) revolved around safety, in terms of more police, faster response time, and communication with the police. Respondents identified a third need (9 percent) for various city services in the area, such as street cleaning and park upkeep. Other urgent needs indicated by survey respondents, such as job training and programs for the Latino population, can be seen in Table 3, below.

Table 3: The most urgent needs in the Clinton School area

Answer	Percentage of responses
Programs for children and teens	22%
Safety	11%
City Services	9%
Jobs and job training	5%
Programs for Latino population	4%
Substance abuse treatment	4%
Childcare	4%
Other	3%
Healthcare	2%
Community building	2%
Programs for parents and families	1%
Housing and homelessness	1%
Programs for senior citizens	1%
Cultural programs	1%
No response	33%

Another way we got respondents to articulate their beliefs about the Clinton School area was by asking them, “What are your greatest hopes for this community?” To this open question, some respondents identified very broad hopes for their community, while others focused on specific improvements. Respondents’ hopes for improvements regarding crime and safety emerged as one of the most common themes (30 percent of responses); we heard the area described as having “too many gangs” and “too much violence.” Just as many respondents expressed hopes for economic improvement, a topic that encompasses personal concerns like one’s standard of living and housing affordability as well as community improvement through business and job creation. The third most common hope (22 percent) envisioned a more unified and cohesive community; the goal, in the words of one respondent, was “to bring the neighborhood closer together, make it more ‘close knit’.” As another respondent indicated, the “potential is there to restore community, but there is no strong sense of community.” A

fourth theme (20 percent) concerned youth and teen programs ranging from educational programs (“after-school programs, tutoring, and summer programs,” one respondent answered comprehensively) to “a center for children and youth.” Other greatest hopes identified by survey respondents can be seen in Table 4, below.

Table 4: Greatest hopes for the community

Answer	Percentage of responses
Crime prevention and safety	30%
Economic improvement	30%
Community involvement/unity/sense of community	22%
Youth and teen programs (includes education)	20%
Drug prevention (sale/use)	15%
Aesthetic improvement/beautification	15%
Creating opportunities/new programs (social services/general)	14%
Awareness of programs	5%
Parental responsibility (communication with school/involvement)	5%
Senior citizen programs	2%
Satisfied	2%
No response	3%

Note: Responses do not add to 100 percent because respondents could choose up to three.

Among this diversity of responses, we think our results indicate some common patterns, the first being substantial concern among respondents for the well-being of family and children in the neighborhood. Responses that hoped for “after school programs,” “after school care,” “something to get kids off the street,” and concerns over “too many kids on the streets,” all fit into these broad categories. These types of needs, concerning consistent support, activities, and help for families with children and teens, were expressed over and over again and inform answers to other survey questions we discuss later. Whereas these are needs that the Center could fulfill, others—for example, safety concerns, city services, and healthcare services—are perhaps beyond the scope of

the Center or a community center alone. Although the Center could address such concerns by working with local government, healthcare agencies, and law enforcement (and, with the last, has to some degree via the Conocer program), in the end much responsibility for change rests with those outside agencies. Perhaps more feasibly, a community center could provide job training programs as well as some type of substance abuse treatment. Also, the Center could address cultural needs and community building needs, as well as many of the “other” answers received that are not so urgent among the whole community.

How residents find help for their problems

Residents in the Clinton School area employ diverse means to fulfill their many needs and aspirations. Who do they currently turn to in order to address their problems? How do they evaluate the effectiveness of the agencies and programs designed to improve their quality of life? These questions, we feel, are of strategic importance to the Center as it seeks to draw substantial interest from the community for its services and programs.

Frequent sources of help

We asked survey respondents, “Who or where do you turn to for help most often?” giving them the option to select as many individuals as applied to their situation. Overwhelmingly, people indicated that they relied on family, with 89 percent choosing that response. The next most common choices were a friend (77 percent), a doctor or nurse (66 percent), a co-worker (41 percent), clergy (37 percent), a social service provider (34 percent), and a teacher (32 percent). See Table 5, below. 4 percent of our respondents chose “other” for their answer, mentioning police, support groups, and local government in this regard.

Table 5: Whom respondents turn to for help most often

Answer	Percentage of responses
Family	89%
Friend	77%
Doctor or nurse	66%
Co-worker	41%
Clergy	37%
Social service provider	34%
Teacher	32%
Other	4%

Note: Responses do not add to 100 percent because respondents could choose more than one.

In order to identify which kind of “social service provider” were most helpful, respondents who chose this answer could choose from a subset of social service provider types. About a third of these respondents mentioned they turn to a case worker or the Department of Social Services (DSS), while another quarter of respondents identified a therapist or counselor. See Table 6, below.

Table 6: Types of social service providers whom respondents turn to for help most often

Answer	Percentage of responses
Case Worker/DSS	34%
Therapist/counselor	25%
Emergency assistance	3%
Mentor	3%
Daycare	3%
No type mentioned	32%

Several aspects of these findings are possibly relevant for the Center’s program planning. Family continues to be a main preoccupation; whereas our earlier tables signaled family as a source of concern in the neighborhood, we see it is also most

residents' chief resource for help. One implication is that the Center may wish to capitalize on residents' primary focus on family by structuring future programs around family members. This could mean something like inviting participation by parents and children alike in family-oriented programs, activities, or events (something we witnessed having great success at a Climb the Beanstalk performance for children's families). To be sure, it may not be wise for the Center to focus exclusively on the family, since doing so may exclude the many others who do not have or live with family. Yet the same suggestion can be made for the other personal associates to whom people turn to help most often; that is, the Center may want to devise activities or volunteering opportunities for community-minded friends, or do something that encourages community in the workplace. Finally, we take note of the relatively low rates with which respondents turn "most often" to clergy, social service providers, and teachers for help. Response rates in the 30 percent range are not insignificant, of course, and they are conceivably explained by factors such as respondents not having children (and therefore not interacting with teachers) or not being religious. Nevertheless, they signal that residents do not consistently turn to the formal institutions of help available in the community.

Obstacles in getting services

In an area where a good number of people live near or below the poverty line, our finding that about a third of respondents turn to social service providers for help "most often" suggests that there are still many who have probably used social services of various kinds before or would use them at some time. However, many residents face obstacles in obtaining social services. For some, the problem could simply be they do not know about programs and activities that could benefit their household. For others, prior inconveniences or negative experiences could have turned them away from social service providers, so that they no longer turn to them "most often."

We asked survey respondents "What do you consider to be the obstacles that prevent local people from receiving the services they need?" and gave them the option to select as many responses as they deemed necessary. Note that our question asked about obstacles facing "local people," not "you" the respondent. Although this may

overestimate the likelihood that all the obstacles respondents identified pertain to any one individual, the question has the benefit of highlighting the array of potential problems in the relationship between residents and social service providers.

As Table 7 below indicates, respondents identified problems of access, eligibility and convenience as the primary obstacles preventing local people from receiving the services they need. Significantly, almost three-fourths of respondents indicated that local people are too often unaware of existing services, while smaller majorities cited long waiting lists (62 percent), exclusion by services' rules and eligibility (56 percent), transportation problems (56 percent), and unaffordable service fees (55 percent). Just about one-half of respondents (49 percent) identified negative attitudes—rudeness, insensitivity, and unresponsiveness—that clientele have encountered from social services staff. A third or more of respondents observed that the service is too far away (43 percent), staff do not speak local people's language (34 percent), and the service is not open at convenient times (33 percent). The few respondents who selected "other" mentioned additional obstacles—crime (gang activity, unsafe streets), cultural barriers (racial bias, lack of multicultural awareness), pride, and homeless shelter shortages—that prevent local people from receiving the services they need.

Table 7: Obstacles that prevent local people from receiving the services they need

Answer	Percentage of responses
Not aware of existing services	74%
Waiting lists are too long	62%
Rules and eligibility exclude people who need services	56%
Transportation is not available	56%
Services' fees are too high	55%
Staff are rude or not sensitive to people's needs	49%
Staff do not seek or listen to consumer input about improving services	49%
Service is too far away from your homes	43%
Staff do not speak consumers' language	34%
Office is not open at convenient times	33%
Other	13%

Note: Responses do not add up to 100 percent because respondents could choose more than one answer.

