



**The City of Allentown Weed and Seed Initiative:  
Evaluation 2008**



**A report of the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium prepared by:**

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**The opinions expressed in the report do not necessarily reflect the views of the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium, the Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges or any LVAIC institutions. They are expressly those of the authors.**



## **Executive Summary**

The WEED & SEED initiative is a collaborative effort including neighborhood residents, the public and private sectors, and state/local government all working together to 'weed out' violent crime, drug abuse and gang activity in designated high-crime neighborhoods and 'seed in' programs that benefit the community residents. The following report results from an evaluation and needs assessment carried out during May-August 2008 of the Allentown, PA. Weed & Seed (W&S) Program, located in the first ward and center city areas of Allentown.

A participatory research approach was used that involved researchers' collaboration with both the W&S staff and committee members to identify key components of the evaluation. Research was conducted via 42 interviews with committee members and resident leaders, 32 interviews with residents from the target area, a mailed survey returned by 481 residents, and review of W&S reports and community level indicators.

In its five years of activity, the W&S organization of Allentown has created an active coalition of residents, city offices, and non-profit organizations to address the problems identified in the target area. It has initiated or supported many programs, especially in the areas of public safety, economic development, and youth activities, often with residents who have been trained and mobilized to improve overall quality of life in the neighborhood.

Results of the research revealed many positive changes in the past five years. A major change has been the reduction in crime rates-- in total numbers, in rate per population, and as a percentage of the city's total crime. In addition, approximately 250 residents were helped to find jobs, and several dozen local businesses have been assisted with loans. The W&S initiative and the programs it supports are well recognized throughout the target area. Furthermore, residents value the friendliness and diversity of their neighborhoods and the availability of small businesses and public transportation. Residents who were interviewed were more likely to consider that the neighborhood has improved in the past two years rather than declined.

We also observed issues that seem to be plaguing the target area, including a significant decline in home ownership. In addition, there is a substantial percentage of the target area's population that does not feel safe, and who consider crime, drugs, trash, and noise to be major problems.

Based on our findings, the following are the researchers' recommendations for the Weed and Seed initiative:

- Enhance the activities of the Housing subcommittee to continue to focus on increasing home ownership as well as improving housing appearance
- Enhance communication among subcommittees, including standardization of reporting
- Increase publicity about the activities of W&S and about the decline in crime
- Increase clean-up activities, perhaps linked in part to the many youth programs
- Enhance enforcement of noise ordinances
- Continue to collaborate with police to ensure greater presence and improved response time
- Evaluate the effectiveness of specific programs in achieving stated goals

## **The Allentown W&S Initiative Evaluation, 2008**

Weed & Seed (hereafter referred to as W&S) is a community-based strategy originally created in 1991 by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ). The W&S initiative is a collaborative effort including neighborhood residents, the public and private sector, and state/local government all working together to prevent, control and reduce violent crime, drug abuse and gang activity in designated high-crime neighborhoods throughout the country. This strategy's approach is two-fold: law enforcement and prosecutors cooperate to "weed" out drug abuse and violent criminals, while private and public community organizations and agencies work together to "seed" in human services such as prevention, intervention, treatment and neighborhood restoration programs.

The following report results from an evaluation and needs assessment carried out during May-August 2008. It includes background on the program and the target neighborhoods, a description of the W&S programs and accomplishments, the results of interviews with committee members and residents most directly involved in W&S, and surveys of community residents. It will conclude with overall impressions and recommendations.

### **I. METHODOLOGY FOR THE EVALUATION**

This program evaluation was carried out in collaboration with the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium, which is a group of faculty from all eight institutions of higher learning in the Lehigh Valley, and which operates under the fiscal and organizational aegis of LVAIC – the Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges. Dr. Judith Lasker, Professor of Sociology at Lehigh University, supervised the research team conducting the program evaluation. Elizabeth Eckley and Sarah Williams, Masters students in Sociology at Lehigh University, served as the evaluators. Phyllis Alexander, Coordinator of Allentown's W&S and Olga Negron, TALL Team Coordinator helped to guide and inform the research team. Michele Deegan, Assistant Professor of Political Science at Muhlenberg College and Director of the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium, contributed significantly to this project, and Zane Kratzer, graduate of Lehigh's sociology masters program, created the maps for this report.

In this program evaluation, the participatory research approach was used. This approach is "people-centered (Brown, 1985) in the sense that the process of critical inquiry is informed by and responds to the experiences and needs of people involved" (Sohng, S.L. 1995). Using a participatory research approach, members of the TALL Team, the AID team, and W&S staff were consulted for ideas about goals and methods for the assessment. The following procedures were used for assessment:

- Review of program evaluations of other W&S sites (<http://www.weedandseeddatacenter.org/>)
- W&S documentation such as committee meeting minutes, pamphlets, fiscal year review, and several Sub Committee yearly reports.
- Attendance at AID and TALL team meetings for participatory research dimension to establish community-defined objectives and methods for properly evaluating the W&S initiative.
- Individual interviews with:
  - AID and TALL team and Subcommittee members (42 out of 72)

- W&S-funded personnel (4 out of 4)
- Mayor Ed Pawlowski
- 32 interviews with residents from the target area, using a structured interview protocol.
- A one-page survey, in both English and Spanish translation, mailed to every resident in the target area. 481 completed surveys were returned by W&S area residents.
- Community level indicators related to the goals of W&S and its Sub Committees.

## **II. BACKGROUND TO W&S PROGRAM IN ALLENTOWN**

### ***Local mission and vision***

The vision of W&S is that Allentown is a diverse, thriving and safe community in action. Its mission is that Allentown W&S will unite the community, promoting an atmosphere of trust and civility, where quiet, drug-free streets sustain thriving businesses that encourage community action and revitalization.

### ***Characteristics of the W&S Target Area***

The most recent population figures for the W&S target area are from the 2000 Census; we report them here while fully recognizing that they are out-dated, but more recent data is available only for Allentown city as a whole. In 2000, Allentown was Pennsylvania's third largest city with 106,632 residents and the largest municipality in the tri-county Lehigh Valley region with approximately 576,129 residents. In the Center City and First Wards, which make up the W&S target areas, there was a total estimated population of 12,264 residents. Of these residents, 74.09% were Latino and 25.91% non-Latino. When asked about racial identity, 45.65% reported white, 14.06% black, and 32.19% categorized themselves as a different race or "other". Of the 12,264 residents in the target area, 4,347 were males aged 18 and older, 4,102 were female aged 18 and older, 1,965 males aged 17 or less and 1,849 female aged 17 or less. Additionally, the per capita income was \$11,803, compared to \$16,282 for the entire city, while the median household income was \$24,764, compared to \$32,016 for the city. (<http://censtats.census.gov>).

With easy access to Philadelphia and New York and between two major highways, Interstate 78 and 22, Allentown is well-situated for economic and demographic growth. Unfortunately, this geographical position also can make it part of a route for criminal activity. The problematic nature of crime in Allentown, particularly in the target area, is demonstrated by data reported in the W&S proposal. While the target area represented approximately 11.5% of the city's population in 2000, the proportion of crimes occurring in the area were double that, and the proportion of arrests at least four times that.

### ***W&S Proposal for Allentown is Funded***

Based in part on these figures on crime and poverty and the troubling reality they reflect, current Mayor Ed Pawlowski, then Director of Community and Economic Development for the city, submitted the W&S proposal. In 2003, the Allentown W&S satisfied the six national W&S criteria and began receiving federal funding to implement the program's strategies. The six criteria are as follows:

- The area's crime rate compared with the surrounding community, especially drug and violent crime.
- The presence of families with children in the area.
- The presence of signs of social deterioration in the area. For example: juvenile delinquency, vandalism, broken families and alcohol and drug dependency among others.
- The rate of poverty and unemployment compared with the surrounding community.
- The presence of homes, businesses and public spaces in need of cleanup, maintenance and capital development.
- The presence of community-based organizations (i.e. churches, schools, and civic organizations) motivated to take responsibility for improving local quality of life. (<http://www.allentownweedandseed.org>)

The W&S site targets two areas within Allentown-- the Center City and the First Ward. Overall, the W&S strategy provides Allentown with 48 blocks of coverage that stretches North to South from Tilghman to Hamilton Street, and East to West from the Lehigh River to 8<sup>th</sup> Street South of Gordon Street and from American Parkway to 8<sup>th</sup> Street north of Gordon Street.

### **III. ORGANIZATION AND FUNDING OF THE W&S PROGRAM**

#### ***Staff***

Allentown W&S funds the following four staff members:

- Phyllis Alexander, W&S Coordinator
- Olga Negron, TALL Team Coordinator
- Yolanda Colbert, Youth Coalition Coordinator
- Cecilia Rodriguez, Employment Counselor

#### ***Subcommittees***

The implementation plan has five components, or Sub Committees: public safety, employment and economic development, housing and physical environment, human services, and youth development. The vision and activities of each of these Subcommittees is described under IV, Subcommittee Accomplishments, below.

#### ***Assistance for Impact Delegation Team (AID)***

The AID team, or Steering Committee, is a collaboration of key non-profit, government and private sector leaders charged to create a revitalization plan and deliver services and resources to the residents of the target area. The AID team is the highest governing authority within the organizational structure of the W&S initiative. AID team members bring several qualities and skills to the W&S effort, including leadership, guidance, vision, direction and management. Members also serve in positions of authority within the organizations they represent (e.g. managers in government agencies, and community nonprofit directors). This level of authority enables AID team members to commit and deliver resources that are required to effect real change in the designated area. These resources may be in the form of financial resources, staff support, volunteer help, and in-kind services. This group includes representatives from each of the five subcommittees, as well as TALL team members. Phyllis Alexander is the W&S coordinator and also attends and helps to organize the AID and Sub Committees.

### ***Target Area Local Leaders (TALL) Team***

The TALL team, also referred to as Clean Block Captains, is made up of residents from the target areas who are engaged in the revitalization process. Many TALL team members have received leadership training upon entering the W&S initiative, and they serve on various Subcommittees and some are members of the Steering (AID) Committee. The TALL team coordinator is Olga Negron, who conducts much resident outreach in the community.

### ***Funding for the Allentown W&S program***

Funding used by the Allentown W&S program comes from city, state, and federal sources.

***Federal Funding*** From April 1, 2004 to March 31, 2008, a total amount of \$798,000 was received from the federal government. This funding has gone to support:

- W&S Employment Counselor, managed by W&S Partner Grace Episcopal Church;
- Safe Havens at The Salvation Army, CADA and St. Luke's;
- Drug and Alcohol Case Manager for the target area (funded for two years);
- Workshops sponsored or supported by W&S;
- Evaluation of W&S;
- Drug Education for Youth (DEFY) program, managed by CADA;
- Equipment;
- Police overtime;
- Required training and supplies.

***State Funding*** For the period of July 1, 2002 to March 31, 2006, a total amount of \$370,010 was received from the state for W&S's Implementation Fund, used for personnel and equipment. In addition, an amount of \$264,000 was received from the state for Quality of Life funding from July 1, 2004 to June 30, 2009. Quality of life funding was used for:

- Police overtime
- Police Resident and Community Relations Training
- Resident Training
- Resident Mini-grants (typically used for block clean-ups and block-parties)
- Neighborhood beautification
- Youth prevention programs e.g. HYPE (Healthy Youth Peer Education program)
- Needs assessment
- Steering Committee (AID) training
- SWEEP Pilot Project
- W&S Web site
- Personnel

The Micro Enterprise program received \$430,000, which has gone to support small businesses in the W&S target area. W&S partner Community Action Development Corporation of Allentown (CADC) manages this program.

