

Presented to the Board of Directors and all citizens of Manchester, CT at a public meeting held on September 30, 2009

Manchester, CT Children, Youth and Family Master Plan

CONTENTS

Introduction	1-18
Infrastructure	19-40
Recommendations:	41- 70
H&S	42-45
FE	46-50
YD	51-55
E&ASP & YIT	56-61
N&C	62-65
ECD	66-71
Appendix:	
A. Resources	
B. Scorecard	
C. Reports	
1. Foundation for the Future	
2. Developmental Assets	

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS, WORKING TOGETHER, LEARNING TO THRIVE

The greater a community's investment in its children, the greater return it will realize when they become adults. Supporting families and their children through the first two decades of life helps ensure that youth become valuable resources to the community and its workforce rather than a drain on resources through high cost social programs and lost earning power.

The Town of Manchester has made significant investments in their young people and families. In fact the community is so accomplished at addressing the issues of children, youth and families that some of the most needy individuals from other cities and towns find their way into the Manchester service system. This issue and others has the Town facing increasing challenges of diminishing resources, increasing needs, and a changing, more diverse population.

With the current economic downturn and the associated need to "tighten the belt" there is a greater likelihood that Manchester's developmental infrastructures will continue to struggle. Many families are isolated and living in poverty. Children spend only a fraction of their time with family compared to a decade ago, leaving parents less time to accomplish an even more daunting task. Many youth are adrift, feeling alienated within their community and school and more susceptible to influences from negative people, environments, media and "Madison Avenue".

Manchester's older, disconnected neighborhoods, many in a spiral of disinvestment, are losing their ability to support families, putting extraordinary stress on the schools and the communities to help young people succeed.

Manchester's well being, indeed its economic vitality, depends on how well the community supports its most vulnerable members and recognizes its shared responsibility to ensure the healthy development of all its children and youth and its support of struggling families and neighborhoods.

Supporting children through the first two decades of life can be analogous to

THEMES

- ♥ All youth, all families
- ♥ All strategies align to the vision
- ♥ Resourcefulness is as important as resources
- ♥ Focused on building assets rather than reducing deficits
- ♥ Begins and ends with inclusion
- ♥ Youth must play an authentic role throughout

“Good plans shape good decisions. That's why good planning helps to make elusive dreams come true.”

~ Lester R. Bittel

building a house. Just as a structurally sound house is built from the foundation upward, within each developmental stage from birth to adulthood, certain milestones must be met in order for a young person to grow to the next stage. These developmental milestones become the challenges the community must face, ensuring that as many youth as possible meet all of them.

Manchester recognized these realities and in June 2008 moved aggressively to reverse these trends by creating a Children, Youth and Family Master Plan (CY&FMP) to chart its efforts through the foreseeable future.

WHY NOW, AND WHY A MASTER PLAN?

There are three important reasons to create a Master Plan focused on helping all Manchester children, youth and families thrive:

1. The Town, like all other communities, is facing economic realities that will require it to do business differently. Finding long-term solutions that will increase thriving for the Town's children, youth and families will greatly reduce the negative impact of diminishing resources.
2. The results from the Survey of Student Resources and Assets, while in many cases better than the national average, clearly demonstrate that the only way to significantly reduce the number of young people who participate in high-risk behaviors is to increase the number of developmental assets in their lives. Since this is far more about changing how the community interacts with its children and youth than it is about fixing them, traditional “fix them” approaches will no longer be sufficient.
3. While the first two reasons are about reducing costs, the Master Plan will also increase the Town's access to new and previously unobtainable resources. Many funding sources now only target communities with comprehensive and collaborative strategies that engage those who will be impacted. This plan now puts Manchester into that category. It also is structured to demonstrate the power of a more inclusive planning approach that will bring to the table a new cadre of citizens eager to contribute.

Children, Youth and Family Master Plans are a common strategy for cities, towns and counties to more effectively and efficiently address the seemingly overwhelming number of issues that impact their younger citizens and their families. But to do this, shifts will be needed in how things are done.

The first shift moves away from addressing the myriad challenges facing children, youth and families with only the traditional “fix it” approaches and reexamine whether the providers to which they have always turned are, in fact,

capable of incorporating these new strength-based approaches. While in most cases these providers are very competent and have had success with many individuals, addressing issues in a more inclusive and comprehensive way will require new experiments and approaches to be tried. This plan embraces what's working and seeks to find new ways to enhance and expand these approaches while creating a climate that supports new experiments.

Another shift that needs to occur moves away from planning efforts that focus almost entirely on the reduction of problem indicators, and focuses primarily on the creation of thriving indicators. No community can continue providing the ever-increasing resources needed to address issues as they surface. Planning must focus as much on system changes as it does on individual changes.

With an understanding of these necessary shifts as guides, the Town embarked on an inclusive planning effort to identify what is needed to enhance the level of thriving for each child, young person and family in Manchester.

INITIATING THE PLANNING PROCESS

For the past several years, the Town of Manchester has undertaken numerous broad-based efforts to improve the quality of life for children and youth in the community and address problems that have surfaced, such as gang-related activity, drug-related activity and other issues related to the community's demographic shifts. In July 2007, the Manchester Board of Directors adopted the National League of Cities' Platform for Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth. That action resolved that the Town would seek to establish the essential infrastructure for a sustained community effort to achieve the Platform's objectives. As an outgrowth of that action, the Town submitted an application to the National League of Cities' Institute for Youth, Education and Families (NLC-YEF) for assistance in implementing a comprehensive master plan for youth.

Manchester was not included among the communities selected for that initiative; however, the NLC invited the Town to participate with three other communities (Taos, New Mexico; Rapid City, South Dakota; San Fernando, California) to receive technical assistance in developing a comprehensive strategic plan. Manchester learned that securing a qualified consultant to coordinate the development of a comprehensive master plan for youth would be the most effective way to proceed and ensure that the planning process would produce real change. An RFP was generated to solicit proposals, a contract was awarded to Onsite-Insights of Hampton, VA in July 2008, and work began immediately. In addition to the consultant's contract, the Town assigned the Director of Human Services, Mary Roche Cronin, and the Assistant Director of Recreation, Chris Silver, to work directly with the consultant providing local insights and support. The planning process was also fortunate to secure a part-time intern from St. Joseph's College to assist with implementation.

*"None of us is as smart
as all of us."*

~ Ken Blanchard

"We cannot become
what we need to be by
remaining what we are."

~ Max Du Pree

Onsite-Insights (www.onsiteinsights.com) selected its President, Richard Goll, as the chief operating officer for this planning process. Onsite-Insights demonstrated the following qualifications:

- Onsite-Insights is a national leader in the creation of successful Children, Youth and Family Master Plans and nationally recognized for its expertise in Youth Civic Engagement.
- Onsite-Insights has extensive experience working with multiple municipal, educational and community agencies, has demonstrated practical knowledge and expertise in youth development and supportive family services, and is experienced with facilitating and conducting focus groups and other modes of gathering public input and consensus building.
- Onsite-Insights has served as a consultant to the National League of Cities and fully aligns its approaches to their Youth, Education and Families "Agenda for Children and Youth".

Part of the planning process included a visit to Hampton, VA, which had recently been selected to receive Harvard University's Innovation in American Government Award for their Children, Youth and Family Master Planning effort. The consultant, who was also working with Greenville, SC on a similar planning process, invited representatives from both communities to observe the Hampton model first hand. Those who attended were General Manager Scott Shanley, Human Services Director Mary Roche Cronin, Assistant Recreation Director Chris Silver, Youth Services Bureau (YSB) Director Erica Bromley and four of the YSB staff; Beth Mix, Heather Wlochowski, Jennifer Wilder Jackson and Pierre Brilliant.

The purpose of the Hampton visit was:

- To present an overview of a comprehensive and sustainable system of Children, Youth and Family services, supports and opportunities,
- To expose the YSB staff to a highly functioning Youth Commission and Youth Civic Engagement structure, and
- To expand the understanding of those attending to the outcome possibilities for Manchester's planning process.

While in Hampton those attending had the opportunity to both observe and interact with staff from the city, youth involved in a variety of engagement opportunities, and staff from the community's intermediary organization, Alternatives, Inc. The Director of the Coalition for Youth (City Department) presented an overview of the city's youth civic engagement efforts, the structure established, the resources allocated, and the relationships built to sustain the effort. The group also met with the Director of Neighborhood Services, the Superintendent of Recreation Services, and the Planning Director. Each shared their perspective of the Children, Youth and Family planning and the youth civic engagement efforts, and how their departments contributed and supported each.

The General Manager had the opportunity to meet with Hampton's Mayor, City Manager, Assistant City Manager, and Budget Director. The entire group was able to interact with youth leaders from a variety of youth civic engagement opportunities including youth planners, youth commissioners, and the Teen Center Advisory Board.

The group also was able to observe the Youth Commission's public meeting that focused on gathering input to the city's Capital Improvement Plan. About 75 youth (in addition to the 20 Youth Commissioners) were in attendance for this two-hour meeting. Prior to the meeting the Manchester group had the opportunity to interact with youth commissioners.

In addition to the selection of the consultant and the visit of Manchester representatives to Hampton, the Town's Board of Directors passed an ordinance that Chapter 28: Commissions, Committees and Boards, of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Manchester, be amended to include Article XIV: Manchester Youth Commission.

The purpose of this ordinance is to establish an independent Youth Commission to the Board of Directors that increases communication between adults and youth, ensuring that the youth in the community are an integral part of government decision making, and fosters civic and neighborhood pride and a sense of identity through the knowledge, understanding, and increased involvement of Manchester's youth in present and future municipal affairs.

The creation of this Youth Commission allowed the Board of Directors to make a powerful statement as to the importance of including young people in the decisions of the Town and the things that impact them. All current Youth Commissioners were part of the master planning process.

HOW AND WHY THE FOCUS AREAS WERE CHOSEN

As already indicated Manchester had adopted the National League of Cities (NLC) Platform "Strengthening Families and Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth". The Platform and its seven key action areas were created based on extensive research by the NLC's staff and membership. It was developed specifically to help guide communities as they tackle the very issues Manchester is addressing. The seven focus areas are:

- Neighborhoods and Community
- Early Childhood Development
- Youth Development
- Education and After School Programming
- Health and Safety
- Family Economics
- Youth in Transition

"Make no little plans.
They have no magic
to stir men's blood
and probably
themselves will not be
realized. Make big
plans; aim high in
hope and work. Let
your watchword be
order and your beacon
beauty. Think big."

~ Daniel Burnham

“If you believe in what you are doing, let nothing hold you up in your work. Much of the best work of the world has been done against seeming impossibilities. The thing is to get the work done.”

~ Dale Carnegie

In addition to the focus areas, the NLC platform identifies the infrastructure needed to support and sustain the long-term implementation of the plan and its recommendations. The framework, therefore, also focuses on these four general areas of infrastructure:

- Policies
- Structures and organizations
- Citizen connectivity
- Measurements

KEY PRINCIPLE

The planning process’s key principle was inclusiveness. Every possible attempt was made to allow all the residents of Manchester to have the opportunity to contribute to this plan. This was done in the following ways, respecting the limitations of citizen participation:

- Ongoing committees where citizens had the opportunity and expectation to delve deeply into an issue;
- The opportunity for participants on each committee to create their own vision that would drive the work of their committee;
- Surveys that could obtain a broader base of information and insights;
- Focus groups that brought together a variety of individuals to share opinions and to generate possible solutions;
- Individual interviews that incorporated the views of those who didn’t have the time to participate more extensively; and finally,
- A website that gives citizens continuous access to all of the efforts to date and allows them to review and comment at will.

This planning process went far beyond simply creating a document outlining the status of Manchester’s children, youth and families. While it accomplished this, as much attention was given to ensuring that the process leading up to the plan was comprehensive and inclusive, and that the infrastructure needed to ensure the long-term viability of the plan would be in place. The planning model also put into place a whole new way of engaging youth and created a process that brought young people, 20 – 30 year olds and older adults together and that will, if continued, forever improve the Town of Manchester.

The planning process continuously asked everyone to measure their efforts against this question, “Are we doing all we can to ensure that all of Manchester’s children, youth and families thrive?” By helping the participants remain focused on this question, the likelihood was increased that their efforts would produce recommendations that:

- Were built on strength-based solutions;
- Focused on reinventing systems more than individual change;

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

- Were proactive rather than reactive; and
- Honored the key principle of inclusiveness.

Based on the above question, the leadership within the town also understood the importance of starting the planning process with clear and passionate “marching orders”. Leaders, therefore, created a powerful and compelling vision to drive the overall planning process. Committee members were constantly asked to measure their work against the likelihood it would significantly help the town realize this vision.

“The Town of Manchester, where all children, youth and families thrive.”

OTHER GOVERNING PRINCIPLES

The following principles and guidelines were adopted from lessons learned from successful Children, Youth and Family Master Planning processes in other cities and helped drive Manchester’s planning process:

- Successful youth-related planning occurs when a city shifts its view of young people from merely recipients of services to resources and partners in the overall wellbeing of the city.
- The basic premise of youth development is: Problem free is not fully prepared, fully prepared is not fully developed, and fully developed is not fully engaged. Manchester’s CY&FMP must focus as much attention on the development and engagement of all children and youth as it does on the prevention or remediation of those individuals deemed to be most at risk.
- Impacting the CY&FMP document is only a guideline or road map. Without a town-wide commitment to provide the resources needed to make the plan work, to the training needed for young people and adults to function more effectively and efficiently together, and an understanding that the process is a journey, not a destination, the plan will have little likelihood of succeeding.
- The information collected and used to create the CY&FMP must focus as much on what’s working for children and youth in the city as it does on what needs to be improved. Therefore, data collection must be both an engaging and anecdotal process involving a variety of citizens as well as a process for obtaining official statistical data points.
- All citizens, including young people, should be able to have a role in both the planning and implementation phases of the CY&FMP. The more who participate, the greater the chances of success. Everyone should be able to support what the plan identifies as important.

“Come all you young people. Don’t be content with things as they are. You will make all kinds of mistakes, but as long as you are generous and true and also fierce, you cannot hurt the world or even seriously distress her. She was meant to be wooed and won by youth.”

~ Winston Churchill

“To put the world in order, we must first put the nation in order; to put the nation in order, we must put the family in order; to put the family in order, we must cultivate our personal life; and to cultivate our personal life, we must first set our hearts right.”

~ Confucius

- Those assigned to staff or manage the strategies identified in this CY&FMP must be given the authority needed to implement and should have the knowledge, skills and abilities to oversee such an initiative. These individuals do not all need to be municipal employees; in fact, partnerships with youth-serving organizations are a good way to access much needed skills and resources.

SELECTING COMMITTEE FACILITATORS

With the vision and governing principles in hand, the next task was to ensure that the planning process benefited from the expertise of those living and working throughout Manchester. The consultant and the staff assigned to this initiative set about the task of identifying individuals who had the skills needed to facilitate the seven focus committees. These individuals needed to be:

- Well respected community members;
- Passionate about the topic and process;
- Willing to facilitate using inclusive group techniques;
- Capable of facilitating a committee of both youth and adults; and,
- Committed to keeping the committee thinking from a strength-based viewpoint and focused on developing strategic recommendations.

Fortunately, choosing many of these individuals was easy because each person was energized by the task. The consultant is deeply grateful for their willingness to share of themselves and for their outstanding work as committee facilitators. *The facilitators and members of each committee are acknowledged in the recommendation sections for each committee.*

SELECTING COMMITTEE PARTICIPANTS

The next step in the planning process was to ensure that the committee participants were representative of Manchester’s rich diversity. While this was a completely open process - anyone wanting to participate could - the key was to ensure that no group (race, culture, gender, age, etc.) dominated the process.

It was also essential to recruit participants who were passionate about a focus area, willing to be open-minded and involved in a process that would strive for consensus, excited about working with those who looked and thought differently than they do, and who were willing to make the commitment of time and energy.

A strong effort was made to meet individually with everyone who was interested prior to the beginning of the committee work. Others joined after the start of the process and some had to drop out before the end; however, everyone was valued and played an important role.

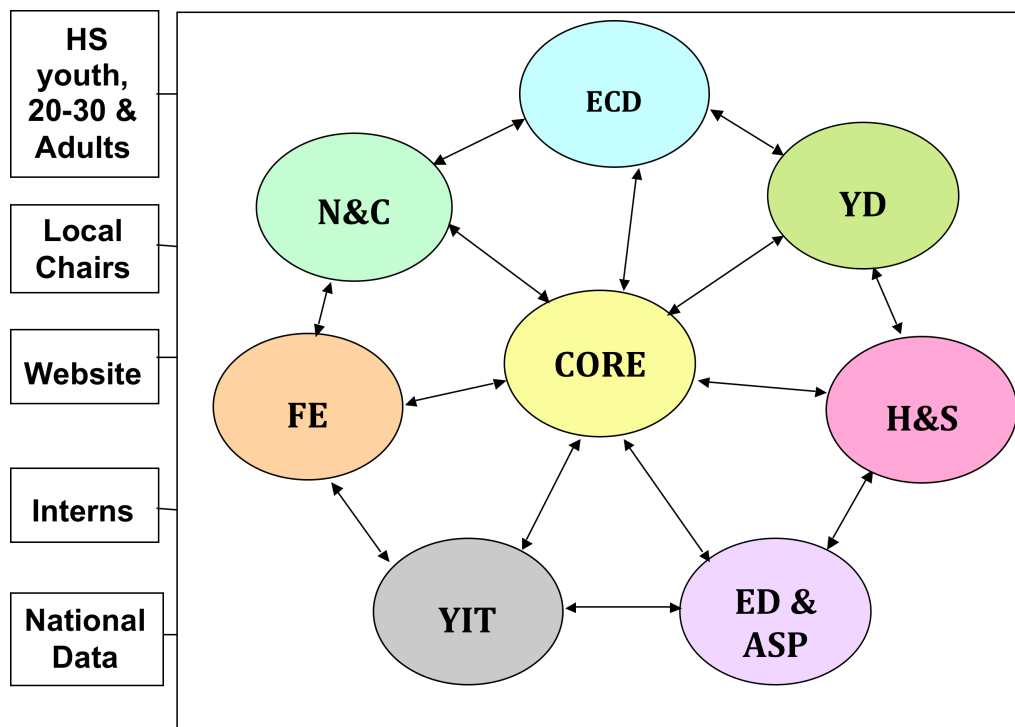
Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

As previously stated, the most critical principle of the planning process was inclusiveness—ensuring that any citizen interested in contributing would be afforded that opportunity. Fortunately, Manchester is already a community of “can do” people who have continuously demonstrated their willingness to roll up their sleeves and get to work.

The diagram below was used to represent the diversity and structure to ensure such inclusiveness. The boxes on the left represent some of the key planning process ingredients.

- The insights of youth, young adults, older adults and elders were all important to the process.
- Local people who were respected throughout the community and who had no hidden agendas were selected to chair each committee.
- There was a website dedicated to the planning process that allowed every citizen access to decisions and afforded the opportunity to contribute.
- Service opportunities connected local college students looking for intern placements to the master planning effort.
- Those serving on the committees had access to all the national data available to help them make their best decisions.

Making the Process Inclusive



“A hundred years from now it will not matter what my bank account was, the sort of house I lived in, or the kind of car I drove...But the world may be different because I was important in the life of a child.”

~ Kathy Davis

"The best way to predict
the future is to create
it."

~ Peter Drucker

The previous large box is a representation of the structure. The ovals represent the seven focus committees, with a core team in the middle. These committees met at least monthly and some met more often. Locations and times were set to ensure that participants had easy access to all the meetings. The website allowed the committees to remain aware of the work others were doing, reducing duplication and increasing alignment.

The Core Team, made up of elected officials, General Manager and other staff, committee facilitators and Youth Commission representatives, ensured that there would be few surprises once the plan was completed and presented to the Board. The Core Team began meeting once the inclusive planning process was completed. Their primary responsibility was to ensure that the recommendations made by the committees could be implemented.

By the time the committees began meeting, 120 residents had indicated their interest in serving and each of them was placed on the committee in which they had indicated interest. After the committees convened, additional people joined the process and contributed significantly.