This table makes it evident that area residents face a variety of obstacles when seeking social services. With effective publicity (which we discuss later in the section entitled “Ways to publicize programs and activities”), affordable fees, flexible rules and eligibility, and polite and responsive staff, the Center has the potential to offer people services in a way that removes several barriers that they have experienced in the past.

Existing social services and programs

Although residents may not know about all of them, the City of Poughkeepsie offers a substantial number of social programs, ranging from emergency food to a boys

choir, from homes for battered women to legal assistance for the mentally disabled. In this section, we discuss the types of programs currently available and the organizations that run them (see Appendix A for our complete program inventory). Then, we address residents' impressions of the quality of the vast range of services offered in city. These issues are crucial for the Center's future planning. Not only do they suggest which programs are needed or would be redundant, but they also highlight best practices and potential pitfalls among other organizations that the Center might take into account.

What's out there

The social services and programs offered in the City of Poughkeepsie can be grouped into 6 major categories: Youth Activities/Enrichment, Adult Education, Health, Housing/Food, Legal, and General Social Services. Of these, the most proliferate type of programming is that for youth (20 programs), then general services (15), legal (14), health (12), housing/food (8), and lastly adult education (3). The large number of programs for youth does not necessarily mean there is extensive program duplication in this category. For one reason, there may be a higher demand for youth programs than others. Also, many programs may be small and serve relatively small groups of children. Perhaps most importantly, youth are a broad constituency with different age levels, interests and aptitudes. For example, the Mill Street Loft and Children's Media Project prioritize art/media instruction over after school and summer care, and so they may serve a different group of children than the Center's Climb the Beanstalk and Summercamp. Indeed, for all categories, there does not seem to be an extensive duplication of programming at this point. On the other hand, the nearly as prominent number of general social services and legal services suggests that this is a community with many in need of assistance.

Of the programs gathered in this inventory (which represents findings of our class' research in Poughkeepsie), many, especially the smaller programs, are provided by larger, umbrella organizations such as the Catherine Street Community Center or Dutchess Outreach, Inc. A central location for services in the City of Poughkeepsie, the Family Partnership Center is not a parent organization, but rather a space for other,

independent service providers. Then there are also the more formal organizations that offer programs or resources in Poughkeepsie. In this category we have identified and listed Schools, Libraries, and Museums. Both the elementary schools and some of the museums are involved in providing youth programming through the funding source of Poughkeepsie's Promise.

Finally, we note that period in which we conducted our research is a transitional one for the social-service landscape of Poughkeepsie. With the closing of the Youth Resource Development Corporation (YRDC) and Poughkeepsie's YWCA in early 2005, many of the long-established, well-used youth programs disappeared. Other organizations have scrambled to pick up these programs, but these two large service providers have indeed left craters in their wake. One woman we surveyed told us that the closing of the YRDC was a great loss to the community, and she wondered aloud how other programs could be successful if the YRDC couldn't stay open. This is a broader question that the Center should consider as it plans for its future, both to avoid the potential pitfalls as well as to consider picking up the social-service slack in the wake of the YWCA and YRDC's closing. For this reason, we address the organizations' closings in further depth in Appendix E.

Where local programs could be improved

Even though Poughkeepsie does appear to offer a substantial array of social programs for its residents, our survey results reveal that a large number of respondents aren't aware of these programs. Of course, awareness is not the only measure of programs' success, and many are currently operating at capacity (thus extra clientele are not needed). Yet, the qualitative evaluations given by respondents do reflect a desire to see improvement across the board in existing social programs.

We asked our respondents to "Please rate the following services for residents in the Clinton School area." A first finding leaps out of Table 8 (below): For almost every service listed, the "don't know" category had among the highest percentage of responses—in some cases, over 50 percent of respondents answered this way. There

were only two items — parks and libraries — to which less than 10 percent of respondents said they didn't know how to rate them. The predominance of “don't know” responses may in large part reflect the diverse demographics of the Clinton School area; for example, if just over a quarter of area household do not include children, then it is unsurprising that so many respondents seem unaware of the quality of children's services.

Table 8: Respondent ratings of Clinton School area services (percentage of responses)

SERVICE	Excel- lent	Good	Fair	Poor	Don't know	NR
For children:						
After-school programs	11%	22%	17%	13%	31%	6%
Daycare	9%	14%	11%	12%	52%	3%
Tutoring	6%	17%	13%	14%	41%	9%
Teen programs	6%	10%	8%	22%	46%	6%
Abuse prevention	5%	16%	11%	9%	52%	8%
Mentoring	5%	22%	13%	10%	41%	10%

For senior citizens:

Emergency assistance: food, clothing, shelter, and energy	9%	33%	14%	8%	32%	4%
Social activities	5%	15%	18%	10%	35%	5%
Income-generating activities	2%	13%	16%	18%	45%	5%

For everyone:

Church and religious organizations	25%	43%	8%	2%	18%	4%
Libraries	23%	51%	14%	5%	8%	0%
Police	17%	47%	13%	12%	10%	1%
Transportation	15%	30%	22%	16%	17%	0%
Health services	15%	40%	22%	11%	11%	2%
Art and culture programs.	14%	35%	18%	12%	18%	2%
Adult education and literacy	14%	38%	13%	13%	19%	3%
Parks	13%	40%	24%	16%	4%	3%
Substance abuse treatment	12%	26%	13%	13%	34%	2%
Assistance for handicapped people	11%	26%	16%	11%	34%	2%
Family services and counseling	10%	34%	24%	6%	26%	0%
English language training	10%	28%	11%	11%	38%	3%
Mental health	10%	28%	19%	9%	31%	3%
Job training	9%	25%	16%	16%	31%	3%
Courts and legal aid	8%	38%	14%	9%	30%	2%
Info and referral	3%	32%	22%	15%	27%	1%

Of those respondents who felt knowledgeable enough about youth programs to rate them, most perceived after-school programs, abuse prevention and mentoring programs as good or excellent; however, only half ranked daycare that highly, while more than half ranked tutoring and teen programs as fair to poor. The specific emphases that the Center currently provides in its youth programs, such as mentoring and after-school programs, seem to be the most positively regarded throughout the City of Poughkeepsie. Among respondents who rated services for senior citizens, most rated emergency assistance programs as good or excellent but social activities and income-generating activities as fair to poor. In terms of services available for everyone, religious organizations, parks, police, art and culture programs, adult education and literacy programs and libraries were often described with high ratings and positive comments. Only transportation and information/referral services received more fair-to-poor

responses than good-to-excellent responses from those respondents who chose to rate them.

The respondents—from young parents to elderly—spoke from their specific experience in the community, and most indicated a desire to see improvement in at least some of the social programs of which they were aware. Although certainly many of the community's needs, such as assistance for the handicapped, may not be feasibly met by the Center, it seems that its existing programs are filling a noted void. Furthermore, we note again that many respondents continually stressed how they or others were not aware of many of existing services. This may be a cue to the Center to advertise its own programming better as well as help refer people to other existing services in the City of Poughkeepsie.

What constituents would want from Center of the Square

Perhaps some of the most exciting information that surfaced in our study comes from the proposals of residents themselves. Having covered the perceptions of service and program awareness, availability, and quality, we now turn to the desires and visions of the local residents. Framed in the context of a new community center, our research investigated which services, programs, or activities residents would like in two ways.

First, we asked survey respondents the open-ended question, “If you could pick three services, programs and activities, which ones would you like to see offered at this new community center?” They gave us a great diversity of answers, but the largest interest expressed was for activities for families and youth. A major subset of respondents (17 percent) indicated that specific types of family and youth programming they would like to see at a new community center include enrichment, mentoring, and well being programs for children and teens; remarkably, this is a program area in which the Center is already experienced through its Climb the Beanstalk program for first graders. An almost equal number of respondents (16 percent) expressed interest in recreational programs for children and teens; again, we note that the Center already has

experience in this area through its Summercamp. Other interests that respondents expressed include art and culture programs (8 percent), recreation activities for adults and seniors (8 percent), job training (6 percent) and adult education (6 percent). These and other interests are summarized in Table 9, below.

