



2010
Community Assessment
of the Needs of
Low Income Families
and their Children
Living in Plainfield, N.J.

for
HOPES Community
Action Partnerships, Inc

August, 2010 – final

Executive Summary

HOPES Community Action Partnerships, Inc. (HOPES CAP, Inc.) is a 47 year old community action agency headquartered in Hoboken, New Jersey that serves the needs of low income groups in the communities of Plainfield, Hoboken, Jersey City and other communities in Hudson County, including Union City, Weehawken, North Bergen, and West New York. HOPES CAP, Inc. provides a broad range of services that are organized under several programs - an Early Childhood Program, Senior Services, Adult Services, Youth Services, and Community Assistance Services.

Every year HOPES CAP, Inc. is required to assess the needs of the low income communities it serves by carrying out a community assessment, with a more in-depth community assessment carried out every third year. The purpose of this document is to share the results of the 2010 in-depth community assessment of Plainfield to identify the current needs of low income families with young children, gaps in services, and provide recommendations.

Content was developed using a multi-faceted approach including in-depth focus groups, surveys, interviews with HOPES CAP, Inc. clients in Plainfield, community residents, community resources and partners, and data gathered from HOPES CAP, Inc. archives and a range of third party sources including the United States Census, Plainfield Board of Education, NJ Kids Count, Union County Clerk's Office, the New Jersey Departments of Health and Human Services, Labor, Public Health, Education, and reports from community services organizations.*

Major findings include the following:

1. HOPES CAP, Inc.'s clients, community partners and resources view HOPES CAP, Inc. as providing high quality services.
2. Low income families with children prioritized the following needs: finding a job, personal safety, legal guidance, literacy classes, ESL classes, housing, health care, transportation, food, and counseling.

Recommendations include the following:

1. Expand the ECP Early Head Start infant/toddler care program.
2. Develop / collaborate on job development/acquisition initiatives.
3. Develop / collaborate on expansion of English as a secondary language initiative.
4. Develop / collaborate on expansion of housing/citizenship/entitlement initiatives.
5. Develop / collaborate on expansion of GED and literacy programs.
6. Collaborate on creation/expansion of pre-teen/teens/youth career development initiatives.
7. Establish Plainfield-based Family Resource Centers in Plainfield.
8. Explore medical transportation for families.
9. Develop / collaborate on expansion of food support.
10. Collaborate on business incubation initiatives.
11. Develop a marketing strategy and implementation plan.
12. Develop new community partners based on expertise, experience, and structures.
13. Expand efforts to develop a broad array of funding streams.

*** Note.** A substantial effort was made to access the latest data whenever possible. Some data incorporated into this report was only available through 2008, such as from the US Census. Other data was available into 2010, such as from the US Department of Labor. The full and up-to-date impact of the recession on low income people is not fully reflected in this report because of the understandable time delay many information sources require to gather, interpret and publish up-to-date, accurate data.

It is important to note that the current economic recession continues to devastate the lives of Plainfield residents. This recession, officially recognized as starting in December, 2007, is considered the second worst in history. It should be kept in mind that even as the economy recovers, the results of the recession will be felt for years to come, and, as always, will most heavily affect low income people with the greatest needs. They will need more services and support in the coming years. HOPES CAP, Inc. programs demonstrate that much can be achieved with and for low income people to help them significantly improve their lives despite challenging barriers.

Acknowledgements

There were many individuals who contributed to the development of this report, and we thank them all. There are three main groups who made this report possible: (1) HOPES CAP, Inc. management, staff, and board; (2) Plainfield Community Services Providers; and (3) the parents and residents who took the time to share opinions in surveys, interviews, focus groups, and conversations. In addition, we'd like to give special thanks to the following individuals.

HOPES Community Action Partnership, Inc.

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Dave Snyder
Community Assessment Team Leader

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HOPES Community Action Partnerships, Inc.

HOPES CAP, Inc.'s mission is to provide quality-driven community services that respond to the social, educational and training needs of low income communities in an effort to overcome barriers to economic self-sufficiency and fight the causes of poverty.

HOPES Community Action Partnerships, Inc. was originally established as Hoboken's community action program in 1964 under the name of Hoboken Against Poverty and Economic Stress, Inc. (HOPES Inc.). Two years later in 1966 HOPES Inc. established the Head Start Program in Hoboken. Over the years HOPES Inc. added other much needed services, including Senior Services, Community Assistance Services, Adult Services, and Youth Services. As the Head Start program expanded in scope and services, it was renamed the Early Childhood Program.

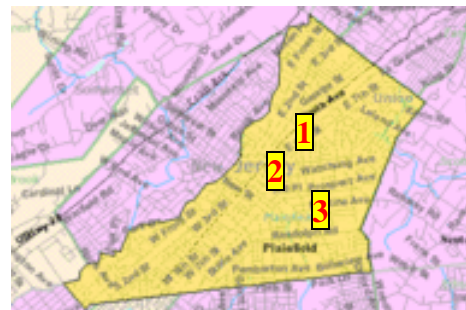
Based on the success of HOPES Inc.'s experience, in the summer of 2009 HOPES Inc. was appointed grantee of the existing Head Start program in Plainfield. In the winter of 2009 HOPES Inc. was appointed to establish 3 Early Head Start program for infants and toddler, one serving Plainfield, one serving Jersey City, and one serving Hoboken. To better reflect the full scope of its services and service area, HOPES Inc. re-branded itself as HOPES Community Action Partnerships, Inc., and now offers the following services:

Early Childhood Program offers comprehensive services including high quality early childhood development, nutrition, health, and social services, along with a strong parent involvement focus, and serves a total 681 children 0 to 5 years of age, and 18 pregnant mothers, including:

- Early Head Start in Plainfield serves 40 children 0 to 3 years of age, their families, and 8 expectant women;
- Head Start in Plainfield serves 270 children 3 to 4 years of age and their families;
- Early Head Start in Hoboken/Jersey City serves 64 children 0 to 3 years of age, their families, and 10 expectant women;
- Head Start in Hoboken, accredited by The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), serves 307 children 3 to 5 years of age and their families (172 Head Start and 135 State funded).

HOPES CAP, Inc.'s administrative offices in Plainfield are located at 7-9 Watchung Avenue. The Early Childhood Program has 3 sites which serve 310 children and 8 expectant women.

1. **Watchung site**, 7-9 Watchung Avenue, serves (169) 3-4 year olds in 11 classrooms;
2. **St. Mary's site**, 513 West 6th Street, serves (60) 3-4 year olds in 4 classrooms;
3. **New Horizon site**, 110-128 West Front Street, serves (45) 3-4 year olds in 3 classrooms;
4. **Home-based Care** is provided to 16 infants, 24 toddlers, and 8 expectant women.



Head Start is Federally Funded through the Agency for Children and Families, Region II. Preschool Services are State funded through the NJ Dept. of Education.

HOPES CAP, Inc. also provides the following programs to the communities in Hoboken and nearby Hudson County communities.

Senior Services – Senior citizens participate in the programs listed below in an effort maintain self-sufficient lifestyles.

- **Assisted Transportation Program** provides transportation to senior citizens to scheduled appointments in order to better enable Hoboken’s elderly to maintain their self sufficiency.
- **Senior Home Visiting Program** provides homebound elderly with home visits, light housekeeping assistance and local errand services.
- **Senior Information & Assistance Program** offers one on one support to seniors who are interested in learning about various human service or entitlement programs available to them. Clients receive support understanding and completing applications. Follow up advocacy support is also made available.
- **Senior Education Program** offers seniors the opportunity to participate in recreational activities, workshops and classes. This program is specifically tailored to meet the interests and needs of Hudson County’s senior citizens.

Community Assistance Services – Individuals are educated about entitlement programs and other services that they may qualify for and receive support with the application process. Examples of such programs include: Social Security, Medicaid, Medicare, Food Stamps, Low Cost Food Program, NJ SHARES, Verizon Life Line, United Water Cares, American Water, Safe Link Wireless, VITA, and NJ CEED.

Adult Services – This program assists individuals striving to achieve personal, educational and professional self-sufficiency and advancement through the following services:

- **Adult Classes** – Adult Basic Education, English as a Second Language, Computer Literacy, and Financial Education.
- **Employment Support Program** – Support is provided for obtaining and/or maintaining employment through Career & Skills Assessment, Adult Classes, Professional Development Workshops, and various Employment Activities.

Youth Services – Youth are provided a safe place to explore, learn and socialize during the school year and Summer Computer Classes offered at the agency’s computer labs. Youth have the opportunity to develop technological skills through innovative hands on learning experiences.

In addition to the programs listed above, other social and educational services are also offered to the community through various collaborative grants HOPES CAP, Inc. has with the Hoboken Board of Education, Hoboken Family Planning, the Hoboken Housing Authority, Hoboken Municipal Alliance, TD Bank, Bank of America, NORWESCAP, Walmart, and Moneywise.

HOPES CAP, Inc. coordinates services with each program and facility through its management team, who meet on a regularly scheduled basis to discuss all issues, ensure clear objectives, and coordinate activities for all staff. A networked computer system links all staff and facilities, enabling seamless communication, up to date record keeping, and well-coordinated services.

Methodology of Community Assessment Process

PLAN, ORGANIZATION AND DESIGN

HOPES CAP, Inc. planned a community assessment strategy that would ensure a comprehensive process would be implemented for this report. A team was assembled to support the development of this community assessment (CA) consisting of a consultant, HOPES CAP, Inc. senior managers, and HOPES CAP, Inc. program managers. Guidance for development of the community assessment was sought from members of the Policy Council, including a member from the Health Services Advisory Committee and the Education committee, members from the Parents Committee, Board members, and specialists from community partners and providers deeply involved in providing services to families in Plainfield.

Representatives from the CA team discussed and planned community assessment goals, objectives, and content as well as identified resources that could provide useful insight into the communities' needs and emerging populations and groups.

A multi-phase methodology was established and agreed upon to ensure targeted goals would be achieved. An ad hoc group consisting of research, evaluation, and community specialists provided feedback on the planned methodology and assessment tools.

