

# ESPRI: NEWBURGH COMMUNITY LISTENING SESSION

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS



***Prepared for***  
ESPRI - Newburgh Anti-Poverty Initiative

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## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
Background	4
Summary of Event	4
Methodology for This Report	5
A Note from the Consolidators	5
Special Thanks to	5
<b>I. Topic: Housing</b>	<b>6</b>
A. Challenges & Barriers	6
B. For Residents Who Had a Positive Experience, What Made It Positive?	8
C. Examples of Orgs/Institutions/Programs Where Residents...	8
...Had Positive Experiences	8
...Had Negative Experiences	9
...Are Aware Of [notes do not indicate quality of experiences]	9
D. Recommendation, Improvement, & Change Suggestions	9
<b>II. Topic: Workforce Development</b>	<b>11</b>
A. Challenges & Barriers	11
B. For Residents Who Had a Positive Experience, What Made It Positive?	14
C. Examples of Orgs/Institutions/Programs Where Residents...	14
...Had Positive Experiences	14
...Had Negative Experiences	14
...Are Aware Of [notes do not indicate quality of experiences]	15
D. Recommendation, Improvement, & Change Suggestions	15
<b>III. Topic: Education</b>	<b>19</b>
A. Challenges & Barriers	19
B. For Residents Who Had a Positive Experience, What Made It Positive?	22
C. Examples of Orgs/Institutions/Programs Where Residents...	23
...Had Positive Experiences	23
...Had Negative Experiences	23
...Are Aware Of [notes do not indicate quality of experiences]	23
D. Recommendation, Improvement, & Change Suggestions	24

<b>IV. Topic: Health &amp; Wellness</b>	<b>26</b>
A. Challenges & Barriers	26
B. For Residents Who Had a Positive Experience, What Made It Positive?	28
C. Examples of Orgs/Institutions/Programs Where Residents...	28
...Had Positive Experiences	28
...Had Negative Experiences	28
...Are Aware Of [notes do not indicate quality of experiences]	28
D. Recommendation, Improvement, & Change Suggestions	29
<b>V. ADDITIONAL CONTENT AREA</b>	<b>30</b>
A. Crossover between Topic Areas	30
Workforce Development + Health & Wellness	30
Workforce Development + Education	30
Workforce Development + Housing	31
Health & Wellness + Housing	31
Health & Wellness + Education	32
B. Provision of Services/Entitlements: The Benefits Trap	32
C. Common Themes Across Topics	33
1. Racism, Systemic Racism, Discrimination, & a Need for Diversity	33
2. Formerly Incarcerated	34
3. Safety, Security, & Violence	35
4. Access to Information	35
5. Transportation	36
D. Perceptions of Poverty & Newburgh Residents	38
E. Responding to a Changing World	38

## Introduction

### Background

In 2016, United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region was selected to be the coordinating and convening organization for the city's poverty reduction initiative funded through New York State's Empire State Poverty Reduction Initiative (ESPRI). The role of the United Way of the Dutchess-Orange region is to build on the work of predecessor, the Community Opportunity Reinvestment Initiative (CORE), to pull together a task force with a specific focus on poverty.

This Anti-Poverty Initiative is structured to include representation from local municipalities, representation from local nonprofit organizations, local school district representatives, social services, and most importantly, residents who have lived or are currently living in poverty. Once the taskforce has identified high-need issues and neighborhoods, they will next select focus areas to target, and then develop a plan on how to utilize available funding to drive community-improvement projects.

To identify high-need issues in Newburgh, United Way organized four workgroups and designed a community listening session event for residents to share their experiences with respect to: (I) Housing; (II) Workforce Development; (III) Education; and (IV) Health & Wellness. Each workgroup prepared a list of questions and prior to the listening session event, the questions were revised and consolidated. This report consolidates the insights and information gathered from residents during the community listening session, and aims to help workgroups select focus areas for improving programming.

### Summary of Event

On Saturday, January 21, 2017, United Way coordinated a Newburgh "Speak to Change" Community Listening Session from 11:00 am - 5:00 pm EST at the Newburgh Armory Unity Center (321 S Williams Street, Newburgh, NY 12550).

Of those who attended, there were: over 150 residents representing the community of Newburgh, 22 table facilitators, 13 notetakers, and a team of volunteers and event coordinators.

Residents were organized into 15 English speaking tables, each with 1-2 table facilitators and 1 notetaker, and one Spanish-speaking room designated for Spanish-speaking residents with 4 facilitators and 2 notetakers. All tables/groups were asked questions from all four workgroup topic areas.

## Methodology for This Report

After the Newburgh "Speak to Change" Community Listening session event, we [Community Solutions]:

1. Transcribed all written notes into typed ones.
2. Rearranged the notes by workgroup topic area: Housing, Education, Workforce Development, and Health & Wellness
3. Pulled out major themes for each topic area under the following categories\*: Challenges & Barriers; For Residents who had a positive experience, what made it positive; Examples of Orgs/Institutions/Programs where residents had positive/negative experiences; Recommendation, Improvement, & Change Suggestions
4. Identified and pulled additional content areas: Crossover between topic areas; Provision of services/entitlements [the benefits cliff and trap]; Common themes across topics [Racism, Systemic Racism, Discrimination, & a Need for Diversity; Formerly Incarcerated; Safety, Security, & Violence; Access to Information; and Transportation]; Perceptions of poverty & Newburgh residents; and Responding to a changing world

*\*Note: We added the number of groups that mentioned a theme under the "Challenge" category in an attempt to quantify the challenge -- however, please note that because of the variance in note taking and facilitation styles, this number does not reflect the importance or extent of impact of the challenge theme mentioned.*

## A Note from the Consolidators

This report consists of major themes identified in the raw notes taken during the "Speak to Change" Listening Session, and is reflective of the perceptions of Newburgh residents. While there may be some differences between what programs, institutions, and services already exist in Newburgh and *residents' perceptions* about what currently exist, we find that understanding residents perceptions is a crucial first step in assessing gaps within existing programs and improving services for residents.

## Special Thanks to...

United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region

Rae Leiner, *Director of Anti-Poverty Initiative, United Way of the Dutchess-Orange Region*

Listening Session participants, facilitators, note-takers, event coordinators, & volunteers

Newburgh Armory Unity Center

## I. Topic: Housing

**Background:** The facilitators gathered information about respondents' housing experiences and explored what prevents people from moving to better housing options.

*“Lots of Slumlords think just because you're on DSS, you don't deserve to have a clean apartment without rats or roaches, that you don't deserve to have working lights.”*

### A. Challenges & Barriers

#### People Feel “Stuck” in Poor Housing Conditions (16/16)

- A number of factors leave residents feeling stuck about how to move out of their current situation. Much of it came down to resources--not having the finances to relocate or not knowing how to identify affordable housing. There were also other reasons related to community connections. Some people have lived in their neighborhood their whole life or feel a sense of camaraderie with their neighbors. Others reported feeling a sense of hopelessness.