Table 9: Services, programs and activities that respondents would like to see offered at a new community center

Answer	Percentage of responses
Programs for youth that enrich their minds: mentoring, self-respect, well-being, etc.	17%
Recreational activities for youth: sports, summer camps, etc.	16%
Arts and culture	8%
Recreational activities for adults and seniors	8%
Adult education	6%
Job training	6%
Health and fitness	6%
Family/community activities	5%
Resource and information referral	4%
Language programs	4%
Transportation	4%
Assistance for the needy: income generating, emergency assistance, housing, etc.	3%
Legal assistance	3%
Police outreach	2%
Drug rehabilitation	2%
Emergency help for seniors	1%
No response	5%

Second, in our fieldwork, we asked a similar question to officials from institutions that serve school children and senior citizens, two key potential Center constituencies. Regarding the latter, we interviewed the program director at the Vassar-Warner Home,

where we learned of the collaboration between this institution and Center of the Square through the Climb the Beanstalk program. This official reported that Vassar-Warner has found the sessions between their residents and the students involved in Climb the Beanstalk to be worthwhile, and it would be interested in extending and formalizing this relationship to include more collaborative programming between area youth and the elderly who reside at Vassar-Warner.

The proximity of Clinton School as well as the relationship that already exists between the school and Climb the Beanstalk led us to further examine the interests of the school in the Center. Although we were unable to interview the teachers or administrators of the school for this study, the members of the PTA indicated a significant, if informal, interest in collaborating with Center of the Square. They particularly expressed a need for teens to have a place to go and activities to keep them busy outside of school hours, and hoped that the Center might be able to fulfill this need. Moreover, the PTA has had trouble recruiting and retaining volunteers for their programming from both the parent and teacher communities. Given this, they are interested in pursuing new avenues to provide programming to the families and children of Clinton. Like respondents, the PTA identified a need for enrichment and after school programs, as well as opportunities for families to participate in programs together. While members of the PTA were familiar with Climb the Beanstalk, they expressed the hope that the Center would expand this type of programming to serve a greater portion of the Clinton Elementary School population—a hope that amplifies the most popular wish reported in Table 9, above.

Finally, the Poughkeepsie City School District has indicated an interest in the development of programming at the Center. In a fieldwork interview at the Poughkeepsie City School District, Superintendent Robert Watson expressed a desire to see the Center collaborate with the district. Specifically, in the context of new demands placed on the district through legislation such as No Child Left Behind, Watson is seeking innovative ways to meet the needs of students in the community. Some of these demands include providing services such as after school care, reading programs, and tutoring, which the

district does not have the staff or infrastructure to support. Because of these circumstances, the school district currently contracts with non-profits to provide these services. Watson was particularly interested in the possibility of the Center expanding and creating programming to serve Poughkeepsie students in conjunction with the school district. As our fieldwork and survey research both suggest, then, there seem to be numerous opportunities for the Center to develop relationships with schools and create programs that draw children and families from these school communities.

Ways to publicize programs and activities

Returning to the question of what programs residents want, for even the most desired programs to be well received into the community, they would need to be effectively publicized to residents. We asked survey respondents, “What would be the best way to communicate what is happening at the center?” They cited several media, which we report in Table 10, below. The largest group of respondents said that flyers would be the best way to disseminate information, followed by newspapers, cable TV, word of mouth, radio, and posters.

Table 10: Best way to communicate Center activities

Answer	Percentage of responses
Flyers	41%
Newspaper	23%
Cable TV	20%
Word of mouth	18%
Radio	15%
Posters	8%

Note: Responses do not add to 100 percent because respondents chose more than one answer.

Although most respondents chose flyers as the best way to communicate Center activities, we should note that the survey question did not explicitly define what was meant by flyers. Some of us clarified that this meant flyers sent in the mail, but it is not clear that all respondents understood this in the same way. Nonetheless, the findings that

posters (which some might also consider flyers) received the lowest number of responses and that newspapers received the second highest number suggest that Center of the Square may best reach residents of the Clinton School area by using communications that are delivered in print to people's mailboxes or doors.

Issues for Center growth and outreach

Before we offer our suggestions as to how and in what areas the Center might plan to develop new programs and expand existing ones, our survey and fieldwork research raises several issues that the Center might consider first. One immediate issue highlighted by our survey and fieldwork as well as the community development scholarship we have delved into is that the Center has already established programs and developed strategies that correspond to key needs and concerns of Clinton School area residents. This reflects good fortune in our survey findings, but we also consider this an issue of organizational necessity for a relatively new community center that is entering into a major transitional period. In its future planning, perhaps the Center should not dwell so much on “reinventing the wheel” with all-new programs and services, although clearly there are some new opportunities worth pursuing. Instead, the Center might focus on improving, refining, and correcting its current social-service programs and organizational processes in order to maximize its most valuable resources: its volunteers' energies and expertise, and its relationships, both existing and potential, with community stakeholders.

Evaluation of current programs

Guided by this principle of starting with what has already been established, we now evaluate the Center's existing programs: Climb the Beanstalk, Summercamp, and Conocer. Through our fieldwork we observed the dynamics of the programs, their promise and potential for expansion, and—perhaps unexpectedly, but no less significantly—their centrality to the formal mission and taken-for-granted assumptions of the Center as an organization. Below, we discuss what we believe works well and not so well in these programs, and we discuss where the potential lies in improving and

expanding them. This section presumes the reader is familiar with these programs and their operations; for more information, we refer the reader to the Center brochure in Appendix D.

Climb the Beanstalk

Climb the Beanstalk is the Center's reading and mentorship program that pairs a first-grade student with an adult volunteer over the course of a school year. Our research suggests this program is quite successful, has good potential for growth, and serves a vital need within the community. The children participating in the program, their families, and the volunteers all seem satisfied with Climb the Beanstalk, and it seems to have had a positive effect on all those involved. The most pressing "problem" we see with Climb is simply that the demand to enroll first-graders exceeds the supply of volunteers able to offer consistent attendance and attention. Once this obstacle is overcome, an obvious area for expansion is to develop new programming and mentoring activities so that Climb the Beanstalk could serve a student population beyond the first grade. At least one respondent remarked that she wished that her son could still participate in the program, but he was too old; her remark was echoed by the esteem given to Climb by the PTA and (by word of mouth) Clinton School teachers.

We see pros and cons to expanding Climb the Beanstalk. On the one hand, expansion could improve the lives of more children than the program now involves, as well as draw increased positive attention to the Center and Climb the Beanstalk. On the other hand, expanding the program to more children could potentially disturb the positive and nurturing space that Climb has created for the children, and it could lead to more disorganization and spread resources thin. Increased organization and structure to the program could mitigate these potential negative outcomes. For instance, we know this is an issue that Climb volunteers and the Center have already worked on, but the Center might want to consider clearing questions about who owns the books used for Climb the Beanstalk, the Center or Christ Episcopal Church. After this is settled, the Center could focus on obtaining more books and other valuable resources (computers, for example) that could be potentially used for other programs as well as further its autonomy from the

church. Being independent of the Church's resources could be beneficial to the Center as well as its individual programs.

Summertime

The oldest of the Center's programs, Summertime is a six-week-long day camp that currently serves about 60 children in the first through fifth grades. As we have seen from the surveys, youth activities and neighborhood safety are big concerns in this neighborhood. For this reason, we think the Center's Summertime provides a truly valuable service to the community as the most affordable summer childcare. While this program has the potential to grow larger in the future and provide more underprivileged children with affordable summer care once the Center obtains a larger space, at this time a simple expansion does not seem advisable before organizational and curricular issues are resolved first. As we witnessed in two planning meetings, Summertime volunteers and the Center are already aware of this. For example, settling on an overarching curriculum or theme for the camp during the preliminary meetings might allow the camp to run more smoothly and improve organization, as opposed to having to make decisions from week to week about campers' activities. This structure could take some stress off of the counselors, giving them more time to concentrate on the children, and it could also prove valuable to the Center of the square as a way of advertising the camp with a specific focus. On the other hand, a fixed curriculum could limit the scope of the camp, so balances should be made between thematic coherence and curricular flexibility.