Meetings were held with HOPES CAP, Inc.'s Family Advocates and Outreach staff who work closely with Plainfield clients in order to gather information about client needs.

The only historical records and data available for this report are those generated by HOPES CAP, Inc. since September 2009. The interim organization which previously managed Plainfield Head Start for 7 years, CDI, did not provide or leave relevant records or data of any kind before, during, or after the organizational management transition process took place. CDI legacy documents that were not available included previous Program Information Reports, service area reports, agency information, enrollment forms, social services logs, childrens' health records, IEPs, minutes of advisory committees, survey results, and self-assessment reports for the last 3 years.

Important external data sources were identified, including approximately 71 Plainfield community service providers who provide a range of services for family support, housing, child abuse prevention and protective, foster care, bi-lingual services, children with disabilities, homeless, mentoring, after-school care, health, education, intervention, enrichment, employment, transportation, and local government services. Community representatives from Plainfield who participate in Policy Council and/or HOPES CAP, Inc.'s board of directors were also targeted.

A strategy document was developed defining CA goals and information to be gathered for the community needs assessment. It was shared among key team members and advisory representatives.

DATA DESIGN and COLLECTION

A focus group was planned, scheduled, and held with clients of HOPES CAP, Inc.'s Head Start Program in Plainfield. The goal was to gather information that would ensure the assessment process and tools would identify current priorities and needs of service groups, identify emerging groups and their needs, and identify gaps in services to these groups.

After the parent focus group, chosen clients were interviewed to gather further detailed information. Surveys were designed, reviewed and finalized for parents/guardians, and community service providers. Surveys incorporated both open-ended and close-ended questions to facilitate the gathering of a cross-section of both quantitative and qualitative data. The surveys' design ensured ease of completion while enabling the provision of important details about their needs.

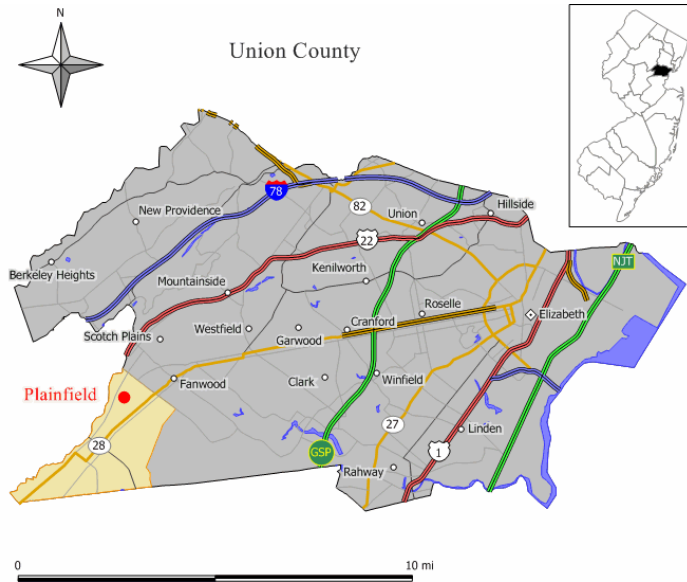
The survey for Head Start parents was translated into Spanish. The surveys for community service providers and policy council/board members were posted online (www.surveymonkey.com) to enable ease of access and completion.

Completed surveys were collected and data compiled for analysis. Community service providers who had developed their own needs assessment or similar reports were asked for a copy in order to include relevant data. Survey results of quantifiable responses were totaled; qualitative responses and comments were individually notated in spreadsheets. Data was then analyzed and interpreted for this report.

The assessment process provided the opportunity to share updated information about HOPES CAP, Inc.'s services and activities with community service providers, city representatives, clients, and residents. This CA process provided an excellent opportunity to introduce HOPES CAP, Inc.'s services, reaffirm existing knowledge, and very important, identify services providers interested in partnering with HOPES CAP, Inc. on initiatives, including defining how they envisioned collaborating. In addition, the CA helped identify providers admired by other providers for outstanding community work.

Overview of the City of Plainfield, New Jersey

The City of Plainfield is located on the southeastern edge of Union County, which is located in northeastern New Jersey. At one time almost exclusively just another suburb in the New York metropolitan area, over the past several decades Plainfield has become the urban center of 10 closely allied, surrounding municipalities.



According to the US Census FactFinder 2009 estimated update, in 2009 Plainfield had a population of 46,318 people living in a land area of six (6) square miles, with a population density of 7,720 persons per square mile. It has a diversified industry base including printing and the manufacture of chemicals, clothing, electronic equipment, and vehicular parts. Portions of Plainfield are part of an Urban Enterprise Zone, which enables a 3 ½ % sales tax rate.

The latest US Census data indicates that in 2008 there were 14,558 households in

Plainfield, 27.6% of which had children under the age of 18 living with them, including:

- 13.0% which were married couples living together;
- 10.4% which were female householders with no husband present;
- 4.9% which were male householders no wife present.

In 2008 the average household size was 2.74 and the average family size 3.61. The median household income was \$50,439, the per capita income \$25,095, and the median age 33.6 years. The largest ethnic groups were Black/African Americans (55%) and Hispanic/Latinos (32.9%). Of the total population, 25.8% were under 18 years of age, 7.6% were under 5 years of age, and 8.4% were 65 years and older. The median value of a home was \$317,500. Of 16,598 housing units, 14,588 were occupied: 7,590 by owners and 6,998 by renters; 2,010 were vacant.

The Plainfield Public School District serves students in kindergarten through 12th grade. As of the 2007-08 school year, the district's 13 schools had an enrollment of 6,465 students and 534 classroom teachers for a student-teacher ratio of 12.1. Union County College, headquartered in nearby Cranford, maintains a campus in downtown Plainfield.

Plainfield is governed under a Special Charter granted by the New Jersey Legislature by a mayor and a seven-member City Council, all of whom serve four-year terms in office. All council members are elected to four-terms of office. There are four wards, with one ward seat up for election each year. There are three at-large seats: one from the First and Fourth Wards; one from the Second and Third Wards; and one from the City as a whole. The three at-large seats and mayoral seat operate in a four-year cycle, with one seat up for election each year.

Poverty in Plainfield, New Jersey

According to the US Census 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates, the following data reflect the poverty of families in Plainfield through 2008.

Poverty in Plainfield

	All Families	100% below poverty	Married couples	100% below poverty	Female Head of Household	100% below poverty
All Families	8,406	9.1%	4,395	4.7%	2,830	17.3%
Families with related children under 18 years	4,841	13.4%	2,214	4.8%	1,858	26.4%

Data Set: 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates, Survey: American Community Survey, U.S. Census

Based on these poverty data estimates, it indicates that in 2008:

- 9.1% of 8,406 families, or 765 families, lived at or below the poverty level;
- 13.4% of 4,841 families, or 649 families with related children under 18, lived below the poverty level;
- 26.4% of 1,858 of families headed by a female of head household with related children under 18 years of age, or 490 families, lived below the poverty level.

Using the US Census average Plainfield family size of 3.6, it can be projected that the total estimated number of members of families with children under 18 years of age living in poverty was 2,336 people, and that of this number, 1,766 were members of female of households with children under 18 years of age.

Application of Maximum + Margin of Error to Standard US Census Poverty Data

We propose that for purposes of this community assessment report, instead of the data provided above, the highest ranges of the margins of error defined by the US Census be used to reflect the poverty in Plainfield.

Since data is always changing, the US Census strives to provide its best estimates of changes in data over the course of 10 years until the next census is taken. Since these estimates are projections, the Census provides a margin of error column to the right of every column of data in US Census charts. The margin of error numbers provided in each column reflect the range of possible error in each projection. This margin of error can be seen on the chart on the next page, which is an exact replica of the chart from the US Census Bureau web site about Plainfield poverty. Using as an example the subject in the first column titled “**Families**”, the **Total** number of families in Plainfield in 2008 is projected to be **8,406**, and as seen the next column, the **Margin of Error** is +/- **586**. The margin of error for the number of families in Plainfield ranges from a plus (+) of **8,992** to a minus (-) of **7,820**.

Plainfield city, New Jersey
 S1702. Poverty Status in the Past 12 Months of Families
 Data Set: 2006-2008 American Community Survey 3-Year Estimates
 Survey: American Community Survey

Subject	All families				Married-couple families				Female householder, no husband present			
	Total	Margin of Error	Percent below poverty level	Margin of Error	Total	Margin of Error	Percent below poverty level	Margin of Error	Total	Margin of Error	Percent below poverty level	Margin of Error
Families	8,406	+/-586	9.1%	+/-2.6	4,395	+/-498	4.7%	+/-3.1	2,830	+/-384	17.3%	+/-5.5
With related children under 18 years	4,841	+/-501	13.4%	+/-3.7	2,214	+/-374	4.8%	+/-3.7	1,858	+/-360	26.4%	+/-7.6

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/STTable?_bm=y&-geo_id=16000US3459190&-qr_name=ACS_2008_3YR_G00_S1702&-ds_name=ACS_2008_3YR_G00_&-redoLog=false

The following are the 3 reasons the highest margins of error for poverty rates in Plainfield be used.

1. The data projections provided by the US Census do not reflect the extensive negative effect of the current recession, and thus poverty estimates are low. As indicated by the authors of the US Census, data estimates are based on a pattern of traditional economic cycles as defined by the Office of Management and Budget for metropolitan statistical areas. Estimated data projections are typically accurate if traditional economic cycle patterns occur. As indicted by multiple economic experts, the aberrant nature of the current recession far exceeds traditional economic patterns in terms of the magnitude of the negative effects on the US economy. As described by economists, the current recession is the second worst ever experienced by the United States; the Great Depression of the 1930s was the worst.
2. Some of the lowest income, non-citizen residents of Plainfield are not included in the projected estimates of poverty in Plainfield. Based on in-depth conversations with many Plainfield community service providers and low income parents who live in Plainfield, there is a significant number of illegal residents in Plainfield. Many of these illegal residents rent living space in Plainfield homes and live doubled and tripled in the homes, many in attics and basements. The vast majority of these illegal residents are from Latin America, particularly the Central American countries of Guatemala, Nicaragua, and El Salvador. They often have limited education and low job skills, earn low incomes, and comprise a significant percentage of the invisible poor. Since many of them fear cooperating with census takers would jeopardize their living status in the United States, it was indicated to us that many do not participate in the census, and the renters/owners of the homes where these families live also do not indicate their existence to census takers. The end result is that many illegal residents are not included in Census projections or counts.

