TOWN HALL SUMMARY

Albany Public Library
Washington Avenue Branch

May 22, 2017
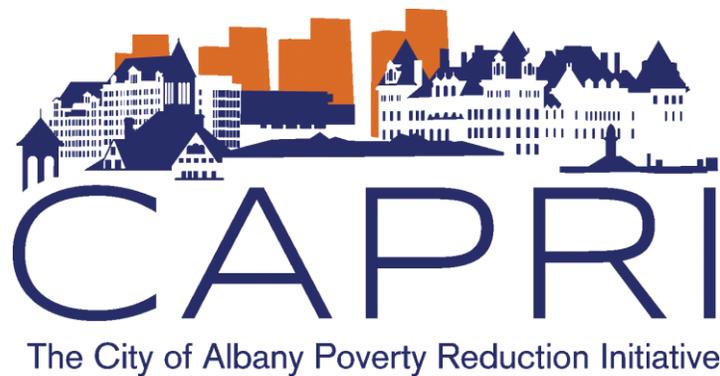
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Town Hall Meeting Objective

The CAPRI initiative can only be successful if we listen to our community. The Town Hall Meetings bring together City of Albany residents impacted by poverty and community stakeholders serving our community to discuss the challenges and barriers those living in poverty face. Their expertise and informed opinions will help guide CAPRI to create meaningful and sustainable solutions that positively impact our community.

Head of Household/Family Group

Question 1: Why do you think some young people are not working?

Two young men that joined the group began the conversation agreed that many young people are not working due to standard age requirements and the absence of experience. They both expressed that if teens at certain ages were eligible to work, it would consequently ease the cost burdens within their homes. Because so many teens are disqualified from working, they have chosen unfortunate alternatives that will supply "quick money." The majority of the group also agreed that discrimination played a major role in being hired and that the stigma that follows African American youth impacts the hiring process. A middle-aged woman, seated with her husband, also suggested that family structure also plays a role in the low employment numbers pertaining to youth. She stated that there is a systematic agenda that is breaking up families; more specifically, that the agenda is removing the head of the household (men). She also stated that Islamic families like hers thrive from a structured household. A woman in the group by the name of Evelyn stated that there is a lack of influence and resources within the community. The group agreed that the community should better serve the youth by creating outlets that will prepare them for applying for jobs, interviewing, etc.

Question 2: What could you, your community and community organizations do to help you and those you know stay or get back into school and/or get a job?

One of the young men within the group began this conversation by stating that there is no community backbone that holds children accountable for performing well in school. Evelyn stated that children struggle to relate to leadership (white teachers). Her theory was that if children began to see examples before them of teachers that looked like them, they would first become more comfortable and perform more efficiently while learning under someone that they could relate to. Another young man in the discussion made a point that the majority of the group also agreed with when he stated that there is a lack of accountability when it comes to giving back to a community once you "make it out."

Question 3: What are the day-to-day challenges you and those you know face?

One of the young men stated that there is a lack of guidance when it comes to families and when it comes to the community. He went on to explain that youth have too much idle time on their hands which allows them to make time for detrimental activity. Two reoccurring themes were continued in the discussion of this question: a decline of outreach and discrimination. A middle-aged man suggested that social media plays a key role when it comes to the community deterring from interacting socially in person. Because technology has completely transformed communication, it is hard for people, young and old to properly communicate. Evelyn shared a story about a time when she was in a restaurant and she was pleasantly and refreshingly surprised at a waiter who made wonderful eye contact while maintaining an attentive demeanor. The news and media also play a dominate role when it comes to the self-image that minorities maintain. It was expressed by all the members in the group that the news media is more intentional in matters of covering more of the notorious events of Albany's minority youth than it does

the good. A reoccurring theme in this discussion was the stripping of a family structure by removing men out of the household thus leaving women alone to raise children.

Question 4: What changes or solutions do you want to see happen in yourself, your neighborhood, your school and in the city of Albany?