Summertime provides children with creative and intellectual outlets over the summer; with proper planning, a revised curriculum could enhance this quality. Even more than Climb the Beanstalk, Summertime is a large enough program that it could serve as a sort of advertisement for the Center—its success could get the community to know the Center better. Increased neighborhood awareness of and participation in the program could draw attention to the Center and the other programs that it offers.

Conocer

Conocer is the Center's English-language program for the Spanish-speaking population; this last year, the program provided a "cultural orientation" component by inviting Poughkeepsie police, teaching them useful Spanish vocabulary, and facilitating interactions between class participants (mostly Latino immigrants) and local authorities. We are very impressed with the potential of Conocer. By striving to meet the expressed need for English training (see Table 9) and reach out to Poughkeepsie's Latino population, it has the possibility to transcend the passive service-delivery model of most social service programs (including Climb the Beanstalk and Summercamp) and truly *develop community*. However, we feel that, in its current state, Conocer is unable to efficiently and successfully reach its potential, for at least three reasons.

First, perhaps the largest problem with Conocer is the different levels of education, literacy and fluency among the class's participants. The instructor cannot easily plan a lesson that caters to everyone's specific needs; trying to do so inevitably makes the lesson too difficult for some and too easy for others, making the students therefore unable to reach their full potential in learning English. One possible way to remedy this problem would be to extend Conocer to two sessions a week, one day for beginners and one day for the more advanced students. While this does not solve the discrepancy between different levels of literacy and education, it is still more beneficial than the single-session because the instructor will be able to create lesson plans with more ease and the learning needs of each student will be more efficiently met. Also, Conocer might try incorporating computers in its lesson plans—something its instructor has already expressed interest in doing—in order to cater to different levels of English proficiency and offer a valuable job skill as well.

A second problem is the inconsistent and low attendance rate of Conocer. On our first visit to Conocer there were no students (it was Ash Wednesday), on our second there were seven people, and on the last day there were nine (which was considered a great turnout). While it is difficult to carry out a lesson plan with inconsistent numbers like these, to a great extent this reflects the situation of the migrant population; factors such as

job security, political situations, inadequate housing, and lack of childcare can prevent a migrant population from attending consistently. In addition to the previously mentioned proposal of offering two different Conocer sessions, another possibility is to incorporate participants' children into the program. While participating in one session of Conocer, we observed a woman's young son help interpret between his mother and the instructor. By having children aid their parents in the learning of English, the Spanish-speaking parents would learn English all while spending quality family time (a community need expressed by survey respondents). Flexibility again is key; we would not want to limit the program to participants with children only.

The last problem is the involvement of the police. On our visits to Conocer, there was only one police officer at the last two sessions (the same one each time). Although this part of the program is a valiant effort to improve the relations between the police and Latinos, we feel it is an overload on the program. Teaching English is already a major task, and to add teaching Spanish to the police makes the program more unwieldy, especially when the police do not show up and the goals of the program are not being met. Although a stronger commitment to police attendance might be worthwhile, we feel there are other ways to achieve Conocer's "cultural orientation" goal. In several of our Spanish-language surveys, respondents expressed a need for legal aid to help them work, obtain housing, and deal with government and institutions in the United States. Perhaps the program could invite bilingual lawyers, at least once in awhile, to bring a different kind of "authority" perspective into the class.

What works and what doesn't in other programs

As the Center develops new programs, we urge it to consider the programs offered by other service providers in Poughkeepsie. This is not only to avoid program duplication—a "problem" that in fact may not be much of a problem, as we discuss later. Just as importantly, the Center can learn what other organizations struggle with as they grow by knowing what works and doesn't work in their programs. During our fieldwork, we examined several other programs in the community such as the Clinton PTA, the Clinton after-school program, Catherine Street Community Center, Mill Street Loft, and

The Children's Media Project. In these programs making connections with other organizations, advertising, and attendance seem to be key issues.

The Clinton after-school program, which is run through Family Services, has done very well in making connections with community organizations in order to improve the quality of its program. The director, Stacy Hyers, mentioned that they work with Vassar, Marist, the Cornell Gardening Project, and Clearwater to provide unique programming for their students. The after-school program has also fostered a strong connection with the Clinton School. Since the program is designed to meet certain academic goals, they have developed programs like Fast Forward, a project-based learning program endowed by Emilie Dyson. This helps the after-school program connect to the school "by making sure that the kids are covering the same material at the same time," Hyers told us. "For example, they'll cover multiplication in the after school program at the same time that they learn it in class." Strong ties to a school also work well for Catherine Street Community Center, which has maintained a good relationship with nearby Morse Magnet School.

By contrast, connections with other schools and similar organizations are not as strong in the Clinton after-school program. Stacy Hyers knew almost nothing about what happened at the Poughkeepsie's Promise programs run out of the other schools. She didn't know if the programs had a similar curriculum, or even how the program was being influenced by the YWCA/YRDC closings, which shut down the programs in some schools. Similarly, the Clinton after-school program does not have a strong connection to the after-school activities run through other organizations. Stacy Hyers claimed her program has only a "functional relationship" with the Center for the exchange of kids who attend Climb the Beanstalk; otherwise, there is little interaction or information exchanged.

This lack of knowledge about similar programs seems to be a common pattern among many Poughkeepsie organizations, not just the Clinton after-school program. It is also evidence in the Center—hence the need for this needs assessment in the first place.

Many organizations seem to want more interaction with other similar programs, but they don't know enough about what's out there to facilitate a connection. As we have already seen (see the section entitled "What constituents would want from Center of the Square," above), the Clinton PTA, with its attendance and advertising frustrations, seems eager to ally itself with Center.

Attendance and volunteers are an issue for some organizations. The Clinton PTA's Movie Day has low student attendance, even though this program fills a void for youth programming mentioned by many respondents. The PTA also has trouble finding sufficient volunteers; its current system of calling people who had previously signed up to volunteer does not appear to sustain participation. By contrast, Catherine Street Community Center is so well established in the community that it barely has to advertise for their programs. It relies mostly on word of mouth and still has no problems with attendance. Mill Street Loft and the Children's Media Project also have well attended programs, and they rely on colorful mail-out flyers to attract customers.

In improving the Center's existing programs and deciding on what needs to be created, it is helpful to see what works and doesn't work in other similar programs. Generally, connections with complementary organizations work well, such as connections between schools (which provide participants) and community centers (which offer programs), but most programs struggle to form adequate connections with other programs that offer similar services. Establishing these connections may be a key issue in solving some of the other issues such as lack of volunteers, and poor attendance.

What would keep residents from using the Center?

When considering the basic elements of current and future programs, the Center should first and foremost make its programs accessible to the people who desire to take full advantage of them. Numerous factors (such as cost or timing) might prohibit potential clientele from reaching beneficial services that the Center may have to offer. In our survey, we asked, "If services, programs and activities were offered at a new community center in the Clinton School area, would you attend?" Encouragingly, an

overwhelming majority (81 percent) of respondents indicated that they would attend programs, services, or activities in a new community center; see Table 11.

Table 11: Attend services, programs and activities at a new community center in the Clinton School area?

Answer	Percentage of responses
Yes	81%
No	15%
No response	4%

Still, it is likely that various factors will prevent at least some residents across all socioeconomic categories from using the Center’s offerings. For insight on this issue, those respondents who answered no to the prior question were asked, “What reasons would keep you from attending services, programs and activities at a new community center?” As Table 12 (below) indicates, about one-half of respondents indicated that time was the problem, followed by the cost of programs, the difficulty of finding childcare, and the difficulty of finding transportation. These findings support an obvious suggestion: the Center should have flexible times for their programs and continue to keep its fees low or free for their programs. In addition to time barriers, children and child-care represent another “barrier” that non-profits like the Center can overcome to increase participation and effectiveness.

Table 12: Reasons preventing attendance

Answer	Percentage of responses
Time	19%
Cost	10%
Childcare	5%
Transportation	4%
Other	13%

While these survey findings provide a direct account of reasons why residents might not attend Center programming, our fieldwork allowed us to observe and think further about the situations and contexts in which people do or do not participate in community centers. Most generally, we observed that many events throughout Poughkeepsie have a low attendance rate. Many participants and organizers seem to think that this is due to bad advertising. There are attempts to inform people of the events, through flyers and signs, but people still seem not to go. Thus perhaps there are greater reasons beyond publicity and awareness of services available that would prevent people from attending services.