#### Drugs & Community Safety (15/16)

- Residents reported that they feel consistently unsafe in their neighborhoods. People reported quiet and dark streets, shootings, and needing to step over “crack pipes” to get to their homes. Residents expressed a desire for a safe place where kids can play. Others noted that the Police Department lacks responsiveness or show up with little action or recommendations.
- Safety also extends into in-home hazards--like mold and lead paint.

#### There are difficult and exploitative landlord relationships (15/16)

- Landlords were often called “*slumlords*” by residents, who reported various abuses and negligences. They articulated everything from apathy to racial discrimination (belief that landlords won't rent to certain people) to skimping on repairs. One person said their ceiling fell in, the landlord still expected them to pay rent, and asthma developed as a result of the incident. Others reported feeling at their “*landlord's mercy*” in an already difficult housing market and that they believe landlords will retaliate if they speak up.

- Residents also named a particularly concerning issue--that landlords have hidden cameras in residents' bedrooms. The resident(s) named a few locations where this might be happening:
  - 180 Broadway
  - 93 Fullerton
  - Chadwick Gardens

### **Buildings are Not up to Code and Expectations of Renters are Unclear (9/16)**

- Buildings appear to be in terrible shape. Residents deal with issues such as rodents, opossums, holes in the wall to run water between buildings illegally and condemned buildings that continue to be rented out. Several times, residents reported that Housing Inspectors are either not doing their jobs well or are colluding with landlords. *"Where is our money going?"* one resident asked. Another demanded accountability and said, *"No one is overseeing the oversee-er."*
- A separate issue seems to be communicating renter or owner expectations for complying with codes. The Spanish-speaking group said they had difficulties navigating the department codes and permit process. People reported feeling ignored and invisible, especially because the Housing Inspectors may not speak Spanish or have information available in Spanish.

### **The Cost of Housing is too High (8/16)**

- The high cost of housing was a common grievance. One person mentioned paying \$1,000 for a 2 bedroom apartment in a crime-ridden neighborhood. Others reported the difficulty of paying increasing rent costs once they were no longer eligible for benefits due to increased income. One such comment was, *"When I was on public assistance it was cheap. Then it went up sharply when I was off public assistance."* When it came to moving to a new place, paying first month, last month and security was cited as unfeasible and that minimum wage just isn't enough to help people relocate even if they are working. "There is not enough", people noted, "for rent or food".

### **Garbage & Cleanliness is a Recurring Concern (8/16)**

- Illegal dumping was cited as a huge problem as well as a lack of bulk pick up and regular street cleaning. One person felt the garbage lowered the property values in the neighborhood. Others pointed out that local grocery stores and businesses need to dispose their garbage properly. It also seems that residents are expected to pay for certain types of garbage pick-up, particularly bulk.

### **Issues with abandoned/condemned buildings (5/16)**

- Condemned and abandoned buildings appear to develop a number of issues--trash, drug-use and safety. People reported that houses are boarded up and need



investment from the housing authority. One resident commented that *"abandoned houses are used by drug addicts, garbage is dumped there, rats abound and there is a fear of fires from neighbors--especially around Renwick street."* Another mentioned, *"[We] need more shelters for homeless [so] they don't camp out on porches of abandoned houses."* (Examples--on Dubois Street, near Broadway)

### The Poor Quality of Shared Transitional Housing (3/16)

- A few times, residents specifically surfaced the poor quality of rooming houses--transitional houses meant for shorter term stays. One person commented that being a month-to-month tenant made them feel vulnerable. Others commented on privacy concerns, saying they never felt safe. Others focused on the room itself--usually small and windowless.

## B. For Residents Who Had a Positive Experience, What Made It Positive?

For those who reported a positive experience, they mentioned:

- They owned the property
- Their landlord was responsive and/or they had a good relationship
- They liked their neighbors and felt connected to the community
- There were no rodents or roaches in the residence
- They felt safe & secure in the home--this often included the presence of security cameras
- There is proximity to needed resources--like a bus stop, library and grocery stores
- Low rent, with "everything included" (one person said they pay \$400)

## C. Examples of Orgs/Institutions/Programs Where Residents...

### ...Had Positive Experiences

- **280 Broadway:** It's a place to get resources and information
- **Cornerstone Residence:** Cited as a great place to live [resident lived for 17 years]
- **Home Emergency Assistance Program (HEAP):** Provides one-time help
- **Project Life:** Help "force you to save your money"; provides child care services



## ...Had Negative Experiences

- **245 Liberty, Church Basement:** Unpleasant experience rooming there
- **Disability Program Navigators (DPNs):** Needed for transportation; Could help facilitate access to information and services
- **DSS:** Doesn't provide enough subsidy to make ends meet; Continues to work with landlords who are corrupt; Subsidy has remained consistent "for over 30 years" despite cost of food and housing going up
- **Cornerstone:** Several people expressed frustration due to long lines and reportedly unfriendly personnel

## ...Are Aware Of [notes do not indicate quality of experiences]

- **First Methodist on Liberty:** Has emergency housing
- **Newburgh Ministries:** It provides many services but closes at 3pm. This means those who work can't receive assistance.
- **Dial-a-Bus:** Senior citizens can call and be picked up if unable to walk to the bus stop

## D. Recommendation, Improvement, & Change Suggestions

### Reign-in landlord abuses, specifically:

- Incentivize landlords to upkeep property
- Educate people about tenant's rights and how to pursue legal paths to rectify landlord abuses
- Establish tenants' rights group
- City should hold landlords accountable

### Get the garbage situation under control

- Store owners should be fined for not keeping sidewalks clean
- City should resume bulk pick-up (because currently the cost burden is on the residents).

### Increase awareness of relevant programs & services, specifically:

- Habitat
- DPN

### **Increase opportunities to move people from renting to owning:**

- Should be rent to own after someone has lived in a place for a period of time
- Educate residents in the homeownership process

### **Improve owners' and renters' understanding of code compliance:**

- Hold code compliance forums as a way to educate the public

### **Leverage abandoned buildings as an opportunity:**

- Abandoned building renovation could create jobs, housing and businesses

### **Strengthen DSS relationship with the community:**

- DSS employees should spend more time with individual families and build relationships that feel more personal

### **Invest in infrastructural improvements to homes and neighborhoods:**

- Suggestions from residents included: better paved roads, streetlights, tree grooming, sidewalks,

### **Increase access to information for Spanish-speaking residents:**

- Have small groups of bilingual residents go door to door to talk with neighbors regarding police, rules pertaining to garbage, picking up after dogs, etc. with printed information [spanish speaking group of residents shared this suggestion with a few volunteering to do this].

### **Employ Mechanisms to Make Housing More Affordable**

- Put on rent control measures
- Expand access to Section 8
- Lower taxes
- Work with tenants to keep them longer. Develop incentives [for landlords] to keep tenants

### **Other Ideas:**

- Program with housing for young mothers
  - One resident noted: "Young mothers needs more help with [their] baby, [they] can't go to school because daycare only helps working mothers"

## II. Topic: Workforce Development

**Background:** The facilitators gathered information about respondents' current and past work experiences, and explored residents' expressed barriers and needs with respect to job searching and job retention.