CREATING COMMITTEE VISIONS

Beginning with the Master Plan's vision, each committee also created a vision for their specific focus area. Visions are the best tool facilitators have for helping committee participants remain focused on the "end in mind". The following are the visions created by each of the seven focus area committees:

Early Childhood Development

"All Manchester children, pre-natal thru age 8, flourish in their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development."

Youth Development

"Manchester, where all youth participate in guided learning experiences to develop character, life skills and positive connections throughout the community."

Education and After School Programming

"Manchester, a community that celebrates and supports learning, 24/7."

Health and Safety

"Manchester, where feeling safe is the norm and health is the culture."

Youth in Transition

"From Seed to Flower"

Family Economics

"Manchester, where everyone possesses the literacy and resources needed to achieve financial security."

Neighborhoods and Community

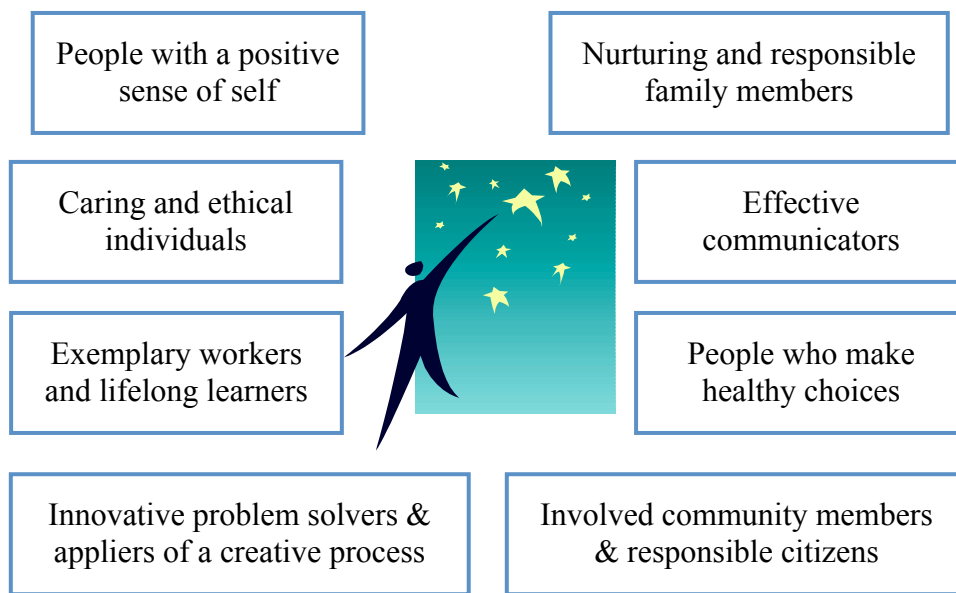
"A vibrant, safe community built and connected by thriving neighborhoods."

DEFINING THRIVING

Before the committees ventured too far into their deliberations it was important to establish agreement on a definition of thriving as something against which their work could be measured. It was important for this definition to represent how Manchester's residents defined thriving, as well as the state-of-the-art thinking throughout the country.

Therefore, after reviewing the research and literature on life skills, developmental competencies, protective factors, developmental assets, youth development, youth engagement and service learning, the consultant provided a working definition that each committee agreed to support.

Thriving youth and adults are steadily growing towards and becoming . . .



“If human beings are perceived as potentials rather than problems, as possessing strengths instead of weaknesses, as unlimited rather than dull and unresponsive, then they thrive and grow to their capabilities.”

~ Bob Conklin

In addition to the eight thriving indicators, there are a few other very important aspects to this definition.

- The sentence stem that begins the definition indicates that thriving is a journey more than a destination. This is especially important because far too often plans demand unrealistic expectations, ones that can only be reached after time and many experiences.
- The definition is also entirely positive. It doesn't focus on what needs to be eliminated, only what needs to be created or reinforced. This helps those who are more focused on problem reduction to shift their focus to asset building and thriving.

- Manchester's thriving definition describes someone on a journey toward being fully prepared, fully developed and fully engaged, regardless of the problems he or she may experience.

"Let us put our minds together and see what life we can make for our children."

~ Iyotak, Tatanka –
Sitting Bull

COLLECTING THE DATA

A number of data collection methods were used to aid the committees in their understanding of their issue, how the residents of the Town perceive it, and how they would like the Town to address it. These data collection techniques enabled the committees to benefit from the insights of an additional 1,000+ citizens.

The Developmental Assets® Survey: Since a major part of the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan focuses on young people, it was critical that as many young people's voices be included in the process as possible. Getting large numbers of youth ready and willing to participate in five months of committee meetings would be unlikely. Therefore, it was determined that surveying them was the best way to increase insights into how Manchester's youth perceived where they live, learn, work, pray, and play.

The survey selected was The Survey of Student Resources and Assets developed by the Search Institute® in Minneapolis, Minnesota. This survey was chosen because it does far more than just measure what is wrong with our young people or what problems they are experiencing at that moment. The power of this instrument is that it measures how young people perceive both the world around them and how equipped they believe they are to succeed within that world. The final report lets the community know how many of the most important building blocks - the 40 Developmental Assets® -Manchester's young people believe exist in their lives.

Search Institute's 40 Developmental Assets are concrete, common sense, positive experiences and qualities essential to raising successful young people. These assets were selected after years of research that combined the best thinking from the fields of youth development, resiliency, and risk and protective factors. The survey has been administered to over 2 million young people from all kinds of communities across the country. The findings demonstrate that assets have the power during critical adolescent years to influence choices youth make and help them to become more caring, responsible adults.

The Developmental Assets framework is divided into two groups representing 20 assets each. The first group, the external assets, represents the 20 positive experiences young people receive from the world around them. They identify the important roles that families, schools, congregations, neighborhoods, and youth organizations play in the promotion of a young person's healthy development.

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

These 20 assets explore:

- ♥ Support: Is a young person getting the support, care, and love he or she needs from his or her family, neighbors, and others?
- ♥ Empowerment: How valued is a young person by his or her community and does he or she have opportunities to contribute to others?
- ♥ Boundaries and expectations: Does the young person know what is expected and whether behaviors are “in bounds” or “out of bounds?”
- ♥ Constructive use of time: Are there constructive, enriching opportunities for growth through accessible, creative activities, youth programs and faith-based activities?

The other 20 assets are the internal assets that identify those characteristics and behaviors that reflect the young person’s perception of his or her internal growth and development. The internal Developmental Assets help young people make thoughtful and positive choices and, in turn, be better prepared for situations in life that challenge their inner strength and confidence. These 20 assets explore:

- ♥ Commitment to learning: Has the young person developed a lifelong commitment to education and learning?
- ♥ Positive values: Has the young person developed strong positive values that can drive his or her choices?
- ♥ Social competencies: Has the young person developed the skills and competencies needed to equip him or her to make positive choices, to build relationships and to succeed in life?
- ♥ Positive identity: Does the young person possess a strong sense of his or her own power, purpose, worth and promise?

“Change is possible, and the power rests in the people and places of community that join together to embrace, invest in, and engage with young people as both gifts and resources for today and into the future.”

~ Peter Benson

Manchester’s Public School Board and its Superintendent, as well as the leadership from St. James and St. Bridget schools, allowed this survey to be administrated to their students. This was a huge asset to the master planning process because it allowed committee participants to hear directly from a large number of young people. A statistically representative sample of 671 randomly selected students in grades six to twelve, all of whom reside in Manchester, were administered the Survey of Student Resources and Assets. All surveys were anonymous and Search Institute computed the results. The data was tabulated and reported collectively to remove the tendency to compare schools. The levels of analysis other than by asset, were by grade level and gender.

The following two pages present the results of the Student Resources and Assets Survey. It is important to remember that it is the total number of assets in a child’s life that are important, not whether he or she has or is lacking any one of the forty.

Manchester and National Comparisons of Developmental Assets[®]

Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 20 EXTERNAL assets

Asset Category	Asset Description	Manchester %	Nat'l %
Support	1. My family life provides high levels of love and support.	73	70
	2. My parents and I communicate positively and I seek my parents' advice and counsel.	49	30
	3. I receive support from three or more non-parent adults.	40	45
	4. I experience caring neighbors.	43	40
	5. My school provides a caring, encouraging environment.	38	29
	6. My parents are actively involved in helping me succeed in school.	37	34
Empowerment	7. I perceive that the adults in my community value youth.	24	25
	8. Young people are given useful roles.	33	28
	9. I serve 1 or more hours a week in Manchester.	47	51
	10. I feel safe at home, school and in my neighborhood.	46	51
Boundaries & Expectations	11. My family has clear rules and consequences and monitors my whereabouts.	41	48
	12. My school provides clear rules and consequences.	64	53
	13. My neighbors take responsibility for monitoring my behavior.	47	49
	14. My parents and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.	30	30
	15. My best friends model responsible behavior.	69	65
	16. My parents and teachers encourage me to do well.	62	49
Constructive Use of Time	17. I spend three or more hours a week in lessons or practice in music, theater or the arts.	16	20
	18. I spend three or more hours a week in sports, clubs or organizations at school or in community organizations.	49	58
	19. I spend one or more hours a week in activities in a religious institution.	49	63
	20. I am out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.	51	52

Surveys that are conducted nationwide (this one has been administered to over 2 million students since 1989) seem to invite comparisons with national norms. Caution is advised in comparing Manchester data with other communities when the profiles of those communities' young people are not known.

Percent of Youth Reporting Each of 20 INTERNAL assets

Asset Category	Asset Description	Manchester %	Nat'l %
Commitment to Learning	21. I am motivated to do well in school.	73	67
	22. I am actively engaged in learning.	58	61
	23. I do at least one hour of homework every school day.	47	53
	24. I care about my school.	68	54
	25. I read for pleasure three or more hours a week.	22	23
Positive Values	26. I place a high value on helping other people.	49	50
	27. I place a high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.	53	52
	28. I act on my convictions and stand up for my beliefs.	63	68
	29. I tell the truth even when it is not easy.	60	67
	30. I accept and take personal responsibility.	56	63
	31. I believe it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.	49	47
Social Competencies	32. I know how to plan ahead and make choices.	33	30
	33. I have empathy, sensitivity and friendship skills.	53	47
	34. I have knowledge of, and comfort with, people of different cultural, racial and ethnic backgrounds.	55	42
	35. I can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.	52	42
	36. I seek to resolve conflict non-violently.	44	45
Positive Identity	37. I feel I have control over “things that happen to me”.	38	42
	38. I have high self-esteem.	59	48
	39. I believe my life has purpose.	63	57
	40. I am optimistic about my personal future.	77	72

Who was surveyed? (Numbers/Percentage)

Total Students	671/100		
Male	307/46	Grade 6	124/19
Female	355/54	7	120/18
		8	104/16
Black/African American	117/17	9	91/14
Hispanic	108/16	10	81/12
White	325/49	11	82/12
Multi-racial	72/11	12	68/10
Other	47/7		

“We shall require a substantially new manner of thinking if mankind is to survive.”

~ *Albert Einstein*

These charts represent the percentage of Manchester students who responded in the affirmative to each of the categories. This information was made available to each focus committee, greatly increasing the voice of young people in the planning process. The complete report is available online on the plan’s website. (<http://cyfmp.townofmanchester.org/>)

Individual interviews: Another method used to ensure diversity and inclusiveness was individual interviews. The consultant and many of the committees used interviews with people important to the planning process, including:

- Young people, to better understand what it’s like to be young and living in Manchester;
- Elected officials and administrative staff, to better understand their current budget realities, crystallize their vision for this effort, and to determine their interest in increasing the level of involvement young people have in decision making;
- Business leaders and the heads of economic groups, to determine what is working and what needs improvement, what they would support and what they would challenge, and what they see as critical workforce development issues;
- School leaders and staff, to gain much needed information, determine their willingness to be part of the plan’s implementation, and to find out what is working and what needs attention; and,
- Law enforcement professionals, to better understand the crime statistics, and to learn more about ways to prevent crime.

The feedback from these interviews became part of the dialogue that occurred within the committee meetings and influenced their recommendations.

Focus groups: A few focus groups were also conducted. These groups were asked pre-prepared questions around an issue that a committee believed needed more citizen input.

Students in middle and high school were also asked to share their views on the town’s after school opportunities. Students were asked questions to determine their opinions of the quality, quantity, variety, accessibility and affordability of these opportunities.

ENSURING OVERSIGHT AND CONGRUITY

The plan’s consultant and staff and the committee facilitators were responsible for ensuring that the work of each committee was:

- Aligned with the overall Master Plan vision;
- Connected to the other committees’ work whenever possible;
- Not duplicating an existing service, support or opportunity;

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

- Creating a recommendation that is strategic - impacting most citizens rather than only a specific or targeted group; and,
- Based on strength-based and asset building principles and practices.

In addition, the consultant and staff provided an extensive amount of information to each committee on the best practices, existing research, periodical articles, websites and general background data important to, or occurring within, their focus area. This information helped keep the committees on task and aware of the best current thinking in the field.

The website was a valuable tool that allowed committee members to remain aware of what the other committees were doing and to allow the general public to learn and contribute to the effort without having to serve on a committee.

COMMITTEE PROTOCOL

To accomplish the responsibilities assigned to each committee, participants were asked to look at the current reality within their committee's focus area, identify what they would view as ideal, map the gap between current reality and ideal, and develop a recommendation for closing the gaps. Recommendations had to be strength-based, proactive and as strategic as possible.

While it was important for each committee to generate and explore as many issues and ideas as appropriate and necessary, it was also important that they select the one recommendation that will alter how the community supports its children, youth and families forever. Each committee was then asked to develop and recommend as many strategies as they deemed necessary to ensure the recommendation could be successfully implemented.

Committee facilitators made sure that the voices of all participants were heard and valued, and worked in partnership with other committees when appropriate. Committees set their own meeting schedules, with a goal of completing their recommendations by the end of May 2009. Staff and intern support were provided to handle logistics, conduct research, and support the members as needed. Funding was made available from the Town to allow snacks and beverages to be served at the meetings. Upon completion of their work, committees reported to the Core Team who, in partnership with the consultant, reviewed the committees' recommendations to ensure compliance with the agreed upon principles and practices.

The Core Team also had the responsibility of identifying the infrastructure that would need to be changed, added, removed or blended to ensure that each recommendation could be implemented with the greatest likelihood of success.

"You never change something by fighting the existing reality. To change something, build a new model that makes the existing model obsolete."

~ *Buckminster Fuller*

HOW RECOMMENDATIONS WERE CLASSIFIED

The following classifications were developed to identify recommendations:

Infrastructure—Recommendations necessary to the plan’s success and the ongoing support of the Town’s children, youth and family agenda.

Strategic—Recommendations that have the greatest likelihood of positively impacting Manchester’s children, youth and families now and into the future.

“You must be the
change you want to see
in the world.”

~ Mahatma Gandhi

A common sentiment is, “we must invest in children because they are our future.” However, research provides even more compelling evidence for the need to pay attention to a youth agenda.

- Children who are born healthy and raised by parents who are involved in their lives and learning are more likely to succeed in school.
- Children with positive early childhood learning experiences are less likely, as young adults, to be involved in crime or receive public assistance.
- Children raised without violence in their home are far more likely to use peaceful conflict resolution when older; those who witness violence are more likely to use it.
- Children who read at grade level by third grade have a greater probability of succeeding in school and in the workforce.
- Young people who experience a greater number of developmental assets are less likely to be involved with risky behaviors and more likely to adopt positive behaviors.
- Young people with specific life skills are more prepared for success in the workforce.
- Youth engaged in civic responsibilities are more likely to use that behavior as an adult.

The infrastructure and committee recommendations that follow are presented in their entirety. Some of the recommendations will need to be fully implemented at the onset, but it is recommended that most are phased in gradually over a ten to twelve-year period. There are also timelines, scorecards and other supporting reports in the appendix. Implementation will, of course, need to be adjusted in real time to accommodate economic and other factors.

Infrastructure Recommendations

✓ Policy

✓ Structure & Organization

✓ Connectivity & Citizen
Coalitions

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

The National League of Cities' Platform challenges cities to identify strategic recommendations within the seven focus areas and the types of infrastructure that will be needed to support and sustain the long-term implementation of the plan. The infrastructure recommendations serve as the container within which the committee recommendations, which follow this section, are implemented. The Core Team, facilitated by the consultant, reviewed and commented on recommendations for the policies, ordinances and principles, structures and organization, and the connectivity and citizen coalition areas of infrastructure. The following individuals participated in the Core Team's deliberations:

Louis Spadaccini	Scott Sprague	Sarah Jones	Nico Arias
Kevin Zingler	Mary Roche Cronin	Duncan Harris	Sara Cinquemani
Matthew Peak	Tim O'Neil	Kevin Brophy	Carolyn Wallace
Rudy Kissmann	Chris Silver	Beth Stafford	Richika Makol
Mark Tweedie	Mark Pellegrini	Bob Eckert	Fabinia Gonzalez
Lisa O'Neill	Marc Montminy	Sharon Kozey	Lynne Gustafson
Scott Shanley	Erica Bromley	Keshia Ashe	Barbara O'Brien-Crockwell
			LaReese Harvey

Summary of Infrastructure Issues

- **Policies, Ordinances and Principles:** In order to ensure that the committees' recommendations will be honored over time, and to create a broader context under which the recommendations can be placed, it is important that the Board of Directors adopt policies and ordinances that attest to their commitment to making decisions that support children, youth and families. The policies should affirm the Board's support of the thriving definition and the core elements needed to promote thriving in all children, youth and families. There also needs to be support for core principles that ensure the actions taken on behalf of the plan are fiscally responsible and implemented at a pace respectful of the Town's capacity to sustain them.
- **Structure and Organization:** It is critically important that those charged with the implementation of the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan can operate within a structure that provides the authority to act in timely and efficient ways, and access to the staff and resources needed to promote success. Staffing, organizational alignment, and frameworks to be used are all needed to ensure that Manchester is successful when implementing the recommendations.
- **Connectivity and Citizen Coalitions:** Of key importance to the success of the implementation phase of the plan will be the connections among the existing services, supports and opportunities that impact children, youth and families and the alignment among the recommendations made by the plan's focus area committees. Since the planning phase was very inclusive it will be important to maintain this inclusiveness during implementation. Youth and adult citizens, as well as organizations, both public and private, need to be welcomed into the implementation process and trained so they understand their role and connection to the plan's vision and recommendations.
- **Measurement:** The final area of infrastructure is the mechanism to measure the success of the plan's implementation. There are multiple kinds of measurements that need to be explored once the final decisions are made on what will be implemented and when. This plan provides a scorecard intended to measure progress in the implementation of the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan. It is not an assessment of any long-term changes in social or behavioral indicators. For these types of results the implementation efforts need to determine the desired outcomes and incorporate the necessary instruments and methodology to acquire that information.

Manchester must have these policies, structures, connectivity and measurements in place to ensure a communitywide culture that embraces the actions recommended by the committees. The infrastructure recommendations also demonstrate to citizens that Manchester is committed to realizing the vision of the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan through structural and policy support, long-term oversight, evaluation of efforts and a continued commitment to bring citizens to the decision-making tables.

POLICIES, ORDINANCES and PRINCIPLES

Policies, Ordinances and Principles Recommendation #1A: Manchester's Master Plan Support Policy

All of the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan committees understood that unless there is clear ongoing support from the Board of Directors, their recommendations would have little chance of realizing the changes they sought. Therefore, it is recommended that the Board of Directors adopt a policy that will indicate the Board's support of their recommendations and strategies.

Families and children are the backbone of our community and their journey towards thriving impacts the entire community. There is no action we could take that would be more morally and economically sound than for us to support our children, youth and families.

We define thriving as a process in which Manchester's children, youth and families are steadily growing towards and becoming people with a positive sense of self, nurturing and responsible family members, effective communicators, people who make healthy choices, are involved community members and responsible global citizens, innovative problem solvers and appliers of a creative process, exemplary workers and lifelong learners, and caring and ethical individuals.