The Youth Delinquency Fund has received a total amount of \$618,000 from state funding. This funding has gone to support the growth and development of youth residing in the W&S target area through programs administered by the following partners:

- The Salvation Army of Allentown
- YEA! (YEA! Manages the W&S Creative Expression program, primarily comprised of XSCAPE, a dance program),
- St. Luke's Neighborhood Center
- Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (CADA)
- Children's First Academy.
- The W&S Youth Coalition Coordinator.

**City Funding** The City of Allentown funds the salaries of the Allentown W&S staff.

#### **IV. SUBCOMMITTEE ACCOMPLISHMENTS**

##### ***Public Safety***

**Vision:** Increase the safety of the community, allowing residents to live and recreate peacefully and strengthen the relationship between police and residents.

**Goals:** eliminate drug dealing problem on street corners, reduce prostitution and loitering complaints, reduce quality of life complaints and reduce number of juveniles on street during school hours. The list below highlights some by the activities of the Subcommittee and its members.

- Assistant Chief David Howells, Jr. and Officer Ken Smith attended a five-day NCBI training on Welcoming Diversity and then facilitated Police/Resident Community Relations Workshops.
- The Police/Resident Community Relations Workshop brought community residents and police officers together to engage in open dialogue regarding relations between police and residents and served as an outlet to voice concerns and suggestions.
- Committee members worked with the site coordinator on the 2007-2008 PCCD Quality of Life grant. The Quality of Life grant awards funds to implement programs that will improve the quality of life of Weed and Seed residents. This site was awarded the grant, and the dollars support the Clean Block Captain initiative, Resident mini-grants for property up-keep, resident training opportunities, neighborhood beautification projects and the Police/Resident Community Relations workshops.
- Forty-two surveillance cameras were put into operation throughout the city of Allentown. This number of surveillance cameras should double with the support of \$400,000 in federal money sponsored by U.S. Senator Arlen Specter. Steering Committee members believe the cameras have been effective as a deterrent to crime. Through August 16, 2008, there were 22 incidents "caught" by the cameras. The cameras have helped with several arrests including shoplifting, drugs, drug paraphernalia, and disorderly conduct.
- George Kelley, creator of the Broken Windows Theory, visited Allentown and offered suggestions to clean up the area and create a sense of safety in the city. This plan was adopted by the city council in September 2008, and the Allentown Police Department plans to implement the suggestions into their community policing by becoming more visible and creating a sense of safety in the community.



In addressing the possible impact of these activities, it is very important to note the trends in the crime rates for the target area. As shown in the tables below, incidents of crime have decreased in the target area since implementation of W&S initiative.

**Table 2. NUMBER OF INCIDENT COUNTS (CRIME TOTALS)**

	<b>W&amp;S Target Area</b>								
	<b>1999</b>	<b>2000</b>	<b>2001</b>	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
Part I Offenses	1066	998	997	1077	719	1637	1224	1338	1059
Part II Offenses	4442	4745	4418	4461	2980	2841	2739	2506	2635
Total Offenses	5508	5743	5415	5538	3699	4478	3963	3844	3694
Target area incidents % of City	<b>23%</b>	<b>23%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>22%</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>16%</b>
	<b>City of Allentown</b>								
Part I Offenses	5589	5576	5292	5996	4093	8462	6699	7197	6800
Part II Offenses	18104	19248	19066	18690	13790	11710	11667	11875	16125
Total Offenses	23693	24824	24358	24686	17883	20172	18366	19072	22925

Table 2 shows that the total offenses for the City of Allentown have gone up since the introduction of W&S in 2003, but that the number and percent of the city's total incidents occurring in the target areas has declined.

**Table 3. Comparison of Allentown Target Area and City Crime Rates Per 1,000 Residents**

	<b>2002</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2005</b>	<b>2006</b>	<b>2007</b>
<b>W&amp;S Target Area</b>						
Part I Offenses	89.9	94.5	136.4	102.0	111.5	88.3
Part II Offenses	371.8	372.9	236.8	228.3	208.8	219.5
Total Offenses	461.5	467.4	373.2	330.3	320.3	307.8
<b>City of Allentown</b>						
Part I Offenses	56.2	58.9	79.4	62.8	67.5	63.7 ]
Part II Offenses	175.3	190.8	109.8	109.4	111.4	151.2
Total Offenses	231.5	249.6	189.2	172.2	178.9	214.9

Table 3 demonstrates that the W&S Target Area has higher crime rates per 1,000 residents than for the city of Allentown as a whole. However, the total number of offenses within the target area has decreased from 461.5 per 1,000 residents in 2002, to 307.8 per 1,000 residents in 2007. The rate of offenses per population has declined from being twice that of Allentown's (461.5 compared to 231.5) to 1.4 times Allentown's (307.8 compared to 214.9).

### ***Employment and Economic Development***

Vision: Create and support economic activity and job growth in the target area.

Goals: To provide employment skills and opportunities that can sustain economic vitality within the target area. In order to combat the reduction in job opportunities, Allentown W&S's Economic Development Subcommittee hired an employment counselor and created a Micro Enterprise program for the target area.

#### ***W&S Employment Counselor***

An employment counselor was hired to help find jobs for those within the target area. As of August 2008, Cecilia Rodriguez, who is based at Grace Episcopal Church, had found jobs for approximately 255 individuals. The pay scale for these jobs ranges between 10 and 12 dollars per hour. The breakdown of the client list is as follows:

164 Female, 108 Male  
185 Hispanic, 46 White, 40 Black, 1 "other"

These jobs are estimated to have generated approximately \$8.6 million to the W&S area economy. The cost of the program, \$35,000, is less than half of 1% of what the program generates in new income for residents.

#### ***Micro Enterprise Program***

The Micro Enterprise program was created to help support small businesses within the target area. Over the last 3 fiscal years, 46 businesses have received a micro-enterprise grant or mini-grant. A total of 53 jobs have been created. Existing businesses awarded a grant included a sub shop, modeling agency, legal services company, specialized transportation company, two restaurants, an auto detailing business and a hardware store. The majority of these businesses were both minority and female owned, and represented the primary means of family support. The start-up businesses awarded a grant included a hair salon, commercial cleaning service, a wholesale tropical fish farm and a restaurant.

Current data on the unemployment rate for the target area is unavailable since the 2006 Census follow-up does not give a breakdown for the target area. Therefore, it cannot be concluded whether there has been an increase or decrease in the target area's unemployment rate. However, the creation of an employment counselor and the initiation of the Micro Enterprise program are two major accomplishments for Allentown's W&S initiative.

### ***Housing and Physical Environment***

Vision: Increase the number of residents who are eager to live, stay and own a home and raise a family in this community.

Goals: improve target area livability, perception and desirability of the target area as a place to live and own a home, and improve the conditions of, and stimulate investment in, the area's housing stock.

The Subcommittee, collaborating with the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Allentown, focused on blighted properties in the target area. The Allentown Redevelopment Authority is responsible for eliminating blight. One way to do that is to acquire blighted properties

and then distribute those properties to local non-profit housing organizations. These non-profits rehab the properties and put them back on the market for affordable home ownership.

In some cases, houses cannot be rehabilitated and have to be condemned. Table 1 highlights the number of blighted properties on the Redevelopment Authority’s list that qualify for condemning. In the last few years, the Redevelopment Authority focused on acquiring a few key properties (the Colonial, Sal’s Spaghetti House) and put the bulk of the earlier Blighted Property Lists on hold. The "active" properties in this table are those that remain blighted and qualify for condemnation, and which are now in the process of being condemned.

**Table 1. Number of Blighted Properties, Redevelopment Authority of Allentown**

Date Determined	# of Properties on List	# Acquired	# Active	% Acquired or Active
March 2001	11	5	0	45%
September 2002	19	9	0	47%
July 2003	1	0	1	100%
March 2004	22	0	5	23%
November 2005	27	3	6	33%
December 2006	36	0	11	31%
March 2008	28	0	18	64%
June 2008	8	1	7	100%

Chart provided by the Redevelopment Authority of the City of Allentown

The Housing and Physical Environment Subcommittee has also been involved in other programs and initiatives. Listed below is a summary of their activities and achievements.

- During 2005-2006, 1300 letters were sent to landlords in the target area asking if they would be interested in selling their home to a tenant. 100 landlords responded positively, but none of the tenants qualified due to reasons related to finances and/or credit.
- During 2006-2007, financial fitness classes were offered in both English and Spanish. Six families graduated and three from the target area. These classes continue to be offered during the 2007-2008 year.
- In 2007, the North Street Project with the HADC began the foundation on the last of a total of 3 three-unit buildings. The first 6 completed homes were to be ready for sale in the summer of 2008.
- In 2007, the Alliance for Building Communities (ABC) rehabilitated and sold 4 homes in the W&S target area. Furthermore, 4 homes within the W&S target area were rehabilitated.

In 2000, according to the Census, 47.26% of individuals in the target area were renting, whereas 52.74% owned their home. According to the city, for 2008, 62.75% of individuals living in the target area currently rent, whereas 37.25% own their own home (data provided by City of Allentown Planning Department). These statistics demonstrate a substantial drop in home ownership within the target area (from 52.7 to 37.3%) between 2000 and 2008. Thus, while efforts

have been made to rehabilitate older homes and build new ones, the goal of increasing home ownership in the area has not been met at this time.

### *Human Services*

Vision: Support residents in their desire to live meaningful healthy lives.

Goals: 1) enhance drug prevention, treatment and rehabilitation programs, with an emphasis on post-treatment support, 2) enable residents to foster a greater sense of self and community through personal development and participation in neighborhood and community activities, 3) increase community outreach for social services that are culturally appropriate to the target area.

As of July 2008, the Lehigh County DHS office has 1,028 active cases (representing 1,444 people) in the Weed and Seed targeted area. Adult Mental Health is the most significant area of concern for the target area. These cases are as follows:

- Adult Services: 22
- Aging Services: 48
- Children and Youth: 221 (representing 637 people)
- Early Intervention: 66
- Adult Mental Health: 569
- Children's Mental Health: 32
- Mental Retardation: 70

Listed below are several accomplishments of the Human Services Subcommittee and its members.

- In 2006-2007, the ALERT partnership and the Human Services Subcommittee collaborated to help promote the Subcommittee to human service providers in the area by facilitating three lunch meetings. Some of the providers agreed to join the Human Services Subcommittee, and during June 2007, 17 people met to discuss how the subcommittee could work cooperatively to meet the human service needs of the residents within the target area.
- The Human Services Subcommittee members surveyed residents to ascertain their familiarity with human service resources. Subcommittee members learned that residents are not aware of the many resources available that will improve the quality of their life. In the summer of 2008, the Subcommittee sponsored the Farmers' Market, now known as the Wednesday Growers Market, that provides human service organizations an outlet for promoting their services to the community, along-side local growers.
- On April 30, 2008, the "How to Be an Effective Ally" program was held at W&S's office in Bucky Boyle Park. 30-40 human service providers attended this event. The main goal of this program was to provide positive communication and support skills to human service providers who work with residents of the target area.

