



A COMMUNITY CONVERSATION

**Habitat for Humanity of Chester County and the United
Way of Southern Chester County
present**

“Current and Emerging Needs in Southern Chester County”
June 28, 2011, Kennett Square, PA
at
The Red Clay Room
Kennett Square, Pennsylvania



Community Conversation report provided by:
Chester County 2020

- I. Executive summary**
- II. Identifying and Ranking the Issues**
- III. Group Discussion Reports**
- IV. Chester County 2020 recommendations**
- V. The Community Conversation process**
- VI. About Chester County 2020**
- VII. Appendices**

I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Topic: Current and Emerging Needs in Southern Chester County

Sponsors: Habitat for Humanity of Chester County; the United Way for Southern Chester County

Facilitator: Chester County 2020

Attendance: 63

Groups represented:

Altoonian Remodelers	Borough of Kennett Square
Chester County Community Foundation	Chester County Food Bank
City of Coatesville	Con-Lyn Construction
First Baptist Church of Kennett Square	Garage Community & Youth Center
Herr Foods, Inc.	Historic East Linden Project
Holcomb Behavioral Health Systems	Kennett After-School Assn.
Kennett Area Community Service	Kennett Area Senior Center
Kennett Consolidated School District	La Comunidad Hispania
Legal Aid of Southeastern PA	Maternal and Child Health Consortium
Melton Architects	Modena Borough
New London Presbyterian Church	New London United Methodist Church
Oxford Borough	Pathstone Corp.
Southern Chester County Chamber of Commerce	Spanish Health Ministries
St. Michael Lutheran Church	Strategic Technology Solutions
	Transformation Initiative

Needs identified in group discussion:

General needs:

- Improved interaction between groups with common interest
- Better use of media (print, TV, internet) to create awareness of needs
- Increased awareness of existing public and private resources to resolve specific needs

Specific needs and Follow-up Leaders:

- "Social" Vision of a Community – Rev. Mercedes Case, New London United Methodist Church
- Access to Basic Needs – Nancy Wykel, Southern Chester County Chamber of Commerce
- Transportation – Kirby Hudson, Coatesville Assistant City Manager
- Even Distribution of Low-Income Housing – Dennis Crook, Eco-Built Homes
- Multi-cultural Population Needs – John McKean, Habitat for Humanity
- Ongoing Home Ownership Challenges – Ellen Wadsworth
Casey Jones, Transformation Initiative
- Senior Housing – Bill Knapp, Con-Lyn Construction

Follow-up:

Follow-up Meetings:

Follow-up meetings will be convened by Habitat for Humanity and facilitated by CC2020. Prior to the first follow-up meeting, follow-up Leaders will list action-oriented objectives for their specific needs. Objectives should be expressed in measurable terms. Leaders should draft an action plan for each objective. All Leaders should attend all follow-up meetings; any June 28 *Community Conversation* participant is also welcome to attend.

The first follow-up meeting will review and refine the action plans.

The second follow-up meetings will review progress of the action plans and assess the need for future follow-up meetings and progress reporting.

Quality assessment:

The sponsors will provide a written assessment to CC2020 of the quality of this program and follow-up, with suggestions for improvement. The assessment will be provided after the second follow up meeting.

II. IDENTIFYING AND RANKING THE ISSUES

The final roster of developed issues with their ratings is shown below. Rating is expressed as the number of votes each issue earned. Seven issues emerged as top-rated. Participants were reminded that issue/work group assignments were for the purposes of the evening's work session, and that any participant could volunteer to work on follow-up for any issue.

THE ISSUES, RATED

<u>Rating</u>	<u>Issue</u>
22	'SOCIAL' VISION OF A COMMUNITY
21	ACCESS TO BASIC NEEDS
21	TRANSPORTATION
19	EVENLY DISTRIBUTED LOW-INCOME HOUSING
18	MULTI-CULTURAL POPULATION NEEDS
17	ONGOING HOME OWNERSHIP CHALLENGES
15	SENIOR HOUSING
10	WORKFORCE HOUSING
10	EMERGENCY HUMAN SERVICES
7	EDUCATION IN SOCIAL JUSTICE/RESPONSIBILITY
7	FAMILY STABILITY
7	IMMIGRATION ISSUES
7	LIVABLE WAGE EMPLOYMENT
6	EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY
6	WATER CONSERVATION ACTION
5	AGRICULTURE - LAND USE, EMPLOYMENT, NUTRITION
5	ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
5	HEALTH CARE SERVICES
5	TAX BURDEN - COST TO FAMILIES
4	ENERGY CONSERVATION/EFFICIENCY
4	WELLNESS
3	ACCESSIBILITY OF INFORMATION
3	PUBLIC SAFETY
3	RECREATION OPPORTUNITIES
3	TAX BURDEN-COST TO MUNICIPALITIES - SERVICES VS. REVENUES
2	AFFORDABLE SAFE CHILD CARE
1	HOMELESS SHELTERS
1	URGENT HEALTH CARE
0	[PLANNING] VISION OF A COMMUNITY
0	EVEN DISTRIBUTION OF LOW INCOME HOUSING & ITS COSTS
0	FUTURE WATER SUPPLY PLANNING

