

**Benton Harbor, A Plan for Positive Change:
*Final Report of the
Governor's Benton Harbor Task Force***

October 15, 2003

Prepared for:
Governor Jennifer M. Granholm
and the Benton Harbor Community

Submitted by:
Governor's Benton Harbor Task Force

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Letter from the Co-Chairs

Dear Members of the Governor's Task Force and Citizens for Progressive Change:

As co-chairs of the Governor's Task Force and active members of Citizens for Progressive Change, we want to formally thank you for your participation in this exciting process of creating a brighter future for Benton Harbor.

As we reflect on the past several months, this has been both an inspiring and challenging experience. There have been some highs, some lows, obstacles to overcome, successes, and a whole lot of learning to make it to where we are today. The one thing that shines through is the strong dedication of citizens from Benton Harbor and the surrounding communities.

In June, when Governor Jennifer M. Granholm came here to listen to the community and pledge her help, she knew she could not do it without the support of individuals like you who were willing to roll up your sleeves to get this very important work done.

As the next steps are taken, we look forward to continuing our work with each of you for the betterment of this community. Thanks to your efforts, the future of this community is very bright. Your talents have proven that when faced with a hurdle, this community can overcome it with dignity, grace, and hard work.

We strongly encourage each of you to continue your involvement in efforts to improve the City of Benton Harbor. Now is not the time to walk away - rather now is the time to continue to take things to the next level.

Thank you once again for all of your time and energy. May God bless you and keep you.

Sincerely,



Reverend James Atterberry
Co-Chairperson
Governor's Task Force



Greg Roberts
Co-Chairperson
Governor's Task Force

Governor's Task Force

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Acknowledgments

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Barnett Jones – Chief, Sterling Heights Police Department
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Pastor Marvin N. Miles – International Gospel Center
Sandra Bomar-Parker – Director, Operation Get Down
Chico Parks – Host of Hearing Our Voice, WSJM 1400 AM
Veronica Putt – Cornerstone Alliance
Virgie Rollins – Consultant
Darrell Singleton – Youth Specialist, Berrien County Juvenile
Col. Tadarial Sturdivant – Director, Michigan State Police
Alice Thompson – President/CEO, Black Family Development
Greg Vaughn – Cornerstone Alliance
Deborah Williams – Citizens for Progressive Change

Organizations

Alkebu-lan Village
ACCESS (Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services)
Andrews University Students (assisted Parenting & Family Workgroup)
Benton Harbor Area Schools
Berrien County Health Department
Black Family Development, Inc.
Brotherhood of All Nations Church of God in Christ
City of Benton Harbor
Cornerstone Alliance
Council for World Class Communities (CWCC)
Detroit Youth Foundation
Family Investment Center
Focus: HOPE
Governor's Office for Southeast Michigan
Hartford Memorial Baptist Church
International Gospel Center
Lakeland Regional Hospital
Lake Michigan College
Michigan Legislative Black Caucus
Michigan State Police
Neighborhood Information and Sharing Exchange (NISE)
Operation Get Down
Second Baptist Church
Southwest Michigan Ministerial Alliance

Executive Summary

Background

Following civil unrest in Benton Harbor, Governor Granholm, after listening closely to Benton Harbor residents, named a 23 member Task Force charged with probing further and getting the community's priorities for improving the quality of life in this struggling city in Southwest Michigan. The Task Force was represented by community residents, civic, business, faith, and government leaders.

Benton Harbor has historically been the subject of numerous studies and notable community-wide initiatives that have promised wide ranging systemic change, but have yielded limited results. A number of community members have become cynical and distrustful of the "real intentions" behind entities that have come to "help" the Benton Harbor community.

In order to broaden the range of voices at the table, the Citizens for Progressive Change (CPC) was formed and designed to elicit input from a varied cross section of the community. Membership was open to anyone that wanted to participate. CPC workgroups identified their desired vision for the community, challenges, opportunities, recommendations, and stakeholders that must be engaged for success. Given the condition of our national economy and its impact on our State, workgroups and Task Force members were to search for solutions and partnerships that involved leveraging existing public resources with private corporation, foundation, and charitable resources.

The Process: Planning and Recommendations

The Task Force recognized the critical need to be inclusive, not only during the information gathering process, but also in articulating the vision and defining goals in the planning and recommendation process.

The Task Force directed the CPC to establish eight workgroups with the task of identifying issues and developing recommendations for submission to the Task Force. The workgroups established were: Recreation, Arts and Culture, Health Awareness and Improvement, Police Community Relations, Education, Diversity with Inclusion, Criminal Justice, Communications, and Economic Development, Housing and Job Training. The CPC suggested adding two additional workgroups, Parenting and Family and Faith Based Community for a total of ten workgroups.

Biweekly meetings were held for the Task Force and CPC. CPC workgroups, which also included Task Force members, met to recommend and explore possible solutions. Each workgroup developed a process that allowed community partners and stakeholders the opportunity to present proposals that would help achieve the community's desired vision.

Each workgroup was tasked with prioritizing and narrowing their list of recommendations to five for submission to the Task Force. This process was not without conflict, frustration, and pain, but this exercise yielded growth, compromise, and change.

A primary objective of the Task Force was to maximize the active involvement of residents within the City of Benton Harbor. The report contains voices from a significant number of Benton Harbor residents who met regularly to establish a vision for their community over the short and long term.

Some activities offered to improve communication and engage community members include:

- The CPC sponsored an adult-oriented community forum, along with a youth forum, held at Benton Harbor High School. The CPC also held several meetings, at different venues in the community, including the Benton Harbor/Benton Township Senior Citizen Center, and an outdoor forum, located in the area where the civil unrest occurred.
- The CPC and Task Force visited seven community organizations in the Detroit area to learn about best practices within nonprofit, community based human service organizations. The group visited Operation Get Down, Alkebu-lan Village, Black Family Development, Inc., Focus Hope, Hartford Memorial Baptist Church, ACCESS, and the International Gospel Center.
- In an effort to focus stakeholders on working together, a “Lay it on the Line” discussion was held for Task Force and CPC membership. The goal of the meeting was to address deep seated distrust and ill feelings against individual stakeholders or stakeholder groups that were long standing barriers preventing collaboration. This seven-hour meeting allowed stakeholders to voice their opinions, and share their thoughts with the limitation that they respect one another. An agreement was made to work together collaboratively to develop recommendations going forward.
- Governor Granholm came to Benton Harbor for “Governor Granholm Day.” The day included a luncheon with civic, faith, business, and community leaders that emphasized “One Michigan.” Governor Granholm challenged the faith based community to take on leadership roles in youth mentoring and volunteerism, specifically with Harbor Habitat. She visited Benton Harbor High School and talked to an assembly of students. During the assembly, youth who participated in the Summer Youth Employment program, with funds allocated by the Governor through Michigan Works!, were recognized.
- The Police Community Relations workgroup sponsored a policy community relations “Day of Dialogue.” Over 300 people attended, including many

students. During this session, community and law enforcement leadership engaged in serious dialogue to develop proactive strategies to inform and address issues of policy community relations in Benton Harbor. The dialogue facilitators included Dr. Ken Brown, Consultant, of the University of Michigan, and Barnett Jones, Chief, Sterling Heights Police Department, and former Oakland County Sheriff's Department. The keynote address was delivered by the first African American to hold the post of Director with the Michigan State Police, Col. Tadarial Sturdivant.

- Additionally, facilitation training was held to support workgroup co-chairpersons. A community celebration was held at Second Baptist Church with area faith leaders. Rev. Tyrone Crider delivered the sermon and incorporated the value of economic development in any thriving community.

In reviewing the report, the Task Force encourages the reader to recognize the significance of allowing a structured process to encourage such open and candid involvement of residents.

As an example, it may not be realistic to expect a new credit union or a multi-million dollar loan pool from area corporations to be established for, and run by, community residents in the short-term, but rather it is important to understand the reasons for such an aggressive goal. The key is not the amount of funding sought, but rather the consensus that access to capital is a difficult challenge, but important goal, for Benton Harbor residents and small businesses.

Other goals, such as those established under the housing initiative, do not require new funding. Rather, they create an integrated process by which access to existing programs can ultimately lead to a balanced mix of public, private, and federal investments. While a goal of \$45 million in new housing development and increased home ownership by five percent may seem ambitious over five years, it is through a structural change of existing programs grounded in collaboration of multi-disciplined stakeholders that these goals can become reality.

Some of the recommendations point to a process change. The Recreation, Arts and Culture Committee believes a community-wide recreation board to leverage all state, federal, and local resources will create comprehensive, structured, and quality programming for youth. The recommendation itself points to a need for the county and local government to help channel resources toward youth recreation. This process change and requisite resource leveraging, in and of itself, demonstrates the need for collaboration and support among units of government – sharing resources to achieve the desired community vision.

Throughout this process, the following community messages were clear:

- All community and established stakeholder groups must find ways to actively enhance citizen participation, oversight, and ultimately see real results and benefits from the dollars spent in this community.
- The community recognizes it must implement programs and create change where community safety and security become reality. Efforts for safety and security must be equally matched by improvements in the education system.

The focus on safety and education allows other initiatives, i.e., economic development, to ultimately be incubated in an environment where success can be achieved. Because this must be achieved with limited resources, stakeholder partnerships, resource leveraging, and active involvement are key.

Recommendations

The recommendations in this report are meant to address some of the most persistent challenges facing the Benton Harbor area community. These proposals reflect the input of area residents, suggestions from key stakeholders, and the advice of public officials. Some of the recommendations in this report can be accomplished in the short-term. Most of the proposals will require long-term strategies for implementation. This important work requires the involvement of local residents and creative partnerships among various community organizations. Members of the community need to develop sustainable strategies for implementing these recommendations, and identify the public and private resources necessary to achieve these goals.

The Governor's Benton Harbor Task Force worked closely with the Citizens for Progressive Change (CPC) work groups to develop the recommendations in this report. These work groups identified the long-term challenges facing the community and sought public input on potential solutions. The report contains many key findings:

Economic Development

- Comprehensive job development strategies must be implemented in the Benton Harbor area
- The Benton Harbor community should take advantage of its unique natural features to develop a comprehensive tourism plan for the area
- Coordinated workforce development strategies must be identified and implemented, including a summer youth work program
- Establish greater access to capital through the possible creation of a revolving loan fund
- Eradicate substandard housing in Benton Harbor by 2025 through various community and governmental efforts

Education

- Reducing the high school drop-out rate in Benton Harbor is central to improving the life chances of area youth
- The Benton Harbor community must focus attention on early childhood care and education and develop effective programs through partnerships with the State and educational organizations
- Transportation barriers need to be eliminated in order to maximize the ability of students to participate in after-school programs
- Benton Harbor Area Schools should examine the physical infrastructure of school buildings and direct the recently passed millage to those schools in the most need
- Benton Harbor Area Schools should examine the technology needs of the schools and develop solid technology plans that will allow the district to participate in programs such as the statewide Freedom to Learn initiative

Health Awareness and Improvement

- Health care professionals and local leaders must work on increasing Benton Harbor area residents' access to quality affordable health care
- Educational efforts must be undertaken with parents in Benton Harbor to reduce infant mortality
- Educational efforts must be undertaken in the community to educate the public about lead poisoning and ways to protect families against its dangerous effects

Police Community Relations

- Staffing and retention must be improved in the Benton Harbor Police Department
- The Policy Community Relations coalition must be sustained through local collaboration in the Benton Harbor area
- Community policing should be instituted in Benton Harbor with a focus on awareness of problems in the community

Diversity with Inclusion

- Communitywide diversity training must be provided in the Benton Harbor area to teach everyone in the community about the importance of understanding and respecting each other's differences
- Law enforcement diversity training must be provided to Benton Harbor area police agencies to increase law enforcement awareness and sensitivity to differences within the community
- The Civil Rights Health Assessment developed by the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, should be conducted in the Benton Harbor area community to provide a meaningful non-judgmental assessment of the state of civil rights in the community and on-going challenges

Parenting and Family

- The community must support and expand parenting classes and support services
- Leaders in the community must increase high-risk families' knowledge of and access to vital community services
- Parental access to child care must be expanded

Criminal Justice

- The Benton Harbor Community will work with local officials and the Michigan Supreme Court toward the establishment of a Magistrate and possible future District Court in Benton Harbor to respond to citizen perceptions about the current Criminal Justice System
- The Benton Harbor Community will work toward reform in their indigent defense system including creation of a pilot indigent defender's office
- The Benton Harbor Community will work toward the creation of a Citizens' Complaint Review and Oversight Board modeled after the Kalamazoo Oversight Board which allows citizen input on handling of complaints related to criminal justice system
- The Benton Harbor Community must work internally to increase community response to jury duty notification, and thus allow for greater diversity in the jury selection of Berrien County juries
- The Benton Harbor Community should explore the feasibility of adopting a juvenile justice system that encourages community-based care management for adjudicated youth

Recreation, Arts and Culture

- Create a Recreation, Arts and Culture After-school Programs committee in Benton Harbor to focus on developing viable recreation programs in the area
- Identify existing recreation, arts and cultural programs which serve the citizens of Benton Harbor, and create a database of these activities to make accessible to the community

Communications

- Increase the capacity of the community access channel in Benton Harbor
- Connect the Benton Harbor Community to the Internet to bridge the existing digital divide
- Take advantage of community publications to increase awareness of positive news and events in Benton Harbor

Faith Based Community

- Faith leaders in Benton Harbor should develop a housing construction/rehabilitation program

- The Faith Consortium in Benton Harbor should meet with area lending institutes and discuss ways in which they can work with conventional lenders to increase access to affordable mortgage financing.
- Faith leaders in Benton Harbor should create an outreach ministry that focuses on, but is not limited to, mentoring and volunteerism in cooperation with Harbor Habitat for Humanity

Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to provide a set of recommendations to address issues in the following areas:

- Economic Development, Housing and Job Training
- Education
- Health Awareness and Improvement
- Police Community Relations
- Diversity with Inclusion
- Parenting and Family
- Criminal Justice
- Recreation, Arts and Culture
- Communications
- Faith Based Community

The report is organized by the above listed categories and includes the desired vision of the community, challenges, opportunities, recommendations and stakeholders needed for success.

The Task Force's vision for Benton Harbor is a city with strong community and governmental leadership focused on collaboration, leading to continuous quality of life improvements. Benton Harbor should have safe neighborhoods, affordable housing, and a strong education system with an emphasis on early childhood development. The city should have adequate, positive recreation outlets for children/youth, with no barriers to transportation. There should be a thriving downtown, with a blossoming arts district, restaurants, entertainment venues, and a bustling waterway, with commercial and residential development, which will spur further economic development in Benton Harbor. Finally, Southwest Michigan should be a region in which the Twin Cities, Benton Harbor, and St. Joseph, along with its surrounding communities, work in harmony to build a world class community that will be a model for the entire State.

Next Steps

Proposals made are wide ranging, from public safety, health and well-being, and economic development, to recreation and parenting. Given the short time frame in which these reports were developed, it is an outstanding compilation of a multitude of voices seeking a common goal to create a community of choice in the City of Benton Harbor and enhancing the southwest region of Michigan.

The Task Force and CPC agreed that in order to implement and sustain the recommendations contained in this report, the CPC must continue.

The Task Force strongly recommends the permanent CPC Committee establish a mandate to create collaboration and cooperation with established organizations including, but not limited to, the Council for World Class Communities (CWCC), United Way, City of Benton Harbor, Berrien County, Lake Michigan College, the Family Independence Agency (FIA), Southwest Michigan Ministerial Alliance, Cornerstone Alliance, The Neighborhood Information and Sharing Exchange (NISE), and a multitude of various state and federal entities.

The CPC Committee will further prioritize the recommendations and themes identified in this report. The CPC will actively seek implementation of the prioritized recommendations in a methodical and structured manner.

At the heart of implementation must be a structured process in which the active involvement of community members is incorporated into the work of the community-at-large. The Neighborhood Information and Sharing Exchange (NISE) will provide organizational support to the CPC. Finally, the recommendations submitted will be made available at area websites, and public access locations.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND HOUSING/JOB TRAINING

Community Development, Evaluation and Monitoring

Desired Vision for the Community

Public and private funds that flow to Benton Harbor have true impact and achieve the desired result. Accountability is key.

Challenges

There are over 350 nonprofit service providers, quasi-governmental agencies, and organizations doing business in the Benton Harbor Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA). These organizations receive approximately \$300 million annually. In addition, the state and federal government reported \$100 million worth of investment through tax incentives and direct funding into the Benton Harbor area over the past two years.