Some challenges remain for the Human Services Subcommittee: 1) Identify the problems for which they want to focus their resources. 2) Establish the proper avenues and venues to provide information target area residents. Although the Growers' Market is a promising event, this may not be the most appropriate venue to reach W&S target residents. Most people who pass

through the market are leaving their work and live outside the target area. 3) Adult Mental Health is the most significant area of health concern for the targeted area.

### ***Youth Coalition***

Vision: Develop partnerships to enhance educational, recreational, and personal development opportunities for youth and their families.

Goals: 1) enhance educational, recreational and personal development opportunities for youth in the target area, including both active and passive leisure activities, 2) provide more positive role models for youth in the target area, 3) better prepare teenagers in the target area for the transition to productive adulthood, and 4) to help families in the target area deal more effectively with behavioral and developmental challenges that affect the well-being of youth.

The Youth Coalition is a coalition of youth providers who meet monthly to provide a safety net of services and programs for youth in the target area (and beyond). These programs include after school activities e.g. tutoring recreation, anti-drug/anti-gang education, a family strengthening curriculum, child care, teen rap group, and a creative expression program. Some of the activities coordinated by the subcommittee and its members during the period of 2005-07 are listed below:

- Mt. Sinai Church, a member of the youth coalition, received funding from Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency (PCCD) to help redevelop the basement floor of the Church into a Head Start classroom, which opened to 20 pre-school children and their families in September 2005.
- The Adult Literacy Center served youth aged 16-21 by offering sessions in anger management, time management and self-esteem. They also provide GED testing, which twenty-seven students took advantage of.
- The Council on Alcohol and Drug Abuse (CADA) Youth Program developed a Young and Wise program as a result of the Drug Education for Youth (DEFY) program. The Young and Wise program helps to serve 25 youth and is aimed at preventing drug and alcohol use, gang involvement, and promoting healthy communication between youth and adults.
- The Caring Café Entrepreneur Program was implemented by The Caring Place Mentoring Program to teach entrepreneurship to youth from low-income communities. The program helps to teach youth about the different aspects of running a business and currently has two of the twelve participating students working in the Café.
- The Salvation Army averaged approximately 30 children in their after-school program. They also successfully held a Salvation Army Back 2 School Carnival which distributed free book bags and school supplies to 189 children in need. Additionally, the Salvation Army provided a free dinner for youth 6-18, an after-school program to assist youth ages 6-12, and a summer program for youth 6-14.
- The St. Luke's Neighborhood Center served the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade population and demonstrated improved behavior and attitude in its youth leaders club.

- A consultant was hired to write grant proposals for the youth coalition to help with sustainability beyond the W&S grant. The initiative received state weed and seed grant for four Weed and Seed partners to implement the Second Steps curriculum.
- In 2008-2009, 4 agencies will deliver the Second Step Curriculum, which focuses on social and personal skill development among middle school students. The program lessons aim to both prevent and reduce risk factors such as aggression, peer rejection, and early initiating of substance abuse and to increase protective factors such as social skills and school connectedness.
- Children's First provides 3 programs for youth in the first ward including a group home for infants and toddlers, a pre-school academy and a primary education program for youth up to 10 years old. The agency serves between 60-67 youth monthly. Between 2007 and 2008, 750 youth were served.
- F.A.C.E.S. collaborated with human service professionals to provide a workshop on how to work effectively with challenging populations. They also facilitated a "Teach us to Fish" project which helped provide 32 parents with information on therapeutic parenting skill-building.
- In 2005, youth told the Allentown W&S Youth Coordinator that while there were many programs and services available to them, there was no place for them to express their creativity. Based on their request, the Xcape program was started in the Spring of 2006, with CADA as partner. YEA! became program partner in 2007, and currently 30 youth meet regularly every week to practice their hip-hop dancing skills. They have performed many times including Giant Stadium in NY.

The Youth Coalition Subcommittee has addressed its three initial goals by implementing programs to youth in the community. These programs have not, however, been subjected to a formal evaluation to determine their measurable effectiveness. These programs should be evaluated so that the Youth Coalition Subcommittee can determine continued W&S participation in the programs, including monetary support.

### ***TALL Team Accomplishments***

The TALL Team is the group of residents from the weed and seed community who are engaged in the revitalization process. Listed below are several programs and initiatives of the TALL team and its members.

- A Clean Block Program was initiated. This is a resident-driven program to educate and encourage other residents to clean, repair and beautify their residential block. Weekly and monthly clean ups around residential blocks have been conducted throughout the First Ward and Center City, led by Block Captains of the TALL team.
- SWEEP (Solid Waste Education & Enforcement Program) project: The TALL team collaborated with the Bureau of Recycling and Solid Waste to support the SWEEP Program, that brought awareness to tenants and homeowners about their litter/recycling violations. In the program's first year, 2005, 58 violations were issued. In 2006, the number of citations reached 1,331 and in 2007, 1,646 citations were issued. The increase

in number of citations may reflect the TALL team's focus on trying to improve the target area as a place where people want to live and own their own home.

- In March 2005, sixteen residents graduated from the TALL Team Leadership Program. Of these 16 residents, one ran in the city council primary 2005, one ran for School District Board of Directors, two became involved with the YMCA committee, one became the Youth Project Coordinator for W&S, co-chair for the W&S Steering (AID) Committee, one created a Boy Scouts Troup, and one became a board member for Community Action Development Corporation.
- In July, 2004, the ALERT partnership provided the TALL Team with \$5,000 to distribute in mini-grants of \$500 for neighborhood projects. The Tall Team received 15 applications from TALL Team members, and awarded 10 mini-grants. These projects included a Free Family Pool Party that served 150 people, Future Stars Support Basketball Team-Inner City Youth that served 20 youth, and a Political Empowerment Training dinner where 15 attended.
- In May 2004, TALL team members walked with members of the Housing Subcommittee to survey the 1<sup>st</sup> Ward. 682 properties were surveyed; one list was created for acquisition and demolition and another list created for renovation, for the purpose of eliminating blight.
- Many community activities have been initiated by TALL team members, such as Neighborhood Jams, Block Parties, and Clean-up days.
- Reality Tour, May 2007. 27 youth and their parents attended the presentation. The TALL team members coordinated the event and the youth from Xcape and The Caring place (both are Youth Coalition members) were the "actors" of the tour. The adults included 3 residents, 2 City of Allentown Police Officers and 3 City of Allentown paramedics.
- Little Apple Market collaborated with the TALL Team to provide up to twenty-five \$25.00 gift cards for Block Captains who organized clean ups on their blocks.
- TALL Team members participated in a Police-Resident Relationship Building Workshop in April 2007.
- In May 2007, a youth panel was created and interviewed by a WFMZ reporter in relation to the elections and the voting process.

## **V. RESIDENTS' VIEWS**

In order to obtain a residential perspective on the progress of the neighborhood and the W&S Initiative, two residential "expert" surveys were constructed. The first survey was a one-page questionnaire, mailed to approximately 5,500 residents within the target area of Allentown. The survey was sent out in both English and Spanish translations. 360 unopened envelopes were returned by the Post Office due to resident change in address. An additional 34 that were completed and returned were not in the target area and therefore not included in analysis. A total of 481 surveys were completed by W&S residents and returned, a return rate of slightly under 10%.

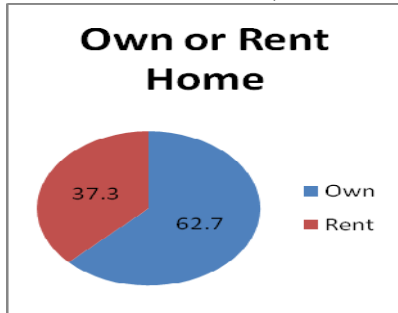
The second survey was an extended version of the one-page questionnaire. The research assistants went to several locations in the target area including Bucky Boyle Park, the PPL pavilion on Hamilton Street, St. Luke's Block Party, the 6<sup>th</sup> Street Shelter, and the senior center at





87.1% of residents responded to the survey in English, while 12.9% responded in Spanish (Figure 2b). 63% of the former group (N=415), and 61% of the latter group (N=59) own their own homes. This difference is not statistically significant.

**Figure 2a - Respondents who own or rent their home, n= 513**



**Figure 2b—Language of Survey, n=513**

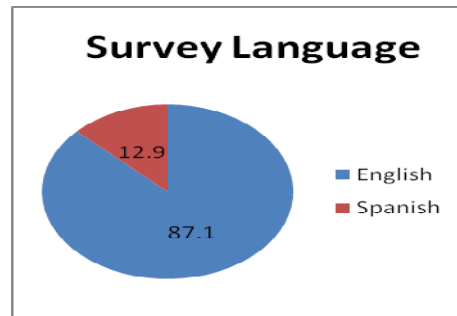
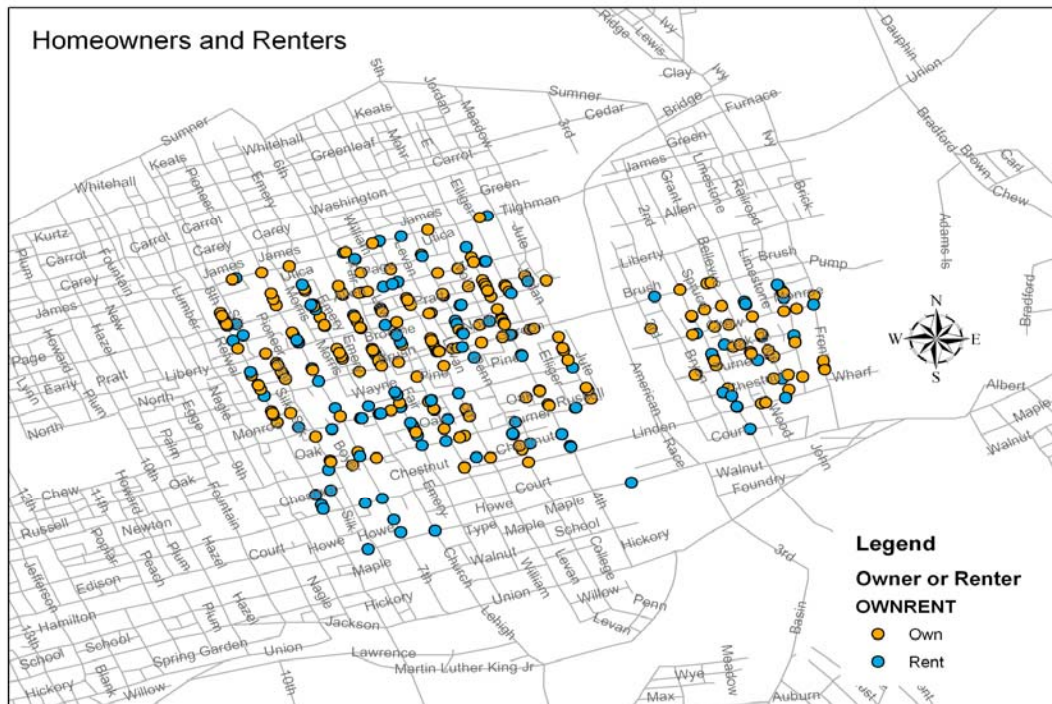


Figure 3 shows the distribution of respondents and whether they own or rent their home. Responses of both renters and owners come from all over the W&S target area.