III. GROUP DISCUSSION

Working the Issues and Follow-up:

The following work group findings are taken directly from the work group reports and individual worksheets; findings are listed for each top-rated issue.

'SOCIAL' VISION OF A COMMUNITY

Important values:

- A community-owned vision, including physically appealing private and public property.
- A vision that responds to the needs of multiple generations, as they evolve.
- An attitude that fosters giving & sharing.
- A community that will inspire people to 'want to live there.'

Important players:

- Leaders who will make the vision a priority

Ways to work together:

- Form a task force to develop a model [community] vision that each community can [customize] to suit its own needs.

Benefits and barriers:

- Anticipated benefit - developing [productive] relationships
- Anticipated benefit – creating an 'ideal' vision to share
- Anticipated barrier – the challenge of defining a community
- Anticipated barrier – persuading people to see the value

Unresolved differences within the group:

- Where do we begin? On a broad, regional scale, or a small, local one?

Suggested action items:

- What we want in common – overall, the same things, but each community must adapt the vision to its unique needs
- How we get there – use existing groups to help promote the concept, and the model vision

Follow-up Leader: Rev. Mercedes Case, Pastor, New London United Methodist Church

ACCESS TO BASIC NEEDS

Important values:

- Human dignity and equity of access

Important players:

- Community leaders
- Business owners
- Transportation [decision-makers]

Ways to work together:

- Assess neighborhood needs & resources; remove [physical & social] barriers

Benefits and barriers:

- Anticipated benefit – revitalized communities with ready access to services
- Anticipated barrier – difficulty in gaining access to information about products & services

Unresolved differences within the group:

- We do not have a uniform understanding of the nature of the needs.

Suggested action items:

- What we want in common – communication; transportation; the pooling of resources.
- How we get there – survey the community & businesses; provide information through phone, internet, and TV.

Follow-up Leader: Nancy Wykel, Southern Chester County Chamber of Commerce

TRANSPORTATION

Important values:

- Accessibility for Western & Southern Chester County

Important players:

- Riders
- Local government
- Bus companies (TMACC)
- Major attractions (Velodrome)

Ways to work together:

- Make a business case for expanded bus service
- Recognize each player is a stakeholder

Benefits and barriers:

- Anticipated benefit – better access to services
- Anticipated benefit – improved transportation hubs
- Anticipated barrier – racism; classism
- Anticipated barrier – active lack of caring; lack of awareness the issue
- Anticipated barrier – economic challenges; disconnect between decision-makers & population

Unresolved differences within the group: none

Suggested action items:

- What we want in common – accessible transportation for all in Chester County connected to Philadelphia
- What we want in common – a central hub linking all parts of Chester County
- What we want in common – in particular, a Baltimore Pike service
- How we get there – an open forum / summit on transportation including all the municipalities

Follow-up Leader: Kirby Hudson, Assistant City Manager, City of Coatesville

EVENLY DISTRIBUTED LOW-INCOME HOUSING

Important values:

- Broad opportunities for mixed income housing

Important players:

- Local & county government; non-profit action groups; housing authority

Ways to work together:

- Enlist media support
- Form action group of important players

Benefits and barriers:

- Anticipated benefit – sustainable communities
- Anticipated benefit – improved quality of life for workforce
- Anticipated benefit – a more equitable life for all
- Anticipated benefit – reduced public cost for services
- Anticipated barrier – NIMBY (not in my backyard!)
- Anticipated barrier – the challenge of attracting young / talented workers to new environment
- Anticipated barrier – how to make is cost-effective?

Unresolved differences within the group:

- The ‘degree’ of distribution – how much of a mix, and where?