Being comfortable with the organization that is providing services is important to high attendance rates. It seems that large and well-known institutions such as Family Partnership Center and Catherine Street Center do not have a problem attracting people to services. The fact that not many people know the Center as a community institution may prevent people from going to the community center initially. Few people in the neighborhood have heard of the Center of the Square, even if they are aware of the programs that it runs. In order to become an institution in the community, we would recommend that the Center get its name out to familiarize itself with the community members.

However, even if community members are aware of the services that the Center offers and are familiar with the Center as an institution, there are still other factors that might prevent them from using the center. As one resident explained, some people have too much pride to use social service organizations. By depending on someone else to survive on a daily basis, it takes away from the person's independence and sense of freedom. While the Center can do very little to alter such attitudes, making their environment as friendly and as helpful as possible may help to attract people who are turned off by rude staff in other social service organizations (recall Table 7).

Another reason why residents may make a conscious decision not to attend services is a distaste for a perceived affiliation with a church. Although many residents

we surveyed turn to clergy for help, those who are not religious or not of the Episcopalian faith, or even of the Christian faith, may feel turned off by services offered in the space of the church. We also note that one respondent said that she “already had a church” that she attended. This raises the possibility that by operating out of Christ Church premises, the Center may encounter resistance from churchgoers that have a loyalty to their particular church.

Finally, our fieldwork suggests several sources of disconnect between the Center and the community, particularly the Latino community. Certainly not limited to the Center, this issue is sufficiently complex that we devote special discussion to it in the next section.

How to reach out

As for residents who are likely to participate in Center programs, or at least are the potential beneficiaries for whom Center programs are designed, reaching out to them starts with advertising a program offering. Through our fieldwork, we have gathered much evidence that Poughkeepsie organizations in general have a very low rate of attendance, as seen in the Clinton School PTA, the Poughkeepsie Institute art forum, and Common Council meetings. Reason for this could include the lack of advertising and the fact that information regarding the programs and events is not easily accessible to people of the community. As we have shown (see Table 7), our survey showed that the leading obstacle to local people participating in programs and social services was their lack of awareness of these opportunities. The Center could remedy this by redoubling its efforts to advertise its programs, which not only draws participants but further spreads its name into the community.

Advertising is just the first step in reaching out to the community. Residents are part of different household types, demographic groups, organizations, cultures, and other social forces that shape their potential needs for and interests in Center programming; make them more or less receptive to institutional interventions; and create time and encouragement in their daily routines to continue participating. More generally, one of

the most important factors in determining success for any community organization is local participation by the community. It affects the administration of programs, volunteers, program attendance, networking, financial support, and program planning. The community organization should reflect the strengths as well as the needs of the community, and therefore involvement by the community is paramount.

For this reason, we think the Center can do more to reach out to particular groups and institutions in the city. We understand that the lack of progress on this issue is a typical growing pain for a developing organization. We also recognize the previous efforts to get the Center's name out into the community. Recent articles in the *Poughkeepsie Journal* and *Weekly Beat* went a little way into creating some form of awareness about the Center's new goals. The "murder mystery" dinner fundraiser also reached a small "outside" population (we estimated that perhaps only two people attended based only on the cable TV advertisement). For the most part, the Center thus far has relied on the word of mouth and not extended far outside of the network of friends and peers. The same holds true for the volunteers and attendees of the programs. Many of these people have a very close relationship to either the church or members who are affiliated with the Center or Christ Episcopal Church.

One way to start reaching out to the community is through the Center's board of directors. Through our observations of its meetings, we saw the board members appear overworked because of the board's small size. With members managing so many smaller tasks, from overseeing subcommittees to organizing fundraisers to actually volunteering in Center programs, the board may not find the time to focus on advertising. Clearly, this is a problem that the board knows about and has begun addressing through recent efforts to attract new members and the recent hiring of the Center's first executive director. The board on a number of occasions has mentioned its desire to not only grow but also diversify. Consequently, a useful strategy would be to develop a stronger relationship with the communities that they hope to attract clientele from. To begin, the board could think further about who its diverse constituencies and stakeholders are: working-class and poor populations that speak English but are divided by race, ethnicity, and religious

inclination; middle and upper-middle class houses who “need” social programs (at least those that deliver material benefits) less but who provide a source of funding and volunteers; a recent Spanish-speaking immigrant population with different needs and a different receptivity to institutional intervention; and the diverse institutions (schools, churches, civic organizations, local government) that represent and “gatekeep” the previously mentioned populations.

Thus, advertising the Center to the community means not only increasing awareness of its programming, but generating more general publicity for the Center that attributes goodwill to its reputation and indirectly encourages personal interest and investment by potential board members and donors. There may be creative and relatively easy ways to do this. For example, by sponsoring cultural events and neighborhood get-togethers for the community, the Center could not only address one of the minor needs identified by (particularly more affluent) residents (see Table 3), but also get the Center’s name out to an important donor population. Another option is to collaborate with local organizations like the PTA, the Vassar-Warner home, and other neighborhood churches. Since these organizations can create a bridge to important constituencies, such collaborations would get the Center of the Square’s name out and perhaps create more awareness as well as perhaps uniting two separate groups into a greater cause/program. (More options for collaboration are discussed below in the conclusion, “Proposals for Center priorities.”)

The immigrant Latino population presents a different situation. Its recent appearance in Poughkeepsie has accompanied significant changes in the city, and through Conocer the Center has taken commendable first steps to reach this community. Still, the Center could think further about what it means to *include* Latinos in its programming. Many of our Latino survey respondents have identified their illegal immigrant status as a problem. Because so few Latinos participated in our survey, we would normally hesitate to generalize this perception to the larger immigrant Latino community. However, our fieldwork and experiences with this community corroborate the problems that are more commonly expressed by Latinos. Although official statistics on this population are

shaky, it is generally understood that most of Poughkeepsie's Latino population is Mexican from Oaxaca, and that many of them are undocumented. This means that until they have a legal status, they play no formal role in the city's civil society. The Center can change this by not only giving them a role in their own community, but by acting as a referral to or provider of legal aid in their efforts to obtain residency, work documents, or citizenship. Although commendable, the "cultural orientation" aims of Conocer only scratch the surface of this task. Notably, Legal Services of the Hudson Valley (at the Family Partnership Center) provide free legal aid for those eligible, but no one with an illegal status is helped. This is because Legal Services Corporation, the organization that provides 85 percent of the funds for Legal Services of the Hudson Valley, requires that all who receive benefits fit a criterion, and legal status is one of these musts.

Whatever can be done for the immigrant Latino participation could be lasting if it engages and includes them in a grassroots manner that will encourage a feeling of ownership for the programs that the Center provides. This is perhaps true for all groups in general, but the immigrant Latino population is particularly wary of institutional intervention. As one institutional representative of this population (a Catholic priest with a Spanish-speaking congregation) told us, outreach must entail a long-term personal immersion in the community's culture, and knowledge must be shared on what he says is a "two-way street." The Center has taken a valuable step along this two-way street by bringing individuals who speak Spanish onto their board. As it seeks to expand or design new programs for this population, the Center could further consider not only the most pressing needs for this group, but the means by which this population could be best engaged.

Proposals for Center priorities

Having presented an analysis of our needs-assessment survey and fieldwork, we conclude our report with suggestions for future planning that we humbly submit for the Center's consideration. We acknowledge, of course, that the Center's directors and staff are quite knowledgeable about social-service planning and implementation; indeed, we

want to formally thank the Center for giving us the opportunity to learn firsthand about the potentials for community development in Poughkeepsie from studying their activities, planning, and efforts. To the extent that we can offer a source of independent expertise in the collaboration between the Center and our class, we do so by articulating the ideas and perceptions of Clinton School area residents (largely through our survey research) and by providing an outside perspective on an organization embedded in a social, physical, and institutional environment (through our fieldwork and studies). On that basis, here are our proposals for future priorities in Center planning.