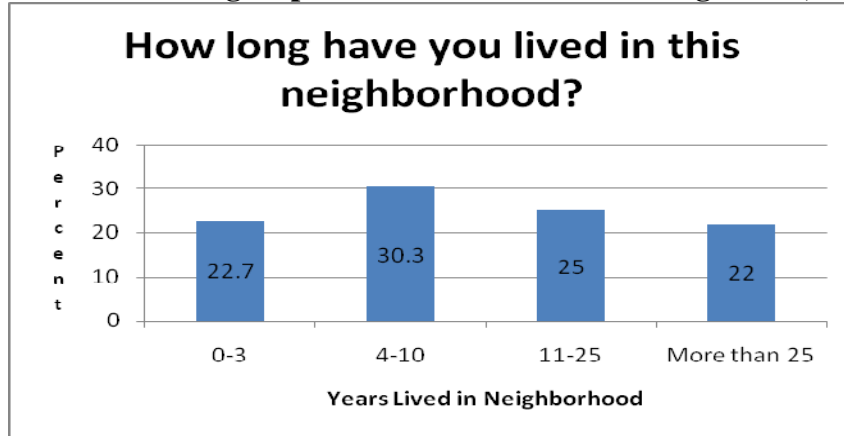
**Figure 3—Geographic distribution of respondents who own or rent their home, n=513**



Length of residence in the target neighborhood ranged between 1 month and 85 years, with a median of 7 ½ years and an average of almost 15 years. The largest percent (30.3%) of respondents have lived in the neighborhood for 4-10 years (Figure 4). Figure 5 shows the geographical distribution of respondents by how long they have lived in the neighborhood.

Owners and renters differ in how long they have lived in the area. Owners lived here an average of 19.7 years, while renters lived here an average of 8.6 years. English-speaking respondents have lived in the area longer (average = 16.8 years) than Spanish-speaking respondents (7.7 years). These differences are statistically significant.

**Figure 4— How long respondents have lived in the target area, n=513**



**Figure 5 – Geographic distribution of respondents’ length of residence within the target area, n = 513**

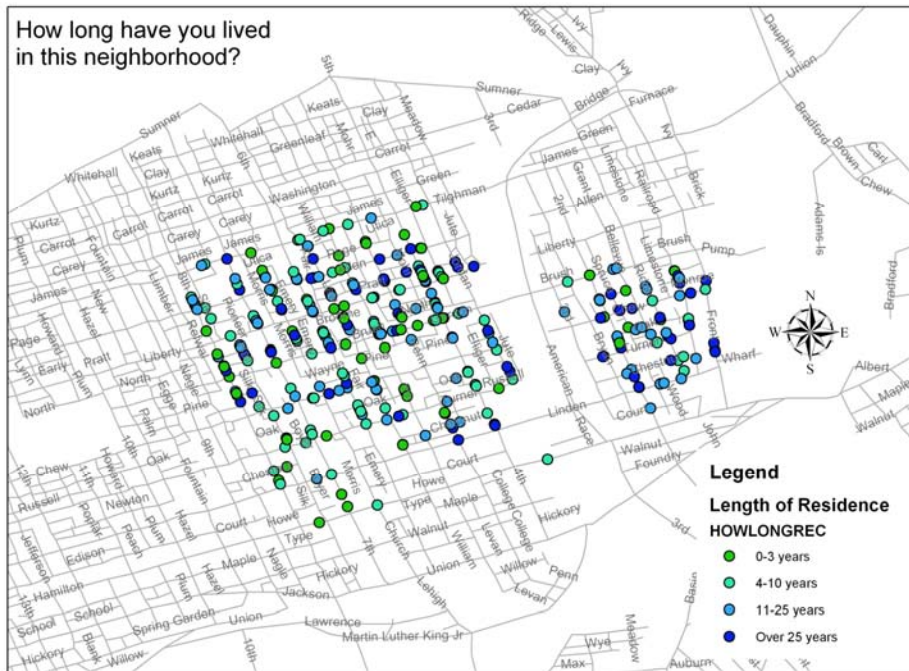


Figure 6 shows the response to the question “How safe do you feel in your neighborhood?” Almost half of the respondents, 47%, feel somewhat safe in their neighborhood. 10.4% feel very safe in their neighborhood, while 2.2 % feel extremely safe. 28.2% feel not very safe, and 12.2% never feel safe in their neighborhood. While the majority of respondents within

the target neighborhood have some feeling of safety about living in their neighborhood, approximately 40% of the respondents feel not very or never safe.

**Figure 6 – Respondent level of safety within the target area, n = 513**

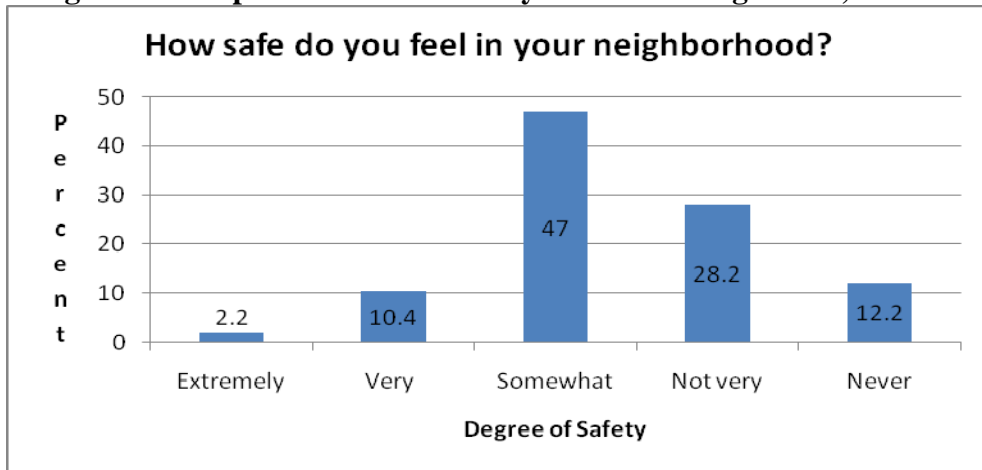
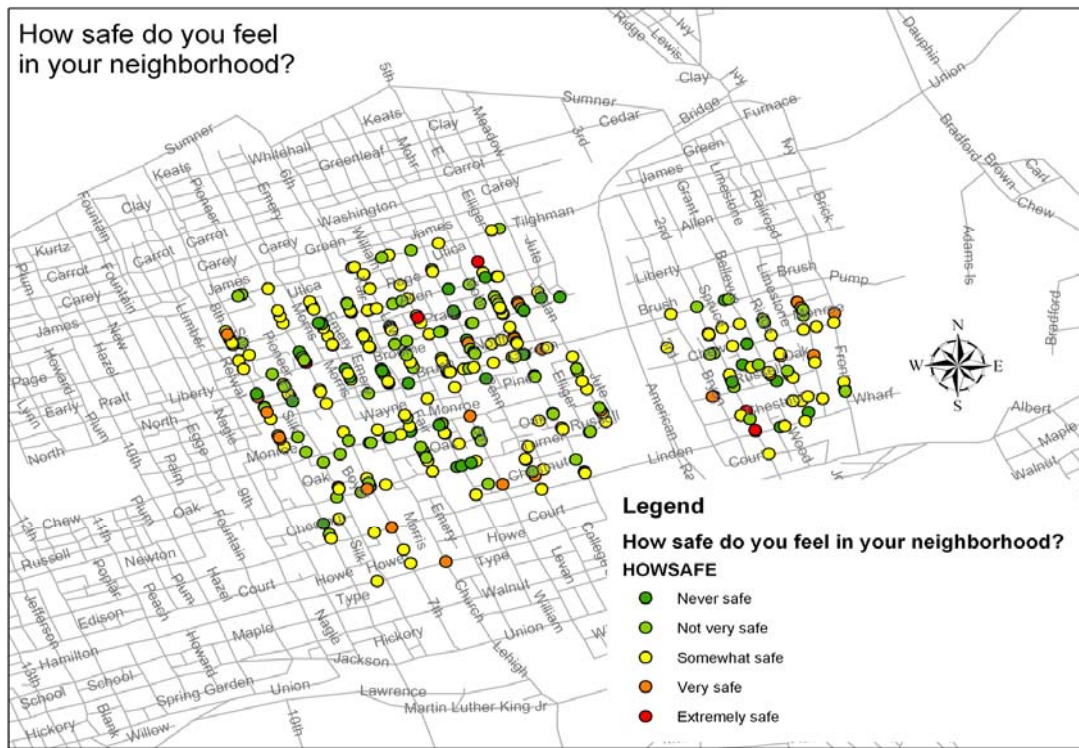


Figure 7 shows the geographic distribution of the responses to this question on safety. One can see that those who feel safe or unsafe are found all over the target area, suggesting that residents do not feel safer in one area than another within the target area, although there is some indication of greater feelings of safety along some of the boundary areas of the district.

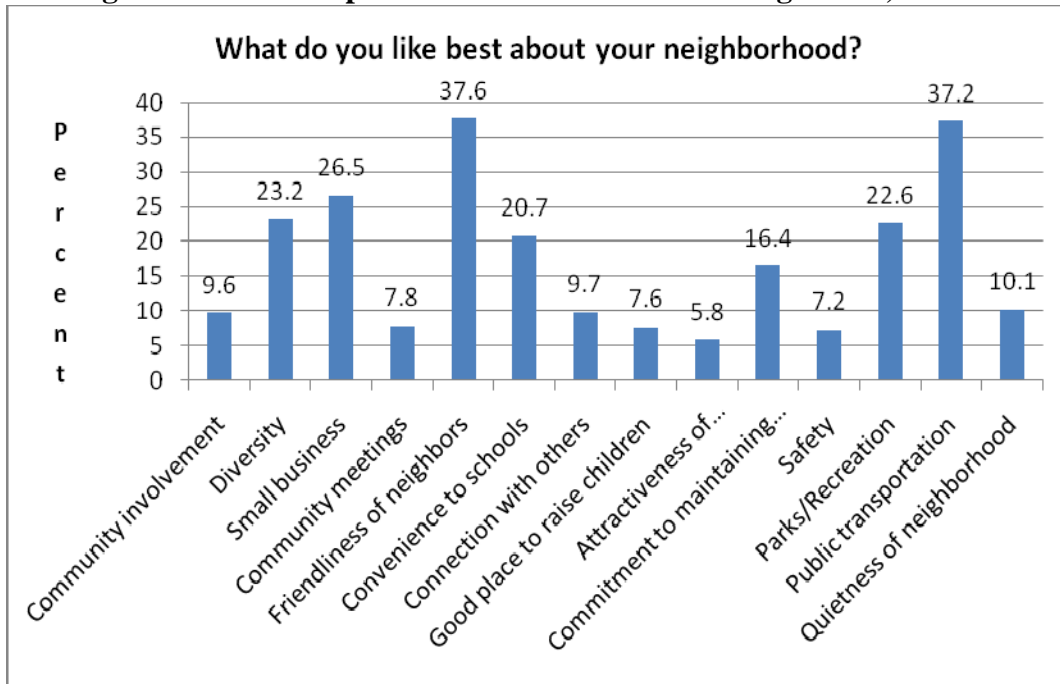
**Figure 7 – Geographic Distribution of response to resident safety, n = 513**



According to the results of statistical analysis, how long residents have lived in the target area is unrelated to how safe they feel. Whether residents own or rent their own home is also unrelated to how safe they feel. Residents who filled out the survey in Spanish feel significantly less safe in the target area than residents who filled out the survey in English.