Suggested action items:

- What we want in common – more mixed-income, broadly available, affordable housing
- How we get there – land use planning

Follow-up Leader: Dennis Crook, Principal, Eco-Built Homes

MULTI-CULTURAL POPULATION NEEDS

Important values:

- A cohesive community without barriers to integration – America does this well in broad strokes, but not at the community level

Important players:

- Schools
- Community leaders; business leaders; educators
- Local government
- Housing providers

Ways to work together:

- Time helps as the generations meld
- Partnerships between action groups
- Action and service groups need to enlist minorities as board members and leaders

Benefits and barriers:

- Anticipated benefit – social & economic diversity
- Anticipated benefit – healthier communities
- Anticipated barrier – current acceptance of poverty
- Anticipated barrier – scarcity of job & housing opportunity
- Anticipated barrier – current immigration policies

Unresolved differences within the group:

- Different minorities' feeling that their needs have lower priority than other minorities

Suggested action items

- What we want in common – to work; have a family; enjoy community benefits with dignity – the real American Dream
- How we get there – communication; education; fostering economic opportunity; fostering leadership

Follow-up Leader: John McKean, Habitat for Humanity of Chester County

ONGOING HOME OWNERSHIP CHALLENGES

Important values:

- Improved, stable social & economic value of neighborhoods & homes
- People able to keep their homes, if they wish
- A population informed about its options

Important players:

- Homeowners
- Homebuilders & contractors
- Community organizations
- Local government
- Government assistance programs

Ways to work together:

- Develop a common vision
- Accountability for all
- True collaboration between groups

Benefits and barriers:

- Anticipated benefit – improved quality of life
- Anticipated benefit – improved public safety
- Anticipated barrier – the need for initial oversight
- Anticipated barrier – the need for a connection between homeowners & resources
- Anticipated barrier – challenges of communication & collaboration
- Anticipated barrier – turnover of key individuals
- Anticipated barrier – the need for neighborhood 'ownership' of projects

Unresolved differences within the group: none

Suggested action items:

- What we want in common – an education plan for neighborhoods; a connection between residents & resources; communication & collaboration
- How we get there – put out a clear call for people who are interested in working on a specific task or neighborhood

Follow-up Leaders: Casey Jones, Transformation Initiative; Ellen Wadsworth,

SENIOR HOUSING

Important values:

- Affordability
- Provision for maintenance
- Access to services
- Integration in mixed-age community
- The opportunity for seniors to choose to 'age in place'

Important players:

- Social services
- Local & county government
- Mentoring services
- Child care services

Ways to work together:

- Open, ongoing discourse
- Connect seniors with information
- Collaboration with service providers

Benefits and barriers:

- Anticipated benefit – more diverse communities
- Anticipated benefit – interaction between youth & seniors
- Anticipated benefit – improved quality of life, including dignity for seniors
- Anticipated barrier – costs
- Anticipated barrier – challenges of relocating seniors
- Anticipated barrier – challenges of current home ownership

Unresolved differences within the group:

- The degree to which seniors should be integrated into communities
- The means by which housing stock may be obtained

Suggested action items

- What we want in common – vibrant, truly diverse communities; improved valuation and quality of life for seniors
- How we get there – establish links between seniors' group leaders and other community organizations; foster access to information
- Follow-up Leader: Bill Knapp

IV. Chester County 2020 Recommendations

1. Follow-up Leaders should state at least one objective in clear, measurable terms in their action plans. They should ask other *Community Conversation* participants for help in developing their action plans.
2. “Who, what, when, and where,” stated specifically, are needed to measure progress. Objectives should be expressed in terms that are active, not passive. Don’t use words like “stimulate,” “foster,” “encourage.” Words like “convene,” “deliver,” “install,” describe measurable achievement.
3. Action plans should list anticipated barriers and specific plans for overcoming them.
4. Action plans should include a specific listing of resources, with contact information.
5. Follow-up Leaders should use past *Community Conversations* as a resource. The *Community Conversation* page at www.cc2020.org includes a roster of past work sessions; reports are available on request. New CC2020 *Let’s Talk* and *Community Conversation* work sessions are available as follow-up tools.

V. The Community Conversation Process

Chester County 2020 (CC2020) convenes *Community Conversations* on behalf of client groups, to assess the present and chart the future. The client sets the scope of the *Conversation* and invites the participants; CC2020 facilitates the program. CC2020 provides an experienced facilitation team for *Conversations*, including members of the CC2020 Board of Directors.