3. Even seasoned US Census specialists who develop the US Census data indicate that immigration data projections are difficult to predict and consistently underestimated. According to a July 2002 research paper titled “*Net Immigration Forecast Error Analysis*” by Tammany J. Mulder of the Population Division of the U.S. Census Bureau:

“Given the limitation of data on the current level of net migration and the inability to predict domestic and international policy, forecasts of this component (immigration) are especially problematic. **Consequently, the historical forecasts for net immigration have remained conservative... The forecast number of immigrants and the net immigration rate are consistently underestimated... Net immigration consistently maintains the highest level of error throughout the multiple series statistics.**”

Based on this reasoning, we propose that the following chart more accurately reflects actual poverty in Plainfield. This chart has been created by adding the highest margins of error provided by the US Census to the projected data rates of Plainfield poverty.

Poverty in Plainfield Using US Census 2006 – 2008 Highest + Error of Margin Projections

	All Families	100% below poverty	Married couples	100% below poverty	Female Head of Household	100% below poverty
Families	8,406	11.7%	4,395	7.8%	2,830	22.8%
With related children under 18 years	4,841	17.1%	2,214	8.5%	1,858	34%

Based on the highest margins of error estimates, it can be projected that:

- 17.1% of 4,841 families, or 828 families with related children under 18 lived below the poverty level;
- 34% of 1,858 of families headed by a female of head household with related children under 18 years of age, or 632 families, lived below the poverty level,

Using the US Census average Plainfield family size of 3.6, and applying the highest margin of error, it can be projected that the total estimated number of members of families with children under 18 years of age living in poverty in 2008 was 2,981 families, and that of this number, 2,275 were members of female head of households with children under 18 years of age.

Children Under 5 Years of Age in Poverty

The US Census indicates that there were 3,499 children under 5 years of age living in Plainfield in 2008. Using the highest margin of error figure in the above chart indicating that 17.1% of all families with related children under 18 years live in poverty, it can be projected there were at least 1,190 children under 5 years of age that lived in poverty in Plainfield in 2008. This number comprises a significant portion of children living poverty in Union County. “New Jersey Kids

Count Pocket Guide 2008” indicates that 12.5% of children in Union County lived under the federal guidelines for poverty, which means that approximately 4,992 of the Union County children under 5 years of age lived in poverty in 2008.

The 4 groups that represent the highest levels of poverty of their total group are:

- children under 18 years of age (23.5%);
- single female head of households (22.8%);
- single female head of households with related children under 18 years (34%);
- seniors over 65 years (28.2%).

PROBLEMS and CAUSES of POVERTY in PLAINFIELD

The following are some of the main problems and causes of the cycle of poverty in Plainfield.

1. **Jobs.** The Bureau of Labor Statistics indicated that as of as of June 2010 Plainfield’s unemployment rate was 9.7%. This figure does not take into account the many residents who: (1) are still unemployed but no longer receive unemployment; or (2) work “off the books” by doing work for hire on a “cash basis”. Cash payment is common among low income residents with limited English skills, low education, low job skills, or are illiterate, and have such jobs as housekeepers, clerks, or day laborers working in restaurants, factories, auto repair shops, or with landscapers, builders, etc. Because they work for cash, they do not qualify for unemployment and are difficult to track. Traditionally those who work “off the books” are among those who lose their job quickly in an economic recession. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, this figure can range up to 50% higher (14.55%) for those with less than a high school graduation.
2. **Housing.** The Fair Market Rate (FMR) schedule of the U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development states that New Jersey housing is some of the most expensive in the country. The cost of housing has increased steadily over the years throughout New Jersey, including Plainfield. Renting a private apartment or house is costly for low income families. In Plainfield, according to a June 2010 community needs assessment by Habitat for Humanity of Greater Plainfield, 65.8% of renters pay more than 30% of their income for housing. According to the First Annual Report of New Jersey State’s Minimum Wage Advisory Commission, “the largest single factor driving up the overall cost of living in New Jersey is the cost of housing, which far exceeds average housing prices in the nation. Housing costs in New Jersey range on average from 43.6 percent to 76.9 percent higher than the national average.”

<u>Examples of Plainfield Apartments for Rent</u>	Bed-rooms	Bath-rooms	\$/mo.
Plainfield Village Apartments	1	1	\$895
316 Franklin Place	1	1	\$1,250
1100-1120 West 7 th Street	1	1	\$995
120 Randolph Road	2	1	\$1,020
351 North Drive	2	1	\$1,050

Source: MyApartmentmap.com

Greater Plainfield Habitat for Humanity indicated that it was difficult to locate low income families in Plainfield who could purchase a house Habitat built at cost. Families needed a minimum annual income of \$54,503 in order to purchase and maintain the home, and many low income families didn't earn enough to meet that requirement.

3. **Illiteracy.** There are many people who can't read: some were born and raised in the US, some immigrated here and can't read English but can read in their native language, and some who immigrated here can't read in English or their native language. National literacy specialists indicate that in the U.S. there are 42 million who can't read, 50 million who can't read at a 5th grade level, and the ranks of the functionally illiterate increase by 2.25 million every year. They indicated that in locations with a large number of people with low educational attainment (i.e. Plainfield), the rates of illiteracy range from a low of 20% to a high of 37%, and that a minimum of 20% of high school students graduate functionally illiterate.
4. **English Proficiency.** Many families speak their native language in the home, and either do not speak English at all, or have limited English proficiency. Over 36.5% of all families in Plainfield speak a language other than English at home, and 25.2% report they speak English less than "very well".
5. **Educational Attainment.** Almost one quarter of Plainfield's population 25 years or older has not completed high school: a significant 13% had less than a 9th grade education in 2008, and another 10.8% left school between 9th and 12th grade without obtaining a diploma. Another 34.2% had completed high school. For young people between the ages of 18 and 24 years, 34.1% left school between 9th and 12th grade without obtaining a diploma.
6. **Education.** The Plainfield Public School district is an Abbott District. According to the NJ Department of Education Plainfield High 2008-09 School Report Card, the average Plainfield High School SAT scores in 2007-2008 were verbal 384, math 392, and essay 380. Based on standardized tests, in 2008, 60.5% of the students achieved a rating of Proficient in language and 28.9% in math. In New Jersey Monthly magazine's September 2008 cover story on the state's Top Public High Schools, Plainfield High School was ranked the 293 out of 316 schools statewide. Recently the school was removed from the persistently dangerous list of schools in New Jersey.
7. **Employment Opportunities.** A steady stream of employers and businesses of various sizes have left the Plainfield area, starting in 1967 after rioting took place in Plainfield as it did in many urban areas across the country. One of the worst blows to strike Plainfield recently was the closing of Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center in 2008, a 131 year old hospital that had been the city's largest employer. The NJ Department of Health allowed Solaris Health Systems, the medical center's parent nonprofit company, to close it after Solaris claimed it was suffering massive financial losses by keeping it open. Local officials and residents responded with a joint appeal filed late in 2008 by the City of Plainfield, the People's Organization for Progress, and the Restore Muhlenberg Coalition, but a three-judge appellate panel decided in April 2010 to allow the hospital to remain closed.

8. **Affordable and Accessible Health Care.** The loss of Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center has left a huge gap in medical services. Many physicians and other medical professionals who staffed the medical center, and who also had private practices in the area, closed their practices. The only local medical center is Neighborhood Health Services Corporation (a.k.a. Plainfield Health Clinic), which is consistently overburdened by the demands placed on it by the community. Plainfield is classified as a Medically Underserved Area (an area designated by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services as having a shortage of primary care professionals). For example, in one elementary school on the West side of Plainfield (Washington), more than 90 percent of the students live in households with incomes at or below 200 percent of the federal poverty level, lack health insurance coverage, have low immunization rates, and have high rates of uncontrolled asthma that could be prevented or managed with proper intervention and education.

Some ECP parents have medical insurance, but many do not. Parents who are in the US illegally don't have access to Medicaid, but can get charity care at the Neighborhood Health Services Corporation if they can show proof of income. They do have to pay for their own medication. Since Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center closed, if families need access to specialty or emergency care, many go JFK Hospital in Edison, a distance of 8 miles.

9. **Job Programs.** There are not enough job programs in Plainfield that can help the low income population prepare for the local work environment. Existing programs do what they can, such as Venture and Venture, a human skills training center and management consulting firm with corporate offices in New Brunswick, N.J. and a training center in Plainfield. The Western Office of the Union County Workforce Investment Board (WIB) in Plainfield offers One-Stop computers for: posting resumes and job searching; assessing skills, aptitudes and work experience; providing information on training providers and support services, training, employment counseling, job readiness preparation, programs for workers who have been laid off, workforce development program, adult basic literacy services and other assistance.
10. **Job Skills.** Many employment opportunities in the area require higher skills and education than some Plainfield residents have attained, such as a college degree or specialized training, making it harder for them to obtain a job that offers a competitive wage. Below are some of the largest employers in Union County.

Firm	Business	Number of Employees
Merck & Company	Pharmaceuticals	6,500
Merck / Schering Plough	Pharmaceuticals	4,745
Overlook Hospital	Medical Center	3,000
General Motors	Automobile Assembly	2,500
Lucent Technologies	Telecommunications Research	2,000
Elizabeth General Hospital	Medical Center	1,900
Novartis	Pharmaceuticals	1,500
Wakefern Foods	Food Distribution	1,400
Exxon Research Center	Petroleum /Refining	1,250

These firms are among the 411 total number of firms in high tech classifications in Union County, according to Rutgers University Center for Urban Policy Research categories. The Chemicals and Petroleum Refining group encompasses 108 firms, just over 25% of the total. Machine tool and special tool firms number 95 in Union County – this sub-classification of the Industrial Machinery group accounts for almost another 25% of the high tech firms. Industrial machinery of several types accounts for another 38 members of the high tech group. High tech firms are found in most of the municipalities in the County with higher concentrations in Linden (47), Kenilworth (40), Union (40), and Elizabeth (40).