### A. Challenges & Barriers

*"When I was on public assistance, as soon as I got a job,  
public assistance dropped immediately, rent went up from \$410 to \$550.  
I had no cushion, or time to save up.  
I ended up cutting back hours to not make too much."*

#### Lack of local opportunities and jobs that hire Newburgh residents [14/16]

- There seemed to be a few different views about the general availability of job opportunities in Newburgh. While many indicated that there is a shortage of job opportunities, some specified that there are actually many entry-level, part-time jobs available, but those jobs have fewer numbers of hours available, fewer opportunities for promotions, and low wages.
- However, most groups agreed that the job opportunities that provide adequate financial compensation (e.g. those other than the part-time, entry-level positions), are not accessible to Newburgh residents. Residents perceive that many employers choose to employ non-Newburgh residents: *"There are qualified people who live in the city of NWB. Hire them for those jobs... why are [they] looking outside of the city [of NWB] for workers?"*
- Residents shared that because employers are not hiring local residents, that there is no investment from these companies coming into Newburgh. As a result, some residents end up leaving -- especially younger residents.

#### Challenges encountered in job programs & social service agencies [13/16]

- Residents reported that there seem to be many job service programs, but that these programs do not work together, and often work in silos: *"There are so many resources that don't work together. You go in circles and no one communicates."*

- Some residents described inconsistencies in the types of services that agencies provide, and inconsistencies in how job programs determined residents to be 'labor ready'. As one resident expressed, *"[job programs] don't always match [your] skills with the available jobs."*
- One resident shared that they participated in an employment training program through DSS that didn't offer any job training or interview skills. As a result, they had to *"spend 30 hours of job searching on [their] own"*. Another resident reported that *"trainings for professionalism is zero tolerance,"* which may be a barrier for residents who are adjusting to being 'job ready'.
- *"It's not like people DON'T WANT to be here but at the same time, we're being forced to live in poverty because of the area median income; we get these programs that come in for any short period of time, and we go right back to square one, what are you teaching anybody if you're not following protocol."*

#### **Residents either lack experience or are over-qualified for existing jobs [12/16]**

- Residents indicated that they either lack the experience for existing non-entry level jobs or are overqualified for the entry-level jobs available. Many shared that there are limited on-the-job training opportunities available and this creates barriers when applying for non-entry level positions.
- Additionally, some residents shared that of the jobs they do have, there are few opportunities to be promoted and therefore overall career mobility is stunted.

#### **Jobs do not pay enough: Paycheck(s) are not enough to meet the cost of living and immediate needs (clothes, housing, food); Cycle of Poverty [11/16]**

- Residents reported that their paychecks are currently not sufficient to meet the increasing cost of living: wages have stayed the same, yet the cost of living has continued to increase.
- Residents shared that most of their paycheck goes towards rent, childcare, and transportation. Residents also indicated that the current systems in place were *"not designed to lift people up and out of poverty"*. Moreover, several residents noted the stress of immediate needs and its impact on employment: *"child issues impact [my] ability to keep a job"; "SNAP isn't enough to eat for a month, so I go to food pantries"; "childcare is a barrier to employment"*.

## Multiple part-time jobs with not enough hours, lack of benefits [11/16]

- Many residents indicated that they have multiple part-time jobs because part-time work provides low or inconsistent hours with low wages. Others indicated that employers would deliberately give employees part-time positions so that employers could avoid providing health and work benefits required for full-time employees: *"They cut my hours before I can qualify for full-time employment benefits"*. One resident stated, *"people get laid off before benefits kick in, then later hire them back"*, and also shared that this happened to her niece at Walmart [niece's employer].
- Residents expressed that they feel expendable and replaceable to employers: *"Places realize that people are expendable and [they] can easily fire them - [they] don't listen to extenuating circumstances"*.
- Additionally, some residents perceive that employers do not want employees to unionize because then employers would be accountable for upholding and respecting worker protection and rights.
- Residents also reported feeling that wages are not reflective of their job responsibilities and some believe that wages are unequal: *"How is it that daycare jobs are \$9/hr, compared to fast food which is \$10/hr?"*

## Lack of diversity of employees/employers, lack of relatability between social service employees/employers and residents [5/16]

- Residents reported that people who work at social service agencies and other programs do not necessarily live in Newburgh and are not familiar with the community, and yet they make decisions on behalf of the residents: *"The people that are working in DSS/Probation do not look like [us]--they are not representative of the people of the City of Newburgh"*.
- Residents also cited that the lack of diversity is apparent at places of employment, particularly in upper management: *"In Newburgh - the upper management is white and middle management is more diverse"*.

## B. For Residents Who Had a Positive Experience, What Made It Positive?

*“We see a lot of potential in Newburgh so we are here, our family is here...  
Newburgh is not a bad place to be.  
If you are born and raised here, you want to stay here but we need jobs that pay...”*

For those who reported a positive experience, they mentioned:

- Participating in a program and having a case manager or someone as a mentor has helped provide easier access to workforce development.
- Residents also shared how residents can be a strength and asset to one another as one resident expressed, *“there are a lot of strong residents that are good in business [and I would] like to see them mentor those on how to start a business”*.

## C. Examples of Orgs/Institutions/Programs Where Residents...

### ...Had Positive Experiences

- **Youth Build**
- **OSHA**: “used to provide job training, education, but don't see it anymore”
- **Newburgh Library**: place where people can find out about jobs and other resources
- **Orange Works**: helped find job
- **Labor Ready & Carol's Temp**: for finding temp work
- **Newburgh Ministries**: for clothing, medical, and tax help
  - *Barrier*: It closes at 3pm and those who work cannot receive any assistance
- **LPB**: “was a program that use to help kids it was one that was actually good, but they pulled funding from that program”
- **DOL, ETA**: One resident shared that they help people get cars, but other residents in the group did not know about this

### ...Had Negative Experiences

- **St. Luke's Emergency Room**: one resident reported racism/discrimination
- **Cornerstone**: one resident reported long waits and unfriendly personnel
- **Access Supports for Living**: “they're picky about who gets to work.... They're suppose to help families but they don't...”

- **DOL:** "They don't actually help, they show a video from the 1980s on how to interview"; "They don't have people to help apply for jobs online" Jobs on board either require too much (Master's degree, experience) or just too "low" (McDonalds)

...Are Aware Of [notes do not indicate quality of experiences]

- **City of Newburgh Interagency Council**
- **100 men**
- **We Are Newburgh**
- **Latino business incentives**
- **ACCES-VR:** vocational rehab
- **Minister's Program:** Re-entry Program

## D. Recommendation, Improvement, & Change Suggestions

*"From what I understand newburgh used to be a beautiful place, there were cobblestone streets and horses, Broadway is the second largest road in the world; on top of that, it has the deepest seaport... Newburgh is an enriched area and I don't understand why they want to see it die."*

### Create jobs in the community & employ Newburgh residents

- Residents suggested a city initiative for attracting companies and employers from various industries that would hire Newburgh residents and stipulate a clear diversity plan in hiring practices.
- There were additional recommendations for the city to reach out to different Newburgh populations to help them build up small businesses.
- *"Get a building with top couple floors with small studios for the homeless, other floors with things for the kids, classes and training for kids and adults, and have the first floor be a business that is run by folks in the building."*

### Focus on the youth

- Residents detailed ways that the city can focus on youth. They shared that there is a need for more summer job programs, youth programs with a career focus where they may also learn about business and entrepreneurship, more after-school



programs, more coaching and mentorships for youth, opportunities for vocational tracks, and help with post-secondary school transitions for youth.