To ensure that the input from the plan's over 1000 contributors is honored, and that reasonable efforts to implement the recommendations are made, we endorse the following:

The Town of Manchester commits to being a community in which the thriving of our families and their children is of primary importance. To this end, the Town's policies, infrastructures, services, supports and opportunities that we endorse align with the recommendations in the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan and the thriving definition. We commit to doing this in partnership with our youth and adult citizens, educational institutions, and the for-profit and not-for-profit businesses that are so vital to the Town's overall thriving.

We have accepted the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan with its citizen-developed recommendations. We accepted this plan with the understanding that for all citizens of Manchester to thrive the Board of Directors and the Town's workforce must be committed to its success. Therefore, the departmental benchmarks must be aligned with the following:

- Civic infrastructures that enhance the likelihood of all residents thriving through a norm of feeling safe and a culture of health;
- Neighborhoods that embrace thriving for their residents as a communal responsibility;
- A system that fully engages and empowers young people in the decisions that impact them;
- A supportive and nurturing foundation from pre-birth through early childhood;
- Economic and financial literacy for all families; and,
- A comprehensive and connected network of organizations serving children, youth and families.

Policies, Ordinances and Principles Recommendation #1B: Amendment to Ordinance 28.

The plan's structural infrastructure recommendation #1B proposes a Neighborhood Commission. The full recommendation and supporting information can be found on page 26. The formation of a new commission requires an amendment to the Town's Ordinance Chapter 28. The following are highlights of a recommended amendment. Potential wording of the Ordinance is in the plan's appendix.

BE IT ORDAINED by the Board of Directors of the Town Of Manchester that Chapter 28, Commissions, Committees and Boards, of the Code of Ordinances of the Town of Manchester, be amended by adding the following Article XV, Sections xxxx through xxxx:

§ XX. Title. This ordinance shall be known as Article XV: Manchester Neighborhood Commission.

§ XX. Purpose. The purpose and intent of this ordinance is to establish an independent Neighborhood Commission to both advise the Board of Directors on issues related to neighborhoods as well as to provide:

- Neighborhood policy guidance for the implementation of the recommendations in the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan,
- A mechanism to identify potential resources and links to neighborhood-related services, supports and opportunities,
- A representative body to act in support of neighborhoods, and
- A method to encourage participation in the overall effort of promoting thriving in the lives of all Manchester children, youth and families.

In addition, the Manchester Neighborhood Commission will be responsible for neighborhood-related strategic issues, tactical issues, and capacity building as follow:

Strategic Issues:

- Coordinate among multiple layers of neighborhood organizations
- Plan comprehensively for neighborhood infrastructure recommendations
- Build connections among neighborhoods
- Share information among neighborhood serving organizations

Tactical Issues:

- Develop a clear definition of a thriving neighborhood
- Recognize/reward contributors to thriving neighborhood agenda
- Address concerns about the equity of resource distribution
- Work in partnership with Manchester's educational institutions
- Learn from neighborhood successes

Strengthening Capacity for Action:

- Train residents to be skilled in the issues pertaining to neighborhood development and thriving
- Create independent neighborhood organizations that focus on thriving
- Increase engagement of youth & adult citizens in neighborhoods

Policies, Ordinances and Principles Recommendation #1C: Phase in gradually.

It is easy to argue that the three critical elements to the success of a community are the wellbeing of its citizens, the vibrancy of its neighborhoods, and its economic vitality. When citizens are thriving the community thrives as well. Thriving citizens live in healthy and vibrant neighborhoods and have access to the resources needed to raise their families. Due to the current economic environment it will be impossible to

fully implement the recommendations within this plan. (It should be noted that each committee was aware of the Town's economic realities and made every attempt to recommend strategies that were fiscally responsible.)

Therefore, to ensure that the plan's implementation can benefit from the momentum generated by the planning process, and yet be cognizant of the Town's economic realities, it is recommended:

Phasing in the recommendations and strategies gradually, applying lessons learned from the initial efforts to the improvement of the next stages, should be the approach used when implementing the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan. When the economy improves and resources become more available, the same principle should continue to apply. The mantra should always be, "Go slow, to go fast".

Policies, Ordinances and Principles Recommendation #1D: Ongoing funding principles.

Even though the committees were successful at identifying effective and cost efficient approaches to the adaptive challenges of thriving, it will still require the expenditure of resources to make sure success is fully realized. Therefore, it is recommended that the following guideline for funding be adopted:

When expanding the number of essential staff, they should always be supported with resources in the Town's budget. This does not mean expansion will require new money, even if new money exists. Rather than creating more fulltime employees to address continued expansion, it is recommended that staff should, whenever possible, be reassigned from existing positions or the redefining of positions when a vacancy has occurred. Support staff (important, but not essential) can also be financed from within the Town's budget or with funding from public or private grants, or from partnerships with existing organizations.

STRUCTURAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

Many times great ideas or recommendations fail to materialize or produce their intended results, not because the ideas were flawed, but because the ideas were not placed within a structure that allowed them to succeed. The oversight for implementing the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan's recommendations cannot be relegated to someone without authority, buried under levels of departmental bureaucracy, or left unsupported by those with policy making responsibility.

The majority of the recommendations that were generated within this Master Plan would be best served by focusing the town's energies and resources on building thriving neighborhoods within which all children, youth and families can individually thrive. The recommendations and the diagram that follow represent how Manchester's new Office of Neighborhoods and Families will align with and support the other aspects of the neighborhood-based strategies. The three critical principles of these neighborhood-based approaches are:

1. It's a partnership. No longer can residents view government as the answer to all their problems and no longer can the government view citizens as only recipients.
2. Neighborhood work is an adaptive challenge. For neighborhoods to build themselves into places people are proud to call home, all the stakeholders will need to examine their attitudes, behaviors and beliefs about their role in making neighborhoods into places where thriving is the norm.
3. Healthy neighborhoods make it easier for thriving to occur. The ability of children and youth to be on a journey towards thriving starts before a child is born, is critically important in the first eight

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

years of life, and can be positively impacted throughout the first two decades of life. Neighborhoods play a major role in supporting this journey. (See Manchester's Foundation for the Future in the appendix). The healthier and more supportive a neighborhood, the greater the likelihood that its children, youth and families will thrive.

The Master Plan incorporates the adaptive change theories of Harvard University's Ron Heifetz (see sidebar). The first responsibility of this planning process was to diagnose the systems that support Manchester's children, youth and family agenda. We learned during this diagnosis that the primarily "fix it" approaches serving as the traditional approaches to the issues of children, youth and families have not produced the kinds of changes that would support the town simply doing more of the same. Asking people to shift away from the traditional approaches is an adaptive challenge.

The second element was to analyze the adaptive challenge. Ensuring the children, youth and families of Manchester thrive is clearly an adaptive challenge. It is adaptive because:

- No one person or group has the answers,
- There isn't a successful inclusive operating system in place,
- No one really has the authority over the entire issue, and
- People will need to change how they function, and in some cases what they believe, if success is to be realized.

While adaptive challenges require that both those receiving and those serving as resources to an issue are willing to make changes, try new experiments and create a comprehensive system that in fact addresses the whole issue, not just its parts, it is also true that much of the issue is also technical in nature. This plan works very hard at maintaining and building on what is already working (strategies where someone already has the authority and has identified and implemented successful strategies). It also tried, through the committee and infrastructure recommendations, to put sufficient emphasis on preparing people to think and act differently.

The third and final element was to analyze the political landscape to understand the values that drive current children, youth and family approaches and the paradigms that exist that ensure that both provider and recipient responses will align with the status quo. These paradigms greatly reduce the likelihood that individuals or groups will embrace the new experiments needed to move forward.

The recommendations presented in this plan are both adaptive and technical. All of them try to build on what has proven, at some level, to be effective. All try to incorporate institutions and systems that have something

Ron Heifetz, Founder Director of Harvard's Center for Public Leadership believes that there are only two kinds of challenges leaders need to face.

- *The first type of challenges he calls technical—the ones for which someone already has an answer, there is an effective system in place to address the issue and there is someone who assumes responsibility. (Making an emergency room successful is a good example of a technical challenge.)*
- *All other challenges Heifetz calls adaptive. These are challenges for which no one has the answers, no effective system is in place to resolve the challenge and no one has the ultimate authority to impact the challenge. (Poverty, drug use, crime are all examples of adaptive challenges.)*

The greatest mistake leaders make is to try to solve adaptive problems with technical solutions. To solve adaptive challenges, Heifetz believes it will take new experiments and new ways of approaching the problem. The Children, Youth and Family Master Plan and, in particular, the recommendations, embrace this theory by providing new skills, knowledge and abilities so that human service providers can create new experiments to tackle the adaptive challenge of ensuring all children, youth and families thrive.

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

to offer, but also something to gain. All of them attempt to build the capacity required for real change to occur. And all of them try to find ways that allow people to hold onto what is precious to them, while eliminating or changing what they can. The most important thing to remember is that adaptive challenges require changes in the way people throughout the community think or behave, or what they believe about thriving and how to increase its likelihood.

The following structural and organizational recommendations help ensure that the technical and adaptive challenges of this initiative are effectively managed and that the authority needed to succeed is afforded.

Structural and Organizational Recommendation #1A: Office of Neighborhoods and Families.

Based on preliminary findings generated by this planning process, the General Manager included in the 2009/10 budget resources needed to create an Office of Neighborhoods and Families. The Board of Directors approved this budget decision. Resources to fund the Office's Director position came from transferring an existing Assistant Director of Recreation position into this Office. Additional resources were identified to fund a part time assistant and a small operating budget.

The Office of Neighborhoods and Families needs the authority to implement the recommendations and manage the adaptive challenges of this plan. To ensure this occurs, the Director should be directly answerable to the General Manager and also serve on the General Manager's Team of Department Heads and key leadership staff.

Staff to the Office of Neighborhoods and Families should be placed in a facility in the section of the town where the pilot neighborhood-based center will be located. After the pilot facility is fully functioning and the resources for a second are identified, the recommendation is that new staff focus on sustaining the original site while the Director and his assistant move to the next neighborhood-based center and begin its startup.

The committees also created a vision statement that combined all the vision statements of the individual committees into one. This combined vision should drive the newly formed Office of Neighborhood and Families.

Manchester CT, a vibrant community, built and connected by thriving neighborhoods where . . .

- *Feeling safe is the norm and being healthy is the culture;*
- *Learning is communal, celebrated and supported 24/7;*
- *All children are born healthy and flourish throughout their developmental years;*
- *All young people are viewed as resources and empowered to do what is needed to thrive;*
- *Everyone possesses the literacy and resources needed to achieve financial security; and,*
- *Every seed turns to flower.*

In order to ensure proper oversight, authority and connectedness, the Office of Neighborhoods and Families, in partnership with the Neighborhood Commission (Structural recommendation #1B) and other individuals and groups when appropriate, will be responsible for:

- Ensuring that the approved recommendations of the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan are implemented and revised accordingly;
- Providing access to timely and appropriate information, connections, support, skills and guidance to Manchester citizens;
- Increasing the ability of public and private citizen-related services to be fully coordinated and complimentary;
- Creating or coordinating services, supports and opportunities to allow Manchester citizens to become increasingly more knowledgeable, skilled and capable of self-sustainability, and more capable and willing to act as positive resources to the overall vitality of their neighborhood and the community;

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

- Building the capacity within the neighborhoods to ensure that citizens can play a greater role in the management of their neighborhoods;
- Bringing together professionals and citizens to build positive and proactive relationships and partnerships; and
- Keeping the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan flame burning brightly.

Structural and Organizational Recommendation #1B: Neighborhood Commission.

The vision for the Office of Neighborhoods and Families is “a vibrant community, built and connected by thriving neighborhoods”. A Neighborhood Commission provides a mechanism for shared leadership and increases the likelihood that this connectivity occurs. The Commission will provide joint mobilization around communitywide neighborhood strategies, grow capacity and promote relationship building.

In order for Manchester to fully support a neighborhood-based approach, the town should create a Neighborhood Commission with the responsibility to provide:

- Neighborhood policy guidance for the implementation of the recommendations in the CY&FMP,
- A method to identify potential resources & links to services, supports and opportunities,
- A representative body for/to neighborhoods, and,
- A vehicle to encourage participation in the overall effort of promoting thriving in the lives of all Manchester children, youth and families.

The Office of Neighborhoods and Families will serve as staff to the Neighborhood Commission.

Creating a Neighborhood Commission early in the Master Plan’s implementation stage allows citizens and professionals to immediately assume a leadership role, to build the relationships needed to ensure success, and to take charge of determining the best way for implementation to occur. Not all of the recommendations in the Master Plan will fall under the purview of the Neighborhood Commission; however, all those related to issues within neighborhoods, or that will be offered within neighborhoods, will.

While the makeup of this Commission should be negotiated between town and neighborhood leaders, other communities have constructed Commissions to include municipal representatives, neighborhood leaders, key service providers, and business leaders. Some Commissions are now including young adult representatives and even high school students. The critical aspect of all the successful Neighborhood Commissions is that they bring together government employees, other professionals and citizens. This allows for the broadest of perspectives. Other issues that the organizing group must consider include:

- How many members should be included – how will the Commission be representative and diverse without becoming too large?
- How will the Commission avoid potential competition with already existing neighborhood-based groups; e.g., block watches?
- How will appointments to the Commission be made without them becoming too political - are members elected, appointed or approved by the Board?
- Who will Commissioners answer to and where does the Commission fit in the Town’s organizational structure?
- How will meetings be run, who is in charge, and how will everyone’s voice be treated equally?
- What kind of preparation/training will Commissioners need to ensure success?

To ensure that the Neighborhood Commission has the clout needed to move the thriving agenda forward, both within the formal and informal systems that impact neighborhoods, it is recommended that the organizing group also address the following.

- The role of the Commission is defined by the charge provided by the Board of Directors. Part of

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

the charge should be to advise the Board on neighborhood related issues while also empowering the Neighborhood Commission to make certain decisions. The organizing group needs to identify these powers so they can be specifically enumerated in the resolution forming the Commission.

- The Commission will need to have some financial support. How much and from where the resources will come needs to be determined.
- A formal mechanism should be created to ensure that the Commission can and will work closely with the town's departments and the schools, i.e., how can the Commission have a meaningful stake in how community block grant funds get allocated?

The Manchester Neighborhood Commission will be responsible for neighborhood-related strategic issues, tactical issues, and capacity building. The following are some possible issues within each category:

The Strategic Issues:

- Coordinate among multiple layers of neighborhood organizations
- Plan comprehensively for neighborhood infrastructure recommendations
- Build connections among neighborhoods
- Share information among neighborhood serving organizations

The Tactical Issues:

- Develop a clear definition of a thriving neighborhood
- Recognize and reward contributors to the thriving neighborhoods agenda
- Address concerns about the equity of resource distribution
- Work in partnership with Manchester's educational institutions
- Learn from neighborhood successes

Strengthening Capacity for Action:

- Train residents to be skilled in the issues pertaining to neighborhood development and thriving
- Create independent neighborhood coalitions
- Increase engagement efforts of youth and adult citizens within the neighborhoods

Structural Recommendation #1C: Neighborhood College.

Manchester already provides citizens and employees multiple opportunities to learn about how municipal government functions. There are currently a Citizens' Government Academy, Employees' Government Academy, Youth Government Academy and a Police Academy. These academies provide participants with an insider's look at their police department and local government's operations. The experience provides opportunities to meet local officials, learn about challenges in providing public services and to see how new technologies are changing the way government does business. Through this process citizens often reduce their distrust of government and even find ways to be of service. These capacity building tools are very much aligned with the purpose of this Master Plan.

Rather than creating yet another academy, the Master Plan's recommendation is to create a task force that reviews how to better blend the desired outcomes of these multiple academies with the desired outcomes of a neighborhood-focused academy/college. The Plan suggests using the term "college" because the focus is far more on skill building than the other academies. The Neighborhood College would combine basic citizen education principles focusing on neighborhoods with the skill building needed to be better stewards of the neighborhoods in which they live.

The College would serve as a requirement for anyone interested in serving on the Neighborhood Commission. It will also be an invaluable tool for the leaders of neighborhood organizations and those simply interested in becoming better neighbors and stewards for where they live. Oversight would be the responsibility of the Office of Neighborhoods and Families as well as the Neighborhood Commission.

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

Neighborhood Colleges are a growing strategy in cities and counties aware of the importance neighborhoods play in the wellbeing of the entire community. How often classes are offered, how many attend, and what is taught varies from community to community. However, almost all offer sessions that focus on these topics:

- Understanding how local government is structured, how it makes its decisions, and how neighborhood leaders can effectively resource the services, supports and opportunities available within the Town (These issues are already offered within the Government Academies),
- How public safety systems work and how citizen/safety officer partnerships can enhance overall safety in neighborhoods (This is already offered within the Police Academy),
- Understanding from a neighborhood perspective how schools determine their enrollment, the curriculum and extra curricula services and opportunities, and how neighborhoods can form partnerships with the schools their children attend to improve educational outcomes, and
- How the budget and finance departments are structured, how they determine their recommended budgets, and how neighborhoods can play a proactive role in budget development.

The skill building sessions that are recommended for the Neighborhood Colleges include at a minimum:

- How to make meetings work;
- How to apply conflict resolution techniques to obtain better outcomes;
- How to work more effectively with the multiple diversities that exist in any neighborhood
- How to be a good facilitator;
- Becoming comfortable with public speaking and how to create informative and visually stimulating presentations;
- How to build youth and adult partnerships that will benefit from the “gifts” of each group; and
- How to write a grant and/or secure other neighborhood development resources.

Sessions would be taught by local government personnel and augmented by other community and school leaders and practitioners. For young people interested in this experience we recommend that the skill building component be a separate “college” experience that is part of the youth engagement recommendation made by the Youth Development committee. A Building Youth and Adult Partnerships session would be a joint youth and adult session.

Structural Recommendation #1D: Neighborhood Organizations

A good way to increase the likelihood that neighborhoods can be incubators for thriving is to help them organize around the issue of thriving.

The recommendation is to empower residents to develop neighborhood organizations that will primarily focus on building neighborhoods that everyone is proud to call home and to ensure every child, young person and family in their neighborhood is on a journey toward thriving.

The Board of Directors should legitimize neighborhood organizations by helping them to organize appropriately – providing a “how to” manual. Forming a formal organization, open to everyone in the neighborhood, focused on thriving and willing to partner with government and others, will ensure effectiveness and support. This type of partnership will be more easily valued if the neighborhood organizations are in fact working to increase thriving in the neighborhoods. A good way to reduce tension between citizens and government is to allow citizens a more appropriate way to surface concerns (rather than before the Board in a time limited presentation that is usually out of context).

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

If, and how, each neighborhood decides to structure their group will be up to the residents of that neighborhood, but those who choose to form one should focus attention on ensuring their membership is representative of the diversity of its residents, with special attention paid to including youth, young adults, and elders. It will also be important to have representation from those businesses and organizations that provide services and supports to the neighborhood. Hopefully, each neighborhood that creates a neighborhood organization will have as many residents as possible build their skills by participating in the Neighborhood College. To be effective, the neighborhood organizations will need to:

- Take the lead in defining the quality of life they want within their neighborhood and explore what can be done to increase the likelihood that all children, youth and families thrive;
- Ensure that their neighborhood is connecting with the resources needed to implement their ideas, e.g., gardening materials and know-how from other community groups that are currently involved in the community garden process, programs for snow removal for the elderly, etc.;
- Give equal voice to all those living in the neighborhood, helping to ensure interested individuals have the opportunity to be trained on how to facilitate neighborhood gatherings and be leaders within the neighborhood;
- Build strong working partnerships with the Office of Neighborhoods and Families and the Neighborhood Commission;
- Serve as a receiving and dissemination point for information from Town leaders; and
- Help ensure that the neighborhood “keeps in touch with itself”, including tracking and recognizing neighbors moving out, moving in, new babies being born, and celebrating the accomplishments of children and teens in the neighborhood.

Structural Recommendation #1E: Neighborhood-based Centers.

Once the Office of Neighborhoods and Families, the Neighborhood Commission and the Neighborhood College are operational, it is recommended that neighborhood-based centers be created that help to support neighborhoods focusing on building their capacity while increasing the likelihood that all their children, youth and families are thriving.

