

# Community Needs Assessment Project - 2007

## Voices from the Community – **Providers**

The goal is a good quality of life for those who live and work in the Northwest Pasadena and Altadena community. In what ways does this currently exist?

### Safe Neighborhoods/Connectedness

- Families have formed neighborhood groups and use the parks and other community resources

### Activities/Opportunities for Youth

- Available resources (including people, history, businesses, service providers, nonprofits)
- Transportation that is low-cost and accessible
- Community events to bring information/resources to community residents
- After-school programs
- Recreational opportunities available to youth and adults
- Number of public parks
- Free Art Bus
- Rose Bowl
- Influx of Charter Schools create choices for families
- A lot of people who really care about young people and are doing meaningful hands-on work

### Services/Programs

- Mental health services (De'Veal, and also mental health services at the schools)

### Agency Collaboration

- Collaboration between City of Pasadena and Pasadena Unified School District
- Key nonprofits know one another, collaborate, and share an overriding goal to make a contribution in the community for children and youth
- Collaboration arises from both informal networking and from collaborative grants
- Considering the number of agencies and the population, a great possibility for better results exists
- Diversity of agency expertise meets variety of youth needs

### City/Community Development

- City's commitment to beautification (e.g., address graffiti quickly)
- Economically, NW Pasadena and West Altadena have improved—more markets, shopping centers, and businesses (although this also leads to gentrification)
- Improvements in the Lincoln corridor, including Gateway to Lincoln Avenue

### Cultural Heritage

- Ethnic diversity
- Black male presence in the community
- Strong cultural and historical traditions
- New breed of pastors who want to get involved in the community

In what ways does the community fall short of this goal?

### Drugs/Violence

- A lot of violence
- Youth are being traumatized by witnessing violence
- Gangs
- Drug and alcohol crime

### Lack of Access

- Youth not exposed to nature and instead have too much exposure to television and computers
- Poverty and homelessness
- Lack of physical fitness for kids
- Lack of job opportunities
- Lack of opportunities for youth
- Lack of affordable housing

### Disparities

- Concentration of liquor stores in certain areas

### Other

- Lack of communication between city and county

**On a scale from 1-10 (1 = little; > 10 = great), how much does financial stress impact households in the Northwest Pasadena community?**

*All respondents rated financial stress as very high, with over 90% of respondents rating it "8" or higher. Some of their comments included:*

- Families unable to afford rents and are being pushed out of the community
- Cost of living
- Child care
- College tuition
- Finding/getting a job
- Cuts in social services and federal benefits reduces resources available to families
- Lack of understanding of financial planning
- Needing to live in unsafe neighborhoods because they are more affordable
- Fears about accessing resources/benefits due to immigration status
- Local climate that favors "haves"
- Gentrification
- Families are taking shifts sleeping because so many people are living in the same house
- Homeless women and children in this community
- Invisible, overwhelming poverty
- Disparity related to poverty is increasing; society that encourages consumerism that targets the poor

- Families are working 2-3 jobs and cannot supervise their kids
- Families are not making it and are one paycheck away from being homeless
- Parents are on welfare and trying to get jobs, but their benefits get cut back even when their income is insufficient to provide for their families
- Lack of entry level access for youth into the economy
- Summer jobs for youth have been cut
- The Black population has really declined in this area; people are moving out
- Many properties are not adequately maintained, so people living in them are being exploited
- Expensive to join the soccer league—scholarships need to be available

**How are youth perceived in the Northwest Pasadena Community? How would you complete the following sentences:**

**Youth in this community are interested in ...**

Negative/Potentially Negative

- Gym shoes
- Cell phones, text messaging
- Money (defines their identity, worth)
- “Hanging” with their friends, with no expectations on them
- Instant gratification
- Computer games
- Clothes
- My Space
- Popularity
- What other youth are doing and how they are perceived

Positive

- Themselves
- Music
- Belonging
- Gadgets/toys
- I-Pods

**Youth behaviors I see in this community on a regular basis are ...**

Negative/Potentially Negative

- Out of control
- Self-destructive
- Attention seeking
- Short-term thinking
- Have not thought about their futures, preparation and college—even students with top grades do not go to top colleges, even though they could! *students are not encouraged to shoot for the moon*—most of them have not been outside Pasadena
- It’s hard to leave the comfort of their friends to get engaged in other activities
- Current youth culture is not really understood by anyone, so it’s hard to impact
- Thinking is not self-directed
- Reluctance to explore outside their niche/community
- Sense of entitlement
- Low self-esteem
- Response to peer pressure
- Disrespectful (e.g., use profanity)

- Open sexual behavior
- Alcohol and marijuana use among teens, even among elementary-age youth
- Parents are not involved

#### Positive

- Want to get a lot of pride out of accomplishments
- Want affirmation and recognition
- Want to be valued
- Notice the hypocrisy of the older generation
- Push for their education
- Reach out for help
- Volunteer (e.g., work with Day One as Youth Advocates)

### **Youth in this community need ...**

#### Opportunities to Develop

- Direction; to be guided and given opportunities to channel their talents and energy in positive ways (e.g., to create music on the computers or become entrepreneurs in fashion, car body shops, writing, etc.)
- Exposure to the great local businesses and resources (e.g., museums, colleges)
- Their voices to be heard
- To show their leadership qualities
- Opportunity to be a part of decision-making
- Employment opportunities
- Mentoring programs for at-risk youth
- Activities that take youth outside their norm
- Activities that empower them to know they have a future
- Youth need to know they can become someone
- Learn how to communicate effectively—to describe their needs and to socialize properly with peers and adults
- Cultural education regarding other cultures, ethnicities, religions

#### Support from Family/Others

- Love
- Hope
- Time
- Attention
- Mentoring
- Role-models
- Structure
- Parental guidance, which is sorely lacking
- To be treated with respect

#### Other

Start early – Before they are teens, so they can develop more appropriately

### **What types of things prevent youth involvement in gangs?**

Several people agreed that, when cutbacks were instituted and in-school and after-school programs in the arts and sports were cut, gang violence and youth problems increased. It was noted that, when crime increases, money is provided for these activities; but when it decreases, the funding is removed, which in turn leads to more negative behaviors.