- Residents also shared that diversity in the workforce would help the Newburgh youth find inspiration.

### **Increase collaboration, communication, and access to information**

- Residents provided many suggestions around ways that the city could increase collaboration, communication, and access to information. Residents communicated that they would like to see a central registry of jobs and job openings in Newburgh. One resident suggested a monthly booklet that lists job opportunities and where they can find help with job placement. They also requested forums where they can participate in networking opportunities. *"We need information about what exists, what is wanted and needed [in terms of jobs], and how to get it".*
- Some residents also recommended improving program outreach by getting the word out about job services and employment opportunities at places where residents spend time: *"go to churches to get the word out".*
- Residents also shared the need for improving communication amongst various stakeholders, such as communication between:
  - Residents and businesses
  - The City of Newburgh and existing businesses
  - Communication amongst agencies
  - Agencies and residents
- Residents also revealed that programs can improve communication with the residents by letting residents express their needs first: *"Don't dictate what people need..."*
- Additionally, residents asked a number of questions during the listening session, which indicate information that they are currently seeking:
  - *"Has there been an assessment of community business needs?"; "What is the city's business plan?"; "Who is having conversations with the businesses?"*
  - *"What can we immediately do [to find work]?"*
  - *"What are the vocational services teaching?"*
    - *"What are the fields for growth?"*
    - *"Financial education?"*

### **Continuing education & skill-building training services [ideally in career areas that people are interested in] where people can get hands-on job skills & where job placement is included**

- Residents expressed a need for specific skill-building training services -- ideally in areas where there is resident interest -- where people can access both hands-on job

skills and job placement services/searching skills. Residents emphasized the importance of labor apprenticeships and on-the-job training, which they believe will help with employment and retention. They also suggested specialized/alternative tracks for specific trades and career routes.

- Residents requested specific job preparation skills and training such as:
  - Resume writing
  - How to motivate oneself
  - Time management skills
  - Money management skills
  - Interview and presentation skills
  - Networking and communication skills
- For residents interested in continuing education, some suggested that programs partner with community college(s).
- As mentioned earlier, residents also shared how residents can be a strength and asset to one another as one resident expressed, *"there are a lot of strong residents that are good in business [and I would] like to see them mentor those on how to start a business"*. Programs may want to find ways to tap into the strengths of the community and host opportunities for residents to provide training and guidance to other residents.

**Offer specific vocational skills, with consideration for subpopulations (for example, those who are disabled):**

- Residents suggested very specific career training/skills and shared their 'ideal' jobs that would require specific types of training in fields such as:
  - Technology training: coding, web development, Microsoft Word, Microsoft Excel, use of internet, social media
  - Healthcare: home/health care, nursing, hospital/medical services, pharmacy/pharmacist
  - Business, Finance: how to start your own business, how to take out a loan to start your own business, business 101
  - Social services: childcare, homeless services, running a group home for kids, *"making other people happy"*, counseling, being a domestic violence worker, civil service
  - Construction: green technology construction, carpentry, landscaping
    - *"Carpenters that licensed and agree to train people from NWB. Formal agreement to have training. Give them tax incentive to help train"*
  - Additional/miscellaneous: CDL driving, sewing, fixing, cosmetology, culinary arts, sanitation

## Greater Accountability from the City of Newburgh & Elected Officials

- Residents indicated that there is a need for greater accountability amongst the City of Newburgh agencies and elected officials: *"there is a need for 'checks and balances'".* They are seeking greater governmental transparency and asked how they [the residents] can get involved in this process.
- Residents also expressed that communication between the city/elected officials and the various subpopulations of Newburgh and *"cultural groups"* be improved.
- One resident shared her dismay with how programs have been abruptly ending: *"Legislators pulled funding because people were not finishing the programs. [They] have to find out why people are not completing the programs [first]."*

## Improve how job service programs work with residents

- Residents outlined some ways that job service programs could work more positively with residents: *"Programs need more compassion, more hands-on support, to look at what the barriers are for Newburgh residents, to work with elders, to bring back the workshops, and to be considerate about the timing of programs."*
- They also shared that it would be helpful if people in case management roles could also serve as a mentor and *"help to motivate and be a cheerleader,"* in addition to assisting and helping residents navigate the workforce arena. They expressed that it is helpful when they are encouraged and feel part of *"something bigger, tangible";* that having a job they enjoy *"makes it easier to go to work"* and allows them to have pride in themselves and their *"work product."*
- Residents also requested that job service programs make special considerations for specific subpopulations such as:
  - Those who are disabled
  - Spanish-speakers

## Need for affordable day care

- Residents shared a need for more affordable day care. They also suggested that employers have daycare connections to help workers.

### III. Topic: Education

**Background:** In this session, facilitators gathered resident perspectives about the quality of education in Newburgh, barriers to children's academic success and resources for children to get educational support.

*"Learning is a tricky word..."*

#### A. Challenges & Barriers

##### Barriers to Parental involvement [13/15]

- In almost every group, residents stressed the importance of parental involvement in education as critical for students' academic success. They frequently cited the need for parents to support children at home by reinforcing what is learned at school. Residents also referred to a need for parents to serve as advocates for their children in the school system, and expressed concern that teachers tend to neglect children whose parents don't participate in school activities,
- Residents cited a number of barriers to parental involvement in the education system, including:
  - An increase in the number of young parents due to teen pregnancy
  - The stress of balancing demands of employment and child-rearing in single-parent households
  - A perception that teachers do not invite parents into the classroom

##### Violence, Bullying, and Safety [8/15]

- More than half of all groups referenced safety in schools as a significant concern for students. Violence, especially in the form of bullying, was frequently surfaced as an issue that prevents children from wanting to go to school.
- Beyond school walls, residents expressed a need for safe transportation for children on their commute to and from school and after-school activities.
- Residents also suggested that installing metal detectors is not enough: schools must teach children how to engage in healthy conflict resolution

## **“Passing to Pass”: Testing & Grades do not accurately reflect whether students are learning [6/15]**

- More than a third of all groups reported that children are being advanced through grade levels without demonstrating competency in core literacy and math skills.
- Residents expressed a significant gap between the grades that children are receiving and what they are actually learning, such that teachers will pass them for completing even the bare minimum. This disconnect is especially apparent during Parent-Teacher Conferences, in which parents receive the impression that their children are doing “OK” and are not provided with critical feedback on how their children can improve (or how parents can support).