This recommendation follows the other neighborhood-based recommendations because the development of these centers should come through a citizen driven process as opposed to one that is created solely by local government. The Neighborhood Commissioners, trained within the Neighborhood College, and in partnership with the Office of Neighborhoods and Families, will be the best group to tackle the development of these centers.

The following suggestions are designed to start the conversations about the neighborhood-based center. They are based on the work of the Master Plan’s action committees and the Core Team.

- There was an agreement that the Town could be divided into four relatively equal (by size and number of residents) quadrants using the intersecting streets, Main and Center. Those who participated in the plan believe that four centers, one in each quadrant, would be cost effective (as opposed to one in each neighborhood), represent and bring together a greater diversity of citizens, and be manageable.
- Since one of the Infrastructure recommendations is to phase in strategies gradually, it is recommended that there be a pilot neighborhood-based center. Most believed that the logical quadrant to begin with is the Southeast. The SE quadrant is identified by these boundaries:

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

Main Street to the west, Center Street to the north, the Town of Bolton on the East, and the Town of East Glastonbury on the south. The SE quadrant was selected as the pilot area because:

- There is a rich diversity of residents living throughout this quadrant;
 - The neighborhoods within the quadrant represent three different economic levels;
 - Bennet school is located in this quadrant, as well as three elementary schools; and
 - The Office of Neighborhoods and Families will be located in the Spruce Street Fire House.
- Expansion into other quadrants should occur only after the pilot center is fully operational and there has been sufficient time to learn the lessons that experience will offer. Expansion is obviously dependent on circumstances that exist when growth is possible, but under the current thinking it is recommended that for planning purposes the time that should be allocated to get a neighborhood-based center up and fully operational is three years. Each center should be located in existing buildings, eliminating the cost related to new construction, but more importantly it will make a statement to the neighborhoods in the quadrant that there is a commitment to better using the resources that already exist. The existing buildings can be either vacant buildings, or ones where other services are currently being offered, but where there is room to add a “neighborhood-based center” approach. Examples might be an elementary school, recreation center, Manchester Community College, etc.
 - Neighborhood-based centers can serve as one-stop centers, creating and providing a variety of services, supports and opportunities, all designed to increase thriving. Those living in that quadrant along with the staff overseeing the center will determine what is provided in each center. Each center should serve as a resource center for the residents in that quadrant of the Town. It should have a blend of Town and private services, supports and opportunities, and training related to the seven aspects of the planning process. Since some neighborhood-based centers may not be able to house all the desired services, or the center is simply not convenient to some residents, the concept of viewing the neighborhood-based center as a “hub” while using other locations as satellites had a lot of support. Wherever the center is located within the quadrant, it would serve as the administrative arm and resource center, and provide some learning/training/meeting/service opportunities. Staff and residents would then identify other existing facilities that could serve as satellite centers for certain opportunities. These facilities could include schools, recreation centers, libraries, places of business, MCC, government offices, etc.
 - Each facility’s location and its climate are as important as its offerings. The location must be as neutral as possible. Everyone in the quadrant must have access and feel safe using the facility, both day and night. The individuals visiting the neighborhood-based centers must believe that it provides a culture and ambience that will support and help them or their families. Part of this will be created by a shared leadership approach; one where youth and adult residents and professionals blend their skills to create a truly neighborhood driven facility. Each neighborhood-based center will empower residents of the quadrant being served to select the services, supports and opportunities that will be offered in their center. Further, residents may, where appropriate, assist in the provision of such services, supports and opportunities and, in so doing, will come to see the center as truly their own.
 - The outcomes for each neighborhood-based center should be as equally targeted at the thriving of the neighborhoods located within the center’s target quadrant, as the individuals and/or families who enter the facility.

The following page presents a visual representation of the neighborhood-related services within this plan.

Organizational Overview of Manchester, CT Neighborhood-Based Approaches and Thriving Centers

Manchester CT, a vibrant community, built and connected by thriving neighborhoods where . . .

- *Feeling safe is the norm and being healthy is the culture;*
- *Learning is communal, celebrated and supported 24/7;*
- *All children are born healthy and flourish throughout their developmental years;*
- *All young people are viewed as resources and empowered to do what is needed to thrive;*
- *Everyone possesses the literacy and resources needed to achieve financial security; and,*
- *Every seed turns to flower.*

Office of Neighborhood and Families (1A)

Staff support to CY&FMP's
implementation and the

- Neighborhood Commission
- Neighborhood College
- Raising of additional funds
- Neighborhood Organizations
- Opening & oversight of neighborhood-based centers

Neighborhood Commission (1B)

- Blend Town employees, - and youth and adult leaders
- Provide policy guidance for initiative
- Identify resources & links
- Representative body to/for neighborhoods
- Encourage participation for initiative

Neighborhood College & Resource Center (1C)

- Build the skills of neighborhood champions
- Create partnerships between municipality & neighborhood champions
- Build community capacity
- Provide neighborhood Tool Kit and connections to Manchester information systems
- "How to" manuals and access to "Best Practice" information

Neighborhood-based Centers (1E)

- One-stop centers in quadrants/neighborhoods
- Located in existing buildings
- Operations and staffing come from existing resources
- Each center has a blend of town and private services, supports and opportunities, i.e.,
 - Early childhood development
 - Youth development & engagement
 - Neighborhood development
 - Learning opportunities
 - Financial literacy
 - School/community partnerships
- CY&FMP combined vision is tool for measuring the centers' success
- Facility's climate as important as its offerings
- Center outcomes are equally targeted at individuals/families and the neighborhood itself
- Center leadership will include youth and adult residents and professionals
- Each center empowered to select its services, supports and opportunities

Neighborhood Organizations (1D)

- Inclusive groups of residents, businesses & organizations
- Define own boundaries
- Select own level of participation
- Take the lead in defining quality of life & thriving for their neighborhood

Structural Infrastructure Recommendation #2: Authentic Youth Civic Engagement Initiative.

The Youth Development Committee recommends that young people have the training, opportunity and support they need to become communitywide resources. To ensure that this recommendation can be realized, there also needs to be an infrastructure recommendation that creates the structures needed to ensure every young person in Manchester has the opportunity to make the community a better place for all who live here. To this end, three ingredients must be present and well functioning to ensure success: 1) the basic principles of Authentic Youth Civic Engagement (AYCE) will need to be applied, 2) there needs to be a method to ensure all young people can contribute in ways that appeal to their passions and are aligned with their abilities, and 3) there needs to be a communitywide shift in how adults view young people. All this begins with a single vision that will drive Manchester's support of a more authentic and communitywide youth civic engagement effort. The recommended vision is, "Manchester, where young people have the opportunities, training and support needed to be meaningful contributors to the common good of the community."

Manchester will create the infrastructure needed to ensure it has a functioning and sustainable Authentic Youth Civic Engagement initiative that:

- Increases the opportunities available to all interested Manchester youth,
- Creates and provides the training needed to prepare young people and adults to work effectively together and to prepare engaged young people to be successful in their AYCE opportunities,
- Shifts adult attitudes to view young people more as resources and less as merely recipients, and
- Builds the support needed to make this initiative successful and sustainable.

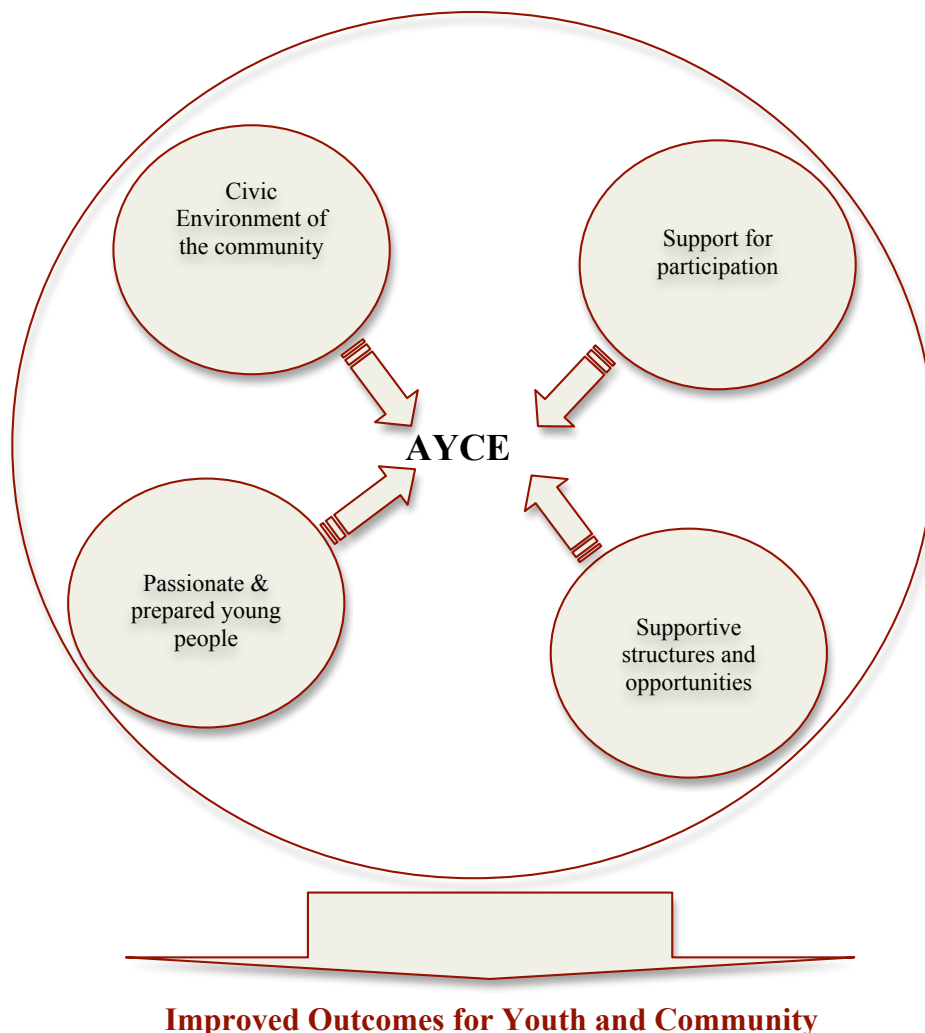
Successful AYCE models have five elements. The more successfully each element functions, the more effective the AYCE initiative will be.

1. Municipal, educational and organizational leaders, both elected and hired, must view the meaningful engagement of young people as a significant contribution to their learning and to the success of the community and their institutions. They must agree that it is important that their employees and the public believe this as well, and they must work hard to build support for the idea as a valuable tool in the solution to "youth problems" is creating a supportive and caring community, not just 'fixing kids'. There needs to be an understanding of the importance of investing in all youth as part of the solution, rather than only labeling and focusing on youth at risk and seeing them as the problem. Manchester's Board of Directors and staff must be willing to create the environment within which AYCE occurs. With this visionary kind of leadership, others within the community will quickly follow. The Board of Directors has already created a Youth Commission. This was a bold first step towards creating the infrastructure needed to ensure the success of an AYCE initiative.
2. There needs to be a wide variety of adult allies willing to support young people as resources within their neighborhoods, schools, youth serving organizations, and the community as a whole. Youth may be prepared and willing to serve, but unless adults support this participation it will rarely happen.
3. There needs to be as many opportunities for youth to serve as there are young people wanting to serve. Manchester's Youth Services Bureau is by regulation the appropriate group to oversee a communitywide AYCE structure, to help organizations and groups form partnerships with young people, and to create the kinds of opportunities young people will value and that produce meaningful

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

outcomes. The YSB also oversees the Youth Commission and, therefore, has a ready-made youth and adult partnership that can serve as the model to other interested organizations.

4. There needs to be passionate and prepared young people who are eagerly willing to engage themselves in the life of their community, neighborhood, school or organization. Young people join groups, volunteer and gain passion for their work when they learn to know and trust a group of caring adults who “get it”. Youth need skill building, guidance and support to be effective, not adults who dictate how things will be or abdicate all responsibility to them. When youth know elected officials by name, meet regularly with their principals, form personal relationships with adult allies, and have the opportunity to give honest feedback, their commitment increases.
5. And finally, there needs to be an awareness that the primary reason to more meaningfully engage young people is not only because it will be good for the young person, but because it will produce better outcomes throughout the community. The following diagram provides a visual of the elements of an AYCE structure.



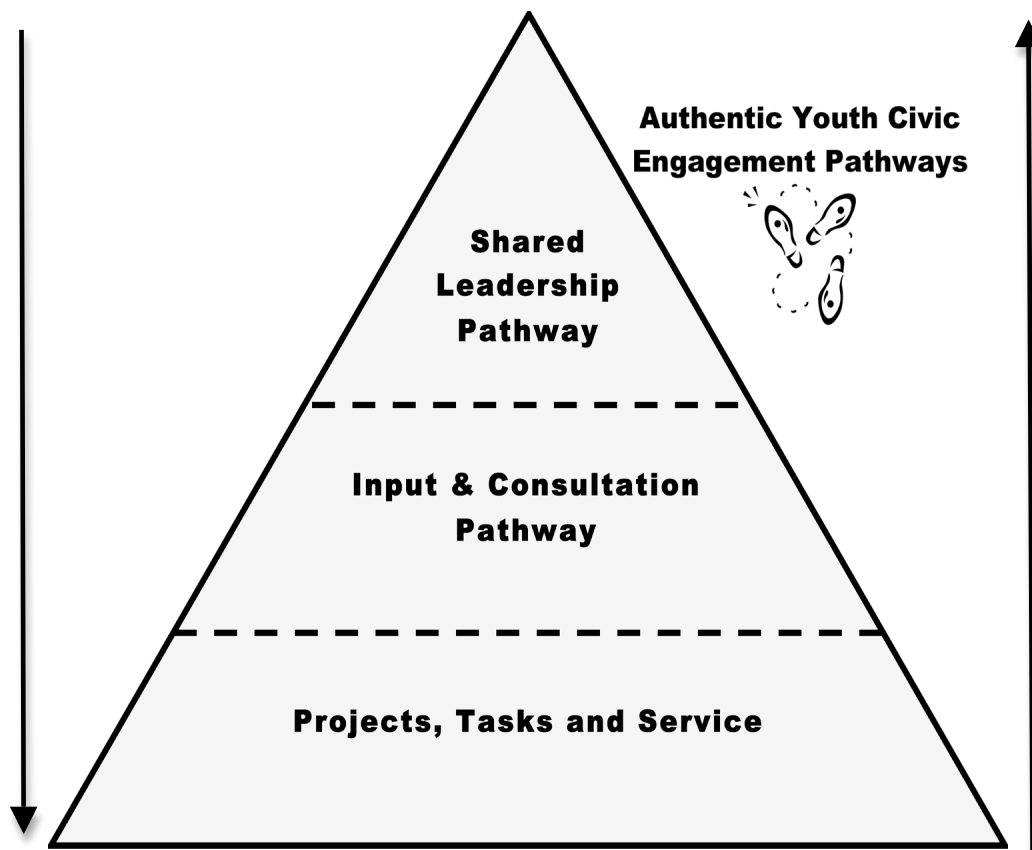
Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

Engaging young people must be an inclusive process. A communitywide youth civic engagement initiative requires participation that is representative of the diversity of Manchester's youth. All youth should have the opportunity to have meaningful roles in government, neighborhoods, organizational and school-based leadership groups as well as to benefit from service learning opportunities in all of their areas of study. It will also be important that youth aren't forced to participate because it will be good for them. Sentencing a youth to community service does a disservice to both those youth and to the youth engagement system. This said, we recognize that young people who may have been labeled as high-risk, deviant, or who have been otherwise negatively stereotyped must have the same access to these opportunities as other young people. Municipalities, schools and service organizations must start focusing more on where a young person wants to go, rather than where he or she has been.

Within any civic engagement opportunity, people choose to participate at varying levels, depending on interest, availability, skill, or the ultimate goal of the activity in which the participant is engaged. For young people, it is no different. Yet most adults limit their vision of teenagers' levels of interest and their potential to help others or impact the community.

While no one ACYE model should be replicated in Manchester, the Hampton, VA model is presented as a guideline for those implementing these recommendations. Hampton's model is the most researched and the most comprehensive and effective AYCE model in the country. Yet the model is based on a simple concept, with multiple engagement pathways indicating how and where young people can contribute.

The three pathways, beginning with the base, describe an increase in the complexity of the roles of young people as engaged citizens and address the corresponding potential for impact on community change. The diagram below is a visual of the triangle and its pathways.



Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

Projects, Tasks, and Service

The myriad volunteer activities available to young people to be helpful and serve others constitute the first pathway of the triangle. Manchester already has a host of these opportunities, scattered throughout the youth-serving and civic institutions. They are short-term, often “hands on” activities requiring few specific skills and minimal training. The Projects Pathway can offer an almost unlimited variety of options for participation with specific issues that offer a positive experience to individuals. Young people participating in this pathway can pass out campaign literature, collect canned goods for a food drive, conduct surveys, organize neighborhood clean-ups, and recruit their peers to get involved. They are making a difference by giving of their time and talent or providing a needed service to the community.

Input and Consultation

This pathway is an advisory function. Here young people enhance the decision-making and problem solving of adults by adding a “youth voice” to processes usually dominated by an adult perspective. Although adults ultimately maintain the authority to decide, the unique perspective provided by young people impacts those decisions. Advisory opportunities can be short- or long-term commitments, generally requiring skills in listening, presentation, and analysis of the issues in question, which may be broad or specific in nature. Where Project Pathway activities often impact an individual who is the recipient of a community service, Input Pathway activities usually impact groups or organizations that benefit from the input provided. Youth-serving organizations, schools, and local government may provide opportunity for advisory-based engagement in the form of focus groups, advisory boards, “speakouts”, and opportunities to assist in data analysis and program development.

Shared Leadership

This pathway offers the greatest potential for impact on community change. Here youth work “shoulder to shoulder” with adults, sharing responsibility for activity and outcome. Many take on leadership roles far beyond those normally afforded others of their age, thus changing community norms of who can be “at the table”. This type of engagement carries a greater need for skill and commitment, and usually implies a focus on broader areas of impact—policy, strategic planning, systems change. Young people in the Shared Leadership Pathway may work within systems as board members or paid employees, or outside of systems as lobbyists or activists. Wherever they choose to focus their energies, they become part of deliberative processes focused on the decision-making that impacts the lives and wellbeing of youth and their communities.

Each pathway is an important element in an overall system of youth engagement. Whether the system encompasses an entire community, or is reflected within an organization or a grass roots initiative, the same principles of the triangle apply. The arrow on the left side of the diagram points to an increase in potential opportunities offered and the corresponding number of potential participants. The arrow on the right indicates the increased potential for community change and the corresponding need for higher levels of skill. While the number of individuals tends to decrease with opportunities further up the triangle, the potential for impact increases.

As the schools, neighborhoods, youth-serving organizations and local government want to increase the number of youth involved, they would be well served to include all three pathways of activity. Not only does this increase the possibility of attracting the greatest variety and number of youth, it increases the potential for impact on multiple issues of social concern. Within almost any topic of interest to youth, there can be a place for everyone and a variety of roles that contribute to community change.

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

Finally, it will be critical that the adults in the community, especially any who want to authentically engage young people, are able to shift their attitudes towards young people. The field of youth engagement has been influenced significantly by the writing of William Lofquist, longtime proponent of community organizing on behalf of youth development. Lofquist presents a “Spectrum of Attitudes” describing a continuum of relationships, the attitudes of which affect the behaviors of one group of people toward another. The three relationships—Object, Recipient, Resource—correspond to a range of possible attitudes—particularly attitudes adults may hold toward young people. While all three attitudes can be appropriate depending on circumstances, the choice of one over another in a youth civic engagement initiative can result in young people feeling isolated and disenfranchised, or included and valued.

According to Lofquist, when adults view young people as Objects, the adult attitude suggests that they “know what’s best for the young person” and have the right to determine the circumstances under which these youth function. For example, in public safety situations an Object attitude is necessary when an adult sets limits that will protect a child. Lofquist describes the Recipient attitude as one in which an adult has something of value and believes that providing it to a young person will be good for him or her. Job training programs exemplify an appropriate use of the Recipient attitude when young people must learn a particular skill or portion of knowledge from the experienced adult. An adult with a Resource attitude believes young people bring something of value to a situation, such as a neighborhood planning effort, and that including them will enhance the adult’s efforts. Approaching youth with a Resource attitude enhances many community situations; however, problems arise when adults are mired in one of the other approaches and are unable to switch to new behaviors.