Many agreed that there should be community-enhanced extracurricular activities or safe places for children outside of school. One woman stated that in her middle and high school years, the arts were a way for her to express herself as it served as an outlet to her everyday struggles. One of the young men also bounced off her comment and voiced his concern in the declining programs for youth. He stated that as he evaluates his community, there is a lack of latchkey and youth programs, and that he himself as a young student had multiple groups to participate in. This same young man also acknowledged that he would like to change his perception of himself so that when the media tries to tell him who he is, he can dismiss those thoughts and ideas. Another woman made a noteworthy point that minorities should know for themselves that they are worthy of an education and worthy of success. She also suggested that there should be an establishment of minority nonprofits. The structure of nonprofits will create a cohesive structure that is necessary to nurture the community young and old.

Support System Group

Question 1: What systems are in place which help or prevent people from getting jobs?

Of all the ideas and answers surrounding question one, the group agreed on three main ideas that they agreed upon and felt answered the question the best.

> 1. Education – The group agreed there is a lack of equal, quality, alternative, and affordable education. The group also agreed that to help young people pursue an education, we need mentoring/advice from older adults with experience in navigating the systems.

> 2. White privilege/Culture- To understand poverty, we must understand one another. The group focused on showing white citizens in Albany how they benefit from white privilege, whether they realize it or not, and how to use that awareness to educate others and create a change. The group also discussed a lack of cultural competence which may lead to discrimination/stereotyping.

> 3. Community Social Supports- While the group agreed that there are some community social support programs, they focused on the lack of awareness of programs and hours that would address the after school/work hours and weekends which they felt are most needed.

Question 2: What policies help or prevent you, your community, and community organizations from helping you and those you know get jobs or get back into school?

Of all the ideas mentioned, the group agreed that the focus should be helping existing organizations operate in a more effective way. The group felt as though organizations need to spread more awareness of services as well as move from more formal to informal policies and operating styles to be more inclusive. The group also mentioned working on quality and quantity of staffing and having hours that work better for the community.

Question 3: How do policies positively or negatively affect the day to day challenges you and those you know face?

For this question, the group focused on lack of follow-up with policies and ineffective implementation. The group discussed the importance of holding legislators responsible. The group also discussed the desire to have more involvement in shaping policy rather than just having it be implemented. The group spoke highly of the way CAPRI has been operating and would like to see other policies be broken down in this format.

Question 4: What changes/solutions do you want to see happen in yourself, your neighborhood, and the City of Albany?

The whole group came to one specific answer on this question. The group agreed that they would like to see more of a collaborative community. This meaning more involvement, accountability, effort/participation, and connections within the citizens of the city. They discussed the importance of self-awareness and selflessness within individuals to help move toward a community mindset. The group also emphasized the importance of coming together to help people realize that helping those in poverty helps as all, as a city and society, in the end.

Jobs/Careers Group

Question 1: What barriers exist that prevent the hiring of youth?

This group identified multiple barriers that prevent the hiring of youth. Of those identified barriers, age restrictions were an issue for youth who are not able to access employment for being "too young." Technological limitations such as no internet or computer are also a barrier for job-seekers when trying to access employment with online applications and trainings. Youth also experience peer issues such as fear of being made fun of for working in particular places, or having friends showing up to a youth's place of employment and using them. The group identified that there is a current lack of training in schools that contribute to youth having difficulty accessing employment. Having a previous criminal record, especially with minor offenses, was also identified as being a large barrier to employment.

Question 2: What could you and your community do to get young people hired and retained?

The group identified helping youth take pride in their work no matter the job as well as the need for mentoring and coaching youth from a young age. Gaining organizational support for employment access

as well as having employers being engaged within the community are steps that were identified to increase hiring and retention. Another suggestion was providing opportunities for youth to gain experience relevant to work. The need for more re-entry work for those who have been incarcerated was also agreed on by the group.

Question 3: What are the day-to-day challenges the job-seekers and employees you work with face?

The largest challenge for job-seekers and employees identified by the group was assisting those facing prejudice. This included possible prejudice by employers as well as prejudice that is made possible by questions on job applications. There was also an identified lack of awareness of what jobs are available as well as services that may assist someone in getting a job. Other topics discussed were a lack of mentoring for youth and having a criminal record.

Question 4: What changes and/or solutions do you want to see happen in yourself, in your neighborhood, your school, and the City of Albany?

Many changes were identified by the group including more job training and coaching for youth for "soft skills." Employer partnerships with schools and support organizations especially during school when all students are present. There was also a suggestion for communities to create advocacy and support resources for their youth and the need to start with youth at a much younger age.