There was also discussion of the value of trades for some students who may not want to go to college, but who have skills or interests that could be cultivated into marketable trades.

Discussion also centered on how important it is that youth have adults in their lives who are sincere, consistent, and unhypercritical, and who encourage a positive view of the future. Adults also need to advocate loudly for youth activities.

#### Parents, Friends, Caring Relationships

- Caring families, schools and neighborhoods.
- Strong parents, particularly a strong mother (weak, overworked or absent parents may leave youth prone to gang involvement)

#### Access to Sports, Arts, and Other Activities

- Keep youth busy after school
- Provide opportunities for involvement in music, arts, sports
- Activities outside their regular social setting
- Opportunities to learn and see new things (e.g., see and learn about the natural environment)
- Athletic programs to stay off the streets and busy after school
- Free programs that are accessible to all (concern expressed about fees charged for some programs that can be prohibitive even though small)
- Scholarships to join sports leagues

#### Self-Esteem/Sense of Belonging

- Greater internal locus of control (feel more responsibility for outcomes); kids with external locus feel they have nothing to lose
- 40 developmental assets; research shows that youth that have 30 or more of the assets to succeed; teachers need to be trained to bring those assets to life
- Expectations and a belief that they can achieve
- Sense of being a part of a larger community
- To feel wanted/sense of belonging

#### Role Models/Mentors

- Meaningful relationships with adults who can provide support and guidance, and who model good behavior
- Deal with it openly and up front; talk with youth about the fact that gang activity is a choice, and present the outcomes and alternatives
- Mentoring – role models (especially for males)

#### Law Enforcement

- Partnership with the police department to help support high-risk youth to be more constructive (e.g., PALS)

#### Skill/Job Development

- Opportunity to develop job skills in areas where youth have energy and talent (e.g., cosmetology, fashion, car mechanics, music production)
- Entry level jobs with opportunity for growth
- Summer jobs for youth that provide some experience and money
- Vocational training and career development

#### Other Services/Programs

- Consistent and ongoing programs

- Violence prevention education and conflict resolution in schools

#### Other

- Give practical solutions
- Don't let mistakes define a person's life
- Less contradictory systems and messages (e.g., told to go to school, but then school is not supportive)
- Fewer unattainable "carrots"; i.e., media-idealized material items
- Options

### **What would it take for a young person to end his/her gang involvement?**

#### Negative Consequences

- Siblings coming out of jail can become role-models
- Youth who have come from gangs help other youths out
- "Scared straight" approaches with former gang members

#### Positive Support/Experiences

- Experience successes and be acknowledged
- When they want better for themselves
- Recognize and celebrate the youth who are doing well
- Exposure to new things, people, etc.
- Duplicate the attractive elements of gang life in a non-gang situation (e.g., money, security, family, respect)
- Instill a sense of self-respect and pride

#### Change Behavior

- Change their social setting
- Geographic change of setting
- "Boot camp," which would help to develop discipline, physical fitness, and pride

#### Parental Involvement

- Must work with the parents
- Improve parenting

#### Skill/Job Development

- Develop leadership skills and Involve in leadership roles (e.g., tutor younger students, run concession stands)
- Employment and job training in fields where there is opportunity to grow and move forward

#### Other

- Spiritual intervention
- Long-term, comprehensive programs—at least 3 years
- Reach out to youth where they are, e.g. on street corners
- Be direct and open in communications with youth
- Try to make a difference with "one youth at a time"
- Focus on prevention/ intervention (rather than gang suppression)
- See the responses in the previous question (4a)
- Options are critical, and cutbacks have removed many options
- Willingness to keep working with a youth who is difficult
- Note the link between family violence and gang violence
- Involve youth in thinking about these issues

- Each person needs to think about what they can do as an individual to make a difference

### **What else is needed?**

More parenting classes  
 Mental health services for children  
 Counseling for younger children  
 Support groups for married couples  
 Drug prevention classes for children  
 More parental involvement  
 Conflict resolution classes  
 Planned parenthood classes for young couples  
 Sessions on how to talk to children about difficult things such as sex  
 Classes to teach parents how to help children when they need help  
 More volunteer programs to get children involved

### **5. In providing support and resources to the community, in your opinion what does NOT work or is NOT helpful?**

- Paternalistic approach that doesn't recognize that we are in this together
- Lecturing versus communicating
- Condescension
- Being vague, versus honest and clear
- All talk and no action
- Disrespect and not "walking the talk"
- Not starting on time or valuing folk's time
- Creating hoops to jump through unnecessarily
- Insufficient funding for programs
- Youth councils only include youth who are doing well—need more diverse youth
- Follow through; things get started and then are stopped (sends a negative message to the youth)
- We ask for a long-term commitment from the youth, but then the programs aren't long-term
- When groups become nonprofit organizations, they end up spending most of their time trying to raise money instead of continuing to serve the youth (their mission)
- Doesn't work when funders try to mold agencies to fit their model versus supporting the expertise and community knowledge of the agency
- PUSD and city don't offer support or assistance to agencies; they look for help from them, but don't provide any help to them