Benton Harbor's statistical data is often subsumed under the MSA data for the surrounding area. This may obscure information on persistent social ills in Benton Harbor. This is important, because federal funding is based on MSA data.

According to the Executive Director, Michigan Works! staff testified before Congress in an attempt to relax federal regulations in order to have flexibility and meet local needs. With the establishment of a Community Development Evaluation and Monitoring (CDEM) Agency, the state and federal government would have a direct line of communication to the citizens they represent and the intended beneficiaries of public funds.

Opportunities

Creation of a direct outlet for citizens to get information about available programs and how public dollars are spent in Benton Harbor, as well as to identify methods to help hold public officials accountable.

Recommendations

- Create and fund a local CDEM Agency that is acknowledged by our state partners
- Create a federal and/or state law that would use municipal statistical data, not Metropolitan Statistical Area data, when allocating funds
- Acquire broad-based support from local stakeholders without threatening individual programs that are effective
- Mobilize a critical mass of funders to work together to achieve this public initiative

According to the "strategic plan" in the Benton Harbor Empowerment Zone Application, the long-term success of the Zone depended upon citizen input and involvement. Stakeholders agreed to provide funding for a local "Citizen's Monitoring Agency." We believe this concept has merit.

If implemented, the following should occur:

- Creation of one central mechanism for collecting local community development data
- Focus all local stakeholders, citizen groups, and government agencies toward one strategic community development goal
- Create a statewide framework for urban redevelopment planners
- Allow certain reporting from stakeholders to CDEM Agency
- Notification of CDEM Agency prior to funding any local stakeholders
- Transparency for agencies receiving state funding

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

All branches of local, county, state, and federal governments

All local community stakeholders

Citizens for Progressive Change (CPC)

The Benton Harbor Citizens Empowerment Corporation

HOPE VI

Desired Vision for the Community

Development of affordable and market rate housing in Benton Harbor which include relevant support services, and creation of The Homeownership Institute

The goals for developing success in this area are as follows:

- Successfully compete for \$20 million in U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) funding through Hope VI
- Eradicate substandard housing in our community by the year 2025
- Increase home ownership by at least 5 percent over five years
- Complete over \$45 million in new housing development in the Benton Harbor area in five years
- Stimulate an additional \$35 million in ancillary development
- Increase home ownership for diverse individuals in the greater region by over 15 percent

Challenges

The Benton Harbor Housing Commission has, on two occasions, applied for Federal Hope VI funding. Hope VI is an innovative federal program that provides dollars that are matched with local investments to create new communities within housing authority service areas.

The two previous applications submitted by the Benton Harbor Housing Commission, while scoring very high, did not garner the points necessary to obtain funding. The primary weakness in the local community's application was a lack of linkages to existing programs and delivery mechanisms, along with the leveraged investments necessary to compete against similar initiatives nationwide.

The Housing Authority portfolio currently consists of 94 severely distressed one, two, three, and four bedroom units constructed as two story apartments on slab foundations. These units are small, old, and obsolete and are not sufficient to serve the Benton Harbor area residents.

Furthermore, with a 700+ family waiting list to obtain affordable housing within the community, it is clear a more massive integrated community strategy is needed to create quality affordable housing for the community.

We also must address the ineffective use of city-owned, scattered site housing properties. The City has over 80 rental homes in its scattered site program, and these properties do not provide tax revenue to the City. Many occupants probably qualify for home ownership.

The challenge is for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Michigan State Housing Development Authority (MSHDA), and the City of Benton Harbor to work together to modify the HUD grant. These homes could then be sold, instead of rented, and the proceeds from each sale could go toward the construction of a new home that could also be sold, thus rebuilding the City's housing stock and simultaneously increasing the rate of homeownership and tax revenue. Additionally, small contractors could work to rebuild homes and hire and train local residents in the construction business. Proceeds from the sale of each home would be used to either build a new scattered site home that would be sold, or they could be used as a matching grant to assist other homeowners near a scattered site with renovation costs.

Recommendations

The nine-step plan to achieve our HOPE VI coordinated housing plan is outlined as below:

- The community developed a strong proposal to become the site of the Jimmy Carter Work Project (JCWP) with Habitat for Humanity International through our local Harbor Habitat affiliate in 2005
- Build on the mammoth volunteer effort required for the JCWP 2005 to carry over into other community housing and redevelopment efforts to, in effect, create community-wide involvement in the entire community redevelopment process
- Create a community-wide support mechanism to sustain the Harbor for Habitat Initiatives from 2005 through 2010
- The collaborators have collectively endorsed and will fully participate in the advancement of the HUD HOPE VI application for our local housing authority that centers on holistic personal growth and advancement
- Integrate several tax credit and MSHDA proposals for the City of Benton Harbor into the HOPE VI and JCWP efforts
- Form and fund a Home Ownership Institute to serve as a common vehicle. We will create a one-stop shop for all who are interested in safe affordable housing to link all housing tools with housing needs
- Create a common strategy to promote and integrate the Harbor Town Development, the Airport Runway Extension, and Housing Relocation program
- Organize a common intake system to support the MSHDA housing at Pavone and Empire
- Integrate the development strategies of the local Renaissance Zone, Core Community, and Edgewater development to create a "cool livable community"

If these recommendations are implemented, the following should occur:

- Construction of 70 off-sight three and four bedroom single-family homes
- Development of 24 on-sight town home public housing units
- Creation of 48 single family rent-to-own homes through the Brunson Hill development supported by MSHDA tax credits

- Creation of a delivery system that will provide home ownership training, small business counseling and workforce training on site at the HOPE VI development
- Creation of retail and commercial space for local residents to implement entrepreneurial activities

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

American Electric Power
Bank One
Benton Charter Township
Benton Charter Township Housing Authority
Benton Harbor Area Schools
Benton Harbor Housing Authority
Berrien County Economic Development
Chemical Bank Shoreline
Council for World-Class Communities
Fifth Third Bank
First Source Bank
Harbor Habitat for Humanity
Horizon Bank
Michigan State Housing Development Authority
Northside Business Association
Southwestern Michigan Association of Realtors
Southwestern Michigan Homebuilders Association
Southwest Michigan Planning Commission
The City of Benton Harbor
Whirlpool Corporation

Revolving Loan Fund

Desired Vision for the Community

- Establish greater access to capital
- Raise the median household income of Benton Harbor residents
- Reduce unemployment rates to reflect the county average of four percent
- Create a housing mix of 65 percent homeowners and 35 percent renters

Challenges

In May 1999, The Woodstock Institute in Chicago released “An Analysis of Residential Lending Patterns in Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, Michigan,” by Daniel Immergluck and Marti Wiles. The report concluded the following: “[w]hile the raw numbers are somewhat small, the large disparity in loan denial rates for home purchase loans between middle and upper income African-American and white residents of the combined communities are troubling. Denial rates for middle and upper-income whites are extremely low at three percent. Increased attention to this issue by lenders and regulators is warranted.” (Page 2) Some scholars and practitioners conclude that, “[w]hile the Community Reinvestment Act (CRA) does not mandate lending institutions to disclose commercial or recreational lending data, mortgage-lending data will provide ample information about an institution's overall lending practices.” If the aforementioned information holds to be true, we can then draw only one conclusion: there is currently no financial institution in Benton Harbor that caters to the capital and credit needs of low-to-moderate income families or small businesses.

Mobilizing the critical mass of capital needed for Benton Harbor citizens to keep pace with regional development is also a challenge we face as we work to create these opportunities for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Opportunities

- Establishment of an alternative institution that acts as a center for capital retention and plugs economic leakages
- Increased median household income through infusion and circulation of capital
- Decreased unemployment through increased small business expansion and start-ups
- Increased home ownership through concentrated mortgage lending
- Increased capital generated from loan interest rates and other credit services
- Implementation of a risk-reduction strategy through joint-venturing with local financial institutions
- Benton Harbor residents and businesses can increase capital investments as co-owners in economic development projects

Recommendations

- Create a community controlled revolving loan fund and market the fund to local community stakeholders to attract corporate investment. This institution will serve the credit needs of low to moderate income individuals and small businesses

The Revolving Loan Fund would initially mirror an existing Loan Fund operated by the regional economic development agency. Cornerstone Alliance has agreed to administer the Revolving Loan Fund for the Economic Development Group of the CPC at minimal to no cost. This strategic partnership offered by Cornerstone Alliance would further add to the existing pool of Renaissance Development Funds giving citizens and small businesses a better chance at access to capital, and developing credit.

The Cornerstone Alliance office will be the application intake office. The CPC Economic Development group will establish a loan board, which will screen applications and make final approval of loans.

In addition to administering the actual loan fund, Cornerstone Alliance also offers technical assistance and other small business development services. These services are essential to potential borrowers to begin the process of business planning, acquiring a home or simply repairing damaged credit.

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Cornerstone Alliance
CPC
State of Michigan

Small Business Funding

Desired Vision for the Community

Local businesses will become competent, highly qualified to compete at every level for funding, and provide quality products and services.

Challenges

To provide the necessary training and initial funding to assure the success of small and minority owned businesses in the City of Benton Harbor, and assist them in competing for other available funds and contracts.

There are several for profit, not for profit, and sole proprietorship businesses with great goals and visions, but they lack the knowledge and skills to operate a successful business or to obtain grants and other funding.

Opportunities

Businesses will gain vital training and information regarding structure, integrity, and accountability, and will be able to apply directly to funding sources for financial assistance to implement business goals and missions.

With adequate training and assistance businesses will be able to seize opportunities offered by grantors and other businesses. Training in accountability is vitally needed in the community. Many other business entities are in need of the same training that is available through the Northside Ministerial Alliance Training Institute, or the Michigan Minority Business Development Council (MMBDC).

Recommendations

- Secure state, federal, or other seed funding for small businesses or organizations that complete training of appropriate training through Northside Ministerial Alliance and/or Michigan Minority Business Development Council
- Evaluate companies and organizations to ensure their efforts are successful
- Pursue training and capitalization for nonprofit and for-profit businesses
- Build the capacity of minority nonprofit and for profit businesses

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

City of Benton Harbor

Cornerstone Alliance

HUD

MMBDC

Northside Ministerial Alliance Training Institute

Michigan Department of Consumer and Industry Services

Development of the Waterway

Desired Vision for the Community

Recreate a working harbor, building on the \$5 million already invested to link the harbor to land, and a working rail bed.

Challenges

Benton Harbor reached its economic peak between 1930 and 1965. The driving forces for this economic prosperity came from the convergence of agricultural production and manufacturing prowess relying on commercial and industrial lake traffic.

Benton Harbor continues to be one of the most successful working ports on Lake Michigan, yet due to a lack of infrastructure to support the working harbor, the spin-off benefits of manufacturing, warehousing, and agricultural production have been lost.

Opportunities

Over the past several years, the City of Benton Harbor has been working to recreate the linkages between these driving elements to the lake and river port traffic. Accordingly, the City of Benton Harbor has removed condemned buildings along Graham Avenue and now has over forty-five acres of prime development property owned by the City of Benton Harbor.

It is reasonably estimated that over 300 new jobs could be created through the production, manufacturing, and warehousing directly related to a working harbor.

The added benefit of the site chosen includes an active rail terminal to link the river and lake barges with CSX mainline between Chicago and Detroit, coupled with newly improved access through I-94 and US 31.

Recommendations

- The City of Benton Harbor requests a \$425,000 economic development grant through the Michigan Department of Transportation to link Graham Avenue and its existing 300,000 sq. ft. of industrial space, and 45 acres of vacant land to the working harbor at Riverview Drive. This connection will be the final phase of a multifaceted \$5 million project already funded and completed in partnership with the U.S. Department of Labor

- Engage the two current working port owners in the community along with representatives from the agriculture and industrial community to identify potential port users. Develop a proposal for a Fruit Market to locate back onto Graham Avenue for its operation as part of the airport extension. Such a development would enhance the comprehensive tourism proposal being constructed by linking the world's largest fruit market to tourist activities
- Begin active marketing efforts to potential port users for investment and job opportunities. We propose that the Michigan Economic Development Corporation (MEDC) develop an incentive package for the Fruit Market relocation
- Michigan Works! should create workforce development training needed for warehouse and distribution employees. Institute a comprehensive communication plan for screening and training the Benton Harbor residents who are under-employed
- Develop a comprehensive marketing program to notify private developers
- Utilize the New Markets Tax Credit, federal and state funds, along with private investment, to begin an implementation stage that will lead to at least three development opportunities over the course of the next three years, creating at least 200 jobs

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Army Corps of Engineers
Berrien County Economic Development
Citizens for Progressive Change
City of Benton Harbor
Cornerstone Alliance
Department of Environmental Quality
Michigan Department of Agriculture
Michigan Department of Transportation
Michigan Economic Development Corporation
Michigan Farm Bureau
Michigan State University
National Association of Agriculture Engineers
Surrounding Property Owners
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Benton Harbor/Benton Charter Township Consolidation Feasibility Study

Desired Vision for the Community

Effectively utilize limited taxpayer revenue through shared opportunities and shared responsibilities. Commission a study to evaluate the impact of the consolidation of the City of Benton Harbor and Benton Charter Township to expand economic growth, share resources and eliminate service duplication for more effective use of taxpayers' dollars.

Challenges

In order to increase economic growth and stability, a community must first have political stability. For the past 20 years, the City of Benton Harbor has been faced with the flight of businesses to malls and other political jurisdictions because of instability evidenced by numerous recall elections, a shrinking tax base, poor housing stock, high turnover of city managers, police officers and other employees, unemployment, and the lack of land space for industrial and commercial development. Furthermore, it is necessary for economic growth that residents' income be turned over at least three or four times within the community before leaving the community, which has not been the case in Benton Harbor. Most of the dollars spent by the residents of the City of Benton Harbor turn over in Benton Charter Township.

Opportunities

The majority of the populations of both communities are African-Americans; therefore, consolidation of the two communities would not diminish the political power base of the ethnic composition of the two communities. Each municipality has a police department, fire department, assessor, treasurer, attorney, clerk, engineer, inspection department, manager, and a housing commission as well as other similar offices or departments. Each municipality spends a considerable amount of taxpayer dollars on various elections.

Most of the larger churches are located in the Township. Most of the meetings of the Governor's Task Force take place in the Township, and several members of the Task force and CPC reside in the Township. It is difficult to address the problems of Benton Harbor without considering the same issues in Benton Township. Can we effectively address the recreational, economic, and social needs of Benton Harbor without addressing the same problems of the Township? Residents often move between the City and Township. The students attending Benton Harbor Area Schools live in both the City and Township.

Some contend that many of the federal, state, local and foundation grants awarded to this area are awarded based on the statistical data with the zip code of 49022 which consists of Benton Harbor, Benton Township, and a few other small municipalities. While the 49022 zip code is known as Benton Harbor, numerous arguments have been made that the City of Benton Harbor does not benefit from most grants awarded on the basis of the City's statistics.

If citizens are going to be asked to vote on a merger or consolidation of the City and the Township, significant data should be collected and provided to the citizens so that an informed and intelligent decision can be made.

Several national models exist on ways local communities have come together to improve governance issues. The structures have ranged from outright merger, to "compact" forms of government in which each unit's political structure was maintained while municipal services were merged. Cities such as Louisville, Kentucky and Battle Creek, Michigan are examples of communities that have followed well-defined processes.

Financial resources exist to assist communities seriously considering the benefits of a merger and as such, funding should be sought through the Kellogg Foundation, the Urban Land Institute, and other foundations that specialize in governmental structure.

Recommendations

- Secure funding to study the feasibility of consolidating Benton Harbor and Benton Township.

If this recommendation is adopted, friction and envy between the two communities may diminish; economic development organizations would be able to better serve the community; taxpayers would realize a savings of over \$1 million annually that is currently spent on duplicative services; and political stability would be restored to the community as well as increased economic development. The savings to the two communities could be utilized to fund other economic development and recreational priorities of the community.

- Battle Creek and Battle Creek Township consolidated several years ago as the result of a recommendation from the Kellogg Foundation. Valuable information could be obtained from the Battle Creek experience.

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Citizens for Progressive Change
City of Benton Harbor and Benton Charter Township
Office of the State Attorney General
Michigan Department of Management and Budget
The Kellogg Foundation

Development of Entertainment Venue

Desired Vision for the Community

Utilization of natural and abundant assets to create tourist destinations, jobs and revenue.