Low income residents earn only enough to maintain a low income standard of living, but do not have jobs skills that enable them to increase their income. According to a 2008 study carried out by Rutgers Center for Women and Work and New Jersey Policy Perspective, *Climbing the Ladder: How to Invest in New Jersey's Working Families*, despite being one of the nation's most affluent states, New Jersey is home to close to 200,000 families that have a working adult who earns too little in pay and benefits to adequately support themselves. The study found that despite having an adult breadwinner, one in five working families in the state is classified as low income, earning less than 200% of the federal poverty threshold. This study also found that the number of low income working families in the state has climbed by 16% since 2000, totaling about 750,000 mothers, fathers and children.

11. **Gang Violence.** The presence of gangs has been on the increase throughout urban areas of New Jersey, and Plainfield is one area where there has been substantial growth. According to a June 29, 2010 article in the Star Ledger, “There have been at least 13 shootings in the West End since April 2010, part of what police believe is a gang war. All three of the city’s homicides this year have occurred in the same neighborhood...which is in the area of three public housing complexes and neighboring blocks in the West End, which runs west between the city’s border with North Plainfield and Green Brook to the north and Seventh Street to the south.” It has been estimated by community service providers that there are approximately 25 gangs operating in Plainfield, including 2 of the largest gangs, the Bloods and the Crips.
12. **Infant and Toddler Child Care Slots.** Despite HOPES CAP, Inc.’s ECP Early Head Start program for infants and toddlers, there are not enough affordable slots for infant and toddler care in Plainfield. Many low income families with infants and toddlers need child care, particularly female head of households who are either working or, if receiving TANF, required to work or attend training or classes full-time. According to Kids Count 2007 there were 305 licensed child care centers in Union County with a capacity for 22,944 children. But the vast majority of these slots are for 3 to 4 year olds. We estimate there are fewer than 200 slots available for infants/toddlers in licensed child care centers in Plainfield even though there are over 1000 slots needed. According to a 2002 study “*Partnerships for Quality: Improving Infant-Toddler Child Care for Low-Income Families* by Zero to Three and Mathematica Policy Research, not only is there an insufficient number of infant-toddler care slots, but most infant-toddler care quality is not good. Some families use extended family members, neighbors, and/or other local home care providers to care for their infants and toddlers. These care providers often: are not trained in best practice care strategies; are not regulated; and are not licensed environments to meet safety regulations

13. **Transportation.** Having a car in New Jersey is an expensive for low income families. The average cost of keeping a car in New Jersey, including gas, regular maintenance, insurance, tolls, etc. costs a minimum of \$ 12,009, a cost few low income families can accommodate. There are not many bus routes in Plainfield. A very common form of public transportation in Plainfield is car service, which is also expensive for many families. For example, it cost \$4 to travel ½ mile in downtown Plainfield. Some ECP parents who leave early in the morning (5:00am) to go to work, pay car services to weekly transport their children round-trip to/from child care at a cost of \$40 per week. A common fee for parents to pay to have a car service take them to/from work in other towns such as Piscataway is \$25 per week, including taking several other workers at the same time.
14. **Personal Safety.** Families are concerned for their safety in some areas of Plainfield where drugs, gangs, and criminal activities occur. This issue is a particular concern for those parents who have to be away when their children are home, i.e. latch key children. Parents are concerned about these negative influences on their children and the danger of “the street”. A 2007 New Jersey State Police study of gang culture found that there was a gang presence in many urban communities, including Plainfield, which was 1 of 6 communities that reported between 4 and 9 gang homicides in 2006.
15. **Food.** There is a condition called food insecurity, which occurs when people do not always know where they will find their next meal. There has been a substantial increase in food insecurity over the past few years. Feeding organizations in New Jersey that run soup kitchens and food pantries, including in Plainfield, have indicated there has been a 27% increase from the previous year in people using their services, including: 70% with incomes below the federal poverty line, 36 % with one or more working adults; and 10% who are homeless families. Many families report having to choose between paying for food **or:** utilities (46%); rent/mortgage (39%); medical bills (34%); transportation (35%). Also, 24% don't have health insurance; 50% have unpaid medical bills; 30% have at least 1 household member in poor health.
16. **House Foreclosures.** According to RealtyTrac, 1 of every 408 housing units in Plainfield received a foreclosure filing in June 2010 alone, which is a 7% increase from 2009.
17. **Homelessness.** Homeless shelters are seeing an increase in the number of homeless who come to their shelters. Plainfield and Union County have seen a 70% jump in the number of homeless based on the “New Jersey Point in Time Count of the Homeless Data Report”. New Jersey has seen a sharp increase in the number of adults who are homeless as a result of evictions, according to newly released data from a statewide survey. Maureen Glenn, project manager in the office of the Union County Department of Human Services, was quoted by the Star Ledger in a January 28, 2009 as saying some of the homeless are "people we've never seen before. They live out of abandoned buildings and (their own) cars, but go to work. They're living, but not in the system."

18. **Health Problems.** Asthma, diabetes, obesity, heart disease and other conditions are major health issues among low income residents. Health problems such as these increase residents' challenges to maintain a high state of health that enables them to effectively pursue and achieve self-sufficiency. Some of the major health issues found in children in Plainfield include HIV/AIDS, diabetes, and obesity. Union County has the 3rd highest level of HIV/AIDS, after Essex and Hudson counties, with 2,655 cases. In 2008 there were 97 cases of HIV/AIDS among children under 13 years of age. (New Jersey ranked fifth among United States 50 states in the number of African Americans living with AIDS in 2001). 67% of children living with HIV/AIDS are African Americans, and this group has a much higher rate of HIV/AIDS (71 per 1000) than the next highest group, Hispanic/Latino (14 per 1000 people). Union County has one of the highest rates in NJ for older housing with lead paint, is ranked 3rd highest in state for leading poisoning among children 6 to 29 months; ranked 4th in NJ for proven cases of child abuse and neglect; and ranked 9th in state in perinatal risks and related outcomes including neonatal death, low birth weight, pre-term birth, and infant mortality. There were 7.25 perinatal deaths per 1,000 in Union County. The rate of low birth rates for African American women in Union County was 1.7 times higher than the rate for White women.

19. **Lack of Affordable Child Care.** Many low income families with young children need child care in order to work, attend classes, or participate in a training program, but the cost is difficult to afford for low income families. Child care is costly for low-income families and it can place a strain on family budgets. According to the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation report, *Commission to Build a Healthier America*, in 2008, the annual cost for center-based infant care ranged from \$4,500 to \$14,600 across the United States; the annual cost of center-based care for a 4-year-old ranged from \$3,400 to \$10,800. Since the cost of living in New Jersey is higher than national figures, the cost range for child care in Union County is in the top range of costs. This cost was confirmed by a random sampling of 3 private day care centers in Plainfield, which averaged out to the following rates:

- age 6 Weeks – 24 Months - part time: \$1,108/month / full time: \$1361/month;
- age 2 – 2 ½ - part time: \$900/month / full time: \$1268/month;
- age 3 – Kindergarten - \$900/month / full time: \$1235/month.

20. **Cost of Living.** The cost of food, housing, transportation, utilities, and other necessities is rising faster than low income residents' incomes. According to the 2009 Consumer Price Index inflation tables, between 2000 and 2009 inflation rose 26.8% or an average of 2.6% per year for 10 years in Union County, New Jersey, and the cost of living in Plainfield, New Jersey is 31% higher than the US average. According to the First Annual Report of New Jersey State's Minimum Wage Advisory Commission, "The cost of grocery items in New Jersey ranges on average from 9.7% to 18.8% higher than the national average. Health care and utilities costs in New Jersey are on average about 8% higher than the national average, and transportation costs are about 9% higher. Additionally, miscellaneous goods and services, the largest component of the index, on average cost about 17% more in New Jersey than the national average."

21. **Family Support.** Family support systems are important to everyone, including low income residents. Many families do not have extended family support systems nearby to support them because they have emigrated here from another country or moved from another area of the country – 30.2% of the Plainfield population is foreign born.
22. **Savings.** Savings are imperative to serve as a backup during financially challenging times. Plainfield’s population has the same savings habits as the average American, who saves only \$392 per year.
23. **Small Business Development.** There are not enough business focused programs in Plainfield that can help prepare its population to develop small businesses of their own. The lead program in this effort is BOSS: Business One Stop Service Program, which is the business incubation program in Plainfield. There is also the Plainfield Business Development Corporation, which focuses on major business development initiatives.
24. **Missing Fathers.** Some fathers do not live with their children nor do they have contact with them, eliminating themselves from having an important role and influence in their childrens’ lives. Not only is this an important missing social/psychological element in many families lives, but they also don’t contribute consistent financial support, leaving the mother as the single income source. Using the highest margins of error in the 2008 US Census FactFinder update, families with a female head of household with related children under 18 years of age comprise 34% of families in poverty in Plainfield.
25. **Financial Resources and Increasing Debt.** According to the National Center for Children in Poverty at Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health, debt has grown much faster for most low-income families than their income. Based on their latest study, the average total debt of low-income residents, including Plainfield, is more than 50% of total annual family income.
26. **Substance Abuse.** In 2006-2008, according to the New Jersey Substance Abuse Monitoring System, there were a total of 3,258 substance abuse admissions of all kinds in Union County, totaling 5.9% of all abusers in the state, and approximately 288 of these were from Plainfield.
27. **Domestic Abuse.** In 2008 there were 1,860 domestic violence cases in Union County. These were the cases that were reported; according to domestic violence experts a much larger number of cases go unreported. In some ethnic cultures, domestic violence is often not reported.
28. **Mental Health Issues.** There are over 200 forms of classified mental illness. The New Jersey Mental Health Institute estimates that 1 in 5 New Jersey families have a mental health challenge in the family. In highly diverse ethnic environments, such as Plainfield, there is a cultural tendency to not seek professional help for mental health issues. In Plainfield it is estimated that at least 9,263 families are affected by someone in the family with a mental health issue.

