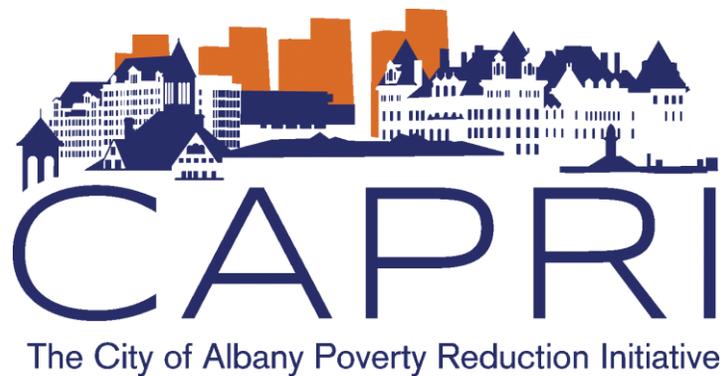


The City of Albany Poverty Reduction Initiative (CAPRI)

TOWN HALL SUMMARY

*Albany Public Library
Delaware Branch*

June 15, 2017



200 Henry Johnson Boulevard, Suite 4. Albany, New York 12210

Table of Contents

Town Hall Meeting Objective	3
Head of Household/Family Group	4
Support System Group.....	6
Jobs/Careers Group	6

Town Hall Meeting Objective

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

Head of Household/Family Group

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

One of the answers given by several group members was that young people are simply not willing to work. They pointed out a culture that does not expect them to work as a major reason for this. Others mentioned that there was not much encouragement or incentive to work. The jobs available may be low-wage, dead-end jobs that do not offer many personal development or vertical career growth opportunities. Another reason given by a woman in the group was that young people with children might have difficulty finding childcare services. They may have to work unconventional hours to provide for their families and their work and childcare schedules often clash.

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

Group members emphasized that people looking for work need access to the necessary services, supplies, and resources to complete their job search and find a job. They mentioned the problems the lack of resources such as Internet access, transportation, cellphone and computer access, translation services, and general information about job openings create as a reason why it was so difficult to get more people working. Members of the group also wanted to identify the people that need help and are willing receive support to provide services that are more efficient. The group believed that this was something that could be tackled as a community but were unsure of how they would achieve that at the moment.

The group members suggested that as a community, they could organize to increase neighborhood activities that would allow job seekers and/or young people to get to know the other adults and professionals in the community and strengthen their networks. They mentioned that these neighborhoods connections were the way many young people got their first jobs in the past. A woman in the group added that the participation of young people in the community activities and organizations would also create relationships with reliable adults in the neighborhood that would be able to advocate and vouch for them if it became necessary.

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

Several of the group members emphasized the challenges faced by single parents in the city. They mentioned the difficulty of running basic errands and providing for their families without the support of another adult. They also repeated their concerns regarding the difficult decisions that have to be made by single parents between working and finding and paying for childcare services. Childcare is expensive and

often cannot be afforded by low-wage workers. Finding childcare services that are available for the unconventional hours worked by many people also prove to be a problem. A man in the group mentioned the difficulty of raising children in an increasingly digital world. He said it was challenging to maintain regular communication with young people that are constantly using one form of technology or another. A couple of group members mentioned that younger generations growing up using more technology might have difficulty staying in school and obtaining jobs in the future. One woman in the group brought up lack of access to fresh and healthy food in many neighborhoods of the City of Albany. She mentioned the long distances that people have to travel to get to a grocery store, often on foot.

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

The group seemed to agree that solutions to these problems could not be effectively carried out on the individual level and instead wanted to see changes made at the grassroots community level. They suggested making sure the community works to secure more affordable and high quality childcare services in their neighborhoods. They also wanted to see more participation in the school system by parents to advocate for better quality education. To create greater support systems for young people, the group suggested creating a group of adults that would act as advocates and liaisons for the children and the community in general. Several group members agreed that gifted students in the district schools do not accelerate because their parents might not know they should or know how to do it. An advocate would be able to work for these gifted children in ways that their parents or guardians may not be able to.

One woman also wanted to see more localized job development in the city. She mentioned the example of training people in construction and home rehabilitation to provide the necessary skills and jobs to people in the neighborhood. In turn, these newly trained people would work in the neighborhood by revitalizing buildings that need improvement and lead to the general upgrading of the neighborhood.