We asked what the residents like best about their neighborhood, indicating that they should choose four from a list of options. Figure 8 shows that the four options chosen most were friendliness of neighbors (37.6%), public transportation (37.2%), small businesses (26.5%), and diversity (23.2%). These views are uniform throughout the target area.

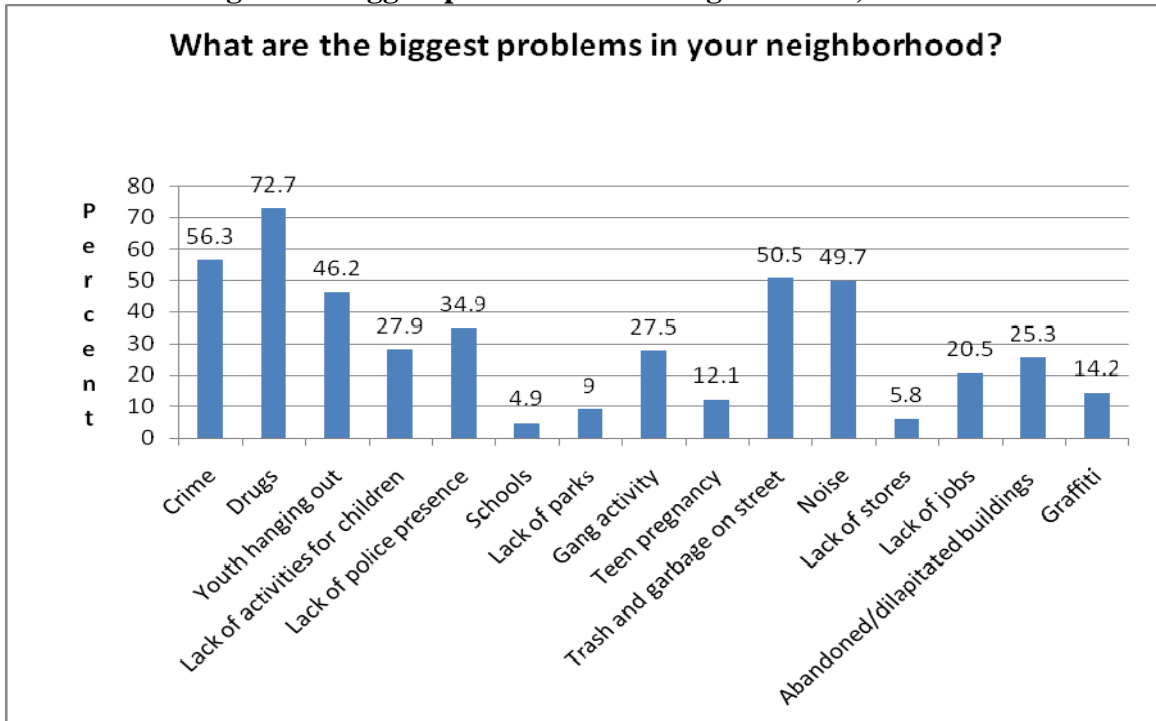
**Figure 8 – What respondents like best about the target area, n = 513**



Residents were also asked what the biggest problems are in their neighborhood and again told to choose four options. Figure 9 shows that the four options most chosen were drugs (72.7%), crime (56.3%), trash and garbage in the streets (50.5%), and noise (49.7%). Mapping indicates that these views are distributed across the target area.

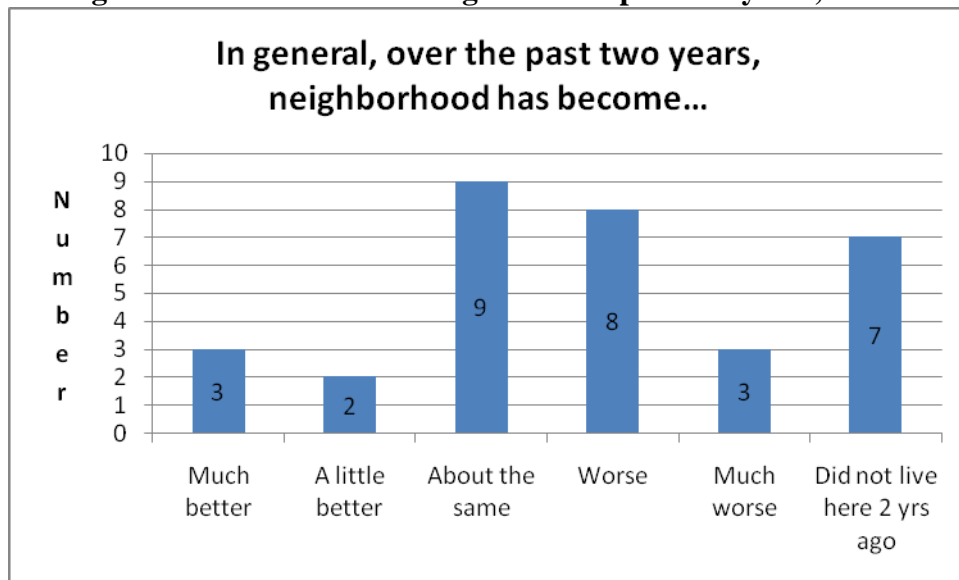
Although asked to select four from each list, residents selected an average of 2.4 from the list of 'like best' and 4.6 from the list of 'biggest problems'. This difference can also be seen in the percentages being on average considerably higher for the list of 'biggest problems'.

**Figure 9 –Biggest problems in the neighborhood, n = 513**



In the extended interview with residents, we asked about the direction that the neighborhood has taken in the past two years. Figure 10 shows that while ‘about the same’ is the most frequent response, 11 out of 25 people who have lived there more than two years believe that the neighborhood has become worse; only 1 in 5 believe it has improved.

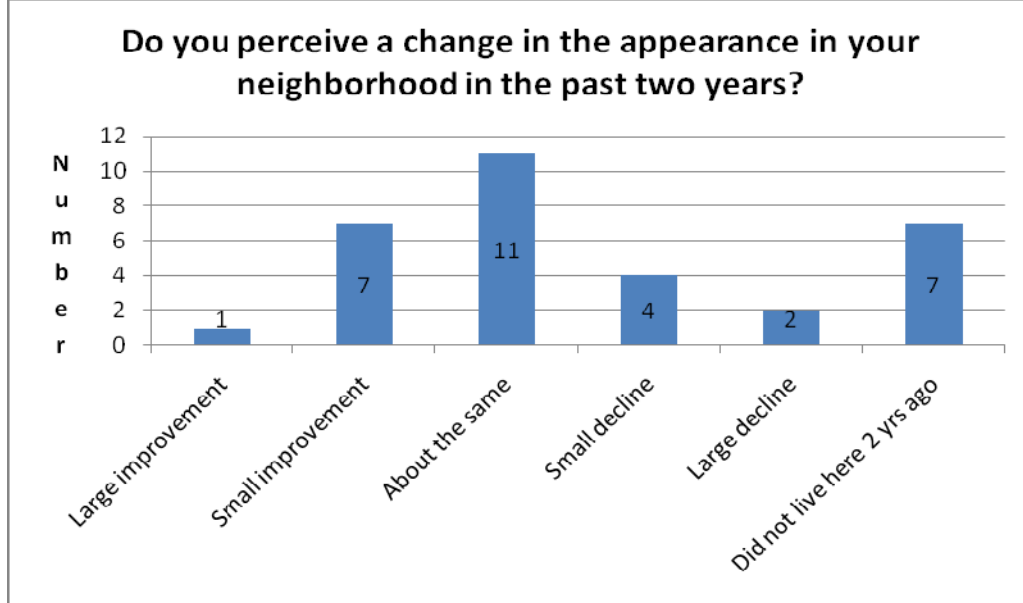
**Figure 10 – Direction of change over the past two years, n = 32**



The extended resident interview also included a question on perceived change in appearance in the neighborhood over the past two years (Figure 11). Again, 7 of the 32 residents did not live here two years ago, and this leaves the results with too small a sample size to be able

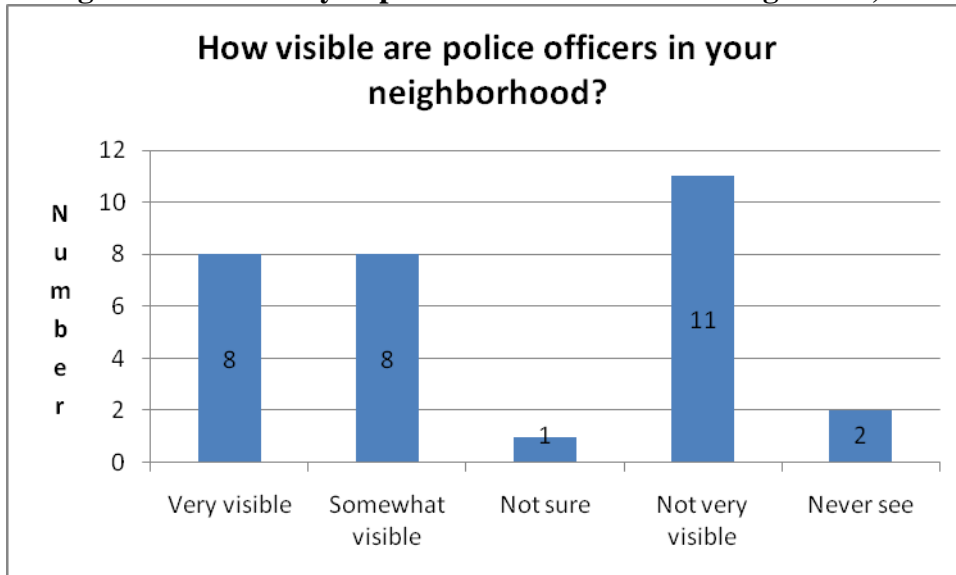
to generalize to the target area’s population. 11 out of 32 residents feel that the appearance has stayed about the same, while 6 see a small to large decline, and 8 see a small to large improvement in the appearance of the neighborhood.