## **Poor Parent-Teacher Communication [6/15]**

- Residents shared that teachers primarily contact parents if/when their children have acted out in class or are on the verge of failing, but rarely provide actionable feedback on how the parents can support their child/ren. In their experience, by the time the teacher makes contact with the parent, it is almost too late to make positive change that might prevent consequences such as dropping out. Residents called for policies that require teachers to check in regularly with parents.
- Multiple parents reported that they don't feel that teachers adequately listen to and address their concerns about their child's education.
- Several residents expressed a desire to sit in the classroom, if even for 15 minutes, in order for them to learn more about the school and build rapport with the teacher.
- From a logistical standpoint, parents stressed the need for schools, as well as the Board of Education, to send communications from the school system via mail rather than by sending flyers home with students. Spanish-speaking residents emphasized that notices **must** be translated into understandable Spanish by another Spanish-speaker; currently they are being translated by Google Translate, which fails to produce an accurate translation.

## **Teen Pregnancy [5/15]**

- One-third of all groups mentioned the rise in teen pregnancy as a barrier for students in Newburgh.
- Residents identified a need to prevent teen pregnancy by providing sex education and contraception in schools.
- Residents also indicated that schools must create environments that support the special needs of teen mothers, especially by providing reliable childcare.

- In addition, residents noted that young parents are less-equipped to support their children's education when they reach school-age, lending to a pernicious cycle of compromised education over generations.

### **Teachers and the Community [5/15]**

- One-third of resident groups highlighted that most teachers in the Newburgh school system do not live in Newburgh and are not part of the community. Several current residents who grew up in Newburgh schools noted that this is a change from the past, when teachers used to live and teach in Newburgh. Residents shared that because teachers are outsiders to the community, there is an inherent gap in trust between parents/students and teachers. Residents expressed their perception that if teachers felt part of the community, then they would be more invested in the students and the level of education they provide to them. Moreover, residents believe that students would be less likely to act up in class if they know that their teachers and parents know one another.
- Several residents remarked on teachers' implicit biases against children based on their race, socioeconomic status, and in the case of siblings, the behavior of an older sibling.
- Some residents referenced incidents in which they believe that teachers have bullied students. One mother shared that one of her son's teachers encouraged him to leave class, stating: *"I'm keeping my paycheck no matter what, so you can leave."*

### **Learning Disabilities & Behavioral Problems [5/15]**

- One-third of resident groups reported a need for children to be correctly diagnosed and supported when they exhibit learning disabilities, such as dyslexia, and/or mental health and behavioral challenges, including ADHD and aggression.
- Multiple residents indicated that they believe students are being overmedicated for behavioral issues that might be better addressed by counseling or therapy.

### **Overcrowded classrooms due to school closures [4/15]**

- Multiple groups remarked on the number of school closures that have occurred in recent years, with the consequence of overcrowded classrooms.
- Residents indicated that overcrowded classrooms make it more difficult for teachers to provide individualized learning to each student.

### **Teaching methods are not inclusive of diverse learning styles [3/15]**

- Several residents shared their belief that every student learns a little differently, and that teachers must match this diversity by employing a variety of teaching methods.

**Drug Dealing & Substance Use/Abuse [3/15]**

- Three resident groups reported that drug dealing occurs in school and that many students engage in substance use/abuse.
- Residents also shared that parents are struggling with substance use/abuse.

**Additional Concerns**

- Several residents reported that some children are unable to focus in school because their basic needs are not being met, with concerns regarding :
  - Food instability
  - Housing instability
  - Stress about “adult situations” in their home life
- Other residents mentioned that schools act too quickly to involve authorities when children act out, especially CPS and the Police, when it is unnecessary.
- Residents expressed mixed perceptions about the role of Group Homes in students' lives: some residents believe they are beneficial because they remove children from unsafe or “dysfunctional” situations, while others indicated that children can feel “stuck” in Group Homes and that Group Homes must provide better counseling & tutoring to children in order to support their education.
- One group shared that students spend too much time at school and commuting to & from school, which makes it challenging for them to stay focused and to do their homework after school.
- Several residents noted that there is a shortage of safe and healthy activities for children to do after school.

**B. For Residents Who Had a Positive Experience, What Made It Positive?**

For those who reported a positive experience, they mentioned:

- That there are some teachers in the Newburgh school system who go “above and beyond” to provide individualized attention to students. One resident shared that their grandchildren were having difficulty with reading and math, so their teachers took time to provide them with additional assistance and tutoring. Another resident indicated that their daughter was assessed for a learning disability and the teachers tailored their approach to accommodate her learning needs.
- That education in Newburgh is superior to the education that their children had been receiving in the Bronx and Brooklyn in NYC (as these residents recently relocated to Newburgh).



- That their children had positive experiences due to after-school programs in martial arts and community service, but noted that these were not made available through the school -- they had to seek them out separately.

## C. Examples of Orgs/Institutions/Programs Where Residents...

### ...Had Positive Experiences

- **JROTC**
- **BOCES**
- **Latchkey Program**
- **Ron Clark Academy**
- **South High:** is getting better than it used to be
- **Charter School** on Broadway
- **Elementary School:** has good teachers
- **Police Athletic League**
- **BEST Resources**
- **Newburgh Prep:** has created a friendly, caring, and safe environment, and also provides lots of opportunity for community service. Newburgh Prep is also an encouraging place for students who may only speak Spanish.
- **GED program:** provides less one-on-one support but a lot of support and good classes
- **Jumpstart Program**
- **Recap's Reentry Program (for parents)**

### ...Had Negative Experiences

- **High School:** is not as good
- **Boys & Girls Club:** could they fix their pool?
- **Newburgh Prep:** does not provide a variety of extracurricular activities
- **GED program:** does not provide as much of a strong community feel

### ...Are Aware Of [notes do not indicate quality of experiences]

- **BBBS, Boys & Girls Club**
- **Center for Hope**
- **Pastor Austin's after school in the Heights**

- **Newburgh Armory**
- **Library:** open on Sundays, but generally tends to be overcrowded
- **City Resource Center**
- **211 Reference Line**
- **NWB ministry**
- **280 Broadway**
- **DSS**
- Activities in **Washington St. School**
- **Northeast Gateway:** Rosie Andrew
- **Unity Armory**
- **YMCA**
- **Best Resources**
- **Dream Center**
- **Mental Health Association**
- **Gateway:** Substance abuse program at high school
- **Planned Parenthood**
- **Team Newburgh**
- **ROTC**
- **Liberty**

## D. Recommendation, Improvement, & Change Suggestions

### Before-school and After-school Programs

- The most frequently cited recommendation by residents, by far, was the creation or reinstatement of before-school and after-school programming. Residents emphasized that these programs must be free and accessible to all students, without any barriers to participation such as grade requirements. A few programming ideas include:
  - Community service activities
  - Trips to museums and theaters
  - Latchkey Library programs
  - Computer programs
  - Gymtime
  - Tutoring
  - Summer youth employment programs
  - Police Athletic League (PAL)
  - JROTC

### **Foster Parental Involvement**

- Residents also suggest that schools teach parents about the curriculum that students are learning, so that parents are equipped to support their children.
- In addition, residents called for building communities of trust both between teachers and parents, and among parents
- Finally, many residents requested that the school system offer Adult Education classes to help bridge the gap between what parents learned in their childhood, and what students are learning today. This may also help reduce educational disparities over generations, especially for teen parent households and single headed households.