Challenges

The City of Benton Harbor currently has over 90 acres of pristine parkland located along Lake Michigan with substantial overgrowth of brush and weeds. This asset is woefully unappreciated and underutilized by residents within the community. It is estimated that less than 700 people visit the park and beach annually.

Opportunities

The City of Benton Harbor is also located along the St. Joseph River, considered by some to be the prime fishing river in the Midwest. Furthermore, Benton Harbor has Ox Creek that traverses through its area with an abundance of wetlands, natural habitat, and prime development opportunities along unique marsh, pond, and creek locations. No economic development along any of this land has occurred.

Berrien County has seen the number of hotel rooms double over the past seven years, and a resulting influx of an ever-strengthening tourism market. However, due to the lack of destination development opportunities and failure to create comprehensive training programs in tourism and hospitality management, the residents of Benton Harbor are neither benefiting from this new tourism, nor are tourist stays extended beyond more than one or two days. As such, the ability to capture significant revenues from tourism is lost until such time as a more comprehensive destination development opportunity can be created.

Given the growth of tourism in Berrien County and Benton Harbor's proximity to Chicago, Indianapolis, and Detroit, the Berrien County market is within a four-hour drive of millions of people. The ability to grow tourism can create job opportunities ranging from entry level wait staff to hospitality management professionals.

Furthermore, increasing tourism in this market creates an improved identity for a community, which ultimately results in creating enhanced business and investment growth ranging from new manufacturing, service sector and second home markets.

Some sample opportunities are:

- Amusement park
- Aquarium
- Kayak runs down the old ship canal
- Children and senior fishing points at the Old Celery Farm along Ox Creek
- Canoe and kayak tours along Ox Creek
- Natural wildlife and education programs along Ox Creek
- Indoor soccer facility to conduct regional tournaments during the winter and colder months
- Indoor roller skating, rock climbing, and other activities that combine opportunities for tourists and residents alike
- Golf course and first tee program that affords Benton Harbor residents preferred opportunities in conjunction with the influx of tourism
- Snowmobile routes for winter activities
- Development of a fishing village for second home purchases
- Waterfront park
- Land and development of Great America and other tourism venues
- Outdoor boat and drive-in movie theater

Recommendation

- Develop a comprehensive strategy to create tourism destination development projects to improve Benton Harbor's tax base and employment opportunities for Benton Harbor residents

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Army Corps of Engineers
Berrien County Recreation Department
Citizens for Progressive Change
City of Benton Harbor
Cornerstone Alliance
Department of Environmental Quality
Economic Development Administration
Michigan Economic Development Corporation
Southwestern Michigan Tourist Council
State of Michigan Tourism Department
Surrounding Property Owners
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Job Training

Desired Vision for the Community

The vision for the City of Benton Harbor and Benton Township would be a responsive and coordinated system of remedial, educational, vocation, and job-training resources in the community that would best serve the greatest number of residents. Further, the agencies involved in the delivery of these services would better understand the specific needs of its population and better communicate the needs and the resources available to the community as a whole. If the agencies are able to coordinate the delivery and services that are available, then a coordinated advertising and marketing plan could be implemented to address the lack of information and dissemination of the opportunities that exist in the community.

Further, the business and industry partners would consistently and effectively provide the agencies involved with the latest employment needs. This will allow the development of a model that will better coordinate job training to meet employment needs.

Finally, the ultimate goal is for the residents of the City of Benton Harbor and Benton Township to achieve full employment with a livable wage augmented by the benefits that allow for self-sufficiency.

Challenges

The residents of the City of Benton Harbor and Benton Township are served by several disparate job training delivery systems in the community including Michigan Works!, Benton Harbor Area Schools, Berrien County Intermediate School District, Lake Michigan College, and Workforce Skills Development. Each is designed to move residents from remedial to specific job skills and ultimately into full employment. While the goals and objectives of each entity may differ, the expected outcomes for each participant in the program remain the same: full employment, livable wages, and benefits from self-sufficiency.

Amongst the residents in communities served by the job training programs, it is commonly believed that there is duplication of services and competition for scarce resources. For example, each of the entities listed as collaborators provide similar remedial services related to resumé construction.

Residents report a lack of knowledge regarding services provided by the agencies dedicated to job training. This lack of community knowledge leads to the perception that each is ineffective in the delivery and success of their job training and preparation models. Further, residents report little understanding of the resources that exist in the community to address their specific job skills needs.

There must be a 360-degree model for effective feedback by employers in the community that are recruiting employees to augment their business models. These participating businesses should be included in the development of the model to ensure that the goals of each are addressing the needs of the community as a whole.

The workforce development delivery system must continuously review, refine and improve its services to remain responsive. The greatest challenge in developing a coordinated delivery system for the community remains interagency competition and communication. Each agency is entrenched in either governmental requirements or grant restrictions that each must maintain to comply with the contract.

There will be a significant challenge in coordinating the delivery of training modules to avoid duplication, and each will view this proposal as its own territory. However, that duplication depletes the resources available to increase communication through new and innovative methods, as there remains little capital for this goal given the current competitive state of affairs.

Opportunities

There are many opportunities for success in the community with the coordinated efforts of service providers in the region. Each, if agreed upon, would have the task of implementing a specific phase of job training services that would not compete with the other, allowing each to become proficient in that sector of responsibility. Further, the community residents would have a greater understanding of the agent that best suits their specific need for the achievement of full employment.

Recommendations

- Implement a planning process with a professional facilitator to identify achievable goals and objectives of the agencies listed as stakeholders in this section. This recommendation requires strategic cooperation by each agency and the local business, employer community.
- Encourage the community to agree upon a common integrated workforce training initiative to drive employability for current residents and attraction of new employment.
- Allow broader community representation on all workforce development boards.

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Benton Harbor Area Schools
Berrien County Intermediate School District
Cornerstone Alliance
Cornerstone Chamber Services
Lake Michigan Community College
Michigan Works!
National Foundation for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE)
Workforce Skills Development

Summer Youth Employment Program

Desired Vision for the Community

The desired vision for the community is to develop a program that informs community youth of the many opportunities that exist beyond the cycle of poverty that is all-too-often the norm. Further, youth will recognize a clear path to future success should the student develop the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace where he/she participates. For example, youth will see the benefits of a high school education, continuing and technical education beyond high school, and the tangible effects of education upon his/her earning potential.

Challenges

Following the disturbances of June 2003, the Governor earmarked \$309,000 to the tri-county Michigan Works! to develop a six-week summer youth training experience, allowing residents of Benton Harbor to see tangible effort by the state and local agencies and employers to address the myriad of problems that exist in a community with high unemployment. This program, while successful in many areas, exposed many of the problems that exist within inter-agency communications, local business partnerships, and governmental support and leadership. This program, while not addressing those residents who are over the age of 22, did allow youth to participate in a worthwhile job experience with hope that they derive substantial educational experiences for the good of their future.

The summer youth job training program was formed in a very short window of time by several collaborating agencies including Michigan Works!, Cornerstone Alliance, the Council for World Class Communities, and the Michigan Department of Transportation. These agencies developed the intake criteria, designed the job requirement criteria consistent with state and federal funding requirements, and pursued interested businesses to ensure that jobs were available for participants accepted into the program.

The program concluded in August 2003 with no specific plan for future funding.

The challenge of this program is to determine a source of funding for a sustainable program that can properly address the needs and expectations of clients and employers who participate in this program. After all, a chance in this program may open the door to future opportunities that youth may never again have at their disposal.

Opportunities

Each participating business will have the benefit of augmenting their staff and general work environment with bright, energetic, and prepared youth that will help to dispel any potential stereotypes that exist within that work environment.

Youth have the opportunity to enhance their remedial job skills through the coordinated training programs. They will be given the chance to witness, first-hand, the benefits of a quality work environment that places specific goals and expectations upon employees for a full day's pay. This pay will assist with the basic needs of individuals and the families while also educating youth about the benefits of contributing to society through established and accepted tools of employment.

Recommendation

- To achieve this level of involvement among youth in the community, there must be a sustained program of job evaluation, training of youth, and funding.

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Benton Harbor Area Schools
Berrien County Intermediate School District
Cornerstone Alliance (Education and Lifelong Learning)
Cornerstone Chamber Services (Business recruitment and Training)
Local, Community and Corporate Foundations
Local Employers (Predominately from Benton Harbor and Benton Township)
Local Job training agencies
Michigan Works! (Lead Agency)

Neighborhood Block Clubs

Desired Vision for the Community

Create a redevelopment fund for use by local neighborhood block clubs. Organized and involved communities are strong communities.

Challenge

Currently, no sustained or systematic funding exists to create resources to reward formation and implementation of strong neighborhood block clubs.

Opportunities

The City of Benton Harbor and Cornerstone Alliance have provided funding for a group of 20 local Benton Harbor residents to receive training from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's Grass Root Community Organization program. This training has resulted in several block clubs being created coupled with several existing block clubs within the community.

Several other block clubs, such as All People Who Love Benton Harbor provide neighborhood cleanups and mentoring programs.

The community policing proposal submitted by the Police Chief of the City of Benton Harbor also outlined the need to create active, strong neighborhood block clubs to assist in the community policing effort.

Recommendations

- Establish a \$50,000 per year, three-year commitment to a structure and process for providing block club grants within the community. These initiatives can include landscape improvements, neighborhood cleanups, conversion of abandoned buildings to recreation centers, and sponsorship of youth organizations, etc.
- The Benton Harbor Police Department would certify the existence of neighborhood block clubs based upon:
 - A committee with officers
 - A defined geographic boundary
 - A record of at least two months with meetings and priorities established by the neighborhood block club
 - At least one meeting with identified police officers and the neighborhood block club
 - Adequate postings and public notices of block club meetings

- Create a Citizens' Oversight Committee to work with available resources in the community to seek additional leveraged funds for reallocation through the process as deemed appropriate

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Benton Harbor Police Department
Berrien County Economic Development
Churches
Citizens for Progressive Change
City of Benton Harbor
Civic Organizations
Cornerstone Alliance
Economic Development Administration
Family Independence Agency
Michigan Department of Agriculture
Michigan Department of Transportation
Michigan Economic Development Corporation
Michigan State University
Surrounding Property Owners
U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
Western Michigan University

EDUCATION

Desired Vision for the Community

Benton Harbor will be a community that values education, as demonstrated by residents, school officials, community leaders and organizations. They will all actively support and participate in school activities and community-sponsored programs in order to develop hopeful youth and promote the overall achievement of all students. We will identify the educational needs, strategies, and resources that will provide hope and prepare 100 percent of Benton Harbor community students for a secondary education or career.

Challenges – Children

Early Childhood

Many children have parents that are unaware of early brain development and the cognitive needs of their very young (prenatal to three years of age) children. The majority of parents work and care is often provided by relatives rather than licensed childcare providers. Also, these relative care providers often lack the knowledge and resources to assist the child in attaining early literacy skills. Because the Family Independence Agency (FIA) Child Day Care provides support (\$2.25-\$2.75 per hour) for relatives providing day care, many children remain with a family member rather than attending available preschool programs for four year olds, such as the Michigan School Readiness Program and Head Start, so as not to forfeit this small income.

Nutrition

Although 98.5 percent of the students participate in the free/reduced breakfast and lunch meal plan, some still are not consuming enough food to function well in school.

High Drop-Out Rate

Student retention is an issue at Benton Harbor High School. Data show students are dropping out of school at unacceptably high levels. Of the 435-student cohort that would have graduated in 2003, 212 students (48.7 percent) dropped out prior to graduation. Of the 223 students who graduated from high school in the 2002-2003 academic school year, 80 (35.8 percent) were boys—meaning fewer boys are graduating and more are dropping out of school.

Drug Influence

The drug culture sustains a flourishing sub-economy, which provides competition to Benton Harbor Area Schools for the minds and souls of youth and families.

Academic Performance

Academic achievement is an area of concern, and support from the community, and state and federal programs, is essential in allowing those students who are starting with disadvantages to overcome their deficits. Class size, after-school programs, and enrichment initiatives are all critical in uplifting these students.

Suspension and Expulsion

Students are challenged with conflict management and resolution in controlling their anger or behavior. Failure in this area has resulted in excessive suspensions from school. During the 2002-2003 academic school year, there were 760 elementary student suspensions—totaling 2,311 days of students missing school; and 4,036 middle and high school suspensions in Benton Harbor —totaling 10,171 days of students missing school, in a population of 2,350 students.

Lack of Home Stability

Approximately 30 percent of the student population lives on their own, with friends similar in age, or with elderly grandparents. Many lack positive parental role models and seek relationships and role models through gangs and relationships that lead to sexual activity and sometimes becoming parents during pre-teen and teenage years. Those students who lack motivation to participate in extra-curricular activities inside or outside of school increase the possibility of involvement in unhealthy and dangerous activities. Many boys and girls do not have positive father figures or role models, and as a result, fall prey to father figures or role models offered through gangs and other unhealthy relationships. Moreover, many girls, not having their emotional needs met in a healthy, nurturing environment, and not developing interests and hobbies at an early age, turn to unhealthy choices.

Lack of Exposure to Positive African-American Role Models

Students lack exposure to professionals such as African American attorneys, businessmen and women or entrepreneurs. Consequently, there are few positive African American men and women to whom students can talk to about taking advantage of college and career opportunities.

Lack of Job Training

High levels of unemployment in the community and even higher levels of teenage unemployment leave students more vulnerable to negative influences and less likely to have developed job skills, employment opportunities, and motivation to take advantage of career counseling. If students held paid internships and part-time jobs after school

this could lead to increases in their job skills and abilities, while contributing economically to meeting their financial needs. Furthermore, by holding part-time jobs or internships, students would have little time to participate in non-productive activities such as gang and/or other criminal activities.

Lack of After School Program Participation

Many students are not able to participate in after-school programs because of the economic circumstances of their families. There is a significant increase in negative activity in neighborhoods when students are left unattended at home. With the lack of positive, structured alternatives, students have greater exposure to negative alternatives. If transportation was provided through a contractual arrangement with a local service, students would be able to be picked up and dropped off at designated safe locations, such as area churches.

Recommendations

- Reduce the dropout rate, taking advantage of alternative schools to increase the student retention rate
- Create an alternative school for suspended students, so they are never out of school
- The Intermediate School Districts should open a charter school in Berrien County for expelled students, providing educational, counseling and emotional services
- Support the Governor's proposed increase to age 18 for exiting school
- Develop effective early childhood care and education programs involving partnerships between BHAS and the surrounding community, in conjunction with Project Great Start at the state level
- Provide nutrition education to children and families, encouraging them to take advantage of free/reduced breakfast/lunch programs and other government-sponsored nutritional programs. Parents also need additional training and outreach from the Berrien County Health Department about the importance of proper nutrition
- Provide students with paid employment opportunities and internships to gain work experience and income
- Provide transportation for after school programs to facilitate improved student achievement

- Increase investment in teacher subject matter competence to fulfill the requirements of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act
- Encourage teachers and structure the environment to facilitate nurturing of all students, preschool through 12th grade
- Provide incentives to teachers to reduce turnover
- Invest in professional development in literacy, mathematics, science and social studies
- Develop partnerships with higher education institutions to increase the number of student teachers, experimental programs and lab opportunities
- Utilize parent coordinators to build bridges and increase communications in a holistic manner such that the staff becomes sensitized to the environmental issues of the students' homes and the parents become more aware of classroom issues
- Increase the availability of support services for emotional health and character building for students

Challenges – Parents

Socioeconomic Variables

Many parents lack the necessary academic skills and financial means by which to successfully contribute to their children's educational attainment and to meet their family's basic material and personal development needs. According to the 2000 Census, the median household income level for Benton Harbor residents is approximately \$17,000. The percentage of residents who hold high school diplomas or General Equivalency Degrees (GEDs) is approximately 60 percent, according to data from the Adult Education program. Furthermore, according to the 2000 U.S. Census, 52.5 percent of children 18 years and under live in poverty. This large student population lacks the necessary economic means to adequately function on a daily basis.

The evidence is in the disproportionate income levels and dropout and graduation rates of Benton Harbor residents and students, which have negatively impacted students' level of hope and their capacity for academic excellence. As a result of these academic and economic deficiencies, along with other factors such as limited school resources, students are dropping out of school at a higher rate (6.9 percent), and graduating at a lower rate (50.1 percent) per the Benton Harbor Area Schools (BHAS) records, as reported to Michigan Department of Education (MDE) and compared to the average graduation rate and dropout rate of Michigan Public Schools (87.8 percent and 3.3 percent, respectively) for the 2000-2001 school year.