1. Strengthen existing programs

As the survey data clearly indicate, there is great demand for mentoring and recreational activities for youth such as Climb the Beanstalk and Summercamp. Although our survey data do not indicate equal demand for Conocer, that reflects our inability to survey enough members of the immigrant Latino population as much as any weakness in the existing program; nevertheless, its admirable efforts to establish both a needed service and a civic/organizational liaison for this population deserve to be continued. We hope the Center finds encouragement from these findings; as we have said earlier, the data suggest there is no need to focus primarily on “reinventing the wheel.” Accordingly, we urge the Center to “work the kinks out” of these programs before they are expanded. Particularly since the latter ultimately entails obtaining a larger space than the Christ Church premises currently offer, we feel a resolution of more immediate questions, such as curricular planning (Summercamp) and outreach to participants (Conocer), are in order first.

2. Create new programming and activities for teenagers

This proposal also finds strong support in the survey data. We think the Center cannot merely extend programming approaches from Climb the Beanstalk and Summercamp; a different strategy for programs, services, and activities is appropriate for this group. Although it should be recalled that less than a third of households in the Clinton School area contain children (see Table 2), these programs could benefit many other households by keeping the neighborhood’s youth productively occupied and giving

them social connections and personal skills that can lead to real opportunities. Ideas for teenage programming that we heard from residents and elsewhere include sports, mentoring, job skill-training, and parenting classes; the Center could also devise others it feels more experienced or comfortable in providing. (We note that certain sports might interest not just youth; a soccer league, for example, could attract substantial interest from immigrant populations.) These ideas suggest the Center would need to invest substantially in materials (as with job skill-training) or liability coverage (as a sports league might require), but we think expeditious and efficient solutions might be available by collaborating with other organization (see our fourth suggestion, below).

3. Organize community events

In our surveys, we heard from several residents that they wished they could meet their neighbors or come together as a community more often. Movie nights, block parties, and other artistic, cultural, or recreational events might be activities that the Center could consider organizing. While the need for such programming was not as urgently felt as activities for youth, we have reason to believe it was voiced more often in affluent households and blocks. At the same time, events we observed such as the PTA's movie day on the weekend showed us that such activities draw from families across the class spectrum; with proper planning, new events could appeal to the many non-family households in the area as well. Thus, these kinds of activities can generate very valuable if indirect effects on individual respect, neighborhood bonds, and community pride. They do not need to be held very frequently—monthly, semi-monthly, or annually, depending on the event—and they help publicize the Center to the surrounding community in very positive ways.

4. Collaborate with other organizations

If at this point the Center does not have the resources to invest in bold new programs or the human-power to administer or staff them, collaborating with other Poughkeepsie organizations provides a way forward. We have been very impressed by how other organizations are a source of program creativity; a few meetings with the local PTA, Vassar-Warner, or other neighborhood churches (to name just some examples)

could generate some exciting plans for future programs. Local organizations are also a source of programming demand: indeed, the closing of the YWCA/YRDC and the school district's No Child Left Behind mandates have created programming (and even funding) opportunities that the Center could pursue to great effect. Just as important are the non-programming benefits that Center could derive from collaborating: extending its name and reputation, finding potential volunteers or board members, reaching potential constituents through their gatekeeper institutions, and strengthening social bonds more generally. The PTA, for example, could be a useful link between the Center and Clinton Elementary School, especially the parents of children in the area, so that a stronger relationship can form between the three organizations.

5. Increase awareness of Center of the Square

While surveying door-to-door, we consistently discovered that almost none of our respondents had heard of the Center prior to our visit. Clearly, that has not been a major factor in the effectiveness of the Center's three current programs, which, it should be remembered, operated out of Christ Church prior to the Center's formation in 2000. However, as the Center seeks to develop interest in new programs, raise funds from non-institutional donors, and attract volunteers and board members, we think soon it will be beneficial for the Center to have its own identity independent of its programs. We urge the Center to publicize itself more effectively in its materials and activities so as to create more awareness about it in the community. This need not be tied to a fund-raising event or other formal event, which would have their own goals and strategies to attend to, but can instead be done through simple yet consistent communications through advertising and community relations, as well as effective collaboration and resource-sharing with other local organizations "behind the scenes."

6. Assess relationship with Christ Church

As it assumes full operation of the three programs it inherited from Christ Church, the Center's relationship to the church remains unclear in a variety of areas—its internal operations, including its board and its programs; its external operations, in terms of clientele outreach and collaboration; and spatially. We recommend the Center clarify the

relationship that it has with the church. To be sure, the Center gains a lot from Christ Church: a premises to work out of and borrow materials and human-power from; a central location that is well known to the community; a space that many community members feel is safe and family-friendly, and a sense of mission that draws many volunteers to Center programs, to name just a few examples. However, there are also downsides to the somewhat blurry lines between the Center and the church. In our surveys, a few residents were turned off by what they perceived as the Center's religious affiliations, while others felt conflicted about attending Center programs because they attended a different church. These may be simple misunderstandings, but they are not helped by the fact that the Center still relies on the church for secretarial services and (at the time of this report) continues to bear the church's name on its stationery. Continuing church affiliation may also hinder program development; for example, so long as questions remain about who owns and can use books for Climb the Beanstalk, this program may not be able to expand out of its current size. Finally, if the Center seeks to expand the board, then some distance from the church is necessary to separate itself from the church in order to draw potential board members who represent the diversity of neighborhood constituents and stakeholders. We know that the Center is already aware of this issue, and we encourage them to act on it more consistently.

Appendix A:
Program inventory: City of Poughkeepsie

Youth Activities/Education

Program	Organization	Description
PASSWORD	Mill Street Loft	Empowerment for girls 11-15 who are socially or economically disadvantaged
Project ABLE	Mill Street Loft	Youth Entrepreneurship Program for city youth 14-21
Habilidad	Mill Street Loft	Project ABLE for Hispanic city youth
Dutchess Arts Camp	Mill Street Loft	Week-long sessions for ages 4-14 of dynamic art education
After School Program	Children's Media Project	Free after school media education.
Media Guild Studio School	Children's Media Project	Summer media classes
Week-Long Immersion Classes	Children's Media Project	Week-long hands-on immersion classes in mixed-media
Poughkeepsie's Promise: Clinton Elementary	Family Services, Inc.	After school enrichment

Big Brothers Big Sisters	Community Action Partnership	Mentoring program
Poughkeepsie's Promise: Columbus Elementary	YWCA (previously)	After school enrichment
Poughkeepsie's Promise: Kreiger Elementary	Family Services, Inc.	After school enrichment
Poughkeepsie's Promise: Warring Elementary	Girl Scouts of Dutchess County	After school enrichment
After School Program	Catherine Street Community Center	After school enrichment
Summer Enrichment Program	Catherine Street Community Center	Summer enrichment program for youth
Peer Initiative/PLEA	Catherine Street Community Center	Peer mentoring
Poughkeepsie Boy's Choir	Catherine Street Community Center	Boy's choir
Life Skills for Youth in Transition	Catherine Street Community Center	Job skill training for at-risk youth
Youth Docent Training	Catherine Street Community Center	
KidzSquash	Catherine Street Community Center	
Dutchess Youth Career Works	Youth Services	

Adult Education

Program	Organization	Description
One-on-One Adult Tutoring	Literacy Connections	
Project READ	Literacy Connections	
Prison Tutoring	Literacy Connections	

Health

Program	Organization	Description
Caret Pregnancy Center		
Child Health Plus		
Community Health Center		
Dutchess County Health Department		
Dutchess County Red Cross		
Family Health Plus		
HIV/AIDS Case Management	Catherine Street Community Center	
The Living Room	Mental Health Association of Dutchess County	
Rape Crisis		
Raymond Opticians		
St. Francis Hospital		
Vassar Brothers Hospital		

Housing/Food

Program	Organization	Description
Beulah Baptist Food Pantry		
Gannet House		
Grace Smith House	Battered Women's Services	
Hillcrest House		
Hudson River Housing		
Emergency Fund	Dutchess Outreach, Inc.	
Beverly II: Closs Food Country	Dutchess Outreach, Inc.	
The Lunchbox	Dutchess Outreach, Inc.	