Community Conversations use a standard agenda, shown below. Participants receive a copy of the agenda with their invitations.

Typical Community Conversation Agenda

Welcome – the Sponsor

Introduction to the Community Conversation – CC2020 facilitators review the process

Reviewing the Present - participants identify and describe issues within the scope of the Conversation. The issues are printed in large format, and posted on easels.

Rating the Issues –participants vote for the issues they feel are most important. CC2020 tallies the votes, and displays the results.

Working the Issues - - pre-assigned work groups select from the top-rated issues, and begins the process of assessing the present and charting the future. Groups choose reporters to compile initial group reports and deliver them at program’s end.

Follow-up Leader Commitment – At least one follow-up Leader volunteers from each work group. Follow-up includes at least two meetings convened by the client and attended by C2020 The first meeting reviews Leaders’ action plans; the second meeting assesses follow-up progress.

Initial Reports – in a case where more than one work group has chosen the same top-ranked issue, those groups deliver their reports in sequence. Work group reporters name the follow-up Leaders from their groups, and the Leaders’ names are displayed.

Conclusion – the Client reminds participants of the schedule for follow-up. All participants recognize the follow-up Leaders; typical elapsed time is 4 hours.

VI. About Chester County 2020

Chester County 2020 is an innovative, energetic, non-profit change agent. CC2020’s *Community Conversation* program connects the county’s residents, businesses, service groups and political leaders to engage in cooperative efforts that address common issues; dispel misguided rumors that develop in any community discussion; and produce action on critical issues.

Community Conversations, convening stakeholders around critical issues, are one of CC2020’s three core programs. CC2020 also provides *Keep Farming First*, to preserve and promote our region’s agriculture, and the *Master Planner Program*: accredited training for wise land use. Information about all CC2020’s programs can be found at www.cc2020.org.

VII. Appendices

1. Press coverage from June 28 *Community Conversation*
2. Initial Action Plans – to be provided after the first follow-up meeting.
3. Action plan progress – to be provided after the second follow-up meeting
4. Sponsors' assessment – to be provided after the second follow-up meeting
5. Press coverage of follow-up meetings will be provided as future appendices

VI. Appendix 1: Print Coverage of June 28 Community Conversation

The Kennett Paper – 7/7/2011

By Matt Freeman

A major key to preserving and improving the quality of life in southern Chester County is for community leaders and area residents to create a shared vision of how to move forward toward a better future.

That was one of the conclusions of a Community Conversation meeting presented Tuesday, June 28 by Habitat for Humanity of Chester County, the nonprofit planning group Chester County 2020, and the United Way of Southern Chester County.

More than 50 representatives of local government, nonprofit groups, and civic associations attended the meeting, which was held in the Kennett Fire Company's Red Clay Room. The meeting was facilitated by David Beideman, a Chester County 2020 board member.

As in other Community Conversations held by Chester County 2020, the participants brainstormed a variety of issues and concerns, in this case many of them related to housing in the area, which were put together on a list. The participants then voted on which they felt were most important.

Participants then gathered at tables to take one topic and decide how it should be addressed. Because the attendees filled seven tables, the organizers picked the seven topics voted most important. Besides creating a shared vision for the future, they included ensuring access to basic needs like food, providing adequate transportation, creating more affordable housing, taking care of the needs of a multicultural population, helping to keep people in their homes, and providing adequate housing for senior citizens.

After the discussions, a representative from each table told the larger group what their conclusions were. Speaking for the transportation group, Coatesville's Assistant City Manager Kirby Hudson said transportation should link rural and city areas, because currently there are places where people without cars have no access to any other kind of transit. Regional transportation hubs help develop local economies, Hudson said, but offering mass transit takes money that is hard to find in today's sluggish economy. "But this is something," Hudson said, "that realistically needs to happen."

The table working on affordable housing said making it more widely available would create a more diverse work force and lower costs for businesses and municipalities. It would also allow younger, lower-earning residents of the area to remain there rather than seek cheaper housing elsewhere. The group said tax incentives and municipal planning could help spur construction of affordable housing, and the media could help by dispelling stereotypes about the kind of people who would buy it.