### **Individualized Learning**

- Residents recommend that Newburgh schools assess students by how they learn best and tailor teaching methods accordingly.
- They also indicated that teachers should consider diverse paths for their students -- including college and trades -- depending on each individual's expressed talents and interests.

### **Hands-On Curriculum**

- Finally, residents called on an update to the standard curriculum to make it more hands-on and applicable to the "real world". A few ideas include:
  - Internships/Apprenticeships/Work-study programs with local businesses and unions
  - Elective classes, including art, music, technology, math programs
  - More school trips to museums and the theater
  - Provide "life skills" such as: house maintenance, personal finance/financial literacy, how to be an engaged citizen

## IV. Topic: Health & Wellness

**Background:** The facilitators aimed to understand residents' experiences with health, wellness, and the healthcare system, particularly as related to their personal sense of stability and employment opportunities.

*"I'm diabetic and the food I need to be healthy costs [too much]. It's too expensive for me to buy and I have to buy food for my kids. Sometimes I have to choose if I need to get to work or if I can buy a loaf of bread."*

### A. Challenges & Barriers

**Stress was a repeated answer in response to the question, "Why is it hard to be healthy?" (11/16)**

- *"Poverty causes stress which causes physical conditions,"* one resident said. Some stressors cited were general, such as anxiety, lack of access to resources, racial discrimination and worries about neighborhood safety. Others were specifically related to health and included: the fact that market prices on over-the-counter medicines have increased, insurance barriers and no family sick days available. People cited a need for resources to manage stress and pointed out how it drives other negative behaviors, such as smoking and drug abuse. They also linked stress to strain on one's mental health and well-being.

**Costs related to care and wellness a huge barrier (10/16)**

- Many residents reported that insurance does not cover all of one's health needs. Several echoed this sentiment: *"I'd hesitate [to visit the doctor] because I need to pay my bills."* Co-pays and availability of specialists contributes to the cost-barrier. Residents also noted the lack of dental coverage as a barrier to oral health, with one resident reporting being unable to get a root canal that he/she needed.

**There is a perception that community health centers are not of a high quality--mostly due to long wait times (10/16)**

- Long wait times contribute to residents' lack of confidence in community health centers. One person reported that they were just sent home after waiting, without

being seen. The long wait is a barrier for people who may not be able to take a whole day off of work, or it may waste a precious day-off if they go ultimately go unseen by a health professional. One person cited St. Luke's Hospital as a place where wait times are too long.

#### **It is difficult to access healthy foods (9/16)**

- Food access concerns came up many times. One resident said, *"A bag of potatoes costs less than a bag of salad and [that] causes problems."* Cost of healthy food seemed to be a primary barrier to eating well. People noted that they have to use their DSS food benefits wisely, lest they run out of food. As one person illustrated, *"The only meals the kids get is breakfast and lunch and for the weekend and dinner they don't eat."* Access is also limited by what grocery stores offer. Some noted that they have to travel for access to fresh food, especially fruit. One resident stated, *"I can't get to Walmart for fresh produce [and so] bodegas take advantage and sell overpriced low quality food."*

#### **There is a lack of mental health resources (8/16)**

- *"We need more resources to deal with stress,"* one person commented. There are "roundabout referrals" in the mental health system and obtaining services seemed elusive to most. The embarrassment and stigma associated with pursuing mental health care appeared to be one roadblock and assuming they forge ahead, residents report long waiting periods to access a mental health provider. For those who were able to access counselors, they reported that *"mental health providers are scared to go to people's houses"* and reluctant to engage residents where they live. Another person noted that counselors do not take the issues that residents present seriously. One specific need expressed was that mental health resources should be directed towards people who were once incarcerated, to help them transition back to the community.

#### **Setting up/Obtaining Medical Transportation (7/16)**

- While residents seemed to know that medical transport exists, they expressed challenges around accessing it. The process is described as *"exhausting"* and a *"hassle."* Moreover, transportation was frequently cited as a barrier for getting to the doctor's office, especially since residents sometimes needed to leave Newburgh for the care they needed.

#### **Lack of Access to Gyms/Gym Memberships (6/16)**

- A lack of a gym or exercise opportunity within walking distance was cited as a reason why people are not as physically active as they could be.

## B. For Residents Who Had a Positive Experience, What Made It Positive?

For those who reported a positive experience, recurring themes included:

- Having health insurance
- Having comprehensive insurance associated with "better treatment" such as Blue Cross Blue Shield
- Good relationship with doctors

## C. Examples of Orgs/Institutions/Programs Where Residents...

### ...Had Positive Experiences

- **Urgent Care:** "More positive" experience than hospitals
- **MVP (insurance):** Takes good care of their patients
- **Beacon Health Center:** They email and call with reminders. Good doctors.
- **Crustal Run:** "Good service"
- **Family Health Center:** Provides help with transportation, matching you up with employee who will help with transportation to doctor
- **Cornerstone:** Has great programs

### ...Had Negative Experiences

- **Food Pantries:** Date of expiration on food has short shelf life. Needs standards. Some stigma and shame associated with going. Lines too long and often crowded.
- **St. Luke's:** Bare minimum. No prescriptions given. Bad ER. Wait times too long.

### ...Are Aware Of [notes do not indicate quality of experiences]

- **Harbor House/Cornerstone:** They have a bus to get to doctors
- **Newburgh Ministries**
- **280 Broadway Recap**
- **Churches:** have information on nutrition, health, disparities
- **Exodus**

## D. Recommendation, Improvement, & Change Suggestions

### **Increase community awareness around prevention and programs related to food, health and wellness, specifically:**

- There should be community involvement in preventative efforts
- There should be direct outreach to communities
- There should be an interactive [electronic] kiosk that people can approach to get information

### **Introduce efforts to alleviate cost-burden related to healthcare, specifically by:**

- Reducing co-pay costs
- Paying for medications
- Including dental insurance
- Better access to specialists

### **Introduce no-fee/free workout & exercise opportunities, for example:**

- Zumba classes
- An outdoor workout park for adults

### **Residents also had some ideas for how to improve access to healthy food:**

- Community gardens
- Putting a vegetable garden in the Senior citizen living center
- Ensure summer farmer's market can also be accessed by people who work
- Create an option to use food stamps at the farmers' market

### **Other ideas:**

- One resident suggested that there should be a person who facilitates someone's health needs (for instance, helping schedule medical transportation, switching insurance, etc.)
- From the Spanish-speaking group: Small groups of bilingual residents can go door-to-door to speak with neighbors about local policy, garbage pick-up and other neighborhood upkeep norms. Several people seemed to be willing to do this.
- Orange County needs a stabilization center



## V. ADDITIONAL CONTENT AREA

### A. Crossover between Topic Areas

#### Workforce Development + Health & Wellness

- Many residents described feelings of hopelessness and lack of motivation. Some residents shared that the high levels of stress associated with employment issues affected their physical and mental health. Many shared that because of the multiple layers of challenges associated with not only employment but also the constant stress of trying to meet their/their families' basic needs heavily impacted their physical and mental well-being.
- Some residents also indicated that pre-existing physical and mental health issues make finding employment difficult.