Legal Services

Program	Organization	Description
Housing	Legal Services of the Hudson Valley	
Elder Law	Legal Services of the Hudson Valley	
Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights (PAIR)	Legal Services of the Hudson Valley	Disability protection
Public Benefits	Legal Services of the Hudson Valley	
Unemployment benefits	Legal Services of the Hudson Valley	
Social Security and SSI Disability Claims		
Children's Advocacy		
HIV/Ryan White		
Family Court Project		Domestic Violence
Protection and Advocacy for the Developmentally Disabled (PADD)		
Assigned Counsel Plan		
Divorce Project		Domestic Violence
Community Support Services		
Advocacy and Referral	Dutchess Outreach, Inc.	

General Social Services

Program	Organization	Description
Dutchess Outreach		
Battered Women's Services		
Catholic Charities		
Community Action Agency		
Community Solutions		
Cornell Co-op Budgeting		
Department of Social Services		
Family Services		
Goodwill		
Battered Women's Services	Family Services, Inc.	
Domestic Abuse Awareness Classes	Family Services, Inc.	
GIFTS	Dutchess Outreach, Inc.	
Furniture Exchange Program	Dutchess Outreach, Inc.	
Acts of Kindness	Dutchess Outreach, Inc.	
Families Facing Challenge	Catherine Street Community Center	

Schools

Name	Grade levels
Circle of Courage Learning Community	K—8
Morse Young Child Magnet School	Pre-K—2
Smith Humanities Magnet School	3—5
Warring Magnet Academy of Science and Technology	K—5
Columbus Elementary School	K—5
Governor G. Clinton Elementary School	K—5
Krieger Elementary School	K—5
Poughkeepsie Middle School	6—8
Poughkeepsie High School	9—12

Libraries

Name	Location
Adriance Memorial Library—Central Library	Market Street
Adriance Memorial Library—Arlington Branch	Haight Avenue
Adriance Memorial Library—Maplewood Branch	Maple Street

Museums

Name	Type
Franklin D. Roosevelt	Library and museum
Mid-Hudson Children’s Museum	Children’s museum
Van Wyck Homestead	Homestead and museum
Volunteer Fireman’s Hall	Hall and museum
Wildlife Discovery Center	Wildlife center

**Appendix B:
Needs-assessment survey**

Hi, my name is _____. I'm conducting a survey for the Center of the Square, a social-service organization that is planning to create a new community center for the Clinton Elementary School area and set up new programs for the community. To do that, it wants to know what needs the community has and what kinds of programs would be most valuable, which is the purpose of this survey.

- **The survey should take about 10 minutes.**
- **The only people who will see the results are the Center of the Square and, if they request it, the people who take this survey, which can include you.**
- **The survey is confidential; no questions ask you for information that identifies who you are or where you live.**
- **You can refuse to answer any question or end the survey at any time.**
- **If you'd like to talk to the people in charge of this survey, I can give you contact information.**

Do you understand these conditions?

Yes _____ No _____

Do you agree to participate in this survey?

Yes _____ No _____

Are you over 18?

Yes _____ No _____ If not, is there someone here over 18 who would be willing to take this survey?

Okay, let's begin. Please let me know if you want me to repeat or clarify any of these questions.

1. Please rate the following services for residents in the Clinton School area. For each service I mention, please tell me whether you think they are **excellent, good, fair, poor, or if you don't know.**

[Clarification: The Clinton School area is about one mile around the intersection of Montgomery and Hamilton Streets, which is where the Clinton Elementary School is.]

4 = *Excellent* 3 = *Good* 2 = *Fair* 1 = *Poor* 0 = *Don't Know*

For children:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|--|
| _____ daycare | _____ assistance for handicapped people |
| _____ after-school programs | _____ information and referral |
| _____ abuse prevention | _____ transportation |
| _____ mentoring | _____ church and religious organizations |
| _____ tutoring | _____ libraries |
| _____ teen programs | _____ art and culture programs |

For senior citizens:

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------|
| _____ Emergency assistance: food, clothing, shelter, and energy | _____ English language training |
| _____ social activities | _____ parks |
| _____ income-generating activities | _____ health services |
| | _____ mental health |
| | _____ substance abuse treatment |
| | _____ police |

For everyone:

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| _____ family services and counseling | _____ courts and legal aid |
| | _____ job training |

2. What do you believe are the three most urgent needs in the Clinton School area?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

3. What do you consider to be the obstacles that prevent local people from receiving the services they need? I'll list a variety of possibilities; please let me know if any of these have been a problem for you before. [*Check any that apply.*]

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Not aware of existing services | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff are rude or not sensitive to people's needs |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Service is too far away from your homes | <input type="checkbox"/> Staff do not seek or listen to consumer input about improving services |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Office is not open at convenient times | <input type="checkbox"/> Waiting lists are too long |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Staff do not speak consumers' language | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation is not available |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rules and eligibility exclude people who need services | <input type="checkbox"/> Services' fees are too high |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Anything else? _____ | |

4. Who or where do you turn to for help most often? I'll list a variety of possibilities; please let me know which apply to you. [*Check any that apply.*]

- | | | |
|---|--|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Clergy | <input type="checkbox"/> Doctor or nurse | <input type="checkbox"/> Friend |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher | <input type="checkbox"/> Family | <input type="checkbox"/> Co-worker |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social service provider – which one? _____ | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____ | | |

5. If services, programs and activities were offered at a new community center in the Clinton School area, would you attend?

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Yes [<i>go to 6</i>] | <input type="checkbox"/> No [<i>go to 7</i>] |
|---|--|

6. If you could pick three services, programs and activities, which ones would you like to see offered at this new community center? [*then go to 8*]

1.

2.

3.

7. What reasons would keep you from attending services, programs and activities at a new community center?

_____ Cost

_____ Transportation – why? _____

_____ Childcare – why? _____

_____ Time – what time is best? _____

_____ Other _____

8. What would be the best way to communicate what is happening at the center?
[Clarification: We're looking for the best option, so please choose just one.]

_____ Flyers

_____ Posters

_____ Word of mouth

_____ Radio

_____ Cable TV

_____ Newspaper

9. Finally, what are your greatest hopes for this community?

This concludes the survey. Now that we've talked about the Center of the Square, would you like any information on their current programs?

_____ Yes [*give them a brochure*] _____ No

Finally, would you like a copy of the survey report to Center of the Square?

_____ Yes [*write name/address below*] _____ No

Name: _____

Residential address: _____

[street]

[address]

[apt. #]

I'd like to thank you for your time and consideration in answering these questions. Enjoy the rest of your day. Goodbye.

**Appendix C:
Survey flyer**

Center of the Square

is a new community center that runs some very popular programs in the Southside:

- Climb the Beanstalk (reading for 1st graders)
- Summercamp (for elementary school kids)
- Conocer (language and cultural orientation for Spanish speakers).

*Beginning on March 25,
we will be surveying residents
to ask your opinion...*

What new programs does the neighborhood need?
What barriers prevent you and your family
from getting the services you want?

Make your voice heard!
Please look for our survey administrators
in your neighborhood on Fridays and Saturdays
and participate in the survey!

QUESTIONS?
Call Center of the Square at 471-3068.

Thanks!
We look forward to meeting you soon.

Appendix D:
Center brochure

Appendix E: The YWCA/YRDC closings

On February 4, 2005, two of Poughkeepsie's premiere community centers announced that they would be closing their doors. The YRDC (Youth Resource Development Corporation) and the YWCA (Young Women's Christian Association) had lost government funding in the prior weeks, leaving them unable to keep the centers running. This announcement came as a shock to many of Poughkeepsie's residents who have relied on their programs, ranging from pool facilities to day care. The effects of these closings have profoundly impacted the City of Poughkeepsie and sparked discussion as to the financial obligations of the government in supporting non-profits, and insight into events leading up to the closings.

The YRDC, a Poughkeepsie community group since 1984, offered programs for "at-risk" kids in the Poughkeepsie area. The program trained around 400 kids a year to be ready for the workplace and provided very useful skills to gain job experience. Its programs worked with some 577 students in the last year to provide 40,000 hours of service to the Poughkeepsie community. Through working with non-profits in the area, these students gained valuable job-skills, earned money to put towards college, and developed their resumé's. Many of these students also worked towards getting their GED, and the program acted as a support system for these high school students.