In the first two attitudes, the focus of the interaction is on the wellbeing of the young person – adults working on behalf of youth. In contrast, the objective of viewing a young person as a Resource is increased effectiveness, problem solving and wellbeing of a group, community or targeted situation. Personal development and enhanced self-esteem of the young person, rather than the focus, tend to surface as byproducts of the experience of being treated as a Resource. If this infrastructure recommendation is to be realized, it will be critical to help adults understand these different attitudes and increase their ability to embrace and apply the resource attitude when appropriate.

“Hope is a state of mind, not of the world.
Hope, in this deep and powerful sense, is not the same as joy
that things are going well or willingness to invest in
enterprises that are obviously heading for success, but rather
an ability to work for something because it is good.”

~ *Vaclav Havel*

CONNECTIVITY AND CITIZEN COALITIONS

Probably the most important, and yet the most difficult shift needed to improve the likelihood that Manchester's children, youth and families thrive, is the one that changes how people interact around the issue. Effective coalitions are a key to sustainable change, especially if they have the support of community leadership, and if they come together to enhance what already exists,

Three coalition-building steps have already occurred during the planning process for this Children, Youth and Family Master Plan that can be built on during the implementation phase.

1. A common and unifying vision was identified—"all children, youth and families will thrive".
2. The willingness and effectiveness of diverse groups of people working together to find common ground and more effectively addressing these issues was demonstrated.
3. An agreement on a definition of thriving was adopted.

Now, new configurations of individuals and groups are needed to help implement and maintain the work to date and to ensure the occurrence of shifts in thinking, behavior and beliefs occurs. The following coalitions are designed to support implementation efforts rather than to drive them.

Connectivity and Coalition Recommendation #1A: Service Providers/Citizens.

Since so many of the committees' recommendations focus on increasing the knowledge, skills and abilities of citizens, creating coalitions of service providers and citizens to ensure the success of these recommendations will be critical.

There are very few examples of successful partnerships where professionals and citizens come together to address issues equally and for a common good. Having a collective vision "Manchester, where all children, youth and families thrive" will require a new dedication by service providers to work together with their youth and adult consumers as well as with other citizens, businesses and the faith community.

All children, youth and family service providers are critically important to the success of this thriving initiative. But thriving is an adaptive challenge - one that requires all stakeholders to change how they think, behave and believe about the issue of thriving. Therefore, they will need to demonstrate a willingness to try new experiments, to apply new ways of doing business and to change some behaviors. Groups committed to maintaining the status quo will be clear impediments to moving forward.

The Office of Neighborhoods and Families will work with service providers to find mutually beneficial partnerships between professional service providers, businesses, the faith community and the youth and adult citizens that use or could use those services. These partnerships will focus on finding new and creative approaches to reduce unnecessary barriers to the broad community-changing outcomes needed to move more citizens toward thriving. These coalitions must produce tangible outcomes; meeting to meet is not sufficient.

For a coalition like this to be successful, service providers will need to be willing and capable of recruiting diverse representatives from both the community and from those they serve. These kinds of coalitions are not common so all participants - providers and citizens - will need to learn how to work effectively together. Since young people will be at the table, everyone will need training in effective youth and adult partnerships. Cultural competency skills will also need to be provided. Part of this process should include teaching community members and service recipients how to advocate for their rights, even though this is often not what providers want to happen.

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

Young people and working parents usually do not have the opportunities to meet during the day, so service providers will need to be willing to meet at times that are convenient to the other stakeholders in the coalition, which usually means in the evening.

Service providers will need to learn better ways to utilize the new technologies when trying to involve young people, e.g., tweeter, Facebook, MySpace, Wiki, etc. Youth will also need to be part of the developmental phase of any coalition if they are expected to remain active and involved.

This type of coalition will also require that service organizations, (non-profit, for profit, educational and governmental) be more flexible in how they support and reward their professional staff for taking risks, trying new experiments and responding to new trends and information. Supportive organizations demonstrate a willingness to be inclusive and demonstrate a willingness to move people around based on need, rather than job description.

Many citizens and recipients of services are never asked to participate and, therefore, providers have no idea how they will respond. Since they have no experience at decision making tables, many stakeholders will be cautious and may feel unsafe. It is the providers' responsibility to help them overcome these tensions.

Finally, it will be important that professionals are not the only ones who select the issues to be addressed. Issues should be chosen by the entire group with preference given to the non-service members of the group.

Connectivity and Coalition Recommendation #1B: Municipalities and School Districts.

While the municipality and the educational institutions within Manchester have their own charters and elected or appointed officials, the fact remains that the vision of "Manchester, where all children, youth and families thrive" cannot be accomplished without the schools and the Town working together.

In spite of many examples in which the Town and school system work well together, there is also a history of them not struggling to find common ground. The most public adversarial scenarios often surface because of the state regulations requiring two separately elected Boards, the tension over the after-hours use of school buildings, politics and disagreements over budget allocations, and union contracts which often make creative problem-solving more difficult.

However, the entire foundation of this planning process was inclusion, so it will remain important to approach the implementation of the recommendations with that same willingness to be inclusive. While the oversight of the plan is the responsibility of the Town of Manchester, it is imperative that the schools assist when appropriate and especially when there is a clear win-win possibility.

The recommendation is to find the aspects of this plan where the outcomes will have a clear, equally relevant impact on the municipal and educational systems, and to work hard to share resources to make those outcomes a reality. Almost all of the committee recommendations would have some benefit, both for the Town and the schools. The developmental asset information is one area that generated excitement and support from both Boards and may be a good place to start by exploring ways to address assets that could be focused on together. An informed public, one that has been given a non-partisan look at the issues, would support efforts asking their schools and the Town to work together on the issues within the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan.

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

Identify the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan recommendations or strategies and/or Developmental Assets[®] indicators that, if successfully addressed, would have the most positive and direct impact on the outcomes of the Town of Manchester and the Manchester Board of Education. Create a joint task force to explore the best ways to pool resources (fiscal, physical and personnel) to ensure that the strategies can be implemented and the outcomes reached.

It is important to remember that when parents and young people are properly prepared to be effective representatives about any issue that impacts them, they become incredibly important spokespersons for that issue. With the skill building that will occur in the Neighborhood College and in the Authentic Youth Civic Engagement initiatives, the community will be building citizen capacity to impact change. Having significant numbers of well-trained citizens doing the essential research and homework, and using the media effectively, will allow those impacted by an issue to increase their influence over that issue.

Connectivity and Coalition Recommendation #1C: Building Developmental Assets[®].

The valuable data provided by the Developmental Assets[®] survey (see pages 14-15 in this plan) should not be wasted. In a society that is so prone to focusing on problems rather than strengths, creating a group to hold the focus on what's working for young people, and to explore ways that local systems can do more to build assets, will be critical. While the data generated by the survey indicates that Manchester surpassed the national averages, there is still significant room for improvement. As one Youth Commissioner indicated when he reviewed the results, "If I brought home grades as bad as this, I would be grounded for a year! Who is going to ground the leaders of the community?"

The research is very clear: the fewer assets a person has in his or her life, the more likely he or she is to participate in high risk behaviors. The greater the number of assets in a young person's life the more likely it is that person will thrive. With the Town's thriving vision, a coalition that markets this reality and that helps individuals and groups to find ways they can build assets will be critical.

In many communities a partnership between parents, young people and professionals drives the building of developmental assets; the recommendation is that Manchester uses this type of coalition as well.

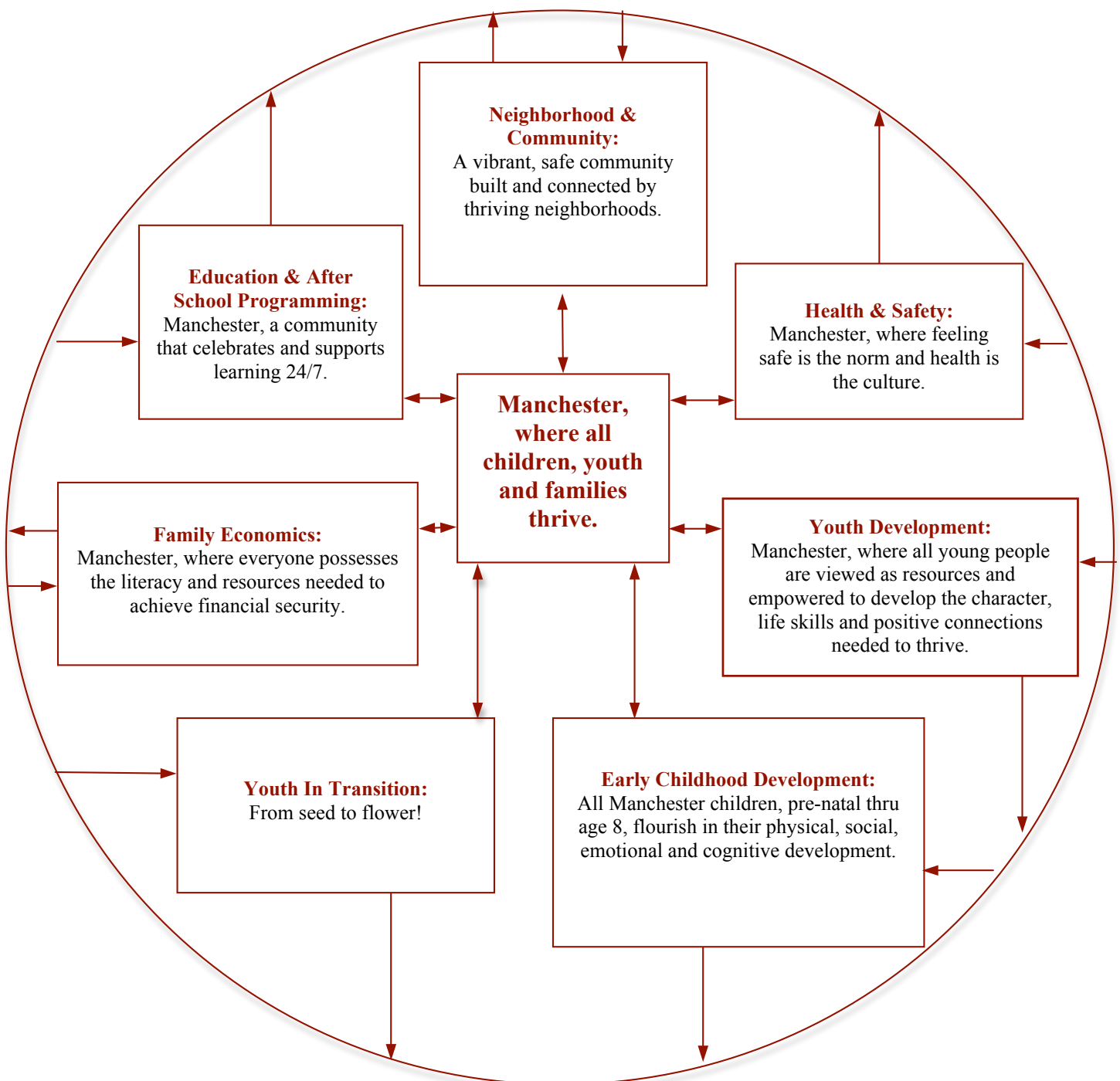
Build a coalition of parents, young people and professionals dedicated to shifting how Manchester's citizens view young people and creating an ever-increasing number of asset building strategies that will prepare individuals, organizations and entire systems to become better asset builders.

A focus on building assets will help shift the negative attitudes many have about the Town, schools, and young people in general. Creating a group that includes Town and school representatives, parents and young people increases the likelihood that the coalition will be multidisciplinary and demographically and culturally diverse. The Youth Services Bureau (YSB), should partner with the Office of Neighborhoods and Families (ON&F) as staff to this coalition. To begin with, the Office of Neighborhoods and Families and the Youth Services Bureau should incorporate the developmental assets into everything they do so they can easily model these actions to other groups interested in doing the same.

Since this plan is creating a neighborhood-based approach to many of the identified issues, it is logical that the developmental asset coalition should also explore efforts to be neighborhood/quadrant based, especially focusing on the elementary school districts.

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

This figure captures the connectedness of the planning process. The center box contains the vision to which all the work was connected. The other seven boxes contain the vision created by each committee. Each committee's vision is also connected to the other six in a variety of ways. Some have similar strategies and some created strategies that would support those of another committee. The result is a connected plan rather than seven unconnected programs or initiatives.



Committee Recommendations

- ✓ Health & Safety**
- ✓ Family Economics**
- ✓ Youth Development**
- ✓ Education & After School
Programming & Youth in
Transition**
- ✓ Neighborhoods & Community**
- ✓ Early Childhood Development**

HEALTH & SAFETY STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION

PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTED

The Health and Safety Committee's primary task was to explore how the issues of health and safety are impacting the lives of Manchester's children, youth and families, and to discover what needs to be done to ensure that these issues have as little negative impact as possible on their ability to thrive. Lynne Gustafson and Sue Valade were the co-facilitators for this focus area and the following citizens joined them in contributing to the success of this committee's efforts:

Anna Doroghazi

Anna Ebor

Jeff Foran

Royden D'Souza

Barbara Quigley

Amanda Whyte

Ashley Mills

John Wilson

Barbara Pettijohn

Stafi Dalal

Elaine Kahner

Rhonda Dannehy

In addition to the insights offered by the rich diversity of those who served on this committee the following contacts and information contributed significantly to their decision-making:

- LaResse Harvey, CY&FMP Intern provided the committee with staff support and research.
- Robin McHaelan, Executive Director of True Colors, met with the committee to help members better understand how health and safety issues impact the young people who identify themselves, either publically or privately, as Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual or Transgender.
- Committee members collected and reviewed the following data:
 - Safety data from the police department and public schools. The data showed both a snapshot of the current safety realities and also trend data over the past three years,
 - Obesity rates in Head Start programs and kindergarten enrollment,
 - [A Profile of Manchester Youth: A Report on Their Development](#),
 - STD rates among teens, and
 - The Developmental Assets® report.
- Committee members also explored what programs, services and other health and safety offerings were currently available from the Police, Health Department and the Board of Education.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Health and Safety Committee explored the impact on the thriving indicators of the services, supports and opportunities provided through the Town's health and safety networks. The committee also explored the perceptions held by the Town's youth regarding their health and safety. These perceptions were provided in part by the results from the Developmental Assets® survey. Based on these findings, and the expertise and experiences of those serving on the committee, the committee set about the task of finding ways to improve or expand what was already working to better ensure all children, youth and families will thrive. The committee's final strategic recommendation connects strategies to the building of thriving indicators, while recognizing that success is dependent on the support of those in leadership roles within the political, law enforcement and health services arenas.

COMMITTEE VISION

The H&S Committee created the following vision statement from which all their efforts were driven and against which all their decisions were measured.

***"Manchester, where
feeling safe is the norm
and health is the culture."***

Healthy and Safety Recommendation: Supported by both policy and process, Manchester will increase its support and promotion of thriving by increasing the scope and authority of the current Healthier U Initiative.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The data collected by the H&S committee indicated that Manchester is for the most part a safe place to live, work, learn and play, but there are sections of Manchester that are less safe than others. Unfortunately, the perception that Manchester is not a safe community, is due in part to the media. The Superior Court of Hartford County is in Manchester, so media reports on cases adjudicated in this court use the byline Manchester, giving the impression that the crime actually happened in Manchester. Also, when one crime is reported repeatedly, it can appear that the crime is not one incident, but several.

The review of the Developmental Assets[®] survey, the presentation by True Colors, and the experiences of youth on our committee indicated that Manchester High School is providing a safe environment for students to learn. However, high school students reported that there is a lack of no/low cost programs, other than sports, for teens and families. For example, programs involving the arts are expensive and not accessible to all Manchester residents who wish to participate. When young people, especially teens, do not have a variety of healthy and safe choices within which to express their creativity and explore their passions, the likelihood that they will become involved in higher risk behaviors and choices increases.

In the area of health, the committee discovered a lack of health education within the schools that is developmentally appropriate and sequential. The Manchester Health Department has several health initiatives, but most of these are grant based and when the monies are gone so are the programs.

The review of the Healthier U program noted that there are several effective programs already implemented by the Manchester Health Department. There are wellness programs for Town employees, health awareness programs for the public, and a program to reduce obesity in the school system. Representatives from the Parks & Recreation and Health Departments, with support from the Youth Services Bureau and the Board of Education, primarily manage this initiative.

In order to build on a strategy that already is showing some successes, the H&S committee believed that Healthier U could be enhanced to address more health issues, including safety issues, reaching more individuals, solidifying partnerships, and broadening the diversity of those who are part of its governance. Therefore, the following strategies are being recommended.

Action Strategy #1: Expansion of Healthier U Committee.

The oversight and planning committee of Healthier U will be expanded to ensure a greater diversity of viewpoints regarding the health and safety issues impacting children, youth and families. The committee recommends that the oversight and planning committee be expanded to include youth, safety and health professionals and other members of the community. Members should include, but not be limited to, parents, neighborhood leaders (both renters and owners), middle and high school aged youth (Manchester High, East Catholic, Cheney Tech, Bennet Academy, Illing Middle, Manchester Regional Academy, and Bentley), business leaders (Chamber of Commerce, local small and chain business owners, and mall representatives), educational leaders, city employees, and representatives of the faith community. They will merge with the Town's health and safety professionals to create a comprehensive view of what needs to be done to improve the health and safety needs of Manchester's children, youth and families. The committee further

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

To ensure that the Healthier U oversight and planning committee is manageable, the H&S committee recommends that it be divided into four subcommittees. These subcommittees would focus on generic health issues, generic safety issues, specific youth health and/or safety issues, and specific family health and/or safety issues. Each of these sub-committees will have professional leadership, identify the issue they will address each year, and have the authority to raise and apply additional resources as needed to accomplish their agenda. The H&S committee recommends that the sub-committees tackle only one issue a year. When possible and appropriate, sub-committees can and should work together on a joint issue.

Selected representatives from the four sub-committees will meet every six months to ensure that duplication is non-existent, that there is alignment with strategies, that no strategy negatively impacts another sub-group's efforts, and that whenever possible funding and fundraising is merged. The Director of the Neighborhoods and Families Office will facilitate these twice a year meetings. These joint meetings should be at the beginning of the planning process and at the half-year mark to evaluate progress and the likelihood of success.

Action strategy #2: Healthier U focus.

The issues to be addressed by the Healthier U sub-committees should be aligned to the thriving definition and, therefore, be ones that have the greatest likelihood of helping all children, youth or parents to grow towards becoming:

- Nurturing and responsible family members
- Effective communicators
- People who make healthy choices
- Involved community members and responsible global citizens
- Innovative problem solvers and appliers of a creative process
- Exemplary workers and life-long learners
- Caring and ethical individuals
- People with a positive sense of self

*“The best way to produce healthy children is to produce good families. It may come close to being the only way.”
~ Author William Raspberry*

While many of the above bullets would not appear to everyone as health or safety related, research indicates that when individuals are moving to a more thriving lifestyle they are far more capable and willing to create a culture of health for themselves and their family, to put themselves in the places of most potential, and to create a norm for being safe. Therefore, it is recommended that the sub-committees resist the temptation to address the more traditional health and safety issues and focus more on the adaptive challenges of moving a child, young person or family to a more thriving lifestyle.

The following are offered only as examples of issues and approaches that the Healthier U sub-committees may tackle. These are offered only to demonstrate possibilities. Each committee must determine the issues they want to tackle and the strategies they will use to move to action.

- **Generic health issue:** Carry out a town-wide campaign that advertises easily avoidable unhealthy choices/behaviors and promotes other behaviors/choices that are equally desirable, but pose a lower health risk, i.e., instead of watching TV when out of school, he or she could canvass the neighborhood to find odd jobs that people will pay to have done; instead of simply believing that college isn't for them, visit a campus to check it out, etc.
- **Generic safety issue:** Organize a town-wide campaign that provides information on how to increase personal safety. Using a variety of media outlets, highlight a different “How To Be Safe” message every week. “How to be Safe” when you're in the sun, “How to be Safe” when driving in the snow/ice, “How to be Safe” from credit card fraud, “How to be Safe” when you have been drinking, etc.