Lack of Transportation

A lack of transportation and job flexibility often hinders parents from participating in school-related activities and training efforts. Thus, parents are not informed of their children's school responsibilities and their obligations as parents to assist them in completing homework assignments. In addition, parents who have a desire to attend parenting classes and conferences often lack transportation.

Under-educated Parents

Poor, under-educated parents have few books in their home, read less themselves, and often do not regularly converse and read with their children. Under-educated parents are often not able to help their children with homework assignments. Under-educated parents often have feelings of embarrassment and/or inadequacy that keep them from participating in parent-teacher conferences and other school-related activities. Many parents do not understand the concept of "lifelong learner," thus they do not understand the importance of participating in parenting classes and other learning opportunities, for example, in the area of technology. This de-valuing of education and the resulting lack of knowledge and skills not only leads to feelings of inadequacy, but, also, is passed on to the children, further perpetuating the cycle of inter-generational poverty.

Recommendations

- Increase the availability of adult education and GED preparation courses
- Provide adult education classes, parenting skills and training in locations that are within close proximity to the parents' homes to diminish transportation difficulties
- Work with the Berrien County ISD to introduce the MDE "Great Parents, Great Start" early childhood program in the community

Challenges – Educational Infrastructure and Materials

Learning Environment

A positive environment for learning is critical to the work of teachers as they instruct their students. Many of the school buildings in Benton Harbor are old and in need of substantial improvements. Some of the school buildings in Benton Harbor contain asbestos and lead, posing severe health risks to students. There is also a lack of adequate classroom space in many Benton Harbor schools.

Materials and Furniture

Benton Harbor students do not have up-to-date books and supplemental materials. Many of the desks and chalkboards in Benton Harbor classrooms are old and worn. Benton Harbor classrooms lack adequate audio-visual equipment such as overhead projectors. The computer hardware and software in Benton Harbor school buildings is often outdated, leaving area students behind in a fast-paced, technologically advanced world.

Recommendations

- Conduct an evaluation of all school buildings sites that are older than 50 years of age to determine the scope of capital funds needed
- Make effective use of the 2-mill levy recently passed by a strong majority of Benton Harbor voters to repair local schools
- Develop a solid technology plan for Benton Harbor schools that will allow the district to participate in technological partnerships such as the statewide Freedom to Learn initiative

Challenges – Community-at-Large

There is no coherent, strategic means by which to locate available resources necessary to assist teachers, administrators, parents, students and the community-at-large in promoting student achievement. There is no community-wide structure / process for inter-issue dialogue, prioritizing and strategies.

Recommendations

- Select an ombudsperson to facilitate cross-functional communications and implementation
- Create a resource guide of all the childhood development and educational services, museums, educational institutions, youth and family services organizations in the area

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Benton Harbor Area Schools
 Berrien County Great Start Initiative
 Berrien County Intermediate School District
 Bessie H. Cohn Day Care Center, Inc., Rainbow 4's Preschool
 Charter Schools
 Early Childhood Development Organizations

Helping Our Youth Achieve (HOYA)
Lake Michigan Catholic Schools
North Berrien Community & Adult Education
Salvation Army
Southwestern Michigan Alternative Learning Collaborative
Technology Bus/ "Tek-bus"

HEALTH AWARENESS AND IMPROVEMENT

Desired Vision for Community

The Health Awareness and Improvement workgroup's vision for the Benton Harbor community is the following:

- Every person receives equal access to health care and excellent health care services from medical providers
- Incidences of infant mortality, substance abuse, and HIV/AIDS/sexually transmitted diseases are virtually non-existent,
- Every person in Benton Harbor resides in safe, lead-free homes in good condition

The role of the workgroup was to learn what health issues existed in Benton Harbor according to the people who live in Benton Harbor, gather and analyze data (surveys, U.S. Census Information, Healthy Berrien Consortium reports, Berrien County Behavior Risk Factor Survey, Michigan data, Berrien County Health Department data and reports, and Western Michigan Regional Minority Health report) to identify additional health needs, obtain an understanding of those issues, conduct a survey in the community of Benton Harbor, prioritize the health issues, identify successful strategies, and make recommendations.

The workgroup made an undisputed agreement that in order to determine the top health priorities in Benton Harbor, there must be input from the citizens of Benton Harbor. The workgroup conducted a health survey with the people who live in Benton Harbor. The workgroup developed and implemented a survey in August 2003 that asked the community the following four questions:

- What are your health concerns that are not being met?
- What are your family's health concerns that are not being met?
- What do you feel are Benton Harbor's health concerns that are not being met?
- If the State was going to give resources (money, people) for health issues in Benton Harbor, where would you want it spent?

In addition, questions were asked to find demographic information such as age, race, sex, and residence.

Four hundred forty-four Benton Harbor and Benton Township residents were surveyed (approximately one third male, two thirds female). Several workgroup members conducted the survey in churches, door-to-door, and at the Berrien County Health Department. The racial distribution of the survey population was the following: 90 percent African American, 3.6 percent White, and 2.0 percent Native American. The sample that participated in the survey largely reflected the population of the City of Benton Harbor (92.4 percent African American, 5.5 percent White, and 0.2 percent Native American).

The survey was exempt from Institutional Review Board approval by the Michigan Department of Community Health.

The Berrien County Health Department developed a Benton Harbor health service matrix, which contains a comprehensive list of all of the services related to health that are available in Benton Harbor. As listed in the matrix, there are many diverse health service programs that are currently available to the Benton Harbor community or were operating at one point in time (see Addendum at end of section). These programs impact many areas of health concern such as cancer, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, immunizations, lead rededication, maternal and child health, infant mortality, sexually transmitted diseases, teen pregnancy, adolescent health, dental health, hunger, etc.

The Health Awareness and Improvement Workgroup utilized the results of the survey, health data, and the previous or current existence of the health programs (the matrix), and went through a group process to prioritize the top five health issues for the City of Benton Harbor and Benton Township. These priorities include:

- Health insurance access
- Drug and alcohol abuse
- Infant mortality
- HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases
- Health hazards in housing

Challenges

Increase the number of individuals who can access health insurance

According to a Behavior Risk Factor Survey in Berrien County conducted in 2002, 21.3 percent of people ages 18-64 do not have any health insurance, which is a significantly greater percentage compared to the Michigan and U.S. populations. Of the African American population in Berrien County, 33.3 percent did not have health insurance compared to the 19.3 percent in the Caucasian population. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, 31.5 percent of Benton Harbor residents do not have a vehicle available and 18.4 percent do not have a telephone. Lack of transportation and telephones are barriers to obtaining medical care.

Based on Benton Harbor Health Survey findings, residents desire access to medical providers in the community. The issue of access may be two-fold: 1) decrease the waiting time for an appointment at the clinic and for services at the clinic, and 2) ensure that when Medicaid participants are randomly assigned to a health plan, they are assigned a provider with offices in Benton Harbor, since many cannot access transportation.

Reduce drug and alcohol abuse in the Benton Harbor community, and provide timely assistance to individuals considering drug and/or alcohol treatment

Drug and Substance Abuse continues as a public health issue for Benton Harbor. A recent survey completed by 444 residents of the Benton Harbor City and Township identifies drugs and alcohol as a leading health concern for the community. Preliminary 2002 statistics generated by the Michigan Department of Community Health, Division of Substance Abuse, report 27,916 individuals in Berrien County are in need of substance abuse treatment. The locally operated Berrien County Substance Abuse Treatment Service served over 1,600 patients in 2002. These clients are primarily Benton Harbor residents and approximately 75 percent are referred through the criminal justice system.

Prevent the occurrence of HIV/AIDS and STD in Benton Harbor.

Berrien County has an extremely high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. As of July 1, 2003, Berrien County was second only to Wayne County for estimated HIV/AIDS prevalence.

Since Chlamydia is the most common sexually transmitted bacterial infection in the United States and Gonorrhea continues to be the most frequently reported communicable disease in the United States, they are used as health indicators of progress in reducing the sexually transmitted infection rates among the population. Berrien County's rates for Chlamydia and Gonorrhea are both higher than the Michigan rates. In 2001, the rate for Chlamydia was 486.9 per 100,000 in Berrien County and 313 per 100,000 for Michigan. The Gonorrhea case rate in 2001 was 290.6 per 100,000 in Berrien County as compared to the State of Michigan case rate of 172 per 100,000.

The rate of teen pregnancy is an indicator for sexual activity among teens. The pregnancy rate in 2001 for Berrien County for females aged 15-19 far exceeds the State of Michigan rate. As an example, for 2001 the pregnancy rate in Michigan for females ages 15-19 was 63.8 per 1,000. The same year, Berrien County had a pregnancy rate for the same age group of 93.4 per 1,000. According to these statistics the teens in Berrien County are sexually active and are at risk for contracting HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

Improve the housing conditions in Benton Harbor

Many of the homes in Benton Harbor contain lead-based paint and lack basic plumbing and kitchen facilities. According to the 2000 U.S. Census, there are 3,072 homes in Benton Harbor built before 1959. Children, who reside in homes that were built before 1950 and are not properly taken care of, are at an extremely high risk for having a lead problem because the paint is now chipping, flaking and cracking.

It is important to explore multiple approaches to achieve improved housing conditions that provide improved health of occupants. Presently, many homes in Benton Harbor

do not meet basic code requirements for electrical, plumbing, mechanical and structural components. Additionally there is a need to renovate or demolish abandoned structures. Lastly, there is a need to improve the overall esthetics quality of the homes, which improves housing values, tax base, public education and city services.

Housing conditions and lead-based paint hazards are directly linked to homes built prior to 1978 when the use of lead-based paint was banned for residential consumers. Homes in poor repair will contribute significantly to the amount of lead hazards available to occupants. Therefore any efforts to improve the structural components of a house will directly impact the lead-base paint hazards in the building.

Recommendations

- Educate Benton Harbor residents (through public service announcements, church bulletins, etc.) about strategies to maximize their health benefits
- Encourage medical residents and students to make use of student loan reimbursement programs in medically under-served areas by contacting the three medical schools in Michigan: Michigan State University, the University of Michigan, and Wayne State University
- Work with the Boys and Girls Club, Council for World Class Communities, Youth Domain, School-Based Clinic, local schools, churches and other organizations to identify what youth programs are currently in existence to reduce substance abuse
- Work with the community to promote existing Alcoholics and Narcotics Anonymous groups
- Limit the number of liquor stores and licenses distributed in Benton Harbor
- Hire a coordinator for substance abuse prevention and outreach. Strategy includes empowering community members of all ages to monitor neighborhoods and discourage drug trafficking
- Establish a local inpatient drug rehabilitation facility
- Implement a halfway house for those who have been receiving inpatient/outpatient services and are transitioning back into their previous environments
- Continue to support Berrien County Health Department's Nurse-Family Partnership Program and existing Maternal Support Services (MSS) and Infant Support Services (ISS) Programs at Lakeland Family Clinic and Intercare Collaborate with the Maternal Support Service

- Promote early and adequate prenatal care
- Educate medical personnel, hospital personnel, and the public about positional asphyxiation (accidental suffocation)
- Support the current efforts by the Infant Mortality Reduction Task Force and the Fetal Infant Mortality Review Committee, initiation of a Safe Sleep campaign, promotion of early prenatal care, printing of maternal and child health resource directory for service providers and families, purchase of Pack-N-Plays (as a substitute for a crib), and printing of stickers with warning signs of labor and delivery that would be put on the prenatal vitamins
- Enhance the Benton Harbor Area School's Family Life Education Curriculum
- Support the Lakeland Family Clinic's Baby Steps (incentive) Program
- Provide abstinence education to Benton Harbor youth to prevent teen pregnancy
- Initiate a lead coalition to increase awareness about lead and its effects
- Demand an ordinance on home inspections
- Work with the Lead Hazard Rededication Program (LHRP) and the Childhood Lead Poisoning Prevention Program (CLPPP)
- Pass an ordinance to make landlords take care of their properties - if they do not take care of the properties, then they should lose possession of the home
- Implement recommendations from the Statewide Childhood Lead Prevention Plan
- Continue to work on prevention/treatment of substance abuse resulting in eventual decreased morbidity, mortality, and complications due to HIV and STD, especially in high-risk populations
- Increase HIV/AIDS education and HIV/AIDS testing in the Benton Harbor community through church groups, schools and awareness pamphlets

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Andrews University
Benton Harbor Area Schools
Berrien County Juvenile Center
Circuit Court
Community AIDS Resource and Education Services (CARES)
Cornerstone Alliance

Council for World Class Communities
Fifth District Court
Gospel Against AIDS
Healthy Berrien Consortium
Individual, Family and Community Development
InterCare Community Health Network
Juvenile Detention Facility
Lakeland Family Clinic
Lakeland Regional Health System
Lakeshore Central Diagnostic Referral
Lakeshore Coordinating Agency
Michigan Addiction Prevention Services
Michigan Department of Community Health
Michigan Department of Corrections
Michigan Department of Education
Michigan Family Independence Agency
Michigan State Housing Development Authority
Neighborhood Organizations
Office of Drug Control Policy
Riverwood Mental Health Authority
Rural Family Partnership Program
The Berrien County Health Department
The Michigan Department of Community Health
United Parents Against Lead
Volunteer Center of Southwest Michigan

Addendum

Benton Harbor Health Service Matrix

Agency/ Program Name	# of Years of Service in Benton Harbor	Description of Services	Capacity of the program (to serve the community)	Evaluation (Quality of the program based upon assessment(s))	How long are the services expected to continue?
Berrien County Health Department					
African American Women's Heart Health Initiative	1 year	BCHD developed and implemented a project to address the high rate of morbidity and mortality among African American women in Benton Harbor due to cardiovascular disease (CVD).	1,200 (group) 350 (individual)		Funding did not continue into 2003.
Breast & Cervical Cancer Screening Program	12 years	This program offers uninsured women access to life-saving breast & cervical cancer screening, follow-up and treatment. Call for an appointment BH:926.7121 (x5670)	BCCCP – 189 Under 40 – 107 Race for Cure – 12 (BH #s only)	During the program's 12 years, 1089 eligible women have been served and 19 cases of breast cancer and 8 cases of cervical cancer have been detected. The invasive breast cancer mortality rate has declined during the program period in Berrien County and in 2001 the Berrien County rate was 2.0 (+/- 0.8) compared with a rate of 2.7 for Michigan.	Ongoing
Children's Special Health Care Services (CSHCS)	Began in Michigan in 1927.	A program that was created to find, diagnose, a treat children who have chronic illnesses or disabling conditions. Staff (nurse and representative) provide consultation, support and family advocacy services to families participating in the CSHCS program. Services are family centered and community-based.	600 (can vary from year to year)	No formal evaluation. Longevity of program. Frequent positive responses to client satisfaction surveys.	Ongoing. Mandated by Title V of SS Act, Public Act 368 of 1978 and MDCH Appropriation Act.
Diabetes Project	1 year	BCHD was awarded a grant by the MDCH to design a pilot study to promote early detection of diabetes and identify persons with impaired glucose tolerance (to help prevent the onset of diabetes). A screening project was initiated in December, 2001 with InterCare Community Health Network of Benton Harbor.	Forty-five (45) people had been screened and referred to classes (until funding was cut in December, 2002).		Funding was cut in December, 2002.
Family Planning		The family planning program provides a broad range of medically approved family planning methods, education/counseling on contraception and health, physical examinations, testing and referrals. 926-7121 (ext 5670)	2,598 unduplicated users		Ongoing
Hearing & Vision Testing		This program provides hearing and vision screenings for pre-school and school-aged children.	2,745 – Vision 2,254 – Hearing (BH #s only)		Ongoing
HIV/AIDS Counseling & Testing		Confidential or anonymous counseling, testing.	247 – tested 175 – post-test counsel (BH #s only)		Ongoing
Lead Remediation	3 years	In collaboration with the MDCH,	21 living units since		Grant ended