The group also wanted to see an increase in awareness about the advocacy and support organizations in the city. They feel that Albany is a city with many underutilized services and resources available to people and they would like to capitalize on this by creating an inventory or “conciierge service” of available support systems and services. A woman in the group wanted to see an end to violence in the city and another group member wanted to see a decrease in the child poverty rate. Housing advocacy and an increase in affordable, healthy grocery stores and farmers’ markets were other solutions the group wanted to see happen in the city as well. They also wanted to raise the community’s expectations of children in schools and focus on education rather than just behavior. They suggest that the raised expectations of young people would lead to a cultural change that would encourage more of them to seek employment and stay in school as they got older. They also wanted to see more organized activities

such as Big Brother Big Sister and Boys & Girls Clubs to occupy the children's time and introduce them to adults in their neighborhood that could advocate for them and support them in the future.

Support System Group

Q1. Which systems are in place which help or prevent people from getting jobs?

The group began the discussion talking about the struggles their clients face when working with Department of Social Services. They acknowledged both the strengths and the weaknesses to clients having to go through this system. On the negative aspect, participants discussed things such as it leaving clients feeling discouraged due to its negative reputation and workers' attitudes toward clients. They discussed how the system was set up so clients had to completely fail before they could be assisted. They also spent a lot of time discussing positive systems, which they identified as social supports or role models. The group felt as though when a client had social supports, networking skills, or a role model, they were more likely to succeed in securing a job and navigating the systems that come along with that job.

Q2. What policies help or prevent you, your community, and community organizations from helping you and those you know get jobs or get back into school?

For this question, the group narrowed in on the 'Ban the Box' movement. They believed as a group that if individuals had a chance to explain themselves, it would be more likely that more individuals could secure employment.

Q3. How do policies positively or negatively affect the day to day challenges you and those you know face?

The group focused on work hours, inability to flex, and contradiction between work and other priorities for this question. The group members stressed how there is an inability to flex work days and the societal value of being at work for forty hours a week, five days a week even though it does not work for everyone. There is also a limited amount of Monday-Friday 9-5 jobs which leaves caretakers trying to make sure children are watched or taken care of on top of working to bring money into the home.

Q4. What changes/solutions do you want to see happen in yourself, your community, and the City of Albany?

The group focused in here on working with local support agencies to evaluate both intentional and unintentional barriers for clients in the community. Group members acknowledged that sometimes it may be hard for agencies to see the holes in their systems but by working together with clients and other agencies, we can limit the hoops that clients need to jump through. We can also find ways in agencies can work together more effectively for the ease of our clients. Group members saw the value in self, agency, and community evaluation on the problems at hand.

Jobs/Careers Group

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

When answering this question the group focused on the skills needed by youth to obtain employment. There is a need for soft skills such as being able to communicate properly and go to work wearing appropriate clothing. It was also identified that there is a need for technical skills to be able to enter jobs that require knowledge and skills in particular areas. Although these are both important the group expressed that it is necessary to be well-rounded and have a good balance of soft skills and technical skills. Returning to a community after incarceration was also discussed as a barrier. Not only do those re-entering have difficulty finding employment due to their criminal record but they also may not know of their rights upon returning. A lack of adequate transportation and family obligations were also briefly mentioned.

Question 2: What could you and your community do to retain young people?

Referring to help people retain work the group discussed the importance of keeping good health. This would help new employees keep jobs longer if they do not have to miss time due to being ill or going to doctor appointments. The importance of peer support in the workplace was also discussed. Peer support may be able to make being at a new job less challenging as well as help to integrate the new employee and be more inclusive. The group also discussed the need for flexibility for emergencies, particularly for low-income employees.

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

The group discussed that many people who have trouble finding jobs deal with issues with literacy in all forms. This includes reading and writing, digital literacy, working with numbers, as well as troubles with literacy in languages other than English. It was then discussed that these issues are exacerbated by technological limitations, a lack of advanced technical training, and a lack of information and networking. The difficulty with balancing receiving services and getting and keeping a job was also discussed. Such difficulties are created due to appointments and travel to services taking a large amount of time.

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

There were many solutions that the group would like to see within the City of Albany. The group would like to see services that are provided to those in poverty collaborate and become more streamlined to decrease difficulties with navigation as well as allowing these services flexible funding to better meet the needs of the community. Mixed economy neighborhoods were identified to assist those in poverty. A mixed economy refers to neighborhoods where there are people of varying incomes as well as a variance in industry. The group also discussed that the poverty profile needs to be re-examined and there needs to be more awareness to demystify biases involved with poverty such as racial and regional biases.