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

- **Youth specific safety issue:** Work with the Youth Commission to identify when and where in Manchester young people feel the most safe and where they feel the least safe. Then, in a partnership between the Police Department and Youth Commission, create strategies that bring the elements of safe places to those that are perceived as less safe. Youth and adults from different parts of the Town can be trained to implement these strategies.
- **Family specific health issue:** Building on the recommendation from the Early Childhood Development committee, the Healthier U initiative will assist in the creation of a curriculum that will better prepare non-professional childcare providers to incorporate more strategies for increasing thriving principles and practices into their childcare routines.

Action strategy #3: Link Healthier U to neighborhood-based centers.

The enhanced model for the Healthier U Initiative shall be linked to the newly formed neighborhood-based centers as they are created. The neighborhood-based centers, especially when all four are operational, will be able to better focus the strategies generated by the Healthier U Initiative's oversight and planning committee and its sub-committees. Because different ethnicities and cultures tend to group together, the centers located closest to these enclaves of diversity will be best capable of effectively addressing their more specific needs. The centers will also provide wonderful meeting places that reduce transportation concerns and increase comfort levels based on familiarity of staff and the identification with the smaller, more familiar community.

Action strategy #4: Reinstate health curriculums in the schools.

The health curriculum should be reinstated to the Manchester Public Schools System. This planning effort and its recommendations have no direct impact on decisions made by the Board of Education. However, the committee strongly believes that health and safety are so closely linked to thriving that the community must find ways to support the Board of Education's efforts to increase and enhance their health and safety curricula. The following are recommendations to show this support:

- Form a coalition with other like-minded communities within Connecticut to encourage the state to include health and safety questions in the standardized tests required of all students. This will increase the emphasis teachers place on the learning of health and safety-related information. These questions could be incorporated into the test's written prompt sections.
- For the areas of health and safety where parents and schools often clash, find ways to offer neighborhood-based learning opportunities. Issues such as sexual identity and reproductive health could be taught within the neighborhood-based centers, not as a substitute to the schools' efforts, but as an enhancement. The more the community and schools can find ways to increase learning, the better.
- Support the schools in efforts to move the 11th grade health curriculum to 9th or 10th grade students. With high-risk behaviors continuing at lower age onsets, the committee believes that students are in need of the information earlier.
- Support the schools in their efforts to both enhance and expand the delivery of health and safety related information. While there are clearly financial issues that need to be considered, this has far too often become the only consideration. The oversight and planning committee of the Healthier U Initiative should form a strong alliance with the schools to find more comprehensive ways of ensuring all of Manchester's children, youth and families have the health and safety information needed to increase thriving.

FAMILY ECONOMICS STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION

PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTED

The Family Economics Committee's primary task was to explore ways to ensure that all families have the financial literacy and access to the resources needed to ensure their children will thrive. It also had the task of exploring ways to increase the likelihood that Manchester's young people have the financial literacy needed to create a financially sound foundation for their passage into adulthood. Beth Stafford was the facilitator for this focus area and the following citizens joined her in contributing to the success of this committee's efforts:

Hope Igdalsky
Sarah Bongiovanni
Jerry Bujaucius
David Plen
Rebecca Okwuazi
Eileen Sweeney

Michele Field
Julian Freund
Marysia Adams
Greg Smith
Nicolas Arias

In addition to the insights offered by the rich diversity of those who served on this committee, the following contacts and information contributed significantly to their decision-making:

- Met with individuals from the student credit union in the high school and the 5th grade school stores.
- Dr. Ann Richardson, Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum & Instruction and Dena DeJulius, K-12 Mathematics Supervisor for Manchester Public Schools, met with the committee to discuss what currently exists within the math curricula that addresses improving financial literacy.
- The committee also reviewed:
 - Manchester's new math curriculum
 - Results from surveys taken by youth in other communities
 - Models like the Town's Police and Government Academies
 - The Developmental Assets[®] survey

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The Family Economics committee focused on creating a recommendation that increases the likelihood that families have access to the financial literacy resources needed to ensure they have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enable their children and youth to thrive. It also realized that unless young people learn the same information before starting a family, it is likely that the growing trend of financial illiteracy would continue.

While time did not allow the committee to fully assess the economic realities of all those living in Manchester, it is obvious that within the past 20 years, changes in the Town's population have created a far more stratified community (divided into groups based on wealth or financial literacy). Research indicates that financial literacy is of primary importance when families are focused on helping their children thrive.

COMMITTEE VISION

The FE Committee created the following vision statement from which all their efforts were driven and against which all their decisions were measured.

"Manchester, where everyone possesses the literacy and resources needed to achieve financial security."

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

The Family Economics Committee wants to address the issue of financial literacy by increasing the access of all families to the resources needed to better understand their economic realities and to build the skills to ensure that financial literacy will not be a barrier to their family's thriving.

Family Economics Recommendation: Every child, youth and family in Manchester, regardless of their circumstances, will have access to the resources and confidence-building experiences that will ensure the life-long learning needed to be financially literate.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Financial literacy is the ability to understand finance. The field of finance refers to the concepts of time, money and risk, and how they are interrelated. The Family Economics Committee has as its objective establishing the financial literacy baseline for Manchester's youth and adult citizens and providing ways to improve financial education and literacy standards through the development of common financial literacy principles.

The need for financial education among Americans is often demonstrated by the alarming rates of bankruptcy, high consumer debt levels, low savings rates, and other negative outcomes that may be the result of poor personal or family financial management and low financial literacy levels. The current economic crisis in the world has only increased the numbers of individuals being impacted. This has caused a surfacing of what appears to be more financially illiterate individuals; in reality when people are employed their level of financial literacy is far less tested. Those whom society was not viewing as in need of sound financial education have flown under the radar, but are now surfacing in large numbers. The Family Economics Committee research led them to believe the most strategic recommendation is one that increases everyone's knowledge and skills in the arena of personal finance.

Each committee was charged with trying to connect to services, supports and/or opportunities that already are showing positive results, and finding ways to build on those outcomes. To this end, it is recommended that this committee's action strategies be aligned with initiatives currently being provided within the Town's Human Services Department. They currently provide a two-pronged service that includes the Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program that provides low-income residents with free income tax preparation, and the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program, the largest poverty reduction program in the United States. EITC dollars have a significant impact on the lives of the town's lowest paid working people, lifting these families above the federal poverty line. This dual initiative also is committed to increasing financial literacy. Finding ways to enhance this existing effort would reduce costs and increase success levels. The following strategies are built on this assumption:

Action strategy #1: Assess Manchester's current levels of financial literacy.

The Town currently has no way of determining the financial literacy of Manchester residents. The committee believes a good survey will give Manchester a benchmark of the current reality, a standard by which to measure the results of the recommended strategies, and information needed to adjust or abort programs and strategies as needed. The committee recommends that before any strategies within this committee's plan are implemented, Manchester's financial literacy reality must be determined. The recommended steps for gathering this data are:

- **Identify what we need to know.** What will allow the Town to accurately create a picture of the personal financial literacy level of its citizens?

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

- **Select or create an assessment tool.** Fortunately, there are already a number of assessment tools that can be used to gauge financial literacy. Most are divided into sections from basic to advanced. The basic measures knowledge regarding day-to-day financial experiences such as check writing, paying cash or using credit, understanding a paycheck, understanding one's spending limits, etc. Subsequent sections assess a person's knowledge of the costs of marriage, buying a home, retirement, etc. The Town needs to determine which assessment tool will provide an appropriate baseline. If no standard tool suffices, then the committee suggests adapting the tools to meet the Town's needs.
- **Select the population to be assessed.** The committee recommends that both young people and adults be assessed. Staff is encouraged to work with the public and private schools to undertake the delivery of the agreed upon assessment tool and the methods of administering the tool. Since high school students are the most likely to be engaged in financial decisions that could negatively impact them (credit, car purchases, pregnancies, college choices, etc.) the tool would be most beneficial if administered to 8th or 9th grade students. Administering the tool to a random sample of students will produce data representative of the entire 8th or 9th grade population.

Attempts should also be made to access information on the level of financial literacy of the adults in Manchester. Collecting this information will be far more difficult. Some suggested ways to gather the data would be through those who seek help from any of the Town's services, attend PTA meetings, visit libraries, visit the DMV, etc. The Town could also partner with local businesses to offer incentives to customers willing to complete the assessment tool, e.g., such as a 2% discount on their meal.

- **Collect and assess the information.** Once a sufficient number of assessment tools have been administered a team of selected individuals (See action strategy #2 below) will interpret the results and make recommendations on what should be included in a financial literacy curriculum.

Action strategy #2: Build a coalition of financial literacy advocates to ensure sustainability of effort.

A financial literacy initiative will not happen on its own. It will require oversight by a diverse and committed group of citizens who have the financial expertise needed to steer the effort in the right direction, and representatives from groups experiencing many of the issues that will need to be addressed. Since the VITA/EITC initiative administered through the Human Services Department already has a coalition overseeing this initiative, it would make sense to build upon this coalition to ensure the diversity the committee seeks. The committee recommends that, at a minimum, the coalition be expanded to include representatives from the following groups:

- Educators (Representatives from public & private schools and from Manchester Community College)
- Youth and family focused program staff (Representatives from MACC, Bridge Family Center, Youth Services Bureau, Human Services Department, etc.)
- Businesses (Representatives from banks, insurance companies, lenders, employment agencies, etc.)
- Town employees (Representatives to include the Budget Director)
- Neighborhoods (Representatives from neighborhoods with different economic realities)
- Parents & Guardians (Selected representatives from services designed to improve financial literacy)
- Youth (Representatives who are high school age as well as those between 18 and 25)

The newly expanded coalition will increase its scope of oversight to include the implementation of the recommendations from this committee. The Human Services Department will work with the Office of Neighborhoods and Families to ensure the coalition is honoring both its commitment to the VITA/EITC initiative and the Family Economic recommendations. This would include selecting the assessment tool to be

used, creating, selecting or adapting curricula for both youth and adults (the Family Economics Committee has created a syllabus for a financial literacy curriculum), forming additional partnerships that will enhance the effort and ensuring that measurement, analyzing and retooling occurs.

Action strategy #3: Create financial literacy curricula for youth and for adults.

The committee recommends that whatever curricula are selected or developed they must be based on the financial planning steps; Assessment, Setting Goals, Creating Plans, Executing and Monitoring, and Reassessment. The Human Services Department already uses the Money Matters curriculum. This is a take-home, easy to follow and understand curriculum for adults that is geared to about an 8th grade reading level. Another curriculum is the FDIC's Money Smart for Young Adults curriculum, which helps youth ages 12-20 learn the basics of handling their money and finances, including how to create positive relationships with financial institutions. Equipping young people in their formative years with the basics of financial education can give them the knowledge, skills, and confidence they need to manage their finances once they enter the adult world. Money Smart for Young Adults consists of eight instructor-led modules. Each module includes a fully scripted instructor guide, participant guide, and overhead slides. The materials also include an optional computer-based scenario that allows students to complete realistic exercises based on each module. The curriculum is distributed on CD, and is free.

Action strategy #4: Make financial literacy curricula available to as many youth/adults as possible.

When addressing a young person's financial literacy, it will be important to work very closely with the Board of Education. The committee's recommendation of assessing the current financial literacy will require the schools to play an active role. Finding ways to do this so that the educational process is minimally impacted will be critical. The committee is also very supportive of having the Board of Education continue to increase the number of courses that teach financial literacy. Strong community support allows the Board to more easily make these decisions. However, adding getting new curricula to the class choices is a long and sometimes difficult process. The committee, therefore, recommends that youth-related, community-based learning opportunities be developed to provide these services immediately. The Human Services Department, through their Youth Services Bureau and the Office of Neighborhoods and Families, will work together to identify how to make these learning opportunities available in a variety of settings to a wide range of youth.

When addressing an adult's financial literacy, it will be important to identify ways to expand the current program in the Human Services Department to reach more than just the lowest income families. To accomplish this, Manchester will have to incorporate some form of marketing program. It will be important for the effort to become a community initiative, rather than merely a social services effort. The community must realize that thriving will only occur in Manchester if it also occurs for an ever-increasing number of its citizens. Financial literacy is a critical component of thriving. If the Town recognizes how important the financial literacy of its citizens is for the community, the more likely it will be to get behind the initiative. This then opens up the possibility of financial literacy preparation taking place in a variety of locations including banks, financial institutions, and other businesses, as well as non-profits and churches. The neighborhood-based centers will also be a great place to sponsor financial literacy classes.

Action strategy #5: Create a partnership with Manchester Community College (MCC).

Increasing the financial literacy of individuals who never finished high school, or who did but never thought they were "college material", would increase the likelihood of them getting their GED or taking college courses to increase their earning potential. The recommendation is to work with MCC to determine the possibility of either a certificate or actual college credit as the reward for completion of the adult financial literacy curriculum. Many people who never dreamed of college have no idea what a campus is like and also lack the confidence to try it out, and this would change that.

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

Action strategy #6: Measure the effort's success. The committee also wants to make sure that any strategies chosen to increase the financial literacy of its citizens are measured to determine their effectiveness. First we recommend that a realistic benchmark be developed against which both young people and adults can obtain their own financial literacy. Short-term instruments will measure:

- Changes in the financial literacy levels of students in 9th to 12th grades
- Changes in the financial literacy of trained family members
- Yearly increases in the number of individuals accessing financial literacy services

The committee believes that long-term results will also occur by increasing the financial literacy of those living in Manchester. Depending on the success of the strategies recommended in this plan, and additional strategies incorporated over time, the following results may be realized as well:

- Graduation rates will increase – having financial literacy will make it easier for young people to see the value of finishing school,
- Employers will have access to a better work force, especially in entry level positions,
- Poverty rates will decrease – a great number of those who live in poverty come from families who have lived in poverty for generations. Increasing financial literacy will go a long way towards breaking that cycle,
- Increase in tax revenue – financially literate families have greater access to disposable income because they are making better financial decisions – more disposable income leads to greater spending, and
- Decreases in needs for costly support services – many of those who access the support services offered by the Town are at or below the poverty level or are making poor financial decisions that put them at risk.

“Economic independence is the foundation of the only sort of freedom worth a damn.”
~ *Henry Louis Mencken*

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION

PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTED

The Youth Development (YD) Committee's primary task was to explore strategies that would ensure that Manchester's young people, ages 9 – 18, have access to, and a voice in, developing the resources needed to increase their likelihood of thriving. Barbara O'Brien-Crockwell and Keshia Ashe were the co-facilitators for this focus area and the following citizens joined them in contributing to the success of the committee's efforts:

Patti LaForest
Carly Orduz
Melissa Tweedie
Joseph Wik
Matthew Boser
Pierre Brilliant
Sarah Cinquemani
Karen Bergin

Bob Eckert
Gerry Ramos
Beth O'Connor
Krystal Makusevich
Molly Sulick
Robert Johnson
Lorraine Mumby
Mary Boland

In addition to the insights offered by the rich diversity of those who served on this committee, the following contacts and information contributed significantly to the committee's decision-making:

- The committee contacted a number of organizations throughout the community. A partial list includes:
 - Lutz Museum
 - Manchester Little League
 - Manchester Public Library
 - Manchester Historical Society
 - Manchester Area Conference of Churches
 - Rotary Club
 - Senior Center
 - Volunteer Coaching at the Recreation Department
 - Arts Commission
 - Center for Service Learning
- The committee also reviewed:
 - Hampton, VA award winning model of Authentic Youth Civic Engagement
 - Information from a host of both youth development and youth empowerment websites
 - The results from Developmental Assets[®] provided the committee with data that proved to be a valuable metric in assessing the self-perception of Manchester's young people in relation to their physical environment (neighborhood and school), as well as personal relationships (family members, friends, teachers, etc). The results revealed youth empowerment as a potential avenue to increase the self-assessed values of young people in their neighborhoods, schools, and community.

COMMITTEE VISION

The YD Committee created the following vision statement from which all their efforts were driven and against which all their decisions were measured.

"Manchester, where all young people are viewed as resources and empowered to develop the character, life skills and positive connections needed to thrive."

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

The youth development committee determined that the vast array of Manchester's youth serving organizations already provide services that address many of the physical, mental and social needs of youth. So the committee determined that the most strategic approach would be to focus on the thriving indicator of becoming Involved community members and responsible global citizens". However, when young people become involved in the issues and decisions that impact them directly, these additional thriving indicators will also be positively and directly impacted:

- Effective communicators;
- Innovative problem solvers and appliers of a creative process; and,
- Exemplary workers and lifelong learners.

The committee found compelling research that demonstrates the overwhelming benefits to young people who are part of the decision-making that impacts them as well as to the communities within which they are engaged. The research, from the Search Institute and Hampton's Youth Civic Engagement efforts make it clear that when young people become part of creating their community, school, neighborhood, or organization's social contracts they are far less likely to break or not support those contracts.

Youth Development Recommendation: "Every young person in Manchester will have the training, opportunity and support needed to ensure that they are recognized and engaged as a community resource, fully capable of making positive changes in their community, neighborhoods, schools and the organizations to which they belong."

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

To ensure that an Authentic Youth Civic Engagement (AYCE) initiative is successfully implemented and sustained, the committee is recommending the following strategies be implemented. The information within this committee's report is also supported by the structural infrastructure recommendation #2: AYCE initiative.

Action strategy #1: Create a database of opportunities.

Building a centralized, interactive, and youth-friendly database where youth engagement opportunities can be posted, reviewed, and easily accessed will be a critical element in the support of an AYCE initiative. If young people don't know what's out there they will have no opportunity of accessing what might be a perfect fit. Schools, libraries and youth oriented programs are examples of groups that could post in the database. With people's ever-expanding technological skills it makes sense the method to incorporate be an online system, accessible from any Internet workstation. This can be modeled after existing websites such as Bostoncare.org or VolunteerMatch.com.

Maintaining the site, keeping the ever-changing information current and interesting, will be a time consuming and potentially costly effort. By making this a shared leadership opportunity for young people, the task could be accomplished less expensively, be filled with greater creativity and be more youth friendly. Housing the site within the Town's information services department, and staffing it with a cadre of interns from the local private and public high schools, makes sense. This approach would bring young people with a passion for technology into the Information Systems Department, increasing the chances of some of them returning to seek full-time employment. It also involves a population of people with an awareness of the most cutting edge technology that can be a valuable resource to the entire department. The E&ASP/YIT and the ECD committees also had recommendations similar to this committee's. It is suggested that the three recommendations be merged whenever possible and appropriate.

Action strategy #2: Youth training.

Providing skill training so young people are prepared to be resources is a core need of a successful AYCE initiative. No young person should ever be placed in a position where he or she will fail because they weren't given the training needed to succeed. Most young people will need at least some training to be able to serve within the input and shared leadership pathways. The field has learned over time that training needs to be ongoing, both broad and specific, related to the issue being addressed and, most importantly, youth-friendly. The most important generic skills of a training agenda are:

- Youth and adult partnerships – how to work effectively together for a common cause
- Problem-solving, decision making, active listening and public speaking
- Group dynamics – how to be an effective member of a group/team, especially one with adults
- How to run a meeting, collect data and analyze information

In addition, young people should have opportunities to practice skills, gain confidence and receive feedback from caring adults with youth development and engagement skills. The recommendation is to have this training be part of the services offered by the Youth Services Bureau. They have skilled trainers and the experience to work with a wide variety of youth.

Action strategy #3: Adult training.

Most adults have a fair amount of experience doing things for youth, but very few have the experience of working with young people. The two most important trainings adults will need are how to work effectively in a youth and adult partnership, and how to appropriately apply the principles and practices of the Spectrum of Attitudes. Neither of these skills comes easily and most require a fair amount of training for adults to feel comfortable being in the partner role instead of the teacher role. The recommendation is for the Town to demonstrate its commitment to youth civic engagement by having its employees be the first to receive the youth and adult partnership and spectrum of attitudes training. The next should be a Training of Trainers course offered for those who want, or will need, to serve as youth engagement trainers in the future. The initial Town employee training and the Trainer of Trainers will require an outside trainer. However, those trained will be able to continue offering these trainings at a much lower cost. The trained trainers should make it their initial priority to offer these trainings to any adult living within the pilot quadrant identified in this plan.