Health Awareness and Improvement

Program		BCHD received funding for the lead hazard remediation program. The goal of the program is to remediate lead-based paint hazards from dwellings in high-risk communities. The program initially consists of identifying homes with potential lead-based paint hazards. Upon confirmation of lead hazards, specifications to remediate are developed by the Environmental Health staff. Specifications are then provided to approved lead-abatement contractors with instructions on the bidding process. EHS is required to have a staff person on site at least 50% of the time that abatement is being carried out. After work is complete, dust samples are collected and analyzed prior to the family returning to the home. Number of (??) dwellings, primarily in the City of Benton Harbor, have had lead remediation completed since program inception.	program began		09/30/03
Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) Program	3 years (Since Nov. 2000)	This program serves low-income, at-risk, first-time expectant mothers and their children through the child's first two-years. Specialized nurses, using tested and proven intervention strategies, provide services that promote health, parenting and social skills.	25 families per nurse (Currently 4 nurses) Total = 100 families	Since the inception of the program in November 2000, 124 families have received services. Of the 86 deliveries, 96% have been full term and of normal birth weight. All are developmentally on target.	Ongoing
Pregnancy Testing		Confidential pregnancy test. Available through the Family Planning Clinic.	463 per year (BH #s only)		Ongoing
School-Based Clinic (SBC)		Youth 10-21 years old have access to primary and preventive health care services through the Benton Harbor High School Health Clinic. This collaborative effort with the Benton Harbor Area Schools supports the health and psychosocial needs of the approximately 1,000 teens served annually.	1,500		
Sexually Transmitted Disease (STD) Services		Provides prevention and control of STDs through: risk reduction, counseling, and education for those at-risk of contracting an STD; detection of infected persons; effective diagnosis and treatment; and evaluation, treatment and counseling of sexual partners of infected persons. 926.7121 (ext 5658)	1,900		
Substance Abuse Treatment Services		Individual and family counseling. Chemical dependency is a family disease. We stress abstinence from all mood altering drugs, participation in support groups such as alcoholics Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, and Alanon in order to assist clients lead a sober and fulfilling lifestyle.	3,730 – Individual Counseling (BH #s only)		Ongoing

		Counseling may last from 1 month to more than 1 year, depending upon the individual needs of the client and family.			
SATS (continued)		<p>Specially Focused Counseling Groups:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Department of Corrections (DOC)</u> – Phase I and Phase II. Phase I is a 12-week educational group for prisoners held at the Corrections Center; Phase II is a 6-12 week process group for parolees and Circuit Court probationers. In addition SATS conducts Strategies for Self-Improvement and Change . . . a 3-6 month program of cognitive re-structuring for parolees. 2. <u>Drug Court Adult Treatment Program</u> – a 4-week program for Drug Court offenders. Includes drug screen, acupuncture, individual/family counseling and group counseling. 3. <u>Adolescent Group</u> – an open-ended group for adolescent offenders held in Benton harbor as needed. 4. <u>Women's Intensive Outpatient Program</u> – a 4-week open-ended group held at the senior Center in Benton Harbor 4 days weekly for 3 hours each day. Modalities include educational sessions, process groups, and stress related exercises. The IOP focuses on addressing gender-specific women's issues. 5. <u>Men's Outpatient Counseling</u> – an open-ended 4-12 week group held weekly in BH. The focus will be on learning cognitive skills to manage the thought processes that lead to negative or destructive behaviors. Some co-occurring disorders will also be discussed along with educational sessions. 6. <u>Women's Outpatient Counseling Groups</u> – Offered one morning weekly at the Benton Harbor office focusing on women's issues in recovery. 	<p>DOC – 296 (group) 41 (individual)</p> <p>IOP – 65 (Individual) 1,100 (Group)</p>		Ongoing
SATS (continued)		<p>Substance Abuse Meetings. Patterned after AA and NA, these support group meetings provide the client with an opportunity to become acquainted with 12-step programs and to deal with feelings and interpersonal relationships in a group setting. Meetings are held in the Benton Harbor office on Tuesdays and Thursdays (at noon) and Wednesdays at 7 pm.</p>	<p>2,500 per year (BH #s only)</p>		Ongoing

Health Awareness and Improvement

SATS (continued)		Drug Screening. Technicians in the Benton Harbor office, utilizing on-site, state-of-the-art equipment, screen urine samples for a variety of drugs including alcohol, and obtain results within one-hour.	12,834 (Year 2002)		Ongoing
SATS (continued)		<p>Court-Referred Education Programs.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Drinking-Driver Basic Class</u>: A one-day, all-day class held at the M-139 office dealing with the effects of alcohol on driving ability, behavior; myths and misinformation; beginnings of addiction. For 1st offenders only. 2. <u>Drinking Driver Advanced Series</u>: A 6-week series aimed at educating the drinking driver about the abuse of mood-altering drugs, including alcohol; family impact of alcohol abuse; development of alcoholism. Aimed at repeat offenders or 1st offenders with other problems with alcohol. 3. <u>Drug Education Class</u>: A one-day, all-day class held at the M-139 office dealing with the categories of mood-altering drugs, effects on the mind and body, and development of dependency and addiction. Aimed at 1st offenders on drug charges. 4. <u>Adolescent and other drug Class</u>: A 2-session class (5 hours) aimed at educating the adolescent about the impact of alcohol on the user, family and community. Updated information on other drugs and laws will also be covered. 			Ongoing
Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Project	3 years	The Teenage Pregnancy Prevention Project (TP3) was initiated to help reduce the high teenage pregnancy rate in Benton Harbor/Benton Township. The project required at least 14 cumulative contact hours of involvement through a variety of community interventions. BCHD offers sexuality education to both females and males. We also collaborate with BCHD's Family Planning and Nurse-Family Partnership programs, Planned Parenthood, Boys and Girls Club of Benton Harbor, Project TRUTH/NBA (Together Reaching Understanding Through Honesty/No Babies Allowed), Lakeland Family Clinic, Berrien County Intermediate School District/ Mentoring and the Faith-Based Community. Teen involvement is very important to this project; therefore BCHD has enlisted the help of teens from Benton Harbor High School to form a teen advisory committee.	The goal of the project was to enroll 1,500 young women and men between the ages of 13 and 19 who live in Benton Harbor/Benton Township.	An 18.7% reduction in the teenage birthrate for the target communities of Benton Harbor/Benton Township has been demonstrated since the initiation of TP3.	Program funding ends September 30, 2003.
Tuberculosis		Screening, diagnosis and treatment	562 TB tests in 2002		Ongoing

Health Awareness and Improvement

Testing		of tuberculosis (TB)	(BH #s only)		
WISEWOMAN	1 year (Since Sept 2002)	The Well-Integrated Screening and Evaluation for Women Across the Nation (WISEWOMAN) program began in Berrien County in September 2002. The goal is to identify and educate women from the Breast & Cervical Cancer Control Program who are over 40 years old and who are at risk for cardiovascular disease. The cholesterol and blood-pressure screening assesses women for cardiovascular disease risk. Education and medical follow-up is available.			Ongoing
Women, Infant & Children (WIC)		WIC assesses the nutritional and health status of eligible participants. The findings from these assessments and screenings are the foundation for the individually designed intervention of nutrition education and food packages for each participant.	4,100 monthly caseload		Ongoing
InterCare Community Health Network		All medical services normally covered by Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHC). Community Health Center provides services by physicians, a nurse practitioner and a physician assistant. Improve individual health by providing comprehensive community oriented primary health care to low income families. Providing medical and dental... 269. 927.5400			All services are continuing on an ongoing basis.
Dental Services		All dental services normally covered by a Federally Qualified Health Center (FQHC)			
Infant Support Services (ISS)		ISS helps Medicaid infants and their families who are most likely to experience serious health problems due to psychosocial or nutritional problems. The ISS team consists of a nutritionist, social worker and a nurse who provide information, health education, counseling/casework referral and recipient advocacy services. Transportation is available for the infant's health care appointments and WIC visits.			
Lakeland Family Clinic-Benton Harbor	Since 1978	Provides medical care to all populations-adults and children. Following clinics available-medical, pediatrics, OB, GYN, GI, cardiology, ENT, infectious disease. Accepts Medicare, Medicaid, Medicaid HMO, insurance, private pay. Provides care to the above patients who are not accepted in specialty practices. For uninsured clients have a sliding scale program based on federal poverty guidelines. Losses in reimbursement are underwritten by Lakeland Regional Health System	Presently have about 26,000 visits per and are accepting new patients.		LRHS is committed to providing primary care for the Benton Harbor area (no end date)

Health Awareness and Improvement

		(Medicaid 65%, Medicare 15%, Insurance 12%, and Sliding scale 8%).			
		Maternal Support Program - Took over the program from the Health department, staffed by an RN, SW, and Dietician who provide support throughout the pregnancy as well as afterward. Provides parenting classes. Developing Baby Steps Store to assist clients in need of infant supplies.	About 400 clients a year deliver through the OB clinic -Accepting OB clients	Meets state requirements for certification	
Lakeland Family Clinic (continued)		Diabetic Educator-The Lakeland Foundation funds a Diabetic Educator position. The RN in this position is certified and provides diabetic education one on one with the clients. Has developed diabetic educational material for the illiterate or near illiterate client due to a 57% illiteracy rate in Benton Harbor as well as the large number of diabetic clients being cared for in the clinics.		Participate in MPRO quality indicators which show we are above state goals for some indicators and improving in the others.	
		TP3- Participates in program to prevent teen pregnancies.		Reduction in teen pregnancies in county of 18%	Funding ends 09/30/03.
		Wise Woman- Acts as a referral clinic for uninsured women with hyperlipidemia who need medical follow up. Referrals are from the Health department. BCCCP-Participates in the program for uninsured women for early detection of breast and cervical cancer. Accepts women from other BCCCP sites that need GYN follow up.	Accepts all referrals and those clients who qualify-Accepting qualified clients	Statistics tracked by the state	
Michigan State University (Berrien County)					
Maternal & Infant Health Advocacy Services (MIHAS)		MIHAS helps eligible women and infants receive prenatal care and infant care. An advocate who has received special training is assigned to work with a client until the infant's 1 st birthday. The advocate offers support and assists in identifying referral sources to meet individual needs such as: Medicaid, parenting education, nutrition resources, transportation and reinforcement of information given to the client by professional staff. The advocates urge clients toward self-sufficiency.			Ongoing
Planned Parenthood of Mid Michigan		Topics include but are not limited to contraception, sexually transmitted infections, how to talk to your children about sexuality, benefits of abstinence, puberty, responsible choices, healthy relationships, decision-making, etc... 269.926.2042			

Health Awareness and Improvement

Benton Harbor Street Ministries					
Teen MOPS		First time, low income mothers, teen mothers specifically. Provide counseling for teen mothers and childcare and a meal. Help to provide emotional support for young mothers, teach them self esteem and proper behavior.			
Agency/ Program Name	# of Years of Service in BH	Description of Services	Capacity of the program (to serve the community)	Evaluation (Quality of the program based upon assessment(s))	How long are the services expected to continue?
CARES of Southwest Michigan PO Box 8822 Benton Harbor, MI 49023 269.927.2437		Community AIDS Resource and Education Services (CARES). Offices in Kalamazoo and Benton Harbor.			
CARE Prevention	1988	HIV Counseling and Testing. Health Education/Risk Reduction.	1,000 high risk		Indefinite
CARES Support	1988 & 2002	Case management; Housing advocacy and Emergency housing assistance. 269.925.1234	100 persons with HIV	Client satisfaction survey – 92% were satisfied.	Indefinite
The Caring Network					
Teen Parent Program		An advocacy program headed by a social worker/case manager who assesses and identifies a plan of care utilizing programs already established such as MSS, ISS, WIC, Family Planning and MOST. The advocate is assigned up to 18 clients to assure access to care and services. Offers encouragement to the client to stay in school, obtain a GED or attend job training; attend child birth education and parenting classes; and not to become pregnant again after delivery. Goal: promote self-sufficiency. Provide transportation to appointments.			

<p>Individual, Family and Community Development</p> <p>960 Agard, Suite 12 Mercy Professional Center Benton Harbor, MI 49022 269.927.6011</p>	<p>April, 2003</p>	<p>To help individuals within a family unit, to set goals, and as a family unit help them to reach their goals, with the support of the family unit. The Agency helps individuals who are "STUCK" and need resources to help them to set goals like budgeting, parenting, communication, relationship management, health and lifestyle, or the area that they choose. The individuals and families will, in turn, help others set and reach their goals.</p> <p>Services include: Counseling; Exercise and Nutrition; Incurrigible Youth; Job Leads; Community Resources; and Literacy</p> <p>Work with each family for 1 year.</p>	<p>Working with 26 families</p>		<p>Ongoing (Depending upon funding)</p>
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Matrix for Prenatal and Postnatal Health Care Services

	Berrien County Health Department Nurse-Family Partnership (NFP) Program	Berrien County Intermediate School District Berrien County Even Start	Berrien County Council for Children 1,2,3,4 Parents	Berrien County Intermediate School District Special Education	InterCare Community Health Network Infant Support Services Program
Goals of Program / Service	Improve pregnancy outcomes, child health development, and families' economic self-sufficiency	Self-sufficiency, school readiness, and engaged parenting Family literacy; and adult, early childhood, and parent education	Teach parents age appropriate behavior, discipline, rules, development, and brain development	Access to general curriculum through accommodations and special instruction	To provide preventive services which are intended to address psychosocial, nutrition, and health education needs of infants at risk of infant mortality and morbidity in their first year of life
Target Population	First-time, low-income mothers	Undereducated (no high school diploma/GED), parents of young children (ages 0-8) in Berrien County	Parents of children ages 1 – 4 years	Children with disabilities	Medicaid and low-income families
Description of services	Parent and health education, personal development, family counseling, family planning, and career planning	Two sites providing education (GED prep or high school diploma), high quality childcare, and parent education	Classes are provided in neighborhoods that have community centers. The class is video-based with emphasis on forming a support group during the 3- week period. Childcare and snacks are provided.	Diagnostic and placement services for local school districts Central facilities for special populations	Nutrition, social work, nursing, parenting education, referral arrangements, and transportation
Eligibility Requirements	First-time, low-income mothers whose gestation is 16 – 24 weeks	Parent of a child ages 0-8, who needs a high school diploma or GED	Anyone can attend	Individual with a disability	Medicaid eligible (be at or below 185% of poverty) and have a risk factor
Length of time a participant is on the program	Approx: 2.5 years	Until the goals for self and family are met	Three - 1.5 hour sessions	0 to 26 years of age	Birth to 3 years old
Capacity	25 families per nurse	15 – 20 families per site	10 parents each series	No capacity	We service all infants that meet the criteria
Location of Services	Berrien County	Benton Harbor and Niles	Berrien County	Berrien County Intermediate School District Service Area	Benton Harbor, Berrien Springs, Baroda, Watervliet, Coloma, and Eau Claire
Does Your Organization Provide Transportation?	Yes, but not for the NFP program	Limited	Provide on-site classes to eliminate the barrier	Per Individual Education Plan (IEP) Yes	We provide transportation reimbursement for mileage and Dial-A Ride tokens. We also refer to HMO for transportation
# of Visits Per Participant	50-70 visits over 2.5 years	Follow school calendar (Sep. – May) with additional summer programming	N/A	Per IEP	9 + visits
Program Staff	Nurse supervisor and nurse	2 family literacy facilitators, 2 early childhood literacy facilitators, and child care staff	Class facilitator and 2 child care workers	Special education teachers, and occupational and physical therapist	Social worker, registered dietician and nurse, and program assistant

Health Awareness and Improvement

	Volunteer Center of Southwest Michigan Adult and Youth Volunteer Program	United Way of Southwest Michigan First Call For Help and SWMLINFO	Lakeland Family Clinic Family Planning	Lakeland Family Clinic Obstetrical Care	Lakeland Family Clinic Maternal Support Services Program
Goals of Program/Service	To mobilize people and resources to deliver creative solutions to community problems	Information and referral	Provide birth control/family planning services	Provide obstetrical care throughout pregnancy and postpartum	Reduce infant mortality Healthy mother, pregnancy, and baby
Target Population	Berrien and Cass County residents	All people in Berrien County	Women No limitations	Pregnant women	High-risk pregnant Medicaid recipients
Description of services	Matching volunteers with interests and issues in the area	Information and referral.	Provide birth control counseling and treatment	Prenatal care and office visits	Provide support services, childbirth and nutrition education, social work counseling, referral to community agencies, and assistance with transportation to medical appointments
Eligibility Requirements	Adults - 18 and older Youth - high school age and younger	No requirements	Community Choice, Medicaid, private insurance, sliding fee scale	Accept Medicaid, and private insurance	High-risk, low-income Medicaid recipients
Length of time a participant is on the program	One day - Ongoing		Not limited	Prenatal until postpartum	Pregnancy through 60 days postpartum
Capacity			Not limited		Not limited
Location of Services	Offices in St. Joseph and Niles	Berrien, Cass, and Van Buren Counties	Benton Harbor	Benton Harbor	Benton Harbor
Does Your Organization Provide Transportation?	No	No	No	If person is enrolled in the Maternal Support Services Program	Yes
# of Visits Per Participant	1		Not limited	Not limited	9 visits and 1 assessment at home or clinic
Program Staff	Intake program coordinators		Physician, certified nurse midwife, registered nurse, and licensed practical nurse	Physician, certified nurse midwife, registered nurse, and licensed practical nurse	Registered nurse, dietician, and social worker