**Figure 11 – Perceived change in appearance over the past two years, n = 32**



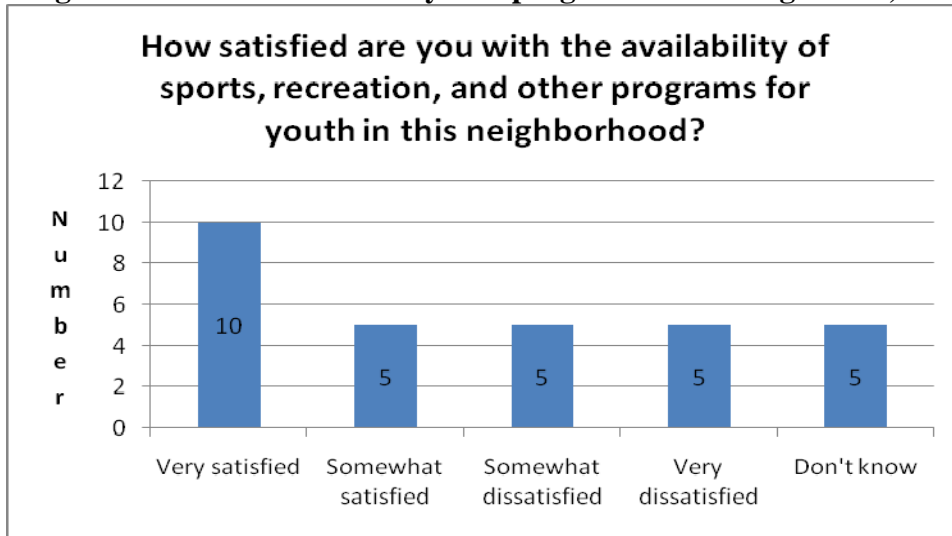
Residents interviewed were asked how visible the police officers are in their community (Figure 12). 16 of the respondents found the police officers to be very or somewhat visible, while 13 found them not very visible or never seen (1 not sure, 2 did not answer the question).

**Figure 12 – Visibility of police officers within the target area, n = 32**



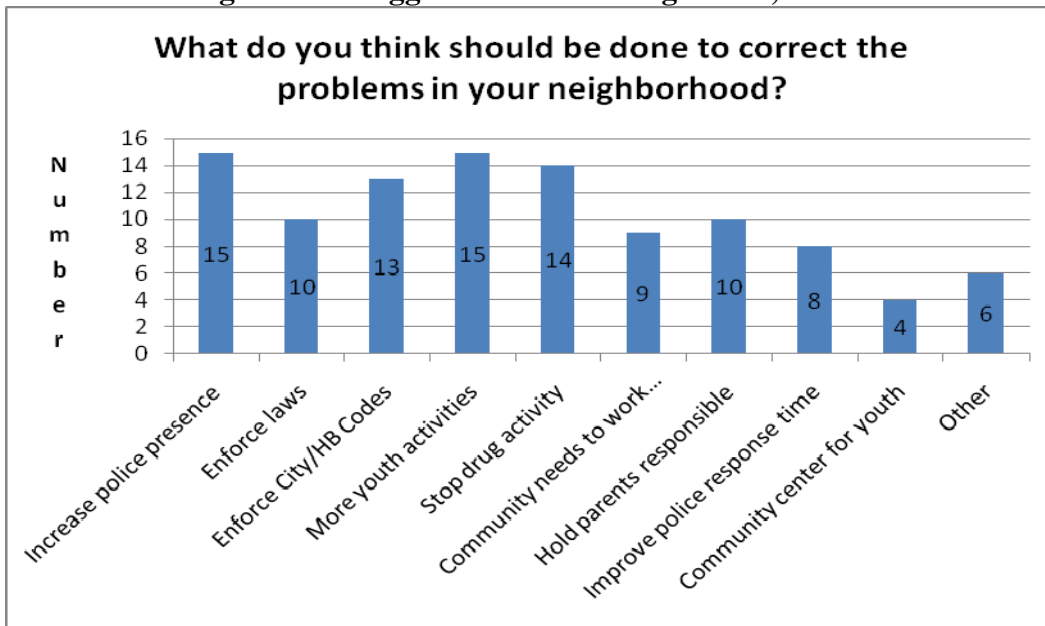
Regarding youth programs, residents interviewed were asked how satisfied they were with the availability of sports, recreation, and other programs for youth in their neighborhood (Figure 13). 15 of the 32 residents interviewed were very to somewhat satisfied, while 10 residents were somewhat to very dissatisfied, 5 did not know, and 2 did not answer this question.

**Figure 13 – Satisfaction with youth programs in the target area, n = 32**



During interviews, residents were given a list of suggestions for improving their neighborhood (Figure 14). These suggestions were compiled by the research team, staff of Allentown’s W&S and members of the Subcommittees. The choices most often picked were to increase police presence, to provide more youth activities, and to stop the drug activity within the neighborhood.

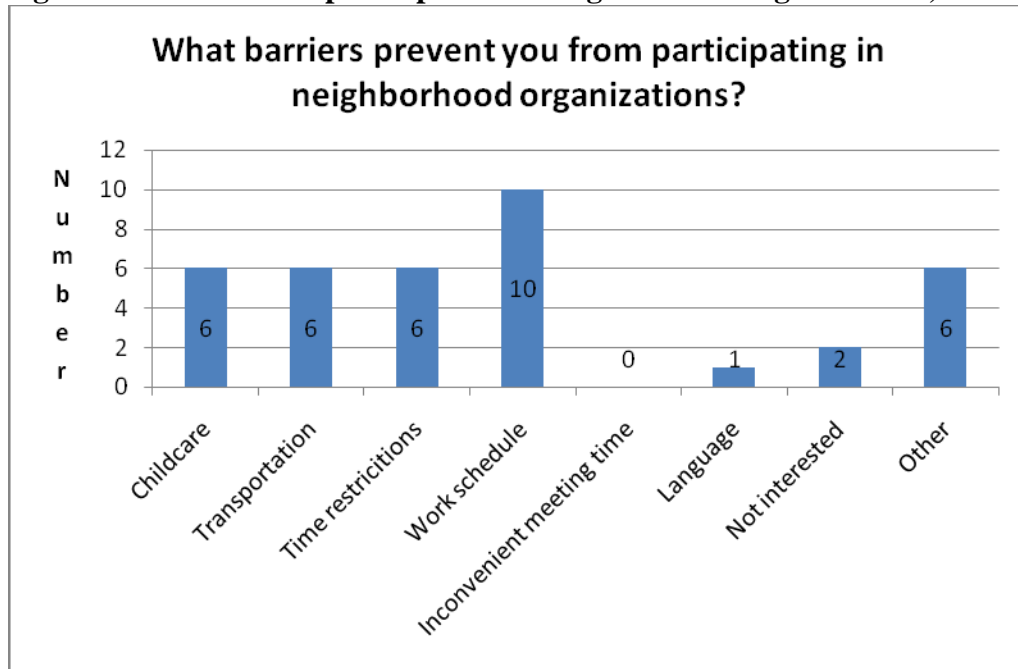
**Figure 14 – Suggestions for the target area, n = 32**



Out of the 32 residents interviewed, 10 were active in one or more neighborhood organizations, community groups or church organizations, 21 were not and 1 did not answer this question. Those who responded that they were not active in any community organization were asked what kept them from participating. The four reasons most stated were their work schedule, transportation, time restrictions and childcare (Figure 15). “Other” was a category chosen by respondents who had alternative reasons: two referred to being unfamiliar with where or how to get involved, one claimed age, one referred to an illness, and two referred to “miscommunication.”



**Figure 15 – Barriers to participation in neighborhood organizations, n = 32**



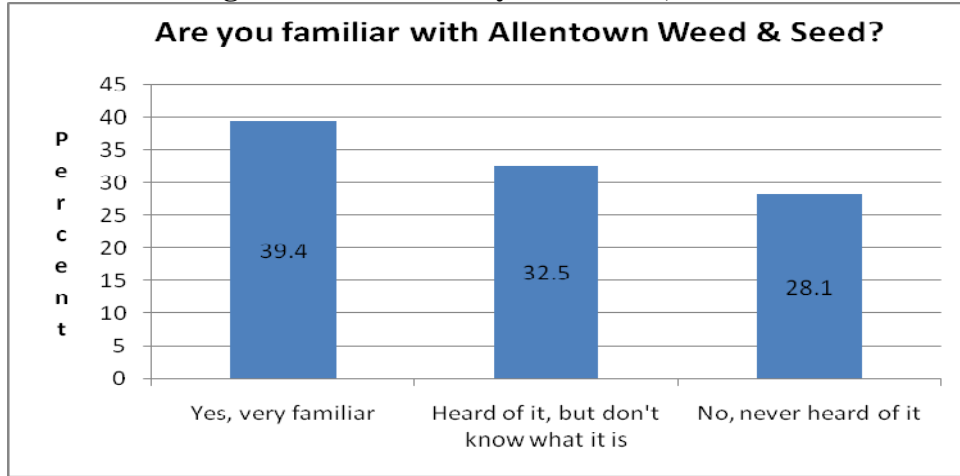
***Residents’ perception of Allentown W&S initiative***

All residents were asked about their familiarity with W&S. 39.4% of all respondents (n=513) were very familiar with W&S, 32.5% had heard of it but were not sure what it was, and 28.1% of respondents had never heard of the initiative (Figure 16). Those who are very familiar with the initiative have lived in the target area significantly longer, with a mean of 22 years, than those who have never heard of it (mean = 11 years). Those who are very familiar with the initiative also feel significantly safer in their neighborhoods.

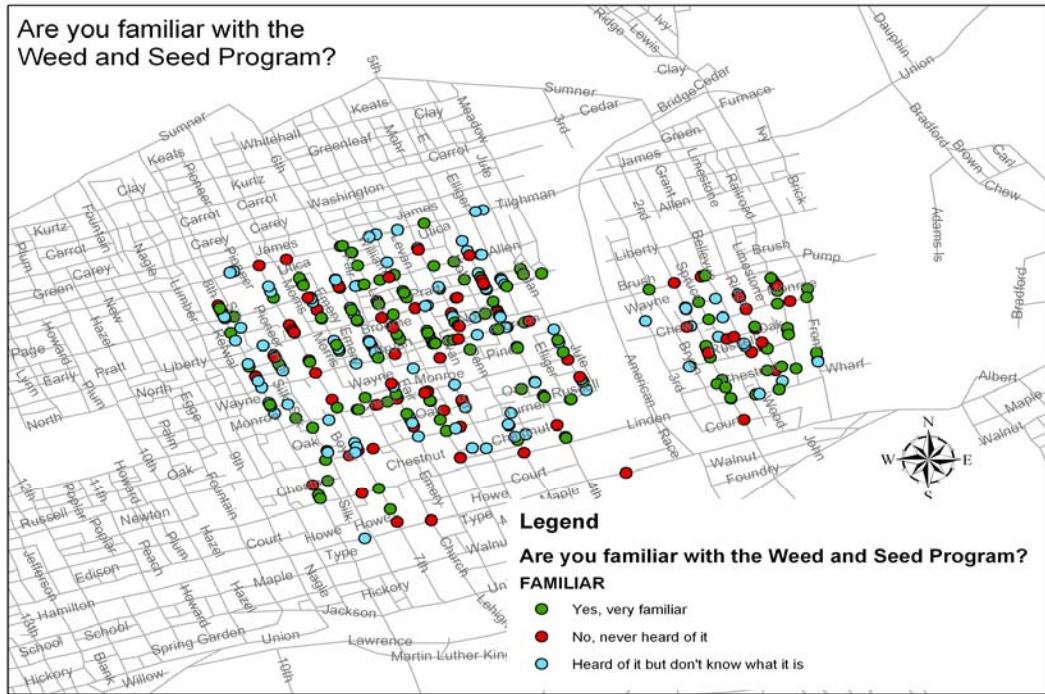
Mapping shows that these perceptions were evenly distributed throughout the target area (Figure 17), indicating that awareness of the W&S initiative exists throughout the entire neighborhood, but still is not hitting all residents of the target area.