Action strategy #4: Youth engagement opportunities.

One of the worst things that a community can do when attempting to implement an AYCE initiative is to get young people excited about being of service, provide them with the knowledge and skills they will need, build their confidence, and then have no opportunities within which they can serve. In the beginning, the initiative's opportunities will need to be created primarily by adults. As the initiative matures, more and more young people will gain the skills needed to create their own opportunities or they will work in partnership with adults to create them. The Youth Development Committee identified some opportunities that they believe would be good to begin with and the consultant added others from his experience. Remember, there are hundreds of opportunities already being offered in Manchester within the Projects, Tasks and Service Pathway. These opportunities occur within the schools and community and are being supported by groups and/or individuals wanting to give young people an opportunity to contribute. There is also the newly created Youth Commission, which is a perfect example of an effective opportunity in the input and consultation pathway. The following are suggestions that will build on these existing opportunities:

Projects, Tasks and Service Pathway Examples:

Volunteerism month. Create an annual school-centered service project that supports "friendly competition" each year during Volunteerism Month (April). This friendly competition could be between schools or between grade levels within a school. The recommendation is for friendly competitions because all volunteer efforts should be recognized and celebrated. But since our culture is so geared to

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

competition the effort will probably gain greater attention if someone is selected “the winner”. This should be for both public and private schools. Non-profit organizations could also enter this project. Schools can find creative ways to connect the efforts to lesson plans. While the committee understands it would require a lot of adult oversight, the increase in school spirit, positive publicity, and the high potential of the service projects having a positive impact on the school will result in a win-win effort.

If the schools and Town embrace this project it will go a long way to increasing the understanding of service and will make recruiting people for other projects easier. The goal of the overall AYCE initiative is to have an ever-increasing number of young people giving back to their schools, neighborhoods, community or the organizations to which they belong. This proposed recommendation will jumpstart that effort.

Input and Consultation Pathway Examples:

Project Citizen Curriculum. We the People: Project Citizen is a curricular program for middle, secondary, and post-secondary students, youth organizations, and adult groups, that promotes competent and responsible participation in local and state government. The program helps participants learn how to monitor and influence public policy. In the process, they develop support for democratic values and principles, tolerance, and feelings of political efficacy.

The Project Citizen program is administered with the assistance of a national network of state and congressional district coordinators in every state and is conducted with the assistance of the National Conference of State Legislatures. It is funded by the U.S. Department of Education by act of Congress. Additional funding at the state level is also provided by an increasing number of state legislatures. State Farm Insurance companies also make grants to localities to get this effort started.

Project Citizen is a logical next step to Volunteerism Month. It takes hands-on projects and moves them to ones that actually contribute to the ability of state and local elected officials to make better decisions. Once again, it takes a significant commitment by the schools or groups that participate, but all early indications point to it increasing school attendance and interest, and the projects selected have actually influenced policy.

Youth led presentations. Young people who are well trained and who prepare properly can contribute incredibly powerful presentations that have a greater potential to influence others. We have become a culture which has lost confidence in the ability of young people to “do the right thing and to do it well”. This may be because of the media images we see of young people, it may be because we rarely put youth in positions that allow them to shine, or it may be because young people have become complacent, no longer believing they have a meaningful voice. Regardless of the reasons, the committee believes it is time to change this reality. This recommendation is to create a youth team that, in partnership with adults, would prepare and conduct presentations and trainings about youth engagement, youth and adult partnerships, the power and potential of youth voice, etc. This group would be made up of young people from a variety of local youth engagement groups. The more opportunities young people have to present, the more they will shift adult perspectives allowing them to view youth as valuable resources with important contributions to make.

Shared Leadership Examples:

Youth leadership groups for the neighborhood-based centers. Each neighborhood-based center should have a Youth Leadership Group that works with the adults in the pilot center and its quadrant to plan, create, implement and assess all aspects of the center. Members should reside in the quadrant

and be representative of that quadrant's diversity. They should be between 13 and 21 and they should receive the training and support they will need to be effective. Their primary responsibility is to set the tone within the center and the quadrant of expected youth behaviors and responsibilities. The neighborhood-based center's Director will provide staff support for these groups.

Micro-grant program. The committee recommends the establishment of a micro-grant program for the allocation of money for service projects within organizations that carry out their projects through youth and adult partnerships. The resources for these grants would come from community donations and be matched by Town resources. These grants will demonstrate the dedication and responsibility of young people, and will funnel start-up resources to worthy groups. The grants will be small, but sufficient to get things done.

As previously stated, in order for the committee's recommendation to be realized, there must be a shift in not only the young person's perception of themselves as a positive contributing force in the Town, but the adults who directly and indirectly work with these young people must also see them as resources. Using the committee's vision, recommendation and strategies as guidelines, the following indicators can be used to measure the initiative's success:

1. Each year, an ever-increasing number of youth engagement opportunities will exist within the Town, neighborhoods, schools, and youth-serving organizations. These opportunities can be from any of the pathways and should not be weighted as to value.
2. A centralized online database is operational with an ever-increasing number of young people and adults visiting the site each year.
3. The number of youth who participate in AYCE pathway opportunities will increase each year. The opportunities themselves will be tracked and the results, when possible, will be recorded. This infrastructure recommendation will give the community a sense of the power and value of youth engagement.
4. The number of youth and adults who receive training aligned to the AYCE initiative will increase every year.
5. An assessment tool should be created that will measure the overall number of young people who believe Manchester values them, that their voices are being listened to, and that they have opportunities to contribute. The baseline data from the Developmental Assets[®] survey exists, but that survey is not designed as a pre-post assessment.
6. An assessment tool should be developed to measure shifts in the attitudes Manchester's adults have toward the Town's young people. Results of this assessment will show an increase in the numbers of adults who have more positive views of the Town's youth.

“Our role is not to fix children’s problems or to treat them as recipients or objects of youth programs—it is to provide them with ample opportunities today to develop their competencies so they can meet their own needs to contribute and be connected to a coherent, caring community.”

~ William Lofquist

EDUCATION & AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMMING & YOUTH IN TRANSITION COMBINED STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION

This section represents the work of two committees, Education and After School Programming, and Youth In Transition. They worked separately, each developing their own recommendation and report. However, the basic premise for each is that many young people need more positive, structured and ongoing engagements with caring adults. Data from the Developmental Assets[®] survey indicated that only 40% of the youth in Manchester perceive themselves as having the support of three or more non-parent adults. To increase the likelihood of thriving, young people need adults to not only serve as positive role models, but to take the time to be “in” a child’s life. Due to the significant similarities and overlaps of these committees, the consultant determined it would be best to combine them.

PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTED

The Education and After School Programming (E&ASP) Committee addressed a young person’s learning experiences during the hours they are not in school. The committee was asked to review family commitment to life-long learning, the link between quality learning opportunities both in and out of school, the role of young people in their own learning process, and how well Manchester and its public and private schools work together to support learning and to provide the opportunities for it to occur. Tim O’Neil was the facilitator for this focus area and the following citizens joined him in contributing to the success of the committee’s efforts:

Leana Jefferson	Doug McDonough	Bob King
Judy Panciera	Amy Gates	Jennifer DiMaso
Eileen Sweeney	Bill Overton	Shawney Cycenas
Anita Rackow	Meghan Kelliher	Alex LaForest
Anne Miller	Sandy Stough	Richika Makol
Lauri Engman	Jermaine Ortiz	Jina Toribio

COMMITTEE VISION

The E&ASP Committee created the following vision statement from which all their efforts were driven and against which all their decisions were measured.

“Manchester, a community that celebrates and supports learning 24/7”

The Youth in Transition Committee’s primary task was to explore ways to reduce the myriad barriers and problems that Manchester’s children and youth experience as they face externally and internally imposed transitions. Sarah Jones and Kevin Brophy were the co-facilitators for this focus area and the following citizens joined them in contributing to the success of this committee’s efforts:

Matt Cieslowski	Ed Wilson
Kathleen Nohmy	Andrew Kim
Ashley Okwuazi	Beth Ryan
Karen Freund	Judith Hamlin
Rima Riedel	Robbie Rickert

COMMITTEE VISION

The YIT Committee created the following vision statement from which all their efforts were driven and against which all their decisions were measured.

“From seed to flower.”

The members of both the Education and After School Programming and Youth in Transition committees realized that the outcomes predicted from their vision statements and action strategies will only be effective if all of Manchester’s youth and families can gain access to the wealth of opportunities presently in place, as well as those that will become available through the process of implementing the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan. They also realized that many families struggle when trying to find the time and resources needed to keep their children on a journey toward thriving. Both committees believe that unless an ever-increasing number of adults are willing

to assume a positive role in these young people's lives we will continue to unnecessarily have an ever increasing number of young people who aren't thriving.

The children, youth and families that currently avail themselves of the many resources in our community represent only a fraction of those who would find value in, and benefit from, those resources. The adaptive challenge that exists is how to encourage Manchester's citizens, especially those least likely to be aware of opportunities, to seek out and utilize those opportunities? Also, how does the community help those who provide the opportunities increase their appeal to Manchester's citizens and how does it increase the number of caring adults willing to serve as mentors?

JOINT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

Both committees formulated their recommendations and action strategies through a process of reading and reviewing provided materials and an extensive give and take between committee members who related their personal and professional experiences in our community. This led to the following conclusions that formed the foundation of the committees' work:

1. Manchester is a very diverse community in terms of ethnicity, language and socio-economic status. While this diversity has contributed to a rich and vital community, it has also made it more challenging for the Town to effectively reach and serve the significant number of youth and families who are disenfranchised from the opportunities that exist in Manchester.
2. It is unrealistic to expect that Manchester's public or private schools can be solely responsible for the educational, social, artistic, cultural and athletic development of Manchester's youth. Every system, organization and individual should recognize their role in helping the community become one where "life-long learning", "being neighborly", and "reaching out and touching someone" are more than just slogans.
3. Manchester has a very impressive network of organizations and programs that currently provide a wide range of opportunities for youth and families to develop. These exist within government, non-profits, and for-profits. Many of these services and opportunities are offered free or at very affordable rates.
4. Many of Manchester's young people are identified early as "in need of services", and for many this label, unfortunately, sticks for the rest of their time in school. Manchester needs to loosen its dependencies on deficit labeling and approaches, and start identifying young people for their strengths and supporting them to thrive rather than supporting them because they are "broken".
5. It is essential that the implementation of the committees' strategies be accomplished on a level that has the greatest likelihood of success. The committees believe that working within identifiable neighborhoods provides the best chance for success. The committees support the overall approach Manchester is prepared to take through the establishment of an Office of Neighborhoods and Families with dedicated full and part-time employees. The recommended neighborhood-based centers, along with their resource centers and opportunities to build a caring environment, are required for the successful implementation of the E&ASP and YIT committees' strategies.

Education and After School Recommendation: The creation of a town-wide network of volunteers, consisting of adults and youth, operating through the structure of the Town's Office of Neighborhoods and Families and the neighborhood-based centers.

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

This network will encourage and facilitate out-of-school learning by offering a wide variety of artistic, cultural, athletic, and social opportunities for all Manchester youth and families. The network will promote equal access to these opportunities through the sharing of information as well as a hands-on approach by individuals and organizations to ensure that all members of our community, particularly its youth, are provided with the resources necessary to grow and prosper in a vibrant, diverse, and enlightened community.

Youth in Transition Recommendation: All of Manchester's children and youth will have the opportunity to grow "from seed to flower". The entire community must pay attention to the externally and internally imposed transitions youth will experience. The community must also be willing and committed to helping young people reduce the unnecessary barriers that exist within these transitional experiences.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Each committee developed a number of strategies designed to promote their recommendation and achieve the objectives of their vision statement. Some of these strategies stand alone, and some have been merged. The committees understand that not all of the strategies will be implemented at once. However, the first two strategies listed were clearly identified by all committee members as absolutely essential.

Action strategy #1: Mentoring.

Both committees recommend the use of a formalized mentoring approach for appropriate young people from the age of 7 through the age of 19. Because the most current research indicates that many mentoring approaches are not effective and, in fact, some actually do more harm than good, the committee wants to make sure that this effort relies heavily on "Best Practices" models. These models have produced positive results because they adhere to the following:

- The youth being targeted are somewhat vulnerable, but have not yet succumbed to severe problems.
- The mentoring relationships are characterized by as many contacts as possible, emotional closeness, and last more than six months.
- The mentoring "program" is characterized by practices that increase relationship quality and longevity, including:
 - Intensive training for mentors,
 - Structured activities for mentors and youth,
 - High expectations for frequency of contact,
 - Greater support and involvement from parents, and
 - Monitoring of overall program implementation.

Mentors will be selected from a pool of volunteers and professionals, and will be trained for the mentoring role using a best practices training curriculum. Mentors are currently available in the schools during the school day, but only on an extremely limited basis, and only for one hour per week. The committees applaud the efforts of the schools, but also realize that this approach is contrary to what research has indicated is needed. Therefore, the mentoring approach contemplated by the committees would not be restricted to the hours of the school day, but would work with youth and families outside of the school system to create and nurture not only learning opportunities, but social, artistic, cultural, and athletic opportunities as well. The mentoring program can, and should whenever possible, overlap with student mentoring, student tutoring and the student activities programs in the public and private schools.

The proposed neighborhood-based centers are founded on relationship building. Their vision is to provide a place where people come to stay on their journey toward thriving. Implementing formalized "best practice" mentoring approaches within these centers will be consistent with their purpose. Just having a place were

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

young people feel safe, respected, and where there will be a variety of others who genuinely care for them, creates an environment where mentoring can thrive. Since the Children, Youth and Family Master Plan calls for the neighborhood-based centers to be gradually expanded, starting with one and expanded to four over time, the committee recommends that the mentoring approach also should follow this pattern.

Action strategy #2: Volunteer interpreters and translators.

Manchester is experiencing a major influx of families and individuals with limited English language skills. Limited language skills put people at a great disadvantage when it comes to acquiring the basics for living, but it can really delay the development of the elements needed to thrive. Young people from these families often have more language skills than their parents and, therefore, are often responsible not only for themselves, but for their parents.

The trend of an increasing number of limited-English speaking residents will continue, and should be addressed more formally so it can be celebrated rather than feared. To ensure this, volunteer interpreters and translators should be available for Manchester's families and for young people, both inside and outside the school system. To cover the whole community, a substantial group of community volunteers representing a wide range of international languages will be needed. Again, the proposed neighborhood-based centers are capable of becoming the hub from which these volunteers would serve. Starting gradually in the pilot quadrant will allow the network to develop and work out any inherent problems before expanding.

Many communities have highly functioning volunteer systems that recruit, train, place, monitor and celebrate volunteers. Manchester has no such system, so both of the above strategy recommendations will be handicapped by this void. While no committee identified the creation of a formalized volunteer system as a recommendation within this plan, Manchester would be wise to consider the creation of such a system.

Action strategy #3: Centralized data and multiple use facilities.

No centralized information collection, screening, and dissemination system exists to inform children, youth and families of the myriad academic, social, artistic, cultural, leisure and athletic organizations that exist in the Town of Manchester. Services and opportunities provided by library services, Town of Manchester programs and activities, boys' and girls' scouting organizations, school related programs and presentations, C.A.S.T., Little Theatre of Manchester, Lutz Children's Museum, youth sports organizations, P.A.L. programs (both academic and athletic), youth services bureau and teen center, and private musical instructors such as Music Makers and Summit Studios, are left to rely on their own efforts. Families and young people, especially those with limited language and other skills, find this to be overwhelming and often give up before finding what they want or need.

Both committees believe, and the studies support these beliefs, that in order for youth and families to thrive and be successful they need to have access to a range of academic, social, artistic and athletic endeavors, as well as support services when needed, to develop their entire being. These opportunities exist in Manchester, but are in many cases underutilized, especially by those who could benefit from them the most. The committees want to ensure that information regarding these services, and access to them, reached the individuals and families demonstrating the most need for them. The committees believe that the neighborhood resource centers within each of the neighborhood-based centers are logical locations for this centralized data to exist, with the additional development of an online database. This database could be coordinated with the youth engagement opportunities database recommended by the Youth Development committee, and would be an extension of the database recommended by the ECD committee.

Furthermore, there should be a greater emphasis by service providers interested in increasing the utilization of their offerings to publicize their youth and family focused programs and activities. Channel 16 television (a government cable access television channel owned and operated by the Town of Manchester), the M.H.S. news organization that provides some of the programming for Channel 16, and the elective fairs held by Manchester High School are excellent venues in which services can be publicized. However, to reach all of Manchester's children, youth and families, more creative venues will need to be identified or created.

Action strategy #4: Increasing connections between public and private schools.

Although, by the very nature of the E&ASP committee's name, its task was to work outside the school system, the committee discovered through its youth members that there are programs and organizations within the school system that could, if better utilized, effectively promote the goals of the committee. These include the student mentoring program, tutoring club, student shadowing program, science scholars, peer mediation, the Center for Service Learning, student activities office at Manchester High School, school to career group, and the student support center.

Finding ways to connect what occurs in the community with what Manchester's public and private schools are offering will increase the effectiveness of both, but will also increase the likelihood that efforts are geared to building thriving attitudes and behaviors. One possible way of overcoming this separation of efforts is to create a group that is assigned the following goals:

- Catalogue services, supports and opportunities (SSO) that exist in the schools and the community;
- Determine which of these SSO are aligned;
- Determine if there is value in making formal connections between the aligned efforts; and
- Explore how connections could be enhanced to improve outcomes while not overloading the time and resources already allocated.

The Center for Service Learning, in particular, is a good example and the Youth Development committee is recommending a Town-based service learning initiative. These two efforts will be better if they align.

The E&ASP committee also recommends greater communication and interaction between the schools and students of Manchester High School, East Catholic High School, Howell Cheney Technical High School, and Great Path Academy. This would lead to a broader awareness of the resources available to the youth and families of Manchester.

Action strategy #5: Building a more prepared workforce.

The YIT committee also identified a need for increasing young people's attitudes and skills so that they may find meaningful employment and make a livable wage. Workforce development is an essential component of Community Resource Development, which helps a community create, sustain and retain a viable workforce that can support current and future business and industry. The YIT committee also saw it as a way to remove the unnecessary barriers that currently exist for young people to transition from school to work. Unfortunately, workforce development funding in this country is available only to those with the least likelihood of being successful. While these individuals certainly should not be ignored, even the most successful outcomes of this approach will do little for the overall economic vitality of the Town and will not address the other 45-50% of young people who could more realistically benefit from the offerings.

The strategy that the committee proposes is to secure resources and technical assistance needed to:

- Identify key stakeholders willing and capable of working cooperatively to devise a plan to determine the community assets needed to solve workforce-related problems and to strengthen community capacity.

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

- Identify ways to strengthen the capacity of individuals to secure and maintain employment that provides a livable wage and advancement.
- Identify strategies for schools (including Manchester Community College), service providers and businesses to work together to provide career exploration opportunities for young people preparing to enter the workforce.

“Don’t limit a child to your own learning, for he was born for another time.”

~ Rabbinical saying

“Any transition serious enough to alter your definition of self will require not just small adjustments in your way of living and thinking but a full-on metamorphosis.”