Health Awareness and Improvement

	Family Resource Center Maternal Support Services (MSS) and Infant Support (ISS) Services	Child Death Review Team	Michigan State University Extension Maternal and Infant Health Advocacy Services (MIHAS) Program	Emergency Shelter Services, Inc. Family Homeless Shelter	Emergency Shelter Services, Inc. Transitional Assistance Program (TAP)
Goals of Program/Service	To provide a healthy start for mother and infant	Education Re: Prevention of child deaths	Educational Program with emphasis on prenatal and infant care for the purpose of reducing the infant mortality rate	Independent Housing	Independent living for 1 year
Target Population	Pregnant women and newborns	Berrien County population	Restricted income, pregnant, and/or have an infant one year or younger	Berrien County homeless families	Former shelter clients
Description of services	Providing prenatal care to women of childbearing age; medical, social work, and nutritional services; transportation assistance; and childbirth and childcare education. Home-based services are also provided.	Seminars, training, education, recommendations for policy and procedural changes	MIHAS clients are involved in the Expanded Food Nutrition and Education Program, prenatal education, Building Strong Families, and the Mother-to-Mother Support Program	Shelter and case management	Case management
Eligibility Requirements	Medicaid patients with risk factors	N/A	Live in Berrien County, pregnant, parent of an infant 1 year or younger, and have a maternal/infant outreach service need	Homeless	Successful shelter stay
Length of time a participant is on the program	MSS – Throughout pregnancy and postpartum period ISS – Up to one year	N/A	Varies per participant, can remain until the infant's first birthday	30 days	1 year
Capacity	Approximately 400 deliveries per year	N/A	150 participants		
Location of Services	Berrien County (South), Cass County, and Van Buren County	N/A	Berrien County	Benton Harbor	Berrien County
Does Your Organization Provide Transportation?	Yes	N/A	Yes, limited as the last resort for transport	No	No
# of Visits Per Participant	Up to 9 visits. Can have more if needed.	N/A	Minimal – once a month contact	1	As needed
Program Staff	Physician, nurse, dietician, and social worker	N/A	Extension educator, five program associates and one clerical position	Social worker	Social worker

Health Awareness and Improvement

	Berrien County Health Department Family Planning	Berrien County Health Department Women, Infant and Children(WIC)	Berrien County Health Department Maternal and Child Outreach Enrollment and Coordination Services	Safe Shelter, Inc.	Adventist Community Services Center
Goals of Program/Service	To provide women's reproductive health assessments and appropriate birth control methods for women of Berrien County	WIC is a supplemental food and nutrition program designed to influence lifetime nutrition and health behaviors in a targeted high risk population	To identify and assist eligible individuals to apply for maternal and child health insurance program	To provide safe housing to survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault	Provision of clothing, household goods, furniture, appliances, and food to those in need
Target Population	Women of childbearing age who reside in Berrien County	Pregnant women and children ages 0 – 5 years	Pregnant women and children ages 0 – 19 years	Women and children who reside in Berrien County	Low-income individuals or those in emergency situations
Description of services	Women's reproductive health assessments, birth control methods, and breast and cervical cancer screenings	Health status and nutrition assessments are completed by WIC certified staff (Registered Dietitians and Registered Nurses): referrals to appropriate health and social services; nutrition education and counseling. Coupons for basic food items such as milk, cheese, cereals, etc. are given to participants to redeem at local grocery stores.	Linking Berrien County residents with health insurance and appropriate health care services through outreach coordination with health care providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shelter • Case management • Outreach • Legal advocacy • Support groups 	Provision of emergency assistance to individuals and families
Eligibility Requirements	Income eligibility	Michigan resident, income requirements, and nutritional risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identified need for referrals • Income eligibility for insurance 	Domestic violence/sexual assault survivor	Referral from recognized agency, teacher, pastor or enrolled Andrews University student
Length of time a participant is on the program	Varies	Women: Varies. From pregnancy to one year after delivery. Children: Birth to 5 years old	45 days – 1 year	30 days	Limited due to nature of program
Capacity	Current target goal: 3,000 unduplicated visits	Current target caseload is 4,100 per month	Unlimited		N/A
Location of Services	Benton Harbor, Niles, and Three Oaks	Benton Harbor, Niles, Three Oaks	Benton Harbor, Niles, and Three Oaks	Confidential	Berrien Springs
Does Your Org. Provide Transportation?	No	No	No	Yes	No
# of Visits Per Participant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies • Depends on the need • Average 4-15 visits per year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Varies • Average approximately 6 visits per year 	As needed	N/A	Every 6 months for adults and 3 months for children
Program Staff	Nurse practitioner, nurse, lab technician, and office assistants	Nurse, registered dietician, and office assistant	Social worker and office assistant	Case manager, children's advocate, legal advocate, and outreach advocate	Director, social worker, staff, and volunteers

Health Awareness and Improvement

	Community Women's Health Center Obstetrical Care	Berrien County Health Department Substance Abuse Treatment Services (SATS)	Berrien County Intermediate School District	Pregnancy Care Center of Niles Diaper Bag Program	Riverwood Center Infant Mental Health Program
Goals of Program/Service	Provide pregnancy care throughout pregnancy and postpartum	To prevent and/or reduce the negative impact of alcohol/drug abuse and addiction and promote physical, mental and emotional well-being	Coordinate services for infant/toddlers among participating agencies	Education of girls	Nurturing relationships and environments to ensure a child's well-being and development
Target Population	Pregnant women	Pregnant women 13 years and older	0 to age 3 with an established condition or developmental delay	Young or uneducated women	Pregnant moms and children age 0-5
Description of services	Prenatal care, postnatal care, and office visits	Individual and group counseling focusing on education and changing negative thinking and behavior patterns. Urine screening is also available.	Coordinates special education, health, mental health services in natural environments	Nine classes to educate young mothers to care for their babies	Home-based parent education, outpatient psychiatric and therapeutic services, team approach to treatment planning and interventions
Eligibility Requirements	Accept Medicaid and private insurance	Berrien County resident with a drug/alcohol problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developmental Delay • Established condition 	First pregnancy and under 6 months of pregnancy	Berrien County resident
Length of time a participant is on the program	Prenatal until postpartum	1 day to 6 months	Identification until age 3	9 weeks minimum	6-8 weeks – 1 year It depends on the family need
Capacity	Unlimited	Unlimited	Unlimited	All women that fit the criteria	16+ families/clinician
Location of Services	Watervliet	Benton Harbor, Niles, and Three Oaks	Home and community services	Niles	Benton Harbor and Niles Conduct home visits in Berrien County
Does Your Organization Provide Transportation?	If person is enrolled in the Maternal Support Services Program	Yes	Assistance is available	No	Yes
# of Visits Per Participant	Unlimited	It varies, depending on the needs of the client	Varies	9 + visits	12-60 visits. It depends on family need
Program Staff	Physician, registered nurse, and licensed practical nurse	SATS Counselors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 service coordinators • 4 child find specialist • 3 infant/toddler teachers 	Educator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 Social Worker • 1 clinician <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Other clinical staff

POLICE COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Desired Vision for the Community

Build dialogue between community organizations, government officials, and community leaders to improve police community relations in Benton Harbor and to understand the consequences to the citizenry and law enforcement when this dialogue is lacking.

- Effect change in youth attitudes toward law enforcement, encouraging them to see officers as role models and mentors rather than the enemy
- Provide a one-stop focus (a community policing officer) for neighborhood residents to go to for help and services
- Identify and partner with existing residents' groups to create organized neighborhoods that have access to resources to care for their needs
- Foster greater parental involvement with schools and children
- Establish a trusting relationship between the Benton Harbor community and local law enforcement officials to ease residents' perceptions of unfairness and police perceptions of an unappreciative community
- Improve the lives of local Benton Harbor area residents by identifying individual human and social service needs and directing residents toward those services
- Decrease Benton Harbor area crime by establishing relationships that allow residents to trust law enforcement and be more willing to provide them with information they may have regarding criminal activity
- Break the "us" vs. "them" syndrome - a situation where residents believe law enforcement is there just to harass them and law enforcement begins to believe only criminals live in the area
- Improve the environment for the segment of the population hit especially hard: children and youth
- Increase the number of police and police presence in Benton Harbor
- Identify Benton Harbor as having exceptionally well-trained law enforcement and public service officers
- Improve education performance of local school children by allowing them to concentrate on in-school learning
- Highlight Benton Harbor in the media as a successful model for improving the quality of life for its residents through Community Policing programs

Challenges

In Benton Harbor, the issue of police community relations is a problem that has had significant and detrimental impact on relationships between the citizens of these communities and their law enforcement personnel. The continuing economic decline and social instability of Benton Harbor affects not only the city, but also the entire Berrien County. The challenges in the Benton Harbor quality of life negatively affect the entire region's ability to attract new, successful companies to provide needed jobs. When Benton Harbor makes the world news with photos reminiscent of war torn, devastated communities, regardless of exaggeration or journalistic slant, it sends a message about the entire region and the state.

City boundaries, school district boundaries, the river or county lines do not isolate "Benton Harbor" problems. Whatever problems affect Benton Harbor affect the entire State of Michigan. Every child who grows up in despair, drops out of school, becomes a crime victim or a criminal or both, is not just a lost child. That child is a lost piece of the future of our State.

Transforming the Community

Extreme poverty, low educational attainment levels, high unemployment, inadequate housing and a struggling educational system have led to crime rates that are more often than not, far above the national average. According to the 2001 Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Crime Reports, Benton Harbor City's crime level was worse than the national average in five of the seven Crime Index categories reported, including: murders, forcible rapes, aggravated assaults, burglaries and motor vehicle thefts.

After Benton Harbor was identified as the most violent city in Michigan (with a crime rate of 16.5 per 100 residents in 1997), federal, state, local, law enforcement agency intervention helped bring some stability back to Benton Harbor. Beginning early in 1997, Michigan State Police sent troopers into Benton Harbor to patrol the streets, train local law enforcement officers and enhance their ability to protect the community. The Drug Enforcement Agency also sent its Mobile Enforcement Team (MET) to pursue violent drug trafficking.

Inadequate Staffing

Area Benton Harbor law enforcement officials are understaffed to meet the needs of the residents. The number of police officers in the City of Benton Harbor is 1.27 officers per 1,000 residents, about half of the national norm of 2.5 police officers per 1,000 residents. The Benton Harbor Police department is budgeted for 17 police officers, although there are currently only 14 police officers employed, leaving three open positions that have not yet been filled. In addition, the police chief has accepted four letters of intent from officers who wish to leave the department, bringing the number of police officers to 10 in the near future.

To make matters worse, an increase in the number of calls for service asked of this shrinking police force leaves Benton Harbor Police little time for crime prevention. The department averages 1,200 calls a month in winter and 1,600 calls a month in the summer, and writes 400-600 reports per month. Since the start of the year, Benton Harbor has responded to more than 9,800 calls, compared to the District 5 Michigan State Police Post which has responded to about 5,800 calls.

Police Retention and Turnover

Inner-city neighborhood work experience and a low pay scale make many Benton Harbor officers prime targets to be recruited away to larger areas. This leaves the

department with not only vacant positions it must try to fill, but also a department that has a lack of experience in the neighborhood.

The Benton Harbor Police Department has been unable to retain officers in the department. In the 19 months since Samuel Harris became police chief of Benton Harbor, the department has suffered nearly a 50 percent turnover rate. Police Chief Harris hired eight of the current 14 officers in his department, and has had a difficult time filling three additional open positions.

The retention of experienced officers in the Benton Harbor Police Department is particularly troubling. Only 10 of the 14 police officers are certified to work alone, decreasing the amount of area law enforcement can effectively cover. In a dangerously high crime area where law enforcement experience can mean survival, eight of the officers have less than two years' experience.

Police Salaries

Attractive pay rates for police officers in other larger communities make it more enticing for police officers to leave the Benton Harbor Police Department. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics' 2000 Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates, the mean income of police and sheriff's patrol officers in Benton Harbor is \$34,780, compared to mean incomes of \$42,980 in the larger Kalamazoo-Battle Creek area and \$42,050 in the Lansing-East Lansing area.

The police chief would like to increase the entry-level salary of \$13.45 to \$15.00 to recruit experienced officers for this community. Currently, the police chief hires new recruits out of the academy who can earn a maximum of \$17.25, or \$35,880 after three years.

Opportunities

Develop a police-community relations Five Year Strategic Plan

- Strengthen police-community relations through “Commitment to Inclusion and Justice, Community Engagement Initiative to Improve Police Community Relations in Benton Harbor and Berrien County Michigan.”
- Police-community partnerships usually take root because of an actual or potential crime problem that threatens to undermine the community's quality of life. In this case, it is the threat of more civil unrest. It also reflects a desire of police to help solve the problems in the community, in lieu of acting as mere "enforcers."
- Collaborate with law enforcement leaders from the Benton Harbor – Berrien County to address the problem of police community relations and racial profiling.
- Sustain the Community Police Relations Coalition

Commitment has been obtained from law enforcement and community group participants that a leadership coalition – comprised of members from the initial stakeholder groups will continue to convene bi-weekly or monthly. This coalition will focus on promoting positive police community relations, trust building between law enforcement and civic leaders, and the education of the community and law enforcement personnel on citizen and police expectations. The broader, formal coalition includes representatives from the following groups:

- ACLU representing Southwest Michigan,
- NAACP (Benton Harbor Chapter),
- Faith Community Leadership
- Local, state and federal law enforcement agency representation
- Community leadership from Benton Harbor and the surrounding bordering townships in Berrien County

Support a Community Policing Program

Community policing is proactive, solution-based and essentially community driven. More than just policing, its major focus is resident involvement- particularly parental involvement in children's lives and their schools.

As a focal point for all community services, it requires local government, local school districts, law enforcement agencies and law-abiding citizens to work together to arrest offenders, prevent crime, solve ongoing social and educational problems and improve the overall quality of community life.

Organizations such as the Berrien County Health Department, the Berrien County Family Independence Agency, Benton Harbor Police Department and Lakeland Regional Health System have expressed their willingness to collaborate with each other, and existing resident groups to improve their community.

The philosophy of community policing forces both the community and local law enforcement into a new way of thinking about police service. It forces law enforcement to look at delivery of service from the customer's perspective: the resident. It also changes police and residents' thinking from "doing for people," to "doing with people."

Recommendations

- *Commitment to Inclusion and Justice: a Community Engagement Institute.* The goal of this initiative is to influence systemic and organizational change to improve overall relationships between law enforcement and community. This initiative will result in a successful collaboration among a variety of civil liberty, law enforcement, and community organizations who will partner and share resources to achieve improved police community relations

- Improve law enforcement practices among police officers in Benton Harbor and Benton Township with community agencies in Berrien County
- Develop a model for continued long-term collaboration and working together constructively as members of law, enforcement community agencies, and neighborhood residents

We must provide opportunities for individuals from multiple sectors to meet and collaborate on mechanisms for improving police community relations in Berrien County. We should also engage citizens from Benton Harbor and its township communities (representing all sectors of the community) in dialog sessions designed to provide education on policing practices, and opportunities to discuss strategies for action planning and implementing improved police community relations efforts throughout the community.

Taking these steps will help:

- Identify common goals among the stakeholders
- Enhance relationships between citizens, community agencies, and law enforcement agencies
- Improve law enforcement practices among police officers in Benton Harbor, and township community agencies in Berrien County
- Effect change in the knowledge base, attitudes, and behavior of law enforcement officers regarding police community relations through the education and informational opportunities it will create
- Improve awareness of fair and impartial application of police practices
- Reduce racial profiling in Benton Harbor and surrounding township communities
- Increase sensitivity regarding the impact that various police practices have on the community
- Influence systemic and organizational change to improve overall relationships between law enforcement and community
- Develop a successful collaboration among a variety of area wide civil liberty, law enforcement, and community organizations who will partner and share resources to achieve improved police community relations
- Residents of Benton Harbor improve leadership skills between high school youth and law enforcement officers through education and mentoring, as the foundation for relationship building in the community and potential future police officers recruited from the community. This will:
 - Develop sustainable working relationships with police and community beyond the Initiative's initial partnership
 - Improve knowledge and attitudes among police in Benton Harbor, through active involvement in the community via a strong community policing program
 - Increase participation in community conflict resolution programs
 - Support a strong community policing program for the City of Benton Harbor

- Increase individual community member support for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement through membership in NACOLE, a non profit National Association for Civilian Oversight of Law Enforcement

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Benton Harbor Area Schools
Berrien County Family Independence Agency
Berrien County Health Department
Children's Action Network
City and county human service agencies
Financial resources
Lakeland Regional Health System

DIVERSITY WITH INCLUSION

Desired Vision for the Community

There is a need for enhanced communications among persons of different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities. This will increase the chances of conflict resolution and collaboration between groups and factions within the Benton Harbor community as well as across geographic boundaries.