Those interviewed were asked to describe the initiative in one sentence. Some residents referred to the “weeding” aspect of W&S, as a “program to get drugs off the streets” and “good to get rid of the crime.” Others explained the initiative in a more holistic way, considering both the “weed” and “seed” aspects of the initiative: they “redo homes”, “weed out bad and plant revitalization”, is “really fantastic, and deals with real issues we have as people who live in the area”, an “organization trying to weed out bad influences and get good influences in”, and an initiative that “helps a lot, especially with reading”.

**Figure 16 – Familiarity with W&S, n = 513**



**Figure 17 – Geographical distribution of familiarity, n = 513**



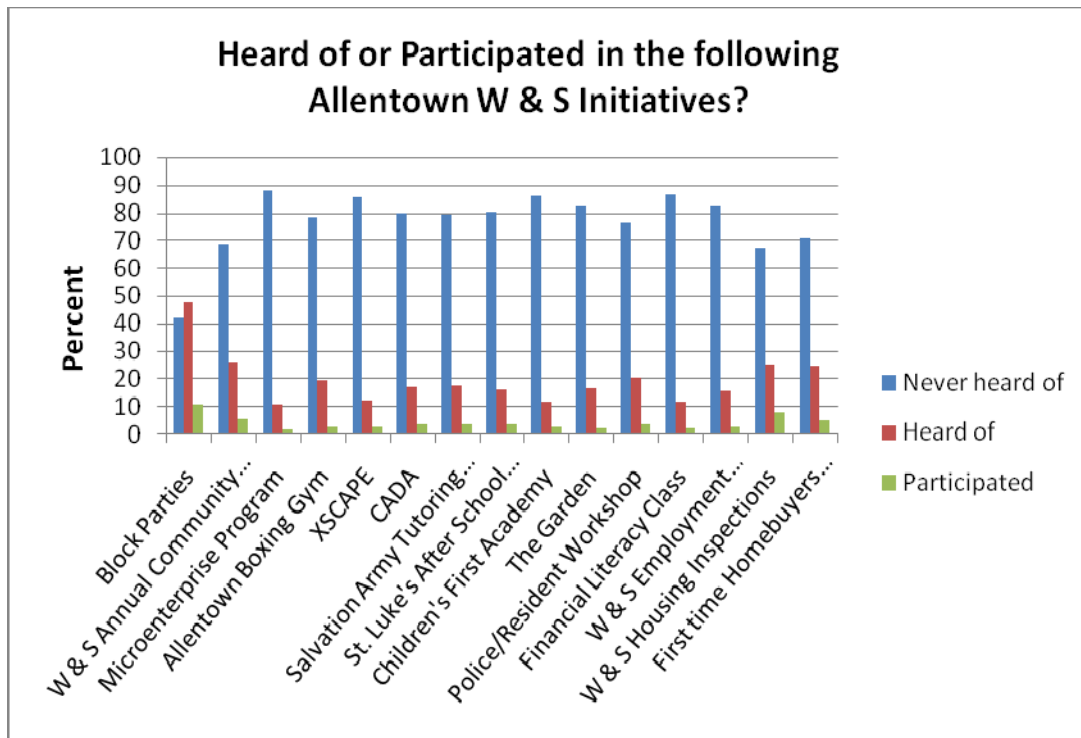
Those who were interviewed for the extended survey were asked if W&S has made an improvement in their neighborhood. 11 out of 32 respondents feel that W&S has made an improvement, 6 respondents felt that it does not make any improvement, while 13 did not know and 2 did not answer.

When asked if there were ways to make W&S more visible in their community, some suggestions made by residents were

- a W&S newsletter should be sent out to the target area residents; flyers posted in childcare centers, the county assistance office, Career Link, supermarkets, churches, parties and bands;
- include recovering addicts in the initiative as volunteers;
- conduct more outreach for community leaders.

In both surveys, residents were asked whether they have heard of or participated in certain W&S-sponsored or co-sponsored initiatives (Figure 18).

**Figure 18 – Knowledge/participation of respondents;  
W&S-sponsored programs, n = 513**



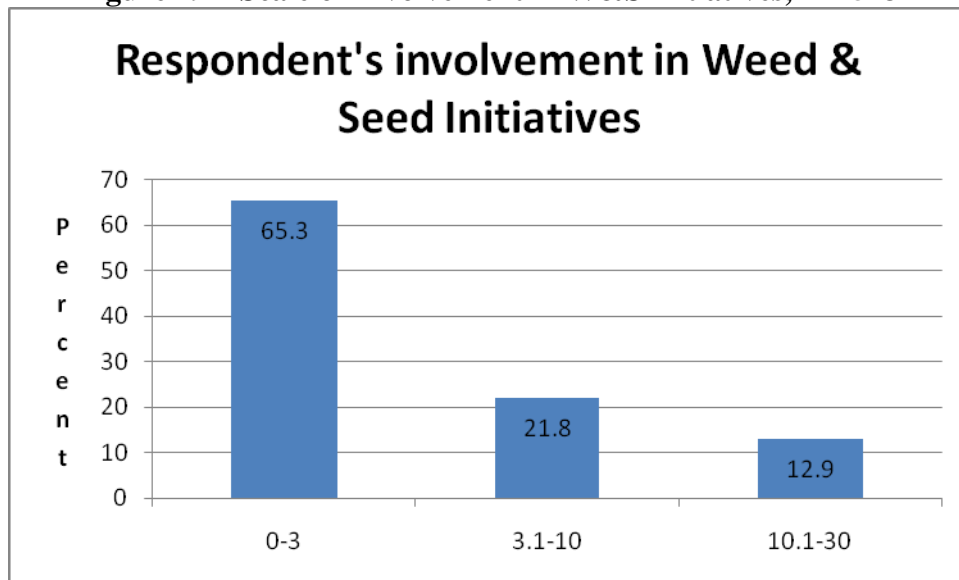
The initiatives that had the highest percent of residents who heard about and participated in them were block parties, annual community meetings, housing inspections, and the first-time home-buyers assistance program. At least 10% of respondents had heard of all the initiatives listed. Block parties had the highest rate of participation, with 10.4% of respondents having participated.

A scale was created to show residential involvement in the W&S initiatives. For each of the fifteen programs listed, participants were assigned a score of 0 if they neither heard of nor participated in it, 1 if they heard of it, and 2 if they participated in it. These individual scores were added together to create a “familiarity scale”, with a possible range of 0 (never heard of any of the programs) to 45 (participated in all of them). Figure 19 shows that 65.1% of respondents scored very low in involvement in W&S initiatives, with a score of 0-3. 21.8% have a higher level of involvement, with a score of 3.1 -10, and 12.9% of respondents had a high involvement with W&S initiatives, with a score ranging between 10.1 and 30. Mapping indicates that level of involvement is distributed evenly across the target area (Figure 20).

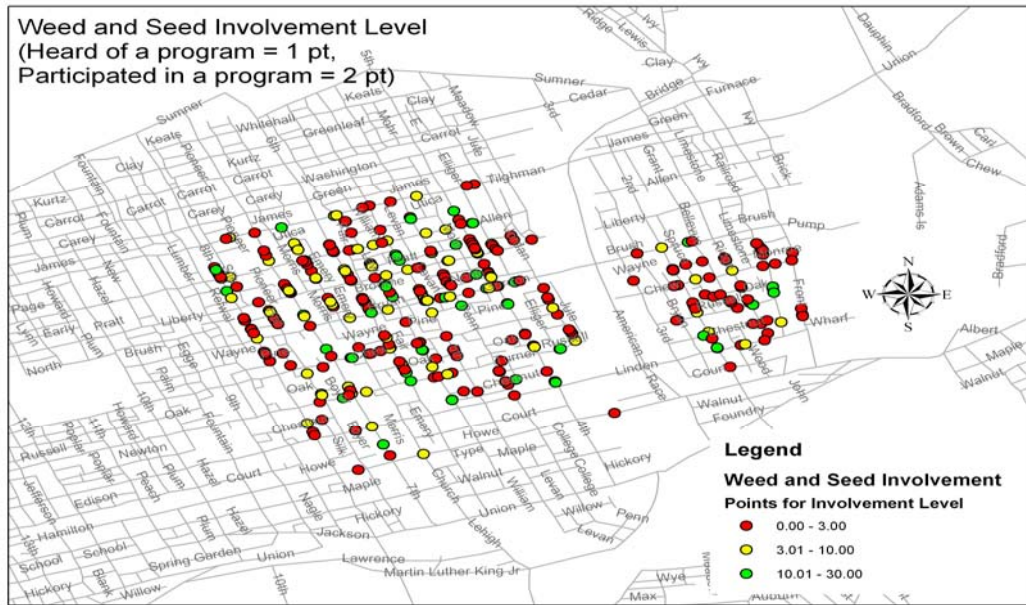
Statistical analysis shows that residents who are most familiar with W&S programs feel significantly safer in their neighborhoods. How long one has lived in the area is unrelated to involvement in W&S. Owners and renters do not differ in involvement in W&S initiatives. Not surprisingly, those who indicated that they are very familiar with the W&S initiative have the highest score of familiarity with the programs.

As seen above, 39% of respondents indicated that they were familiar with the W&S program. Yet 73.1% had heard of one or more of the individual programs sponsored or co-sponsored by W&S. Thus, while people may have heard of specific programs, they do not necessarily associate these programs with W&S.

**Figure 19 – Scale of Involvement in W&S initiatives, n = 513**



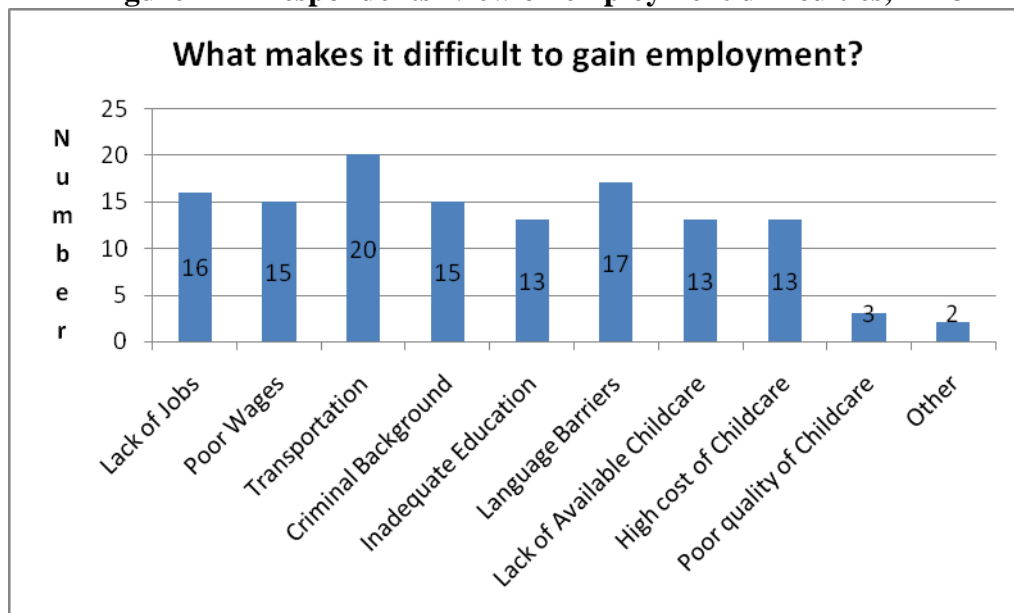
**Figure 20 – Geographical Distribution of Residents’ Familiarity with W&S, n = 513**



***Resident’s Perception of Employment Difficulties***

During the extended interviews (n=32), residents were asked what makes it difficult for people in their neighborhood to get employment (Figure 21). The three highest responses were that there are transportation issues, language barriers, and a lack of jobs.