29. **Teen Pregnancy.** According to the 2009 Kids Count Data Book, Union County reflects the same teen pregnancy rate, 7%, as the State of New Jersey with a teen (ages 15-19) birth rate of 27 pregnancies per 1,000 females.
30. **Lead Poisoning.** Union County had the 3rd highest level of lead poisoning in the State with 113 reported poisonings, 1/10th of all poisoning in the State. Only Passaic and Essex counties had higher rates.
31. **Crime.** Based on the 2008 crime report, there were 1,654 reported crimes, averaging 1 crime for every 28 residents, and 1.79 times the national average for violent crime.
32. **Child Care Workers.** According to RWJ Foundation’s *Commission to Build a Healthier America*, child-care workers and early childhood educators are often inadequately trained and poorly compensated. Some child care workers are hired with little or no experience or training. Some aspiring child-care workers pursue the Child Development Associate Credential, either before they obtain a job in child care or at night while they work as child care workers during the day. This credential usually often requires 120 hours of CDA-approved classroom training within a 5 year period and can require up to 480 hours of supervised field work.

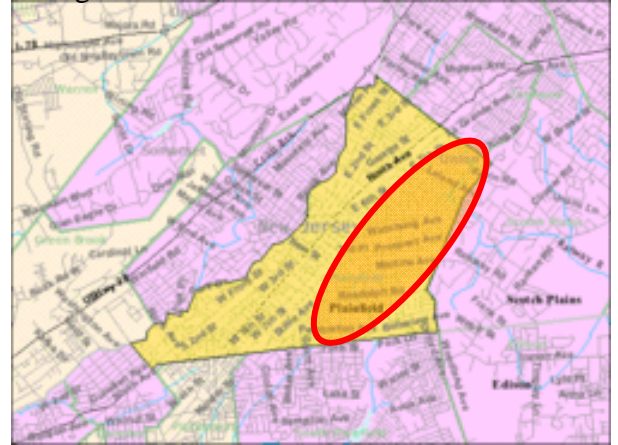
A recent report “*The State Of Family Child Care In New Jersey*” was carried out by the New Jersey Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies in partnership with The Child Welfare League of America. According to this report, inclusive of Plainfield:

- 18% of child care workers have completed some high school, 48% have a high school degree or GED, 14% have an associate degree and 20% have a bachelors degree or higher
- 41% of child care workers reported a pretax annual wages of less than \$15,000
- only 10% of child care workers reported earning over \$31,000 each year.

33. **Young Children from Low Income Families.** While children under 5 years of age comprise 7.6% of Plainfield’s population, they comprise a much higher 17.1% of residents in poverty.
34. **Families Headed by Female Single Head of Household with Children Under 18 Who Are Low Income.** While female head of households with children under 18 years of age comprise only 10.4% of Plainfield’s population, they comprise a much higher 34% of residents in poverty.
35. **Families with Two or More Children from Low Income Families.** The Legal Services of New Jersey Poverty Research Institute document “*Hard Times Amid Prosperity: A Current Profile of Poverty in New Jersey*” indicated that: (1) there were a disproportionate number of families with 2 or more children in poverty in New Jersey; (2) families with 2 or more children had double the rate of poverty than families in poverty with 1 child (10.2% for 2 or more children compared to 4.6% for 1 child). According to the study “*The Real Cost of Living in 2008: The Self-Sufficiency Standard for New Jersey*”, in Union County in 2008 it costs 1 adult with 1preschooler \$42,231 to \$46,588 to live self-sufficiently, and 1 adult with 1infant **and** 1 preschooler \$57,999.

Plainfield Service Area Information

The service area of the HOPES CAP, Inc.'s Early Childhood Program in Plainfield is all of Plainfield, which is located on the southwestern edge of Union County and is bordered by nine municipalities. Scotch Plains lies to the north and east, and Fanwood to the northeast. Borders to the south are South Plainfield and Piscataway, and to the southwest lies Dunellen, all which are in Middlesex County. Green Brook lies to the southwest, North Plainfield lies to the north and Watchung borders to the northwest. All three of these municipalities are in Somerset County.



Head Start Recruitment and Selection

HOPES CAP, Inc.'s Early Childhood Program in Plainfield focuses on recruiting the lowest income families throughout Plainfield. The largest number of low income families are located in the West Side of Plainfield (oblong area on map), which is where families live who have the greatest need of HOPES CAP, Inc.'s services.

Plainfield's West End neighborhood is where the majority of low-income residents live and where much of the public housing is located. The West End has been described as "a distressed community strangling from the effects of high-drug trafficking and usage, prostitution, the availability of fire arms, drive by shootings, insufficient transportation, and a limited tax base." Over time the West End has been negatively impacted by the departure of middle class residents from the area, who have left for newer and safer locations such as Piscataway, which houses Rutgers University and many corporations.

HOPES CAP, Inc. often selects families from the West End. A much smaller percentage of families selected live in pockets of rented housing and apartments located throughout the rest of Plainfield. Families are selected based upon a detailed rating scale; the greater the need in several areas, the higher the rating. Families with the highest ratings are selected for Head Start and Early Head Start.

BACKGROUND of PLAINFIELD

Plainfield was known in the 1860s as the "Queen City of the East" for its clean air and natural beauty. In 1915 it was known as the home to a "100 millionaires", who built elegant country homes; many of still exist today. Stylish homes were subsequently built around them on the east side, with many small homes built on the west side by/for people who provided services to the east side. Plainfield became the urban center for all the surrounding suburban towns.

The July 1967 riots in Plainfield changed the tone of the town. The Plainfield riots were a series of racially-charged, violent disturbances that occurred 2 days after the riots in Newark started. Rioting by young African Americans lasted for nearly a week with a series of events, including one policeman being murdered, a State of Emergency being declared by the governor, and National Guard troops and state police patrolling the streets and conducting house to house searches for stolen guns from a nearby arms factory.

The riots were the catalyst for a social and economic sequence that affected Plainfield for decades. Known as “white flight”, many white residents moved out of Plainfield to nearby suburbs along with many businesses. Some buildings that became vacant remained vacant; other buildings that had been burned out remained that way for decades. Plainfield began to experience resurgence in the 1980s and 1990s. Some of the destroyed, vacated and older buildings were raised so county and State buildings could be built.

More people became invested in improving the community. New groups began to move into the community, including a growing Hispanic/Latino population, particularly from Central America. As a result of increased migration to the area, the ethnic composition of children and families in Plainfield began to change rapidly. By the year 2000 Hispanics/Latinos made up 25% of the population. By the year 2008 Latinos made up 32.9% of Plainfield’s population, and the Black/African American population had moved out by about the same percentage (7.5%). With the strong growth in Latino children and families in Plainfield has also come a dramatic increase in the number of children in Head Start classrooms whose primary language is Spanish. Within the Plainfield Head Start program, 87.8% of families identify themselves as Hispanic/Latino.

Some of the changes that have come to Plainfield in the last several years have been difficult. Like so many urban centers, the population has been affected by a range of health, social, and economic issues. Health issues like AIDS and HIV have taken their toll on the population, causing a range of challenges including disability to death. There are ample chronic health problems like diabetes, obesity, asthma, lead poisoning, malnutrition and related cardiovascular, circulatory and respiratory issues. Gangs have been on the increase in New Jersey everywhere, and certainly have infiltrated Plainfield, with a current battle going on for “turf”. A number of recent shootings in Plainfield have been highlighted in state-wide news, as have some several stories about Hispanic/Latino men, particularly illegal immigrants, being mugged and severely beaten. The case of Guatemalan immigrant landscaper Lazaro Tista became quite well known as a racial bias crime. Tista, who had a wife and 8 children, was murdered by men ages 17 to 21. The latest blow to Plainfield has been the closing of Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center.

Despite Plainfield’s challenges, there is a strong dynamic of concern and action to confront and overcome Plainfield’s issues. A cadre of dedicated community service providers and government services provide a wide variety of services, sometimes valiantly, and sometimes achieving remarkable success, that continue to make a major difference and clearly enhance the lives of Plainfield’s many low income families.

POPULATION of PLAINFIELD by GENDER and AGE GROUPS

Based on the chart below:

- Children 0 to 4 years of age comprise 7.6% of the population;
- the largest age groups are: (25 to 29), (20 to 24) and (30 to 34);
- certain age groups have increased in their percentage of the population, including: (20 to 24); (25 to 29); (45 to 49); (50 to 54); (55 to 59); (60 to 64); (70 to 74); (80 to 84).

Household Residents in Plainfield by group	2008 Percentage of Total Population	2008 Total Population 46,046	2000 Percentage of Total Population	2000 Total Population 47,829
Females	50.1%	23,069	51.1%	24,436
Males	49.9%	22,977	48.9%	23,393
0 to 2 years of age	3.7%	1,703	3.9%	1,865
3 to 4	3.9%	1,796	4.0%	1,913
5 to 9	7.2%	3,315	8.0%	3,770
10 to 14	7.1%	3,269	7.4%	3,837
15 to 19	5.4%	2,486	7.0%	3,341
20 to 24	8.2%	3,776	7.4%	3,559
25 to 29	8.4%	3,868	7.7%	3,683
30 to 34	8.2%	3,776	8.2%	3,922
35-39	6.6%	3,039	9.0%	4,305
40 to 44	7.5%	3,453	7.7%	3,682
45-49	7.1%	3,269	6.2%	2,965
50-54	7.2%	3,315	6.0%	2,870
55 to 59	5.9%	2,717	4.7%	2,238
60 to 64	5.0%	2,302	3.6%	1,725
65 to 69	2.2%	1,013	2.8%	1,229
70 to 74	2.7%	1,243	2.2%	1,052
75 to 79	1.2%	553	1.8%	861
80 to 84	1.2%	553	0.7%	335
85 years & older	1.2%	553	1.2%	566

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey, American FactFinder

LIVING STATUS in PLAINFIELD

Based on the following data, only 1 increase can be seen, that of householders 65 years or older living alone (0.9%).