#### Workforce Development + Education

- Many residents indicated that the large disparity in the Newburgh school system and education outcomes of Newburgh children is also affecting job outcomes. Residents shared the importance of *"keeping kids in schools"* and that the high school curriculum should include job/vocational skills such as resume writing, as well as on-the-job training via internships.
- Some residents also shared how parenting plays a role in students' attitudes towards education:
  - *"People are not taught to raise their children"*
  - *"Parents need to be talking to their kids about the need to work, Parents must instill work ethic in their kids, must push them to want more than what we had"*
  - *"We have a lot of innocent deaths here a lot of kids here, the guidance they got from their parents, they're partying with their kids, they're putting guns into their kids hands"*
- Still other residents indicated that their work schedules made it difficult for them to be home with children after school, to support them in doing homework. Yet parents agreed that having a job is important for them to serve as role models for their children.

- Some residents also expressed a desire for adult continuing education. There seemed to be a tension between this desire for continuing education and balancing that with having a sustainable income through steady work.
  - One resident shared that this tension was addressed via job programs where: *"Social workers often tell us NOT to go to college but focus on getting a job."*
  - Another resident shared their desire to *"get an education so that [they] would be able to work and build businesses"*.

### Workforce Development + Housing

- *"There is a hospital here and we can't be hired. I have a license in security--employers, they look at your address when you apply for work and they tell you, 'we'll let you know,' but they won't hire you because of where you live. They think we're from a 'bad' part of town."*
- Many residents noted the clear crossover between housing concerns and workforce development, where finances dictate where residents live, but where the benefits cliff disincentivizes residents from finding high paying work.
- Many people echoed the sentiment that, *"cost of living is far above what people make, regardless of whether it's welfare or work."* At the same time, people told stories of how sharply rent goes up if they do have a better job or assistance. This creates a trap where residents feel stuck in a cycle of poverty.
- Residents also shared that because jobs do not pay enough, paycheck(s) are not enough to meet the cost of living and that a large portion of paycheck going towards rent. One resident questioned, *"How many walmart employees actually work full time...can't feed [a] family of four while getting 9.50/hour with only 12 hours/week [because] they don't want to pay employee benefits."*

### Health & Wellness + Housing

- Residents cited living conditions and housing stability as being a driver of stress and mental health issues. Living conditions included everything from neighborhood infrastructure to the presence of garbage to rodents in the home. Newburgh's water issue came up a few times, with one resident saying it took several months to see the results of if they had been impacted by the water. Others cited, *"good housing"* either as a response to *"What does being healthy mean to you?"* or *"What makes it hard to be healthy?"*
- Some residents surfaced stories of lead and/or mold that landlords delayed in fixing (or didn't fix at all). The lead and mold impacts children in the household. One person noted that the dust/pollution led to asthma.

**Health & Wellness + Education**

- Residents expressed a need for rehabilitation programs for parents struggling with substance abuse
- A few times, residents surfaced the need to educate children about healthy eating habits, especially by introducing healthy foods in the school cafeteria

**B. Provision of Services/Entitlements: The Benefits Trap**Housing

- As seen in the Workforce section below, many participants discussed the delicate balance between holding a job, earning enough to sustain a living and hanging on to benefits that can subsidize one's cost of living. One person said that "89% " of their income goes to rent. Others acknowledged that DSS doesn't give enough, and the amount of assistance attainable scales back sharply if a person obtains a job that pays more.

Workforce Development

- Residents shared how the benefits cliffs effects employment: *"When I was on public assistance, as soon as I got a job, public assistance dropped immediately, rent went up from \$410 to \$550. I had no cushion, or time to save up. I ended up cutting back hours to not make too much"*. A resident with five children, one who is a special needs child, reported that she receives SSI and that she fears if she gets a better job, assistance would get cut and that she still would need SSI even with a job, given her and her family's needs.
- Additionally some residents shared that they do not have employment but work in order to receive benefits. However, the cost-benefit appears null:
  - *"I work for Orange County to get DSS to pay rent which is \$350/month. I work over 30 hours a week..."* -Resident A
  - *"That's slave labor..."* -Resident B in response to Resident A
- One resident shared how participating in one housing program affected his work life: *"I lived in a group home and they would often make people late for work"*.

Education

- One resident stated that if their children don't go to school, Social Services will take away the family's money for housing.

## C. Common Themes Across Topics

### 1. Racism, Systemic Racism, Discrimination, & a Need for Diversity

#### Housing

- It was expressed that homeownership is difficult for people of color due to predatory lending. *"How many black homeowners do you know?"* One person challenged.
- Several people cited "racial discrimination" as a barrier to getting better housing or as an observed behavior in landlords. A resident noted that, *"a lot of landlords won't rent to 'certain people.'"*

#### Workforce Development

- In addition to the lack of diversity of upper management in the Newburgh workforce, residents indicated there were multiple layers of discrimination and racism at play in the workforce arena. People felt that there is persistent employment discrimination towards formerly incarcerated, the elderly, the disabled, and those who were living in poverty. One resident stated that jobs were checking people's credits as part of their employment application process: *"I don't think that jobs should be checking people's credits... they're discriminated by credit checks."*
- Additionally most groups of residents reported racial discrimination and racial inequality as a large barrier to employment. Some also pointed to specific places of discrimination:
  - *"Union jobs block people of color"*
  - *"Electric company openly said they will not hire black people"*
  - Black resident asked why when he goes to the bank, he is denied a loan and when non-black residents go, they are approved.
- Residents suggested that increasing the diversity of employees and employers in Newburgh would affect youth positively: *"More people of color for our diverse youth to look for inspiration".*

#### Education

- Residents perceive that teachers exhibit racial bias in the classroom. One child said that the teacher only picked on white students to read [out loud]. The teacher told her she "wasn't on that level."
- Residents also indicated that there is racism in educational opportunity, including financial barriers at the college-level

## Health & Wellness

- For Healthcare, racism is intertwined with socioeconomics. The lower your income, the less reliable the health insurance, awareness, access and care, according to residents. One person said, *"your insurance shouldn't dictate how well you are treated."* And several feel it does. One woman told a narrative of how she experienced a poorer quality care when she had her first child versus her second, when she had a better job and thereby better insurance.

## 2. Formerly Incarcerated

*"I defended my sister from getting jumped and now I have a felony and now I don't qualify for housing; this is why people keep committing crimes again, I can't get a job, I try to do the best that I can but that's not enough, so what do you do, I have to fight to live, but there's nothing left to do but to commit crimes out of desperation."*

## Housing

- Residents expressed concerns about formerly incarcerated individuals that get "dumped" in Newburgh. The prisons are downstate and people also come from Canada. There is a perception that the city gets money to take parolees into the Newburgh.