The City of Benton Harbor should foster an environment where all people are valued and respected. Our leaders and residents must be dedicated to a safe, inclusive and welcoming environment for newcomers – be they businesses, members of the gay lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) community, retirees, or first-time homeowners. Improving the city's perception will increase the number of "creative class" folks who live or work in the city. The "creative class" includes those high-skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and young professionals who utilize creative processes in their work and literally have the ability to live wherever they choose. Leadership and residents must create an inclusive, participatory environment, and engage in partnerships with a multitude of organizations and individuals.

Challenges

Years of misunderstanding, disparate opportunities, and physical separation have led to an environment of mistrust, hostility, prejudice and fear within Benton Harbor and the surrounding communities. The City of Benton Harbor and its neighboring communities are faced with the task of learning to communicate across their differences in order to improve the social and economic outlook of each municipality and, thereby, the entire region.

Many businesses, organizations, and residents provide support to the Twin Cities region and set the standard for civic involvement and community-building. Several arts and cultural organizations are positioned to connect people across differences, and there are good opportunities for lifelong learning in an inclusive environment. However, the infrastructure necessary for economic vitality falls short of the requirements of communities where businesses flourish and people can find good jobs.

The City of Benton Harbor has experienced whirlwind population loss. Since 1970, the City has lost nearly a third of its residents. The residents who remain are not a diverse group – more than 90 percent are African-American; less than 5 percent are foreign-born; less than one percent are same-sex couples; less than 20 percent have a four-year college degree or higher; and only 12 percent are between the ages of 25 and 34. In addition, the disparity between black residents and other races points to a wide gulf of culture and economic opportunities. This disparity amplifies issues of racism and class inequality in the city and surrounding areas.

Benton Harbor's economic decline has unfolded over more than three decades. More than 40 percent of residents and 53 percent of children live in poverty. The median income is \$17,471, less than half the median income of Berrien County.

In addition, there is an uneven level of quality among educational systems, with students who fit a narrow profile able to succeed and many others falling through the cracks. Opportunities for adult education are plentiful in the area, but access is limited for some due to transportation, childcare, tuition, and scheduling difficulties.

Opportunities

There are several groups that provide sources of diversity and cultural support, including Andrews University, Calling All Colors, Council for World-Class Communities (CWCC), Healing Racism, Lake Michigan College, and the Race Relations Council. There are also several businesses and government agencies that have embraced the altruistic and business aspects of diversity and inclusion as well, including the Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR).

In fact, Benton Harbor and the surrounding communities are rich in assets. Specifically, Benton Harbor possesses caring residents, strong existing organizations and associations, and recent downtown revitalization. Many people are willing to seek solutions, but they are not united around a common strategy. The community as a whole is not united around a common understanding of what is meant by the phrase "diversity with inclusion."

The Diversity with Inclusion subcommittee's overarching vision is to create a network of diverse and inclusive-minded individuals and organizations within the Benton Harbor community to leverage relationships and resources for the betterment of the city and entire region. We have the ability to do this by providing workshops and learning experiences that enhance the understanding of different cultures, ethnicities, abilities, sexual orientations, philosophies, faith traditions, educational backgrounds, and socio-economic groups. Specifically, we must provide accessible learning workshops for the residents of Benton Harbor and offer a foundation that builds cultural awareness esteem and, at the same time, provides an opportunity for further understanding of diversity with inclusion.

Recommendations

➤ **Community-Wide Diversity Training**

Because of disparities that exist within the Benton Harbor community, the Diversity with Inclusion subcommittee of the Governor's Task Force thought it extremely important to offer courses and workshops that will build a foundation of cultural heritage and self esteem while also breaking down the internal and external damages of racism. Healing Racism workshops will offer interpersonal education when it comes to dealing with the negative effects of racism. These workshops are already offered in the community and offer a natural opportunity for learning. Classes are ongoing and additional workshops could be added to accommodate more participants.

We have also had discussions with the Evangelical Lutheran Churches Association regarding a partnership to conduct a train-the-trainer workshop on dismantling systemic racism. This program will allow approximately 40 individuals to participate in a workshop designed to help people develop strategies that will begin a collaborative process of dismantling systemic racism on different levels. Individuals would be selected with the assistance of Citizens for Progressive Change and local ministers. The workshop could be conducted before the end of 2003 and at the latest, first quarter of 2004.

The Michigan Department of Civil Rights (MDCR) has also played an integral role in helping us formulate localized learning opportunities. The MDCR has agreed to conduct a workshop they currently sponsor called Building Cultural Competency. The objectives of the workshop include discussions around the five major cultural groups that exist in America. The workshop delves into dispelling myths and stereotypes about different groups and also addresses multi-cultural communication protocols. A heavy emphasis will be placed on recruiting young adults 18-29 to participate in these education sessions. These sessions will be offered as soon as first quarter of 2004.

Using Community Wide Diversity Training (CWDT) to help residents respect each other as human beings is a top priority. Creating the learning opportunities to see our differences as strengths that open opportunities for everyone to grow and participate fully – rather than seeing them as threats – will help our whole area flourish. By training area employees to be diversity-with-inclusion facilitators, a foundational core of trainers can be built to sustain continued diversity-with-inclusion learning. We will not only be providing residents with the tools they need to function in their work environments, but also at home and in their communities. The CWDT is an ongoing program provided by the Council for World-Class Communities. Over 80 area residents from various places of employment have participated in the program. The goal is to train 200 facilitators to go back to their places of employment and the community at large and deliver the diversity with inclusion modules.

➤ Law Enforcement Diversity Training

Our second recommendation is to provide law-enforcement diversity-with-inclusion training for the Benton Harbor and Benton Township police departments as well as the Berrien County Sheriff's Department, the Michigan State Police, St. Joseph, St. Joseph Township, and Lincoln Township police agencies. Such training provides officers the ability to broaden and enhance their skills relative to dealing with issues of diversity and inclusion. It also helps improve police-community relations as well as relations among officers. Law-enforcement diversity training helps promote self-sufficiency among area police officers and promotes sensitivity and cooperation among police forces across our community.

The program will serve as a follow-up to the diversity-with-inclusion training that took place this past summer sponsored by CWCC in which 243 law enforcement representatives participated. The program will consist of a two to three day workshop that will result in 50-60 agents being trained facilitators within their departments. This will allow year-round education to take place within each department. Training will be done in partnership with all of the above-mentioned agencies, CWCC and the consulting firm of Excel Force during the summer of 2004.

➤ Civil Rights Health Assessment

A community that has a passion for ensuring the civil rights of all people should constantly take stock of such quality of life issues as employment, housing, health, recreation, public safety, public works and education. The community should work diligently at trying to empower members of all backgrounds and lifestyles.

Civil Rights Health: A Community Based Model is designed to help communities recognize their civil rights challenges and develop strategies to overcome them. Civil rights challenges are present to varying degrees in every community. The most effective means to meet these challenges is through ongoing collaborative efforts. A Civil Rights Health Assessment would provide a meaningful non-judgmental assessment that would allow the community to systematically discern the state of civil rights health.

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Citizens for Progressive Change
 Cornerstone Alliance
 Council for World-Class Communities
 Evangelical Lutheran Churches Association
 Healing Racism Institute
 Michigan Department of Civil Rights
 Race Relations Council
 Residents of Benton Harbor

PARENTING AND FAMILY

Desired Vision for the Community

The Parenting and Family group's vision for Benton Harbor is to make it a dynamic community where children have the opportunity to become socially and morally responsible citizens. The community should lift up the value of married two-parent households as a strong foundation, while empowering all parents to become more effective in promoting those values which give life to our community, and provide adequate training in moral values, parental values, and practical job skills.

Challenges

The "Kid's Count Special Report" defines high-risk families as those meeting three out of the following four criteria:

- Parents with income below the poverty level
- Single-parent headed families
- Parent(s) unemployed
- Household headed by person without a high school education

Benton Harbor families are at serious risk. Berrien County, with a population of 168,000, ranks in the top 50 percent of Michigan counties for number of high-risk families. Forty percent of the County's high-risk families reside in Benton Harbor. Twenty-five percent of the Benton Harbor population is unemployed (2001 figures) and 39.5 percent of parents lack a high school diploma (2000 U.S. Census). At 17.9 percent, Benton Harbor ranks highest in the State for percentage of families with children 18 and under (source: Michigan Family Forum, Promoting Fatherhood in Michigan, 2003). The U.S. Census for 2000 noted that 52 percent of all families with children under 18 who have incomes below the poverty level are headed by a single woman.

In some parts of the Benton Harbor African American community, long-term social and economic hardships have raised the stress level to the boiling point. This stress becomes catastrophic for individuals who lack the family structures and personal values to withstand it, and who in turn express this in ways that are damaging to the community.

The elders in our community, who play a crucial role in communicating values and parenting skills to subsequent generations, are themselves struggling to survive due to cuts in programs providing elder care (such as nutritious meals, home-bound meals, visiting nurses, and prescription drug aid). Because of all this, parents lack the skills and values to pass on so their children can thrive, become mature and responsible, and advance their community.

Any survey of pre-colonial African literature informs one that family life was a central feature of both community and national life. This deep sense of kinship with all it implies has become one of the strongest forces in traditional African life. This sense of kinship

controls social relations between people in a given community, governs marital customs and regulations, and determines the behavior of one individual toward another. Out of this strong kinship have emerged certain philosophical principles, which have guided family life – humanitarianism, mutual aid, cooperation and community participation. A strong sense of family is one of the basic values that African Americans brought with them to this country and are in danger of losing.

Many African Americans in Benton Harbor and surrounding areas are living in survival mode. These economically-challenged parents see as their chief responsibilities in raising their children to: feed them, clothe them, and keep a roof over their heads. The effort necessary to meet these goals alone leaves them feeling that there is little or no time for deeper involvement with their children.

The challenge is to help African American families, and the community, restore those core values which give life and strength to families:

- commitment to marriage and family
- personal and civic responsibility
- moral values
- the value of education

We need to find ways to support the well being of our elders who contribute so much to those core values and who often take on the responsibilities of parenting. In order for individuals and the Benton Harbor community to thrive, the value of entrepreneurship must also be encouraged within families, along with those values which support it, for example, perseverance, a work ethic, self-discipline, and frugality.

Opportunities

- Utilize an Andrews University “Family and Parenting Needs Survey” to measure issues related to parenting and values
- Consider working with active programs addressing these issues in other cities
- Support the presence in Benton Harbor of the “We Can Make a Difference, Parenting For Prevention” organization which provides culturally based parenting programs
- Support the Senior Nutrition Service, Inc., which provides meal services to meet the dietary needs of area seniors
- Make available under-utilized community buildings to house programs, including the public library, Bobo Brazil Center, Charles Grey Recreation Center, Family Investment Center, and the Boys and Girls Club
- Establish a better working relationship between the community and the Family Independence Agency (FIA)
- Support workforce development programs

Recommendations

- Support and expand parenting classes/support services
- Provide parents with opportunities to learn and share values that define the African American strengths that enabled us to survive through very difficult times
- Increase access to transportation
- Provide information to parents on proper nutrition for their children
- Support and expand senior nutrition meal services
- Expand parental access to child care
- Support teen job training
- Support youth mentoring programs, such as Males-to-Mind and the newly created one sponsored by the local alumni chapter of the Kappa Alpha Psi Fraternity at the C. Bassett Brown Youth Center
- Increase family counseling and parental coaching
- Create training and work opportunities and help parents move from welfare to work
- Increase high-risk parents' knowledge and use of positive discipline methods
- Increase high-risk parents' and children's knowledge of and access to community services
- Begin the process of formalizing a Black Family Institute similar to the one in Detroit

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Benton Harbor Area Schools
Benton Township Housing Commission
Berrien County Council for Children
Berrien County Family Court
Berrien County Health Department
Berrien County Intermediate School District
Capstone Center
Harbor Harvest Urban Ministers
Individual Family and Community Development
Michigan Family Independent Agency (FIA)
Michigan State University Extension
Mr. G's Transportation
Peace Temple United Methodist Church
Progressive Missionary Baptist Church
Riverwood Mental Health Center

CRIMINAL JUSTICE

Desired Vision for the Community

Benton Harbor residents will be treated fairly and equally in the Berrien County Criminal Justice System. Working together with law enforcement, Benton Harbor citizens will improve their relationship with local criminal justice officials.

Challenges

Establish a Magistrate, and eventually a District Court in Benton Harbor

The primary purpose is to eliminate alleged racial disparities that exist inside the Berrien County Justice System. Today the perception from some Benton Harbor residents is that the color of a person's skin is a better indicator of what kind of plea bargain is offered and the sentence length imposed.

The challenge with this proposal is the reality that the Michigan Supreme Court, not the executive or legislative branches, has control of all Michigan courts, with broad grants of constitutional authority to make all decisions short of removal of judges.

Improvement of the Indigent Defense System

Another challenge is a perception that Benton Harbor residents who require a court-appointed attorney do not get effective counsel. Benton Harbor residents are allegedly encouraged to plead guilty at an alarming rate, and do not receive counsel prior to their scheduled hearing. The indigent defense contracts have been renewed and let with the recommendation of the chief and judges of the court from which the contracts originate. Private attorneys who defend indigent clients on a part-time basis bid annual fees with three-year term contracts. Some contracts have been in existence for nearly 30 years. There are very few minority public defenders and none have offices located in Benton Harbor. Court-appointed attorneys have limited resources compared to the prosecutors such as investigators, access to court records, and a sufficient hourly rate to cover trial cost, or adequate professional compensation. An additional challenge is the fact that the community has not identified sustainable funding for this goal.

Establishment of a Citizens' Complaint Review and Oversight Board

There is also a perception that Benton Harbor residents experience injustices which go unheard within the criminal justice system. There are no local citizens' committees to review complaints against the police, defense attorneys, prosecutors, or judges.

While the Attorney Grievance Commission hears complaints about attorneys, and while the Judicial Tenure Commission oversees judicial complaints, there is no recognized outlet for complaints against police officials.

Increase Minority Representation in Jury Selection

Minority jurors are underrepresented in felony trials eliciting the perception that Benton Harbor residents are not receiving a trial by a “jury of their peers,” as reported by the State Auditor General report. The report stated, “The questionnaire return rate for Benton Harbor appears to be significantly lower than other communities in Berrien County.” A challenge remains to identify a sustainable funding source for this recommendation.

Recommendations

➤ *Establish a Magistrate and eventually a District Court in Benton Harbor*

Provide an atmosphere in which citizens can feel that they are being judged by their own community. It would create a system that establishes a cooperative partnership among probation, law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies that focus on public safety and the related issue of perceived racial disparities inside the Berrien County Justice System and reconnecting the citizens and community to the Berrien County Courthouse.

➤ *Restore a full District Court to the City of Benton Harbor with either a sitting judge or rotating judge system*

Berrien County will have to work with the State Supreme Court to achieve this recommendation.

➤ *Improvement of the Indigent Defense System*

Create a pilot indigent defender's office modeled after the Kent County defender's office. This office would initially employ at least two full-time defense attorneys, one full-time investigator, and one administrator. It would ultimately grow to assume at least 25 percent of the county's indigent defense caseload. The office should ideally be located in Benton Harbor. A Board of Directors will oversee the office and attorneys will adhere to a set of public defense standards or the 11 Principles of Public Defense from the Michigan State Bar Public Defense Task Force.

Judges and court administrators should no longer be involved in the process of recommending attorneys for indigent defense contracts. Statewide recruitment of indigent defense attorneys should occur rather than the current regionalized solicitation of attorneys in local newspapers and through the Berrien County Bar Association.

➤ *Establish A Citizens' Complaint Review and Oversight Board*

Establish a pilot Citizen's Complaint Review & Oversight Board. This board will document, process, and make recommendations to the appropriate county or court-controlled agencies to address citizen complaints within the system.