<u>Of 14,558 Total Households</u>	2008	2000
Family Households	57.6%	72.0%
Family households with children under 18	27.6%	35.5%
Married couples with children under 18	13.0%	18.8%
Female householder with children under 18, no husband present	10.4%	13.0%
Male householder with children under 18, no wife present	4.2%	NA
Householders 65 years or older living alone	8.3%	7.4%
Households with individuals 65 years and over	17.7%	21.1%
Average household size	2.74%	3.1
Average family size	3.61%	3.49

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey, American FactFinder

ETHNICITY of PLAINFIELD

The racial and ethnic diversity of Plainfield reflects a complex configuration of residents and a multiplicity of cultures. It has been reported that as many as fifty languages are spoken among residents of the community:

- 36.5% of residents report speaking a language other than English as the primary language in the home (19.6% nationally)
- 30.2% of the total population is foreign born (12.5% nationally)
- 65.4% of the foreign born are not US Citizens;
- 90.6% of the foreign born report Latin America as their place of birth.

Based on this data, it can be projected that:

- there are 14,792 residents who need English as a Second Language training;
- there are 8,004 residents who are foreign born who are not US citizens;
- 7,252 of the residents who are foreign born who are not US citizens are from Latin America, and they comprise 17.9% of the total population of Plainfield.

Among persons of Hispanic or Latino races 74.8% report heritages other than Mexico, Puerto Rico or Cuba. According to Plainfield Head Start, the vast majority of families in the Head Start program are of Latino/Hispanic descent, and the vast majority of their heritage is from Nicaragua, Guatemala, and El Salvador.

People of Hispanic or Latino of any race make up over one third of the population and are by far the fastest growing group in Plainfield. Based on the chart below and other supporting data from the US census:

- the largest group, African Americans, decreased by 6.8%;
- the 2nd largest group, Hispanic / Latinos, increased by 7.7%;
- the 3rd largest group, Other Race, increased by 12.1%

Year	African Amer.	Hispanic/Latino	Other Race	White non Hispanic	Asian	2/more races	Native Amer.	Pacific Islndr.
2008	55.0%	32.9%	22.9%	19.0%	1.4%	0.1%	0.02%	0.02%
2000	61.8%	25.2%	10.8%	21.4%	0.9%	4.6%	0.4%	0.1%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey, American FactFinder

FOREIGN BORN, CITIZENSHIP, and LANGUAGE in PLAINFIELD

In Plainfield:

- the percentage of residents who are foreign born has increased by 6.5%;
- the number of residents who speak a language other than English in the home has increased by 7.8%.

Year	Foreign born	Not US citizen	Speak a language other than English at home	Speak English less than very well
2008	30.2%	23.6%	36.5%	25.2%
2000	23.7%	17.0%	28.7%	47.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey, American FactFinder

EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT in PLAINFIELD

Based on the following data:

- residents 25 years or older who
 - don't have a high school degree totals 23.8%;
 - have a high school degree decreased by 36.4%;
 - have some college but no degree decreased by 11.7%;
 - have some a bachelor's degree increased by 2.3%;
- 34.1% of residents 18 to 24 years of age did not have a high school diploma 2008

25 years or older	Less than 9 th grade	9 th -12 th grade no diploma	High school diploma	Some college no degree	Asso- ciates degree	Bachelor degree or higher
2008	13.0%	10.8%	34.2%	16%	5.1%	20.8%
2000	NA	NA	70.6%	NA	NA	18.5%
18-24 years 2008	NA	34.1%	34.6%	27.7%	NA	3.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey, American FactFinder

ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS of PLAINFIELD

Plainfield's economy is based on industrial manufacturing and mid to small retail businesses. Of those residents who work (20,206 – 52.8% males and 47.2% female):

- 24.5% are in management, professional, and related occupations;
- 10.6% are in management, business, and financial occupations;
- 7.3% are in management occupations
- 13.9% are in professional and related occupations
- 26.1% are in sales and office occupations;
- 6.6% are in service occupations;
- 50.4% are in production, transportation, motor vehicle, and material moving occupations;
- 19.2% are in construction, installation, extraction, maintenance, and repair occupations.

Between 2000 and 2008:

- the percentage of families in poverty headed by a single female head of household with children under 18 increased by 6.5%;
- the median household income increased by 9.3%;
- the per capita increased by 7.6%.

	Median Household Income	Per Capita	Population Over 16 Years of Age Unemployed	Families Below Poverty Line with Children under 18	Families Below Poverty Line with Single Female Head of Household with Children under 18
2008	\$50,439	\$25,095	8.4%	17.1%	34%
2000	\$46,683	\$19,052	5.5%	17.2%	27.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2008 American Community Survey, American FactFinder

2008 PLAINFIELD HOUSEHOLD INCOME

Of 14,588 households:

- 18.9% had income of \$100,000 or higher
- 12.4% had income between \$75,000 to \$99,999
- 19.3% had income between \$50,00 to \$74,999
- 13.0% had income between \$35,000 and \$49,999
- 20.9% had income of \$35,000 or less
- 15.6% had income of \$15,000 or less

HOUSING in PLAINFIELD

The number of residents who pay more than 30% of their income for rent is 65.8%.

	Median Value	Average Rent	Total Housing Units	Occupied housing unites	Owner-occupied housing units	Renter-occupied housing units	Vacant housing units
2008	\$ 317,500	\$1,000	16,598	14,588	7,590	6,998	2,010
2000	\$137,500	\$726	16,180	15,137	7,579	7,558	1,043

HOPES CAP, Inc. Plainfield Client Information

HOPES CAP, Inc. clients in Plainfield are low income families with young children between the ages of 0 to 5 years. HOPES CAP, Inc.'s clients are the 17.1% of families with related children under 18 years of age in Plainfield (approx. 828 families) who live below the poverty level. Based on U.S. Census statistics, it can be conservatively estimated that in Plainfield a minimum of 9,000 individuals live at 100% of the 2009 Federal poverty guidelines (\$10,830 for 1, \$14,570 for 2, \$18,310 for 3, etc.)

Some HOPES CAP, Inc. Early Childhood Program parents are single with more than one child. Some have not completed high school, hold one or more low-paying jobs, attend classes at night, and have a disability or health issue. In Plainfield, 1 out of every 3 single female head of households with related children under 18 (34%) lives in poverty.

Over 75% of HOPES CAP, Inc. clients in Plainfield reside in rented apartments, some in the attic or basement of homes rented out by either the home owner or a renter. These occupants often overpay for these apartments since many of them can't show proof of citizenship or income to rent an apartment in an apartment building. Of the 14,588 homes that are occupied in Plainfield, almost half, 6,998, are rentals.

A few HOPES CAP, Inc. clients live in subsidized public housing. According to the New Jersey Council on Affordable Housing and the Federal Department of Housing and Urban Development, in Plainfield there are 3 main public housing units managed by the Housing Authority of Plainfield (HAP) with a total of 344 units:

- West End Gardens was built in 1954 and consists of 128 (1, 2, 3, and 4 bedroom) units;
- Elmwood Gardens was built in 1961 and consists of 120 (1, 2, 3, and 4 bedroom) units;
- Liberty Village is privately owned 96 units of Section 8 Project Base HUD's rental assistant complex. Liberty Village is managed by the Housing Authority of Plainfield and composed of families with low & moderate incomes. Houses have 1, 2, 3 & 4 bedrooms.

There is also 1 HAP complex with a total of 451 units dedicated solely to low income seniors and the handicapped: Richmond Towers has 225 units - 135 efficiency units and 90 (1) bedroom units.

Head Start Eligible Children and Families in Plainfield

CHILDREN by AGE, FAMILY & HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION in PLAINFIELD

Age	6 – 18 months	18 months - 2 years	3 – 4 years
Estimated Number of:			
Head Start Eligible Children	285	293	611
Head Start Eligible Children Attending Head Start	16	24	270
Abbott Eligible Children	320	616	1,032
Total Eligible Children	621	933	1,913

HEAD START ELIGIBLE HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION in PLAINFIELD

Household Composition	Number
Two parent families	188
One parent families	632

AVERAGE EDUCATION LEVEL of ECP PARENTS in PLAINFIELD

Less Than High School Graduation	High School Graduate	Some College, or Associates degree	Bachelors Degree or advanced degree
44.3%	39.5%	13.5%	2.7%

TYPES of EMPLOYMENT of ECP PARENTS in PLAINFIELD

Retail	Housekeeping	Restaurant Kitchen Laborer	Barback
Waitress	Delivery Person	Construction Laborer	Cook
Nurse's Aide	Receptionist	Landscaping Laborer	Bartend
Office Clerk	Babysitter	Warehouse/Factory Laborer	Bouncer

HOUSING & ENVIRONMENTAL CONDITIONS of ECP FAMILIES in PLAINFIELD

Housing Status	Percentage	Number
Own Residence	0%	0
Rent Residence	100%	280
Homeless	3%	8

GEOGRAPHIC LOCATION of SERVICE AREA in PLAINFIELD

The vast majority of the Head Start eligible families live in on the west side of Plainfield.

EMERGING / GROWING POPULATIONS in PLAINFIELD

The largest growth population in Plainfield is clearly Hispanic/Latinos, having increased from 22.2% of the population in 2000 to 32.9% in 2008. Their numbers are expected to continue to grow at this fast rate in this area. Many in this group are comprised of people from Central American countries such as Nicaragua, Honduras, and El Salvador. Also among this group are some people who have less than a high school education as well as many people who speak Spanish in the home (rather than English) and consider that they speak English less than “well”. The other fast growing population is the ethnic category, Other Races, having almost doubled in size between 2000 and 2008 from 10.8% to 22.9%.

POPULATION SHIFTS in LAST FEW YEARS in PLAINFIELD

The significant shift in the last few years is the 6.8% reduction of Black/African Americans who have left Plainfield and been replaced by Hispanic/Latinos.