The group discussing multicultural population needs said the question was how to integrate all cultures into a cohesive community, according to its spokesperson, Carrie H. Freeman, executive director of the United Way of Southern Chester County. "America does this fairly well — eventually," Freeman said. "Time does help as the generations meld." Schools help in the process, she said, and it would also help to nurture civic leaders from minority communities.

According to the group that discussed ongoing home ownership challenges, it was important that people who were overextended and having trouble paying for their homes were made aware of what services were available to help them. Communication within neighborhoods and among civic leaders and the heads of agencies that help homeowners would help promote safer, cleaner, more stable communities, the group said.

The group that worked on access to basic needs said it was important to assess what those needs were in a given community and then help people understand what services were available to assist them.

Communication was also important to the group that talked about senior housing. They said social service agencies could help in reaching out to seniors and inviting them to continue to take part in their communities. In-home care, visiting nurses and other services could help seniors stay in their homes for as long as they wanted to, the group said.

The group working on a social vision for the community recommended forming a regional task force that could create a model of such a vision that could be adapted by different communities to fit their own wishes and needs.

Each group also named a volunteer who would attend one or more followup meetings to pursue the recommendations they had developed.

Appendix 1 cont.

The Chester County Press – 7/6/2011

Community conversation focuses on housing and other needs in southern Chester County

By Steve Hoffman

Staff Writer

A group of participants identified the social vision of a community, access to basic needs, transportation, low-income housing, multi-cultural population needs, ongoing home ownership challenges, and adequate senior housing as priorities during a “community conversation” last week.

Habitat for Humanity of Chester County, Chester County 2020, and the United Way of Southern Chester County were the presenting partners of the June 28 community conversation at the Red Clay Room in Kennett Square. Although housing needs were a focus, a variety of other issues were discussed during the event.

Debbie Gebauer, who handles some community outreach work with the New London Presbyterian Church, said that the church often receives requests for basic needs—food, clothing, and shelter among other things—that were difficult to meet.

“Sometimes, I’ll get three calls in a week,” she said. “We’ll hear from people who say that their car broke down and they can’t afford to fix it and still buy food. Or we’ll hear from a family who has had the heat turned off. Sometimes, it’s overwhelming.”

Gebauer said that she has seen the number of requests for assistance increase since the economy slowed in 2008.

Gebauer’s story about how difficult it is to meet the requests for help made an impression on another community conversation participant, Carrie Freeman.

“We’re very interested in finding out about what the community is saying about the needs that exist,” said Freeman, the executive director of the United Way of Southern Chester County (UWSCC).

Freeman said that because UWSCC provides funding to dozens of non-profit and community service organizations each year, it is a good place to start if someone is looking for assistance. That makes it important for UWSCC to continually do outreach to make sure that as many community needs as possible are being met.

“We’re aware of all the non-profits in the area,” Freeman said. “Referrals can be made.”

Jessie Cocks, a community activist and a member of Kennett Square Borough Council, said that there are significant concerns about the quantity of affordable housing that is available for senior citizens.

“I think we have a great void of senior housing in Kennett Square Borough,” Cocks said, explaining that it is important to have a variety of housing options if a community is going to keep its senior citizens instead of losing them.

“We would keep many of our treasured senior citizens... if it wasn’t so hard to age-in-place,” she said.

Cocks added that a network of sidewalks and connected trails that will allow residents to walk to more places is important for several different reasons.

“We’ve gotten to be such a get-in-the-car-and-drive-half-a-block society,” she explained. “To me, making Kennett Square more walkable is a no-brainer.”

Transportation was an issue that came up several times during the course of the evening.

Cocks said that increasing transportation options makes a community more desirable, especially for senior citizens. Even a small bus that would make regular loops through the area would be a start to fulfilling the community’s transportation needs.

Charles Huston IV, the executive director of Habitat for Humanity of Chester County, explained that the organization is planning for a 40-home project in the West Grove area after a long search for the right location in southern Chester County.

Huston said that he believed that a community conversation such as this one would help him better understand the needs of the community.

David Beideman, a board member of Chester County 2020, observed that a variety of participants, ranging from elected officials to business professionals to church and school leaders, took part in the community conversation. Beideman summed up the value of a community conversation by saying, “It begins to open up a dialogue between groups so that they can merge resources and take advantage of each others’ capabilities and talents.” Beideman went on to say that the hope now is that participants will take what they learned during the conversation and take action to implement some of the ideas that were raised.

“Now we’re going to look for some folks to take on leadership roles with these issues,” he said.