## Workforce Development

- Some residents suggested that because of the job scarcity in Newburgh, this was a contributing factor for people to resort to 'crimes of desperation': *"people can't find jobs, resort to the streets and illegal activities - and fill up the jails". "5 jails have the biggest business in Newburgh"*
- Residents shared the difficulties for the formerly incarcerated populations to find employment and implied how this may create a cycle of criminal behavior:
  - *"Those who have a record not being able to get jobs. Thus ending up back in criminal behavior"*
  - *"People discharged from prison have little to no opportunities"*
- Residents reported that because felony convictions make employability difficult, that the city should *"help ex-felons with finding work"* and that they *"not discriminate against them"*.

## Health & Wellness

- A suggestion was put forth that formerly incarcerated individuals should have access to mental health services to help them transition

### 3. Safety, Security, & Violence

***“It takes a village to raise a child. We are mothers, we love them and want to keep them safe, as a group of mothers, we need to come together and get back to having that village of mothers. Let’s meet at the bowling alley/movies, etc. we need to get back to that, we need to stop secluding ourselves...”***

*-resident who is the mother of a child killed during a Halloween party shooting*

#### **Housing**

- Neighborhood safety came up as a concern for residents. There were reports of dark areas near abandoned buildings, drug abuse and gun shots, which leaves people feeling unsafe. One of residents' repeated asks was for affordable, safe housing.

#### **Education**

- Multiple residents indicated that violence and bullying at school is a serious concern. They shared that children experience bullying and fist fights at school, on the school bus, and during their commute to and from school or after-school programming.
  - “Kids get picked on and bullied who didn't bother anyone. Then they don't want to go to school. Teachers don't do anything. They keep reporting it, but nothing is done to fix it.”

#### **Health & Wellness**

- As mentioned previously, issues of safety feed into stress and mental health issues. *“The community is very unsafe. I don't feel safe for my kids walking a block to the store...”* one person shared. Another explained that gunshots, *“Create fear, stress [and] prevent people from going out.”*

### 4. Access to Information

#### **Housing**

- Many people cited not knowing how to find affordable housing as a reason why they stay in bad housing situations. Others spoke about wanting to access tenants' rights information. There didn't seem to be a hub where people access housing-related information.

#### **Workforce Development**

- Residents shared that if there were jobs available, it was at times difficult to access information about them because of the lack of computers. They shared that many requested them to apply online for jobs.

- As mentioned in the workforce development section of this report, residents communicated that they would like to see a central registry of jobs and job openings in Newburgh. One resident suggested a monthly booklet that articulated about job opportunities and where they can get help with job placement. They also requested forums where they could participate in networking opportunities. *"We need information about what exists, what is wanted and needed [in terms of jobs], and how to get it".*
- A few residents requested specific access to information 'benefits' for Newburgh residents living in poverty such as:
  - Free WIFI internet access
  - Free TV Channels for channels 2-13

### Education

- A few residents indicated that they don't have access to computers, so the Internet is not an option for them to receive information from the school or to assist their children with homework.
- Several residents referenced that nonprofits in the community appear to be working in silos rather than collaborating with one another.

### Health & Wellness

- People expressed needing to understand: How to switch insurance, what their insurance will and will not cover and navigating health related processes
- The church/Newburgh Ministries was noted several times as a rich source of information

## 5. Transportation

### Housing

- People noted distance from bus stops or from locations they needed to be as an impediment to self-advancement. "[I] need a job with transportation so I can have steady housing," one resident, who was also homeless, said.

### Workforce Development

- All groups of residents brought up transportation as a challenge & barrier with regards to workforce development. Residents shared specific concerns about public bus transportation in Newburgh: limited bus routes and routes not being near homes/work locations, limited hours/days available, cost of public transportation and nonpublic transportation costs, not knowing where the routes were and/or the



bus schedules, and drivers/public transportation information being available only in English for Spanish speaking residents.

- Multiple residents cited that because of the various public transportation concerns, they chose to walk to and from work, some who walk multiple hours each day. One resident shared: *"I have a family member who had no way to get to work, and so he walked to work and got hit by a car and got killed"*.
- A few residents shared that they were offered job positions [outside of Newburgh] that required vehicles to get to/from the place of employment, and unfortunately had to turn away the opportunity because they did not have a car, as one resident summed up - *"Transportation service keeps people pigeon-holed into specific jobs"*. Another resident shared that he had to walk two miles to take multiple busses to get to a job service program and that it took too much time to travel to a program that didn't guarantee a job upon completion.
- Residents had some recommendations for how Newburgh could improve transportation:
  - *"Expand the city bus system"*
  - *"Incentivize employers for carpools (for example: give employers gas cards if they are carpooling)"*
  - Multilingual bus drivers (or materials in Spanish)
  - Clearing snow quickly so that transportation to work is not so difficult [seasonal]
    - Landlords to ensure snow is cleared in front of buildings

## Education

- A few residents noted that the commute to school and challenges of the bus schedule elongate the school day, making it difficult for students to concentrate both during and after school.

## Health & Wellness

- As mentioned, many identified transportation as a barrier to accessing health services, but also expressed confusion around the process of booking medical transportation.

## D. Perceptions of Poverty & Newburgh Residents

*“Lots of slumlords think just because you’re on DSS, you don’t deserve heating, you don’t deserve to have a clean apartment without rats or roaches, that you don’t deserve to have working lights. Even at the DSS office, they got people who think just because you need assistance that you’re a criminal or that you don’t deserve the same basic respect that other people get.”*

There were many indications from residents that they were perceived negatively. Many residents felt negatively perceived, stigmatized, and disrespected by people in multiple areas of their lives: from landlords, to employers, to DSS workers, to nonprofit case managers. Residents indicated that in addition to having very tangible challenges and barriers to employment, that negative perceptions were an additional burden. Residents shared that the stress of these tangible challenges were burdensome but that the perceptions projected onto them *“perpetuates the negative impacts”*. They shared that they felt expectations of them were low from many different people in the systems they touched - creating a cycle of low motivation.

- For example, one resident shared that his son’s teacher told him that she had the opportunity to teach at any school, but she chose Newburgh so she could “help poor people.”
- Relating to health care, one resident commented that they feel healthcare practitioners have bad attitudes towards those who have medicare. *“They are jaded,”* this resident said, they *“look down on those with assistance.”*

## E. Responding to a Changing World

### Housing

- Residents noted that, like Section 8, once more plentiful/accessible, seem no longer available.
- Rents in the area are rising faster than wages and incomes are.

### Workforce Development

- Residents shared that if there were no investment from companies coming into Newburgh, people end up leaving to places where there are better investments into the community.
- Residents expressed that some of the decrease in production/manufacturing jobs were a result of the automation of specific jobs. Given the changing world and automation of jobs, residents shared their desire to learn refined skills that were compatible and up-to-date with changing industries' needs. *"Don't teach us dead end skills."* Residents also shared their desire to learn more technology/computer based skills such as web development, computer coding & programming, microsoft excel, etc.

### Education

- Residents frequently defined "quality education" as students being able to apply what they've learned in the "real world." They stressed the importance of students being prepared for employment opportunities available in the current global economy, and considered a few ways for schools to respond:
  - Teach students "life skills" ranging from social etiquette & manners, to resume writing, to financial literacy
  - Learn how to be an engaged citizen and challenge authority