If modeled after the Kalamazoo Citizen Oversight Board, it will clarify, facilitate, monitor, and enhance communication and legal procedures between the community and the criminal justice system. Continued monitoring by volunteers and well-documented transcripts of problematic cases in the court system will enhance the credibility of this board.

Creation of this board will result in citizens' complaints being heard and responded to. A challenge, however, is that there is no identified source of funding for this recommendation. Critical stakeholders like the county courts, police officials, and city government need to be contacted and actively participate in this program for it to be successful.

➤ *Increase Minority Representation in Jury Selection*

We must develop a campaign within the Benton Harbor community regarding the importance of accepting jury duty. We believe that jury board members should be actively and continuously involved in finding ways to improve the jury system. Recommendations for members to the jury board should be sought from the Benton Harbor area.

➤ *Juvenile Justice Reform*

We must explore the feasibility of adopting a juvenile justice system similar to the Wayne County Care Management Organizational System. This juvenile justice system allows adjudicated youth to be remanded by the prosecutor and the courts to be wards of the county, and come under the care of a community-based care management organization. This model keeps juveniles in their community and reduces overall incarceration costs.

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

American Civil Liberties Union (A.C.L.U.)
 Berrien County Bar Association
 Berrien County Circuit Court
 Berrien County Commissioners
 City of Benton Harbor
 Michigan Supreme Court

RECREATION, ARTS, AND CULTURE

Desired Vision for the Community

Provide recreational, arts and cultural opportunities for youth and adults. This goal will help develop physical and creative abilities that are necessary for effective lifelong physical, educational, and cultural activities.

Challenge

There is a lack of advocacy and support for recreation, arts, and culture.

Opportunity

We can satisfy an unmet need through programming designed to meet community needs.

Recommendations

- Create a Recreation, Arts and Culture After School Programs committee
- Identify and secure immediate funding for recreation, arts and cultural programs in Benton Harbor
- Identify existing recreation, arts and cultural programs which serve the citizens of Benton Harbor, and create a database of these activities and make it accessible to the public
- Re-institute the Department of Recreation
- Address the lack of transportation to after school activities
- Respond to the programming priorities of Benton Harbor Middle and High School youth, including indoor activities, dance, music, teen dances, indoor games, studio recording video/film making, outdoor activities (basketball, football, skating park/roller blade, tennis and an activity park with go-carts, batting cage, archery and miniature golf)

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Benton Harbor Area Schools
City of Benton Harbor
Michigan Council for the Arts and Cultural Affairs

COMMUNICATIONS

Desired Vision for the Community

To enhance the flow of information among citizens, government agencies, organizations and businesses within the community

- To communicate through twenty-first century technology
- To create an avenue where citizens' opinions and ideas are the driving force behind decision-making
- To provide greater access to the *Benton Spirit* newspaper to provide community-centered information and programming. The *Benton Spirit's* mission to proactively assist in the total development of Benton Harbor supports recommendations listed throughout this report

Challenges

Identify non-traditional communication methods to reach Benton Harbor residents

Just as communication was the key goal of the Governor's Task Force, it is also the key ingredient in the formula to allow the citizens of Benton Harbor to pick themselves up out of frustration and despair.

The basis for this priority stems from the persistence of unfavorable community statistics, the apparent need for new and innovative ideas and the results from a citywide, door to door survey. The results indicated the following: 80 percent of the residents could not identify any mechanism to learn about community issues, did not know how to access services available to them through area agencies, and had never participated in any type of community planning.

A survey conducted by the Community Technology Center of the Benton Harbor African Arts & Culture Council concluded that less than ten percent of the households in Benton Harbor have access to the Internet from home.

Opportunities

Some case studies by the National Telecommunications and Information Administration show a number of significant impacts and opportunities when a community maximizes the use of its public access channel:

- Higher levels of education attainment through distance learning
- Increased participation in civic and community affairs
- More responsive government
- Greater individual expression and diversity
- The community access channel becomes the media outlet of choice for community stakeholders

There are numerous reports that show information technology as a catalyst for change. Research demonstrates that opportunities to access information through the Internet have been the biggest source of change in low/moderate communities.

Recommendations

- Increase the capacity of the community access channel by pursuing a capacity building grant from stakeholders, negotiating a firm franchise fee with a new cable provider when the current agreement expires in 2006, and generate revenue from production fees and program sponsors
- Connect the Benton Harbor community to the information super highway (“bridge the digital divide”)
- Work with the *Benton Spirit* newspaper to disseminate positive information about community events and programs in Benton Harbor

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Benton Spirit
Berrien County
City of Benton Harbor
Community Agencies
Cornerstone Alliance

FAITH BASED COMMUNITY

Desired Vision for the Community

The Faith Based workgroup wants to realize progressive change in the Benton Harbor community. Our desired vision includes a community where affordable housing exists, residents have access to credit, realize the American Dream of home ownership, and where access to better jobs, job training, and economic wealth are not constrained by barriers. The Faith Community will work to build an effective Consortium that models effective leadership and demonstrates the value and strength of collaborations. Through outreach efforts, the social needs of the community can be addressed, as well as the spiritual needs.

Faith based organizations are great assets in the Benton Harbor community. These churches and ministries are often located in neighborhoods and fulfill a variety of human services needs to families and individuals who often fall through the cracks of our systems, especially at-risk youth. Faith-based organizations, while addressing human service needs, also address the needs of the soul. Governor Granholm challenged area ministers to take a more proactive role in community involvement. She specifically challenged them to lead their congregations in youth mentoring and volunteerism through Habitat for Humanity.

Challenges

As the Economic Development section of this report demonstrates, there are a number of socio-economic challenges facing Benton Harbor residents. According to the U.S. Census data (2000), Benton Harbor has aging and deteriorating housing stock, yet households pay a significant portion of their income on rent.

In the Woodstock Institute's 1999 study, "An Analysis of Residential Lending Patterns in Benton Harbor and St. Joseph, Michigan," by Daniel Immergluck and Marti Wiles, it highlighted a disparity between St. Joseph and Benton Harbor and a high volume of sub prime refinance loans being made in Benton Harbor.

The report's most striking finding is the dominance of sub-prime refinance lending in Benton Harbor. Sub-prime loans are designed for borrowers with poor credit histories and tend to be substantially more expensive than conventional loans. Sub-prime lenders account for 81 percent of the refinance applications in Benton Harbor and originate 64 percent of the refinance loans. Comparable figures for St. Joseph are 21 percent of applications and 13 percent of loans. Some sub-prime lenders have been found to engage in "predatory" lending practices, including encouraging overly-frequent refinancing and charging excessive fees, which can lead to or exacerbate foreclosures, housing abandonment, and losses in family net worth.

One reason that sub-prime lenders may be so dominant in the refinance market is that they face little competition from conventional lenders, which tend to focus their efforts on higher-income, non-minority areas. The report shows that this is especially a problem in the Benton Harbor-St. Joseph area. Together, the four most active refinance lenders in St. Joseph, none of which are sub-prime lenders, have a market share in St. Joseph that is approximately four times their share of refinance loans in Benton Harbor.

Opportunities

The Faith Based workgroup spearheaded the development of a collaborative effort among 12 churches in the Benton Harbor community. This consortium will be an integral part in building the community, by tearing down the barriers which have come to separate the community and will demonstrate the potential for success when people working together.

Churches participating in this collaboration are in close proximity to each other. Each church will focus on the neighborhood around their locations in working collaboratively to address the affordable housing needs of the total targeted area.

The Faith Consortiums Second Outreach Ministry will assist families in the community with their common needs, such as food and rent. Programs will include: volunteerism, after-school youth mentoring such as Mentor Michigan and Harbor Habitat for Humanity Church builds.

After School Youth Mentoring - Pair congregation members with at-risk youth for one-on-one mentoring sessions, and group activities. The intent of this outreach is to provide a positive alternative to youth in their neighborhoods, and encourage them to excel in academics. Tutorial support will be provided by a team of volunteers, and supervised by a certified teacher.

The twelve church sites will be safe havens for area youth to participate in positive programs and after-school activities. Transportation to and from the church sites will be provided. Mentors will build a relationship with youth; support them in developing needed life skills and aid them in accessing needed resources.

Habitat for Humanity Volunteer Program: Harbor Habitat for Humanity is a local member of Habitat International. The local chapter has targeted the Benton Harbor and Benton Township areas for housing construction. Often, it lacks a significant volume of volunteers from the Benton Harbor area. The twelve churches want to encourage volunteerism by their church members in the greater community, by helping to coordinate volunteers for Harbor Habitat, particularly for Church Builds. Church Builds brings area churches together to collectively work on the construction of single-family homes. It also creates an avenue for building relationships between diverse groups of people as they work on a common goal.

Recommendations

- The group will pattern a housing construction/rehabilitation partnership program after one that is currently operating in Muskegon, Michigan by Trinity Village Non-Profit Housing. The partnership will be between Trinity Village Non-Profit Housing Corporation (TVNHC) of Muskegon, a developer, and the Benton Harbor Faith Community (the twelve designated churches). We will implement an employment and training program, also modeled after TVNHC's Muskegon model.
- The Faith Consortium will meet with area lending institutes and discuss ways in which they can work with conventional lenders to increase access to affordable mortgage financing.
- Faith leaders will work to manifest the concept that “no one will be left behind” with the creation of an outreach ministry that addresses the social service and spiritual needs of the community. The initiative will include a pre-apprenticeship training program targeting young men and women ages 19-35 who have not been successful in the traditional educational/vocational environment, and who have not been able to compete for local jobs in the trades. These individuals are generally locked out of this industry, because they may lack education certification or human relation skills that focus on interpersonal relationships and workplace productivity - teamwork, conflict management, communication skills and critical thinking. They may face personal challenges, including substance abuse, poor work histories, transience, unstable living arrangements, and histories of incarceration.

The Pre-Apprenticeship Training Program Initiative is a nationally accredited curriculum developed by the National Center for Construction Education and Research (NCCER) in response to the training needs of construction and maintenance industries. It is one of many in the NCCER's standardized craft training program. The NCCER is a nonprofit educational entity affiliated with the University of Florida and supported by many industry and craft associates. Upon successful completion of training with an accredited sponsor, trainees receive an industry-recognized certificate and transcript from NCCER.

Key Stakeholders Needed to Achieve Desired Results

Faith Based Organizations
 Habitat for Humanity
 Lending Institutions
 Labor Organizations
 Mentor Michigan
 Michigan State Housing Development Authority
 Michigan Works!
 Trinity Village Nonprofit Housing Corporation

CONCLUSION

Recommendations

The recommendations in this report are meant to address some of the most persistent challenges facing the Benton Harbor area community. These proposals reflect the input of area residents, suggestions from key stakeholders, and the advice of public officials. Some of the recommendations in this report can be accomplished in the short-term. Most of the proposals will require long-term strategies for implementation. This important work requires the involvement of local residents and creative partnerships among various community organizations. Members of the community need to develop sustainable strategies for implementing these recommendations, and identify the public and private resources necessary to achieve these goals.

The Governor's Benton Harbor Task Force worked closely with the Citizens for Progressive Change (CPC) work groups to develop the recommendations in this report. These work groups identified the long-term challenges facing the community and sought public input on potential solutions. The report contains many key findings:

Economic Development

- Comprehensive job development strategies must be implemented in the Benton Harbor area
- The Benton Harbor community should take advantage of its unique natural features to develop a comprehensive tourism plan for the area
- Coordinated workforce development strategies must be identified and implemented, including a summer youth work program
- Establish greater access to capital through the possible creation of a revolving loan fund
- Eradicate substandard housing in Benton Harbor by 2025 through various community and governmental efforts

Education

- Reducing the high school drop-out rate in Benton Harbor is central to improving the life chances of area youth
- The Benton Harbor community must focus attention on early childhood care and education and develop effective programs through partnerships with the State and educational organizations
- Transportation barriers need to be eliminated in order to maximize the ability of students to participate in after-school programs
- Benton Harbor Area Schools should examine the physical infrastructure of school buildings and direct the recently passed millage to those schools in the most need
- Benton Harbor Area Schools should examine the technology needs of the schools and develop solid technology plans that will allow the district to participate in programs such as the statewide Freedom to Learn initiative

Health Awareness and Improvement

- Health care professionals and local leaders must work on increasing Benton Harbor area residents' access to quality affordable health care
- Educational efforts must be undertaken with parents in Benton Harbor to reduce infant mortality
- Educational efforts must be undertaken in the community to educate the public about lead poisoning and ways to protect families against its dangerous effects

Police-Community Relations

- Staffing and retention must be improved in the Benton Harbor Police Department
- The Community Police Relations coalition must be sustained through local collaboration in the Benton Harbor area
- Community policing should be instituted in Benton Harbor with a focus on awareness of problems in the community

Diversity with Inclusion

- Community-wide diversity training must be provided in the Benton Harbor area to teach everyone in the community about the importance of understanding and respecting each other's differences
- Law enforcement diversity training must be provided to Benton Harbor area police agencies to increase law enforcement awareness and sensitivity to differences within the community
- The Civil Rights Health Assessment developed by the Michigan Department of Civil Rights, should be conducted in the Benton Harbor area community to provide a meaningful non-judgmental assessment of the state of civil rights in the community and on-going challenges

Parenting and Family

- The community must support and expand parenting classes and support services
- Leaders in the community must increase high-risk families' knowledge of and access to vital community services
- Parental access to child care must be expanded

Criminal Justice

- The Benton Harbor Community will work with local officials and the Michigan Supreme Court toward the establishment of a Magistrate and possible future District Court in Benton Harbor to respond to citizen perceptions about the current Criminal Justice System
- The Benton Harbor Community will work toward reform in their indigent defense system including creation of a pilot indigent defender's office

- The Benton Harbor Community will work toward the creation of a Citizens' Complaint Review and Oversight Board modeled after the Kalamazoo Oversight Board which allows citizen input on handling of complaints related to criminal justice system
- The Benton Harbor Community must work internally to increase community response to jury duty notification, and thus allow for greater diversity in the jury selection of Berrien County juries
- The Benton Harbor Community should explore the feasibility of adopting a juvenile justice system that encourages community-based care management for adjudicated youth

Recreation, Arts and Culture

- Create a Recreation, Arts and Culture After-school Programs committee in Benton Harbor to focus on developing viable recreation programs in the area
- Identify existing recreation, arts and cultural programs which serve the citizens of Benton Harbor, and create a database of these activities to make accessible to the community

Communications

- Increase the capacity of the community access channel in Benton Harbor
- Connect the Benton Harbor Community to the Internet to bridge the existing digital divide
- Take advantage of community publications to increase awareness of positive news and events in Benton Harbor

Faith Based Community

- Faith leaders in Benton Harbor should develop a housing construction/rehabilitation program
- The Faith Consortium in Benton Harbor should meet with area lending institutes and discuss ways in which they can work with conventional lenders to increase access to affordable mortgage financing.
- Faith leaders in Benton Harbor should create an outreach ministry that focuses on, but is not limited to, mentoring and volunteerism in cooperation with Harbor Habitat for Humanity

Next Steps

At its final meeting on October 14, 2003, the Governor's Benton Harbor Task Force voted unanimously to establish a permanent CPC committee to continue the important work of the Task Force. The CPC leadership structure includes Rev. James Atterberry as chair, and Sandra Dudley and Rev. Steven McCoy as vice-chairs. Greg Roberts will serve as the liaison between the Governor's Office and the CPC. This permanently-established group will work to implement the recommendations contained in this report.

Over the long-term, the CPC will identify continuing challenges facing the community and proposals to address them.

The official responsibilities of the Task Force are completed with the submission of this report, but the Benton Harbor Community is just beginning its work. Just as the Task Force required broad-based participation from the community to do its work, so too does the CPC as it moves forward with its responsibilities. The CPC cannot and should not work alone; it requires the entire community to do its work effectively. To move the Benton Harbor Community forward, true partnerships must be formed between the CPC and long-established community organizations and governmental entities in the area, including the Council for World Class Communities (CWCC), United Way, City of Benton Harbor, Berrien County, Lake Michigan College, the Family Independence Agency (FIA), Southwest Michigan Ministerial Alliance, Cornerstone Alliance, The Neighborhood Information and Sharing Exchange (NISE), and many others. Most importantly, local residents must participate in the task of moving the community to the next step; indeed, their participation in this effort is indispensable. Now that the Task Force has begun the job of moving the Benton Harbor area forward, the Community must continue this work.