RACE ETHNICITY of HEAD START ELIGIBLE CHILDREN 0-5 & PRIMARY LANGUAGES in PLAINFIELD

<u>Ethnicity</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>Primary Language(s)</u>
White (Alone) - Non-Hispanic	0.05%	English
Hispanic / Latino total	87.8% %	
- Hispanic / Latino where English is primary language	5.9%	English
- Hispanic/Latino with Spanish as primary language	81.9 %	Spanish
Black / African American (Alone)	12.1%	English
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (Alone)	0%	English
Persons Reporting Some Other Race	0%	
Persons Reporting 2 or More Races	0.04%	English
American Indian or Alaskan Native (Alone)	0.01%	English
Asian (Alone)	0%	English

CULTURAL INFLUENCES AMONG HOPES CAP, Inc. ECP FAMILIES

The main cultural influences among Early Childhood Program families are their own extended families and network of friends. Because of the large number of non-citizen residents, and the lack of services they can't receive because they are illegal residents, a sub-culture of support services is well established among this community. For example, there are sophisticated car service systems to transport families' children to child care and schools as well as take the adults to various work locations. There are check-cashing operations that cash checks for people without bank accounts and to send money to families in their country of origin. There are informal, non-restaurant food services where some people purchase and transport groceries while others prepare it. Since some parents who not legal residents can't receive Medicaid, some seek alternative health care within their own communities.

Another significant cultural influence in Plainfield are the many churches which have long been important institutions in Plainfield. Some churches provide outstanding outreach and social service programs, such as the Ruth Fellowship Ministries led by the Reverend Tracey L. Brown, Pastor & Founder, located at 733 South Second Street in the heart of the West Side, located close to many of the gang shootings and where many gang funerals take place. The church maintains an all inclusive welcoming atmosphere that has enabled much communication to occur. Another dynamic entity is Grace Episcopal Church led by the Reverend Carolyn Eklund, who helped lead the effort to keep Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center open.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT IN HOPES CAP, Inc. EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

Based on feedback from parents, ever since the HOPES CAP, Inc. Early Childhood Program began running the program September of 2009, parents indicated they were much more likely to participate in provided programs (estimated at 81% parent participation). These activities range from a one time experience to participation on a monthly basis throughout the year. Repetitive activity examples are: volunteering in classrooms, preparing food/materials used in the classroom, attending a field trip, attending parent/teacher conferences, and participating on the Policy Council. HOPES CAP, Inc. staff indicated that parents with higher involvement in HOPES CAP, Inc. Head Start activities were not only more collaborative in their parenting strategies, but implemented change at a faster pace than non-participants. HOPES CAP, Inc. staff indicated that greater parent involvement is facilitated since 90% of teachers and aides are bilingual in Spanish.

HOPES CAP, Inc. staff stated during interviews that the greatest level of parent participation in activities occurs during the fall and spring. Parents also indicated in interviews that extended family members (grandparents, uncles, aunts, etc.) who live in the area or with the family are available to help with child care. Parents indicated that neighbors and friends are an important source of help and support for their families, and that those families who are members of a religious organization also receive support from other members.

Feedback revealed that that 100% of parents consistently indicated very high levels of satisfaction with HOPES CAP, Inc. Early Childhood Program staff. Parents who requested information and guidance were asked about their satisfaction. Parents routinely reported that their needs were fully met as it related to: staff knowledge; staff performance meeting their expectations; staff providing accurate, clear information and easy to understand guidance in a timely way; and being courteous and friendly.

Parents indicated (100%) the highest levels of satisfaction with the HOPES CAP, Inc. Early Childhood Program, indicating staff:

- help their children grow and develop;
- ensure the health and safety of their children;
- support them in their role as parents;
- are inclusive of parents' ideas and value their contributions;
- show respect and consideration of their family's culture;
- provide services children need and guide parents to needed community resources;
- make parents feel part of the community and their importance in this community;
- support parents when encountering barriers to obtaining external services;

- ensure the children are fully prepared to enter and succeed in kindergarten.

Parents indicated (84%) they implement a number of activities in the home that paralleled and/or supported classroom activities, including:

- storytelling;
- doing a task/chore in the house;
- playing/listening to music together;
- watching a video or TV;
- talking about these activities.

PROGRAMS SERVING HEAD START ELIGIBLE CHILDREN in PLAINFIELD

Child Care Agency	HOPES CAP, Inc.	Other Child Care Centers
Locations	3	21
Infant Slots	16	16
Toddler Slots	24	114
Pre-Schooler Slots	270	1,095
Children Served	310	1,225
Licensed to serve disabled	yes	Yes all
Children with Disabilities	7	119
Capacity to serve non-English	yes	yes all
Staff Reflect Cultures Served	yes	yes all
Availability or accessibility of service	7:30am – 5:30pm	7:30am – 5:30pm

There are an estimated 15 other Plainfield child care centers serving Head Start eligible children living in Plainfield, including but not necessarily limited to the following as reported by: Al & Jean’s Children (123 -30 toddlers), B’s Nurturing Neighborhood (30), BUF-Health and Human Services (165), BUF-II (115), Dawn to Dusk Christian Child Care and Learning Center (75), Faheemah’s Child Care Center (30), The Kings Daughters Day School (150-40 toddlers), Little Hearts Learning Center (115-8 infants & 17 toddlers), Neighborhood House Association (NA), Plainfield Bilingual Day Care Center (69-19 toddlers), Playhouse Child Development Center (98-8 toddlers & 8 infants), Precious Steps Child Care (30), Precious Steps Too (45), Second Steps Child Care (180), Washington Community School (NA).

ESTIMATED KITH & KIN CARE SITUATIONS IN PLAINFIELD

Based on the number of estimated children between the ages of 0 and 4 years of age in Plainfield living in poverty, and the number currently attending child care programs, we estimate there are approximately 180 children cared for by relatives and neighbors. These caretakers are usually unlicensed and care arrangements are informal.

HEAD START ELIGIBLE CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES in PLAINFIELD

NUMBER OF DISABLED CHILDREN IN SERVICE AREA

Infants	Toddlers	Pre-Schoolers
63	103	122

TYPES of DISABILITIES

Asthma	Emotional/ Behavioral Disorder	Speech or Language Impairment	Non-categorical Development Delay includes Autism, Learning, Occupational, Physical
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ENROLLED HEAD START ELIGIBLE CHILDREN with DISABILITIES in PLAINFIELD

Health Impairment	Emotional/Behavioral Disorder	Speech or Language Impairment	Non-categorical Development Delay
0	0	0	7

ENROLLED HEAD START ELIGIBLE CHILDREN with HEALTH INSURANCE (261)

- Medicaid (233)
- Private Health Insurance (28)
- No Health Insurance (9)
- Children with ongoing source of continuous, accessible health care (270)
- Children up-to-date on schedule of age appropriate preventive/primary health care (255)
 - Number diagnosed with chronic condition needing medical treatment (50)
 - Number who have received or are receiving treatment (42)
- Number of children who received medical treatment for the following health conditions:
 - Anemia (4)
 - Asthma (25)
 - Hearing difficulties (8)
 - Overweight (2)
 - Vision problems (9)
 - High lead levels (2)
 - Diabetes (4)
- Number of children medical professionals determined are up-to-date on immunizations (270)
- Number of children with continuous, accessible dental care provided by dentists (269)

RESOURCES AVAILABLE to DISABLED CHILDREN in PLAINFIELD

- Plainfield Board of Education Child Intervention Team
- Prevent Blindness Tri-State
- Union County Community Coordinated Child Care
- Plainfield Health Clinic
- JFK Medical Center
- Plainfield Family Success Centers
- Plainfield Housing Authority

Strengths And Needs of Low Income Families with Children

The following information was based upon feedback from surveys, interviews, and focus groups held with parents served by HOPES CAP, Inc. Early Childhood Program.

STRENGTHS of LOW INCOME FAMILIES with CHILDREN

1. **Parents value their children's HOPES CAP, Inc. education.** 100% of respondents repeatedly mentioned the high quality of education their children now receive at HOPES CAP, Inc. Early Childhood Program, and how much better it is than the interim group previously responsible for managing the program. 100% of parents felt their children's educational, health, nutritional, and social needs were being fully met.
2. **Families feel valued by HOPES CAP, Inc.** 100% of respondents appreciated having the opportunity to be involved as much as they wanted to be in their children's education and felt their involvement in the program was seen as important to the success of the program and their children.
3. **Parents are optimistic about their children's success in ECP and later in public school.** 100% of respondents indicated they believe their children's experience and skill development at ECP will enable them to do well in school.
4. **Parents feel optimistic about their family's future.** 92% of parents believe that their children will eventually have a better life than they theirs by developing goals and pursuing them.
5. **Parents feel optimistic about their own skills development.** 82% of respondents indicated that they believe they eventually will be able to improve their current work skills and financial resources they need to improve their family's lives.

NEEDS of LOW INCOME FAMILIES with CHILDREN as DEFINED by FAMILIES

Families prioritized 10 needs that are important to them.

1. **Finding Work**. Families have been deeply affected by the current economic recession. Some have been recently laid off from their job; some have lost one of the two jobs they had. Others who are day laborers want help trying to get work. Many parents want more resources to help them find a job, and to find a job quickly.
2. **Personal Safety**. Families expressed concern about the safety of their living environment. Many of the families have concerns about safety for their children, gang activity among young people, and illegal drug sales. They worry about their young children being influenced by gangs and others in their neighborhoods, and not feeling comfortable allowing their young children to play outside unattended.

3. **Legal Guidance.** Families would like access to lawyers or specialists who can give trustworthy guidance about legal issues, including becoming a citizen, and housing. A number of families have been taken advantage of by people in the area who say they will help them become citizens, and their money is just taken with little or no help given. Some families who are in the country illegally don't feel they can say anything lest they draw attention to themselves.
4. **Literacy Classes.** Many families have adult members who can't read or write English, and they want to become literate so they feel they can function more effectively within the community in which they live. They either can't afford the literacy classes, or the classes they can afford are not provided nearby or at hours that fit their schedule.
5. **ESL Classes.** There are many family members who don't speak English and want to learn it. Again, they either can't afford ESL classes, or the classes are not provided near their homes or during the few hours in the day or night they have available to attend.
6. **Housing.** Families mentioned that they would like to be able to rent an apartment or house on their own without having to share a living environment with another family member, another family or individual. Some said they feel their landlord takes advantage of them by charging them more than their share of the utilities and rent.
7. **Health Care.** Families need medical or dental care, and they often don't feel they can afford physicians or dentists fees. Their children, often born in the US, have medical coverage, but they themselves do not. They hoped HOPES CAP, Inc. could make arrangements with local dentists and physicians who would be willing to take lower fees.
8. **Transportation.** Parents were very appreciative of the HOPES CAP, Inc. bus that picks up/drops off some of their children, but wished that public transportation like car service did not cost as much as it does, or that there were more bus routes.
9. **Food.** Parents mentioned that some families run out of some basic supplies during the month and they have to go to food banks, which sometimes don't have the supplies they need.
10. **Counseling Services .** Several parents mentioned that they would like to have a counselor to talk to sometimes to talk through the challenges they face on a daily basis. Topics ranged from marriage counseling to parenting advice to just having someone available to hear them and being able to give productive feedback.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES VIEW OF NEEDS

The following information highlights Plainfield community service providers view of the needs of low income Plainfield residents.