The YWCA had served the Poughkeepsie community for over a century and acted as a stable center for both youth and adult groups, but it was also a facility used by many in the area including the Center of the Square summer camp. The YWCA provided a preschool (5 days a week), day care, and after school programs located at Arlington Elementary and the Pleasant Valley First Presbyterian Church. It served children who also attend these elementary schools: Arthur S. May, West Road Elementary, and Traver Road Elementary. It offered nutritious snacks, indoor and outdoor activities, computers (at some sites), and arts and crafts. At its main site, the YWCA offered swimming lessons, fitness, enrichment classes and clubs, and many teen services such as a teen

parents program and a program entitled “Teens Against Racism.” In addition, an important program was YouthBuild, a paid job-skills program available to Dutchess County youth ages 16-24 who are income eligible and need their G.E.D. They learned construction skills and life skills and were able to earn their G.E.D. and receive a stipend.

Most important regarding the closings of the YRDC and the YWCA is why these centers that offered so much to the community had to close their doors. Both closings were based on financial difficulties that had been noted, at least by the YWCA, since October of 2003. The YWCA’s decision to close was made because they could no longer pay for liability and employee insurance. Without insurance, the Dutchess County Youth Bureau had to cut \$20,000 in state funding to teen and family services. Additionally, upon inspection of the YWCA’s facilities, the pool was found to need extensive structural repairs, adding to the debt of the center, which closed the pool on February 2. Overall, the YWCA needed about \$500,000 to pay of all its debts, back taxes, and fix its pool. The YWCA employed between 70 and 80 staff, mainly part-time, to run programs for the estimated 350 children, teens, and adults who used the center. Some parents expressed anger because they were not forewarned about the closings and were stranded without childcare. The YWCA does, however, want to make sure that all, or most, of their programs are picked up or replaced by other agencies in the Poughkeepsie area. As a means of transitioning these changes, the Dutchess County YMCA is offering its location for temporary use through May and is considering adding after-school programs to help area residents stranded after the closing. The YMCA will honor any prepaid swimming and aquatic classes and plans on adding day-care programs through May. It also plans to offer special rates to former YWCA members.

The YRDC also suffered from financial difficulties, primarily after they lost \$550,000 in contracts from the state Department of Labor and \$1 million in federal AmeriCorps funding in the last year. There is also some controversy currently surrounding the YRDC closing. The former Executive Director of the YRDC, Richard Heyl, left a Philadelphia community center after resigning due to problems with a misappropriation of funds. Now, the Department of Labor is looking into the finances for

the YRDC to see if the allegations are true. This past December (2004), Heyl resigned as the director after five years of service. However, just a few months later, the YRDC filed a Chapter 11 bankruptcy. Heyl refused to comment about the allegations that he transferred money into a general funds account to make the financial situation of the organization appear better. It is reported that it took the board two weeks to force him out of the center. Heyl's resignation from the YRDC remained uncontroversial until the recent closing due to financial reasons, and after he was not invited to a fundraiser by the YRDC, citing that he might not have been welcome because of the agency's financial situation at his departure. It is unsure at this time whether or not Heyl's actions as Executive Director influenced any of the recent events.

This closing forced the remaining nine employees to act as volunteers in closing down the YRDC. Anne Santos, one of those employees, claimed that they had all been laid-off as of February 4, 2005, but had remained there to work out a paycheck situation as well as to help those students they served transition into other programs offered by Poughkeepsie groups. The programs offered by the YRDC, with the exception of the after-school program run out of a local middle school, will be carried on temporarily by other organizations. The Dutchess Community College took over the G.E.D. and work centered program, but Santos said she “[doesn’t] know what will happen after this group of students goes through.” It is unknown as to whether the programs acquired by other organizations will flourish as they did through the YRDC.

Immediately following the closings, several local government officials as well as community residents reacted quickly to work towards regaining funding for the centers. Among them has been Joel Tyner, a recently elected County Legislator from Rhinebeck. He and other Poughkeepsie area residents have been meeting every week on Thursday evenings at the Family Partnership Center on 29 North Hamilton Street. The main focus of their “Dutchess Justice” discussions has been to regain the \$2.8 million of funding back into the community centers (YWCA, YRDC, and BOCES). One of the primary topics is where this money will come from. The county has recently planned to expand its jail, ultimately adding 300 beds to the sum of \$70 million. This action is required by

the state Commission of Correction, which oversees prisons in the state. The county plans to add only 150 beds at this time. The Commission has given the county a waiver for years that allows them to exceed its official capacity of 285 inmates. This \$70 million investment, many are saying, could be more efficiently used to support the community centers in the area that offer programs to its residents.

Many people in the county are distressed that there are plans in the making to increase the size of the county jail while no money has been appropriated to these closing agencies. Sixty people gathered outside the County Office Building in Poughkeepsie on Thursday, February 10, 2005, to encourage the county to give a little over \$2 million to save the YWCA and the YRDC. They presented a petition to regain funding for the centers (attached at the end of this section). Legislator Rick Keller-Coffey suggested that “the county lead an effort to help the two agencies get back on their feet and help other non-profits in the community better coordinate their resources” in order to avoid these problems in the future and so that the county is not simply giving money away.

In terms of the Center of the Square, it is important to look into the recent closings of the YRDC and YWCA in order to examine what effects it might have on the Center and how the Center might be able to adapt to better serve the community. Barbara Harrington, Chair of the Board of Directors, has told us, “with regards to the closings, they will not affect [the] Center negatively in any way.” Although she thinks that the Center will be unable to take on any new programs in the next year, she believes, “the closings give us an opportunity to expand.” She emphasized that it would be important in expanding, that they offer the programs that might not be continued by other organizations.

The YRDC and YWCA closings present important case studies that exemplify the relationship between government and private financing of not for profit groups. It is evident that these nonprofits relied heavily on government allocation of funds that, when removed, forced the operations to close. This example proves very important for the Center, as it is a developing community center. In its hopes to expand, it should be aware

of the financial strings tied to government funding. An organization, Families First New York, offers management services to non-profits so they can better focus on serving their constituents. By gaining financial advice from an organization like this, the Center would be better prepared in handling the needs of its community.

DUTCHESS COUNTY SHOULD BE PENNY-WISE AND ENSURE ADEQUATE FUNDING FOR YWCA, YRDC, and BOCES—NOT BE POUND-FOOLISH

WHEREAS, the County Executive has pointed out that investing up front with funding for crucial programs for county residents often saves much more money a bit later, and

WHEREAS, due to recent circumstances, three important nonprofit agencies here in Dutchess County-- YWCA, Youth Resource Development Corporation, and BOCES Adult Services-- have been forced to stop serving thousands of county residents, and

WHEREAS, \$500,000 is needed for the YWCA to fix their pool, pay debts and pay back vendors for fuel, oil and other services, and

WHEREAS, \$1.5 million is needed for YRDC, to replace recent funding cuts-- \$550,000 in contracts with the state Department of Labor and \$1 million in AmeriCorps funding over the past fiscal year, and

WHEREAS, \$330,000 is needed for BOCES adult education programs cut by 40% in October; these programs and YRDC's employment and job training programs helped people all over our community and those just getting out of our County Jail become self-sufficient and not a burden on local taxpayers, and

WHEREAS, the funding crisis that has hit these three agencies, along with the cuts to services, have caused a serious negative impact on the entire county; in fact, this situation has now reached crisis proportions; due to this emergency now we must address this issue

now, in February, and therefore be it

RESOLVED, that the Dutchess County Legislature hereby calls for \$2 million to be immediately added to the county budget and distributed as needed to the YWCA, YRDC, and BOCES, as the attached recent newspaper articles attest below, and hereby calls on local state legislators and federal representatives to help, so that this burden does not fall entirely and unfairly on county taxpayers, and be it further

RESOLVED, that a copy of this resolution be sent to County Executive William M. Steinhaus, Governor George E. Pataki, Senators Stephen M. Saland and Vincent Leibell, Assemblymen Thomas Kirwan, Joel M. Miller, Patrick R. Manning, Willis H. Stephens Jr., and Kevin Cahill, President George W. Bush, Senator Charles Schumer, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton, and Congress members Sue Kelly, Maurice Hinchey, and John Sweeney.