~ Martha Beck

NEIGHBORHOODS AND COMMUNITY STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION

PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTED

The Neighborhood and Community (N&C) Committee's primary task was to explore ways to ensure that the places in which Manchester's children, youth and families live, are continuously striving to create the type of environments that have the greatest likelihood of promoting thriving. Mark Pellegrini was the facilitator for this focus area and the following citizens joined him in contributing to the success of this committee's efforts:

Winona Francis
Ryan Baniszewski
David Carlson
Mary Savage
Gary Anderson
Barbara King
Paul Litrico
Robert Johnson

Rachel Tower
Geoff King
Mike Stebe
Leslie Frey
Catherine Hanley
Michelle D'Aiuto
Michele Gara Grady
Jason Doucette

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

There are many interpretations of neighborhood, all of which are useful in neighborhood planning efforts, because every group has a different logic for their definition. Neighborhood associations/councils and community groups offer their interpretations. City planning departments and the public school system often designate neighborhood boundaries along census tract boundaries. And community residents quite frequently have a very different mental map of their neighborhood than the officially designated neighborhood areas used by planners and policymakers. All definitions are important and meaningful. The question is how one begins to create agreement over the definitions so that the debate focuses not only on boundary definitions, but also on how to make positive changes that are inclusive and increase the likelihood of thriving within these "neighborhoods".

While the committee did not formally define a neighborhood, a look at the vision from which they worked indicates how much they embraced this concept. At a minimum, those in the dialogue to define a neighborhood should include a diverse representation of residents (youth, young adults and elders need to be involved) from a diverse representation of "neighborhoods", planners, elected officials, and those who in some way provide services, supports and opportunities to those within these "neighborhoods".

COMMITTEE VISION

The N&C Committee created the following vision statement from which all their efforts were driven and against which all their decisions were measured.

"A vibrant, safe community built and connected by thriving neighborhoods."

The recommendation attempts to help shift the way citizens interact with one another in the places they live. As relationships are built, trust will follow, and as trust increases the willingness to help others to thrive will also increase. When coupled with the recommendations from the other six committees, Manchester will be building a vibrant and safe community built on thriving neighborhoods.

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

Throughout history, the "commons" were places where people came together to build the relationships needed to feel supported and safe, yet they were also places where it was possible and permitted to surface divergent thoughts. Over time, the concept of the commons has been gradually lost, succumbing to gated communities, disconnected neighborhoods, and individuals who are more focused on individual issues and less focused on the common good. If Manchester is to create the vibrant and safe community the N&C committee and most citizens seek, finding ways to resurrect the concept of the commons within and among neighborhoods will need to be a central component.

Neighborhoods and Community Recommendation: All of Manchester's residents will participate in community affairs, blending their personal goals, interests and values for the common good of the whole community and/or their neighborhood.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

Action strategy #1: Ambassador initiative.

The committee recommends that ambassador programs be developed throughout the community. These ambassador programs will be led by youth, but in partnership with adults. Youth Ambassador programs are driven by young people who have been provided with the necessary tools and encouragement to mobilize their peers and neighbors in support of safe and connected neighborhoods; ones which create opportunities for Manchester's children, youth and families. The Youth Ambassadors' core goals would be to ensure:

- Adults view children and youth as important resources to a thriving neighborhood,
- There are enriching and safe options for children and youth during after school hours;
- That all children and youth in a neighborhood feel safe, and
- There are opportunities for young people to have a voice in the decisions being made in their neighborhood.

One model, (and there are many in communities all across the country) is the Safe and Sound Youth Ambassador program in Baltimore, MD. Since its inception, this initiative has articulated a six-step approach that serves as the framework for its effort. These six steps have been adapted to apply to the effort recommended for Manchester:

Vision: Reach agreement within each of the four quadrants of the Town on the essential opportunities and supports children and youth need within their neighborhoods to grow up on a journey towards thriving.

Information: Collect data on the current status of children and youth, existing programs and services, and the distribution of public and private resources in each quadrant to inform decision-making, and monitor progress for Manchester's Children, Youth and Family Master Plan.

Neighborhood Mobilization: Clearly articulate what actions and involvement are required of all organizations and individuals in each neighborhood or section of the Town to support and nurture thriving.

Action: Develop and implement research-based strategy blueprints to deliver increased opportunities and supports to all children, youth and families.

Accountability: Ensure that public and private resources invested in research-based strategies flow to supports and opportunities that work, and are directed away from those that fail to achieve results.

Sustainability: Support this master plan's recommendation for a public policy that advances resources to ensure effective approaches are sustained over time, creating a cycle of opportunity and success.

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

The committee recommends that the Youth Ambassador initiative work with the Youth Commission and the Youth Leadership groups created within neighborhoods to identify and recruit "youth ambassadors". These groups will serve as information and outreach resources and encourage social interaction in neighborhoods and at community gathering places. Once ambassador groups have been established, they would be responsible for their own recruitment and sustainability.

The more successful youth ambassador models have memberships that include middle school, high school and college age youth participating together. Different age groups can have different projects that they choose, or they can all work together. Projects can be from any of the three engagement pathways described in the plan's AYCE Infrastructure recommendation.

It will also be critically important that the youth ambassador initiative be operated using a youth and adult partnership approach. This approach has young people driving the initiative with the adults providing training, support and connections.

Possible activities or venues for the youth ambassadors' initiative include the following.

- Encouraging and helping to organize and support neighborhood block parties.
- Planning and carrying out a "visit next door" program that encourages people to do neighborly activities on their streets.
- Participate on planning committees and work at major Manchester events, such as the Manchester Road Race, downtown seasonal celebrations, July 4th celebration, Arts in the Park, etc.
- Serve as greeters, entertainers, information resources, etc. in the downtown, at the mall, at municipal parks, or at other gathering places in the community.
- Identify community needs and projects, and organize action plans and carry out those plans in conjunction with other organizations, municipal departments, etc.
- Find and publicize local hero stories.

Action strategy #2: Connecting the neighborhoods.

The committee believes that a critical ingredient for building thriving neighborhoods is to ensure the neighborhoods are connected to each other in both relational and physical ways. The ambassador initiative addresses a relational strategy for connecting neighborhoods. The following are strategies for physically connecting the neighborhoods:

- Develop sidewalks, pathways, and trails to improve access and connections to neighborhoods and community amenities as part of a capital improvement plan, and
- Ensure that new developments or redevelopment projects provide access and connections to neighborhoods where they are located.

Action strategy #3: Accessible and sustainable neighborhood-based centers.

The N&C committee's vision statement helped influence many of the Plan's infrastructure recommendations. This was especially true for those that identified the need to locate facilities that can accommodate neighborhood-based centers that can become a community gathering place while also providing a variety of services, supports and opportunities. Manchester has already indicated that the location for the first of these centers will be in the SW quadrant. This quadrant was selected based on the diversity of citizens living and working there.

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

To ensure that these neighborhood-based centers are capable of building relationships among those that attend and that they also become the “commons” for the surrounding neighborhoods, they should include rooms for neighborhood organizations to meet or for educational or informational programs. Cyber cafés would be a “now” way to draw people in, drop-in information centers would allow people to access information they need or want, and there also needs to be a commitment to make them as youth and family friendly as possible.

It will be critical that residents are completely involved in the design of the facilities and in the development of the services, supports and opportunities offered. The variety of possibilities that could be offered in any neighborhood-based center are endless and because of this, residents, both young people and adults, must be afforded the opportunity to indicate what they want as offerings and how they want to be involved in the center’s operations. The Director of the Office of Neighborhoods and Families will need to build coalitions of professionals and citizens to ensure that they will be able to work well together. The centers are the new commons, which means people will be coming together to build the relationships needed to feel supported and safe and to surface divergent thoughts.

“The American city should be a collection of communities where every member has a right to belong. It should be a place where every man feels safe on his streets and in the house of his friends. It should be a place where each individual’s dignity and self-respect is strengthened by the respect and affection of his neighbors. It should be a place where each of us can find warmth, which comes from being a member of the community of man. This is what man sought at the dawn of civilization. It is what we seek today.”

~ Lyndon B. Johnson

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATION

PARTICIPANTS AND DATA COLLECTED

The Early Childhood Development Committee's primary task was to explore ways to ensure every child in Manchester has the opportunity to begin life with as few challenges and as much nurturing as possible, that during the developmental ages from conception to eight they are supported and cared for, and that they enter school ready to learn and able to read on grade level by third grade. Sharon Kozey and Jessica Bonafine were the co-facilitators for this focus area and the following citizens joined them in contributing to the success of this committee's efforts:

Bette Roberts
Joanne Dwonczyk
Ardith Crampton
Laura Dunleavy
Rich Bunce
Jerry Reisman
Pamela Cowan

Melinda Schlegelmilch
Amanda Smith
Jose Falcon
Liz Lanza
Carolyn Wallace
Joan O'Donnell
Heather Doucette

The personal and professional experiences of the participants on the Early Childhood Development (ECD) Committee, the extensive research within the field of early childhood, and the data that exists within Manchester, all point to the fact that thriving begins at conception and creates its foundation in the developmental years from birth to age eight. If a child begins life under difficult circumstances or within a non-nurturing support system, or if the foundation that is built within the developmental years is negative, then that child's chances of thriving are greatly diminished. A child who begins life this way has a greater probability of demonstrating higher incidences of:

- Aggressive and malcontent behaviors that worsen with age;
- Unresponsiveness or inappropriate responses to affection at later ages;
- Lack of school readiness, making it almost impossible for a child to ever catch up;
- Mental and physical health problems that manifest themselves at different life stages, often many years after childhood;
- Delayed brain development; and
- An inability to form positive, caring relationships with others.

COMMITTEE VISION

The ECD Committee created the following vision statement from which all their efforts were driven and against which all their decisions were measured.
"All Manchester children, pre-natal thru age 8, flourish in their physical, social, emotional and cognitive development."

It is also true that these characteristics put a tremendous strain on not just the child and his or her family, but on the entire community. The services and supports needed to address these preventable issues become an ever-increasing drain on the resources of a community.

The Science of Early Childhood Development report produced by the National Scientific Council and the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University indicates that "toxic stress", which they define as

strong and prolonged activation of the body's stress management systems, can damage a child's developing brain architecture and lead to lifelong problems in learning, behavior, and both physical and mental health. The essential cause of toxic stress is the absence of consistent, supportive relationships to help the child cope.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION

With record numbers of parents working outside of the home, quality childcare is vital to Manchester's ability to compete in the 21st century. Today, more married couples are both working to increase their family's income and more children now live with a single parent who must work to support them. Now more than ever, Manchester is recognizing the importance of accessible, quality childcare.

Research shows that the majority of infants, toddlers, and children in low-income families are in what have become known as Family, Friend, and Neighbor Care (FFN care) — care provided by parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, other relatives, friends, and neighbors. The Annie E. Casey Foundation's 2006 KIDS COUNT Data Book indicates that FFN care is the most common type of childcare for low-income children under the age of six with working parents.

A child's ability to learn and develop skills is often shaped by his or her early experiences. What happens in the first three years of life has a great impact upon subsequent stages of development. Some would even contend that there are "critical" or "sensitive" periods of development in which certain skills are learned most rapidly, after which the ability to learn new skills quickly and easily is lost forever. Thus, it is important to create a safe and stimulating learning environment for children from birth throughout the early years.

There are numerous reasons that parents choose FFN care over licensed childcare options. Some of those reasons are lower cost, more convenient location, no formal application process, and no waiting lists. There is much to learn about FFN care; however, FFN care may have any or all of the following characteristics.

- Care giving arrangements often are initiated when a parent asks a family member, friend or neighbor for short or long-term help.
- Wages, if any, may be paid in cash or in barter, and are likely to be lower than for a licensed caregiver. In some instances FFN caregivers help out a relative or friend and do not charge for the care provided.
- The number of children per caregiver is generally smaller than in licensed care settings.
- FFN caregivers often have no formal training.
- Care giving is arranged to meet the parent's need for, or interest in, shared values and culturally relevant language.
- Care is provided during late-hour or variable work schedules in the safety and familiarity of the parent's own home, or that of the caregiver.

FFN care is often safe and affordable, but in some instances parents may find that care falls short of the quality learning environment they would like for their young child. FFN caregivers' knowledge about children's healthy development, connections to other caregivers, and connections to the community can be strengthened via a variety of program and policy initiatives. The ECD Committee believes Manchester's leaders should take the lead in efforts to improve the quality of FFN care, which may lead to a comprehensive programmatic approach that addresses the complex dynamics between children, parents, providers, employers, and the broader economy.

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

The ECD committee believes that the services, supports and opportunities currently available in Manchester for those families who are experiencing the most toxic stress are effective and, while they could be expanded, they are available. The committee saw the greatest need with those families and children who are not yet presenting behaviors severe enough to warrant referrals to these services and for those whose income doesn't qualify them for needed services, but without some assistance can't afford them.

Therefore the committee focused its attention on supporting the low- and moderate-income families who need to be away from their children in order to acquire the resources needed to raise them. These are mostly loving and caring parents who simply don't have the resources needed to allow them to focus on developing the thriving indicators they want for their children. The committee's recommendation is designed to increase the likelihood that the children of Manchester's economically struggling families will be able to ensure their children receive the nurturing care they need, in as positive an environment as possible.

The ECD committee, on which many of Manchester's early childhood development professionals served, is aware that FFN care is often the type of care that Manchester's children are in while parents are working. The committee believes that a critical and strategic way to reduce toxic stress is to reach out to these non-professional caregivers to offer them support and guidance. Supporting FFN care providers is critical to ensuring a successful early care and education experience for Manchester's youngest residents. This translates into an important long-term economic development tool that plays a critical role in a community's ability to lay the foundation for children to enter school ready to learn and acquire the skills they need to become a competent and highly skilled member of Manchester's workforce.

Early Childhood Development Recommendation: Manchester's non-professional childcare providers will have access to skill building opportunities that increase their ability to more effectively care for the children left to their care. This access will be coordinated through the recommended neighborhood-based centers, in partnership with an improved network of early childhood development providers.

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

While much deserved attention has been paid to improving the quality of professionally operated center-based care, family day care, and parenting skills, there are three focus areas that are very under-addressed and on which the committee decided to recommend strategies. The first is improving the quality of the caregivers, the second is a centralized and standardized intake database, and the third is to ensure that the many factions within the early childhood system work more closely together, emphasizing a more customer driven process. These under-addressed issues put a large number of Manchester children at increased risk of toxic stress. The ECD committee is recommending that Manchester officials can and should take the lead in efforts to ensure each of these recommendations are addressed.

Action strategy #1: Increasing the quality of FFN care.

The following strategies all contribute to building a more skilled system of childcare providers; one that is in alignment with the professional services currently available and one that increases the likelihood that children will be sufficiently nurtured and prepared to enter school ready to learn.

Understand the issues. Before seeking to improve FFN care, it is important to understand why parents are choosing this care, what difficulties caregivers face, and what type of help they would welcome. A team of stakeholders should be convened to develop the necessary structure, identify from whom information should be sought, and develop the questions that should be asked. This group of stakeholders should, at a minimum, include representatives from childcare resource and referral agencies, libraries,

family support centers, educational institutions, and the School Readiness Council.

Examples of the types of questions that might be asked include: What activities do you feel are important for children? What skills do you believe you could use? What type of social or professional networks would support your caregiving? The information gathered from these focus groups should be tabulated and analyzed and used as the foundation for the development of appropriate services, supports, opportunities, and assessment strategies.

Clarify caregiver expectations. While there are many benefits to using a relative or friend as a childcare provider, this can also be a difficult situation for both the parent and the caregiver. Manchester can help all parties by providing a tip sheet or resource guide for parents and/or caregivers. The materials can help people identify potentially sticky issues up front (e.g., expectations regarding time, feeding, safety, discipline, holidays, and payment) and ideas about how to address these concerns effectively. The materials need to be user friendly, so it will be important to engage FFN caregivers in writing and editing them. This information should also be available online. This would be an excellent project for the Healthier U family subcommittee to tackle.

Nurture networks and support groups. Most FFN providers do not consider themselves childcare workers and, as a result, are not a part of any professional networks. While these caregivers may feel that they do not need formal supports, several studies have documented an interest in informal networks or support groups that allow FFN providers to let off steam, share ideas, and get support. Meetings can take place in caregivers' homes, at the neighborhood-based centers, or in some other comfortable space for the providers.

Many FFN providers do not have access to new cutting-edge educational activities, do not have the opportunity to interact with peers, and may not have any professional networks to rely on for support. Regularly scheduled meetings will give FFN providers the opportunity to discuss challenges, share ideas, and get support, such as quality resources and basic information on healthy child development. It will also give Town leaders the opportunity to convey how community partners (i.e., city agencies, schools, hospitals, churches) can play a role in strengthening the quality of care. A network of FFN caregivers also could take on some additional roles, such as: publishing a newsletter; coordinating a system to share toys, books or equipment; or setting up a system to provide back-up care. These networks could use the neighborhood-based centers as their base of operation.

Connect FFN providers to federal and state assistance. USDA's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) can help qualifying caregivers provide healthy meals and snacks to children in their care. The committee recommends that a partnership be formed with the Department of Social Services to help ensure that providers qualify. Since this program includes home visits, it can also provide opportunities for interaction with FFN caregivers who may not seek out other supports or resources. This initiative can play a leading role in educating caregivers about the availability of food assistance and other federal and state assistance.

Organize or co-sponsor trainings and workshops. Manchester supported workshops should be developed that address issues from child development and home safety to stress management for FFN caregivers. Workshops can be offered at the neighborhood-based centers, faith-based institutions, or as part of a network or support group structure. A smaller group of caregivers interested in becoming licensed family day care providers may also be interested in business training. For FFN providers who would rather not come to trainings, the materials from these workshops may be provided in a written booklet, a video, or online for use at home.

Coming together to build a better town through relationships and commitment.

Make educational information and materials available. Manchester should provide child development materials to all those who are providing FFN care or who are interested in doing so. These materials can be translated into other languages and designed to address multicultural issues, where appropriate. Another key support that a city can provide is a lending library for books, toys, puzzles, games, and videos. This can be administered through the public library system, a FFN provider network, or mobile units that make the rounds to participating caregivers on a regular schedule. Another valuable support for FFN caregivers would be free culturally enriching programs at local museums and memberships in the Town's recreational programs.

Initiatives to improve FFN providers' access to health and safety information can fall under the jurisdiction of a number of city agencies (e.g., the health department, fire, police). Some ideas include: providing caregivers with written information; offering free first aid kits or home safety kits; having police provide demonstrations of the proper use of child car seats; providing free smoke detectors and information on planning escape routes; offering CPR training; and disseminating information about free and low-cost health insurance options for children.

Engage the business community. Those who serve on the oversight committee should carefully consider requests from business leaders, other than money. Businesses can provide both in-kind or pro-bono services as well as specific monetary donations to help support FFN providers. Examples of in-kind resources include meeting space or conference rooms, used computers, training seminars, or business-planning advice for childcare providers. Requests can be as simple as asking local retailers to donate materials and distribute written information about resources and training sessions that are available for FFN providers.

Partner with local faith-based organizations and MACC. Faith-based organizations, places of worship and the Manchester Area Conference of Churches have long histories of providing essential services to families, especially those that are sometimes hard to reach. Oftentimes, these groups have built trust with hard to reach individuals and their credibility is well respected in local neighborhoods. Manchester can sponsor "Getting to Know You" sessions in partnership with these organizations to build trust in a safe and familiar environment.

Action strategy #2: A centrally located, standardized intake system.

The committee recommends that a centrally located and standardized intake system be designed that evaluates a child/ family's need for services in a non-judgmental way. This system should be both web-based so that families can complete at home, or center based so they can complete the survey with a caseworker. The intake system will collect and produce a variety of important information that will result in a list of resources for which the family is qualified and contact information with which the family can follow up. This database will also help families understand the importance of building the skills of the friend, family member or neighbor whom they have chosen to care for their child(ren). There should be an opt-in option for families allowing community-based providers to follow up with them and to connect with their FFN caregiver to ensure they are aware of available resources. The system can then generate an email to childcare providers and other professionals with the families' contact information. If possible this strategy should be merged with the YD action strategy #1 and the E&ASP/YIT action strategy #3.

Manchester, CT, a community where all children, youth and families thrive.

Action strategy #3: Connect with what's already working.

All of the recommendations and strategies within this committee's report need to be closely aligned with the early childhood development services, supports and opportunities that already exist or will be developed in the Town and public and private schools in Manchester. It will be especially important to align with the Early Childhood Capacity Building Leadership Workgroup and the School Readiness Council.

"In every child who is born, under no matter what circumstance, and no matter what parents, the potentiality of the human race is born again." ~ James Agee