**Figure 21 – Respondents’ view on employment difficulties, n = 32**



When asked what programs, activities or initiatives residents thought W&S could offer in order to help individuals in their neighborhood gain employment, English proficiency classes were highly recommended, as was increasing public transportation and providing bus passes to those not able to afford them. Also, job training programs such as skill training for electrical, technical or contracting skills were suggested. More childcare options were identified as a need in the neighborhood. One resident in the W&S target area indicated that she was on a waiting list for child care so that she could begin work. However, the waiting period would be until October and it was June when the interview was conducted.

## **VI. COMMITTEE MEMBERS' VIEWS**

In order to obtain AID team, Subcommittees and TALL team member input on the Allentown W&S, all members were contacted via email and phone to participate in a confidential interview (please see appendix). The interview was approximately 15 minutes in length, and in total, 42 interviews were conducted.

When asked about the perceived strengths of the Weed and Seed initiative, there was consensus regarding the strong commitment by the members of W&S to the neighborhood and to the organization, the ability to conduct outreach successfully, having a diverse group of members who bring resources and experience to the organization, and the successful collaboration in the multiagency approach to which W&S subscribes.

Additionally, some common themes arose when members were asked about the weaknesses they perceived in the W&S program. One of the most common themes, mentioned in approximately 10 interviews, involved problems with scheduling. Committee members highlighted the difficulty for both residents and committee members making time in their schedules to attend W&S meetings and events. The AID and Subcommittee members also expressed their concern over their individual organizations often setting the pace of their participation and or involvement. Approximately five respondents discussed the lack of resources, such as funding, as a major obstacle to their success. Furthermore, issues such as the lack of accountability and the need for more residents to get involved in the program came to the forefront.

AID, Subcommittee, and TALL team members were asked to discuss what they thought was the most beneficial program for the target area. The most commonly provided answers emphasized three: the youth programs, the police/resident workshops, and the Microenterprise Program. There was also mention of block parties, community clean ups, farmer's market, etc.

When W&S members were asked about the issues that they would like to see addressed by either the organization as a whole or by their respective Subcommittees, the two most frequently cited responses involved increasing homeownership in the target area and also working to bring more well-paying jobs to the city. Other responses included wanting to improve Allentown's overall image, increase outreach to parents and youth in the community, establish precedent for more collaboration between subcommittees, gang prevention, and strengthening W&S's relationship with the Allentown School District.

During the course of the interviews, the question "How could W&S make a greater impact on the community?" was also posed. This question also prompted an array of responses, but most notable were those that suggest greater advertising efforts such as creating a newsletter or conducting press conferences to increase awareness about W&S programs and successes among the general public. Also, concerns were voiced over how the "weed" and "seed" money gets

dispersed. Members voiced their desire to have the funds more evenly divided so that both the “weed” and “seed” parts of the strategy are allocated similar funding. Creating more partnerships with other community and human service providers was also frequently mentioned with regards to expanding the resource base of the Allentown W&S site.

The last question of the interview asked members what organizational accomplishments they would like to see W&S achieve over the next few years. In terms of frequency, increasing homeownership in the target area along with promoting and educating residents on financial responsibility represented the most frequent responses. The other responses included helping Allentown residents achieve a greater sense of safety, making the Allentown site sustainable, raising the standard of living in the target areas, helping provide community empowerment through membership, and helping the W&S brand become more visible and recognizable in the community.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This program evaluation and needs assessment of the Allentown W&S initiative and needs assessment in the target area resulted in several key findings and recommendations.

### ***Resident Findings***

The W&S initiative and the programs it supports are well recognized throughout the target area, although participation is relatively low. Residents do not always recognize that some of the programs, such as Block Parties and the Salvation Army tutoring program, are sponsored or supported by the Allentown W&S initiative. Therefore, the knowledge of W&S’s contribution may be lacking and more advertisement could be used to correct this misunderstanding and create more resident awareness of the initiative. During collection of data from residents and committee members, suggestions were made for increasing community recognition of the W&S initiative and included posting a W&S banner at Block Parties and other sponsored events and also regularly advertising programs and event information at CareerLink.

Although APD statistics demonstrate that crimes have been decreasing in the W&S area, concerns about safety are prominent. While approximately 60% of respondents feel somewhat or very safe in their neighborhood, 40% feel ‘not very’ or ‘never’ safe. Additionally, respondents who filled out the surveys in Spanish felt less safe than residents who filled the survey out in English. Furthermore, when asked to select four aspects they like best about the neighborhood and four of the biggest problems, residents tended to select more items from the list of problems. This indicates that, generally, there is a negative view of the targeted area by its residents. Thus while residents appreciated friendliness, small business, transportation, and diversity, they are very concerned about drugs, crime, garbage in the streets, and noise. On a more positive note, although the numbers are small, residents who were interviewed in person were somewhat more likely to consider that the neighborhood has improved in the past two years rather than declined.

### ***Committee Member Findings***

The results of the individual interviews with committee members highlighted Allentown W&S’s strong commitment to the neighborhood, the ability to conduct outreach successfully, the participation of a diverse group of members who bring resources and experience to the organization, and the successful collaboration in the multiagency approach. Additionally, when committee members were asked what programs were most beneficial to the progress of the target

area, the ones most commonly referred to were youth programs, the Police/Resident workshop and the Microenterprise Program. Furthermore, members voiced their desire to have the funds more evenly divided between the “weed” and “seed” parts of the strategy and greater advertising efforts were suggested to increase awareness of the W&S initiative. Creating more partnerships with other community and human service providers was also frequently mentioned with regards to expanding the resource base of the Allentown W&S site and helping to assist in the sustainability of the initiative. Also, more collaboration between Subcommittees was suggested by members.

When stakeholders were asked what issues they would like their Subcommittees to address over the next few years, they focused on increasing home ownership, promoting and educating residents on financial responsibility, initiating English as a Second Language classes, achieving a greater sense of safety, making the Allentown site sustainable, and raising the standard of living for target residents

### ***Target Area Outcomes***

According to a recent article in the Morning Call, the number of working poor living in center city Allentown's poorest neighborhoods spiked by nearly 50 percent from 2000 to 2005. These neighborhoods were designated as zip codes 18101 and 18102, which are heavily concentrated in the First Ward and Center City of Allentown. “These areas are then less likely to attract private-sector investment and good-paying jobs, and services might cost more for lack of competition” suggests the report, taken from a study by the Brookings Institution, a nonprofit think tank in Washington, D.C.

Thus at the same time that W&S has worked with the city, with residents, and many other agencies to improve the neighborhood, there has been a loss of jobs and of home ownership, creating greater challenges for the future. A substantial proportion of the residents do not feel very safe. Trash, noise, crime and drugs continue to be considered major problems by residents.

Even in this situation, crime has decreased and many new programs have been created for youth in particular. In its five years of activity, the W&S organization of Allentown has created an active coalition of residents, city offices, and non-profit organizations to address the problems identified in the target area. Many programs in the area of public safety, economic development, and youth activities have been initiated or supported by W&S. Housing subcommittee members have worked with the city to identify properties in need of repair, and Human Services subcommittee members have worked to make residents more aware of the services available to them. Residents have been trained and mobilized to improve overall quality of life in neighborhoods. The Employment Counselor and Micro Enterprise program have contributed to economic development and should be continued for future job opportunities and employment possibilities.

Below is a list of some of the positive outcomes the research highlighted for the W&S targeted area.

- Crime rates are reduced, in total number, in rate per population, and as a percentage of the city's total crime.
- Some residents trained by the TALL team have become leaders in the city, and the TALL team has been active in neighborhood clean-up programs.
- Approximately 250 residents were helped to find jobs, and several dozen local businesses have been assisted to begin or continue in the target area.
- W&S itself and the programs it supports are well recognized throughout the target area.



- Residents value the friendliness and diversity of their neighborhoods and the availability of small businesses and public transportation.
- Although the numbers are small, residents who were interviewed in person were more likely to consider that the neighborhood has improved in the past two years rather than declined.
- W&S has successfully brought together a large number of residents, city officials, and local organizations to work collaboratively on many programs to enhance the community.

### ***Evaluator Recommendations***

After completing the program evaluation, the researchers feel that the following recommendations could contribute to the continued success of W&S initiative.

- Enhance the activities of the Housing and Physical Environment Subcommittee to continue to focus on increasing home ownership as well as improving housing appearance.
- Clarify the mission of the Human Services Subcommittee, perhaps to focus on a particular activity such as adult mental health services.
- Enhance communication among Subcommittees, including standardization of reporting.
- Increase publicity about the activities of W&S.
- Increase publicity about the decline in crime.
- Increase clean-up activities, perhaps linked in part to the many youth programs.
- Enhance the enforcement of noise ordinances.
- Continue to collaborate with police to ensure greater presence and improved response time
- Evaluate the effectiveness of specific programs in achieving stated goals. This last is important for identifying what programs to continue to support financially. Each one should have some outcome measures to indicate impact on youth, on homeowners, etc.

### ***Recommendations for future evaluations***

With regards to the community based indicators of the target area, some documentation was inaccessible for various reasons and therefore omitted from the report; future evaluations should attempt to include more indicators, and will benefit from more detailed Census Data after 2010. Also, documentation collected from the W&S Subcommittees was not consistent in format nor program area, and therefore analyzing the progress of W&S Subcommittees proved to be challenging. Improved record-keeping, as recommended here, would alleviate that limitation of the current report. Finally, more fine-tuned evaluations of the impact of specific programs sponsored by W&S would be greatly desirable; continued funding of programs should be linked to indicators of success in achieving their goals.

### Works Cited

Sohng, S.L. 1995. Participatory Research and Community Organizing. Working Paper Presented at the New Social Movement and Community Organizing Conference. University of Washington Seattle, WA.

## **About the Lehigh Valley Research Consortium**

The Lehigh Valley Research Consortium (LVRC) is a collaboration among academic researchers, governmental, not-for-profit, and business groups throughout the area, which has joined together to examine social, political, economic, health, and environmental issues in a regional context. The LVRC draws upon experts from local four and two year institutions of higher education in order to examine community issues, disseminate information about our community to citizens, engage in collective dialogue, and augment the classroom learning of our local college communities. This collaboration fosters new insights into regional challenges in the hopes of enhancing our understanding of complex issues and solutions.

Recognizing the intertwined nature of the region's communities, we have created a community-based information system, which is a compilation of over 300 indicators. By pulling together many facets of community well-being into one location, this information system creates an opportunity for richer, more productive conversations about our future direction, keeping in mind the unique nature of our diverse communities. Faculty researchers and college students work with community organizations to evaluate existing programs and policies as well as analyze current conditions to offer enhancements to existing policies and practices.

The LVRC is organized through the Lehigh Valley Association of Independent Colleges, a 501(c)(3) organization. For more information about the LVRC visit our website <http://www.lehighvalleyresearch.org>.

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