Need	Most Important	2nd Most Important	3rd Most Important
Jobs	82.4%	11.8%	5.9%
Youth Services	16.7%	66.7%	16.7%
Housing Counseling	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%
Help Finding Jobs	50.0%	33.3%	16.7%
After School & Summer Programs	50.0%	25.0%	25.0%
Job Training	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Affordable Literacy Classes	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Guidance Attaining Citizenship	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%
Low Cost Housing	0.0%	83.3%	16.7%
Affordable GED Programs	0.0%	66.7%	33.3%
Health Insurance	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%
Low Cost Transportation	0.0%	20.0%	80.0%
Guidance Accessing/Using Existing Services	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%
Infant and Toddler Care	33.3%	0.0%	66.7%
Affordable ESL Programs	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Improved Health Care	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Financial Education	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Computer Training	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
Language Translation	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%

COMMENTS BY SERVICE PROVIDES ABOUT COMMUNITY NEEDS

Community Resources

- *Melinda Allen-Grote, Director of Social Services, Homefirst*, a 30 year resident, believes that having community institutions is very important to the vibrancy of a community, and two factors that have negatively impacted Plainfield are the public school system and the loss of Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center. She is also concerned that the Plainfield Library, another important factor in stabilizing Plainfield's community life, is losing some of its funding despite its remarkable track record of community involvement and benefiting so many residents.
- *Mary Ellen Rogan, Director, Plainfield Public Library* said the charter schools are doing a very good job educating their students. The library tries to support their reading lists by purchasing the books and making them available.

Collaboration

- *Eric Graham, Family Self-Sufficiency Program Coordinator, Housing Authority of Plainfield*, believes community agencies are collaborating well together, learning from each other, not being self-focused, as evidenced by the very successful 3rd annual community resource day.
- *John Tilli, Director of Operations, Plainfield YMCA*, said the YMCA's purpose is to serve youth and collaborate, and that he will do whatever is necessary to make collaboration happen. This approach has enabled the YMCA to be part of (3) 21st Century grants and a United Way grant. He said the YMCA collaborates with many groups such as the Boy's and Girl's Club, YWCA, DYFS, New Covenant Christian Academy, foster care group etc. Some are free services, some fee for services, and some are subsidized. While he feels the Boy's and Girl's Club run the strongest teen programs, he wants to collaborate on developing more programs for teens, including aged-out programs, a lifestyle center, gang awareness, graduation rate, truancy rate, teen pregnancy, etc.
- *Jeffrey Dunn, Director, Business One Stop Service, Workforce Investment Board*, said it's very important to tie into the BOSS and the 21 agencies involved in order benefit low income families. It better enables all decision makers of these agencies to make knowledgeable, effective decisions. For example, right now he is trying to develop a child care resource for Housing Authority families that work the 2nd shift.
- *Eric Graham, Family Self-Sufficiency Program Coordinator, Housing Authority of Plainfield*, feels the Family Success Center is off to the good start, and is approaching families with a holistic approach and community-wide linkages in order to empower them.

Housing

- *Jeremy Montgomery, Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity of Greater Plainfield*, said it's hard for lower income families to live in New Jersey. Even though they sell the homes they build at cost and 0% interest mortgage, it's hard to find low income families who qualify to purchase Habitat's low cost homes. Families need to show a minimum annual income of \$54,500 for a 20 year mortgage, and the many families who want to participate find it difficult to demonstrate they meet these requirements. The monthly payment includes the mortgage, insurance, and Plainfield's public utility tax. Many families just can't qualify, and Habitat is always looking for families to qualify for this opportunity.
- *Shanee Helfer, Community Development Specialist, United Way of Greater Union County*, indicated that many residents are living in overcrowded units that are not safe or conducive to habitability, which causes stress on families, children, and the community. She implied the "800 lb gorilla in the room" that no one wants to talk about is housing conditions in Plainfield. Responsibilities need to be clarified by the City of Plainfield for Plainfield house inspectors, the landlords, and the tenants about what is acceptable and not acceptable in terms of housing conditions. Landlords are chopping up homes and not telling the inspections department and the planning department.
- *Theresa McCoy, Director of Housing Services, Plainfield YMCA*, said there is not enough affordable housing and there is not enough employment for many people to sustain permanent housing so they rely on the YMCA's 51 bed dormitory facility and 60 room single room living facility, and even that is hard for many to afford.
- *Jeremy Montgomery, Executive Director, Habitat for Humanity of Greater Plainfield*, said far too many people are paying over 30% of their income for housing – 65.8%.
- *Melinda Allen-Grote, Director of Social Services, Homefirst*, said that despite 41 unites of housing they own and operate, many more low income families need help with housing in the area.
- *Shanee Helfer, Community Development Specialist, United Way of Greater Union County*, stated the actual housing system has to be changed at a City and State level or nothing will change. She said change in Plainfield must consist of a multi-tiered, all inclusive approach that gets "buy-in" from everyone in Plainfield – the many residents (including those who remake homes), elected officials, major stakeholders like property owners who rent out homes, and major landlords who own property downtown. In summary, everyone who wants to make housing affordable, business affordable, and business attractive downtown needs to participate or it won't work. She said it's difficult to get consensus now because there are a number of groups with their own agendas. She highly suggested using United Way's Worldwide Community Impact Approach to get buy-in; it is an effective community outreach and neighborhood development strategy. She said all groups have to be included from the onset or it won't work.

Literacy, Citizenship, ESL Programs

- *Mary Ellen Rogan, Director, Plainfield Public Library* said they have large, popular literacy, citizenship, and English programs because there are so many Spanish speaking people who come to them. The library has a very long waiting list to get into the classes. They are so popular, and successful, because she feels people know they care and also due to the teaching strategy used – they have over a 100 volunteer tutors who work with 1 or 2 people at time in one of their 10 private rooms in the library. The tutors and students arrange their schedules during morning, afternoon, and night according to times that accommodate everyone's schedules. She said the 10 rooms are constantly busy.

Youth Programs

- *Ivory Fennell, Youth Coordinator, 2nd Street Youth Center Foundation*, said his center is located in the area where there have been a lot of shootings. He said there are many 13 to 16 year olds walking around with nothing to do. There are a lot of gangs in the areas, with a heavy influence of the Crips and MS13, a Latino/Hispanic gang, who try to continually recruit these young people.
- *Eric Graham, Family Self-Sufficiency Program Coordinator, Housing Authority of Plainfield*, pointed out that the biggest need besides jobs is intervention with young people to keep them active. Youth direly need activities; there are far more youth than there are centers to accommodate them. There are also mental health issues that need to be addressed among low income families.
- *Ivory Fennell, Youth Coordinator, 2nd Street Youth Center Foundation*, said teens all over the city need to have centers accessible to them where they live. He said when he grew up in Plainfield, all the schools used to be open at night so kids could at least play basketball, and there were community centers where you could learn plenty of non-sport skills. Now all the schools are closed at night except for Washington school, which is a community school.
- *John Tilli, Director of Operations, Plainfield YMCA*, said the number one need is for youth programs, which is why they run an after school program for the greater Plainfield area (7 towns) to enable parents to stay at work. They have 6 sites that are physically located in schools so kids can go right from their classes to the after-school program without leaving the facility, and they also transport kids with their 3 buses from other schools in Union County to the Plainfield YMCA, which has a computer lab with 16 new computers, new pool, and resurfaced gym. The program serves up to 300 kids.

Jobs

- *Theresa McCoy, Director of Housing Services, Plainfield YMCA*, indicated that there is a need for more programs about how to obtain a job, get a resume done, life skills, etc., and funding needs to be found for these services. The dining area of the YMCA could be used for providing such services when it is not being used for meals.
- *Mary Ellen Rogan, Director, Plainfield Public Library* said they put in a bank of 12 computers to enable people to spend more time on computers to fill out job applications and develop resumes. The computers are in constant use throughout the day.
- *Ivory Fennell, Youth Coordinator, 2nd Street Youth Center Foundation*, said a key issue is funding for their teen resource center, including stipends and employment. They need a lot more volunteers as well.

Health Care

- *Eric Graham, Family Self-Sufficiency Program Coordinator, Housing Authority of Plainfield*, said they have just recently arranged for the mobile unit from the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey to visit Plainfield at various sites once a month to provide primary preventive health care services, i.e. checking blood pressure, diabetes, etc. and providing referrals.

Mental Health

- *Melinda Allen-Grote, Director of Social Services, Homefirst* said that they developed their Grief and Loss program because there is so much violence, poverty, lack of hope, and there are many health issues in the Plainfield community. Many families need a way to express their grief, which affects everyone, including the youngest of children, who also need a means to express grief.

GROUPS WITH THE GREATEST NEEDS AMONG LOW INCOME RESIDENTS

The following are those low income groups with the greatest needs in Plainfield. While numbered, each group has equal needs.

1. Children between the ages of 0 and 17 years who:

- live below the poverty line;
- have a disability;
- are homeless;
- are in foster care;
- have families with an abuse problem;
- have families who speak English “less than very well”.

2. Heads of household who:

- are a single female or male head of household;
- are homeless or live in subsidized housing;
- live below the poverty line;
- have children;
- have children with a disability;
- have an abuse or domestic issue;
- have had a significant loss of income;
- speak English less than “very well”;
- have less than a high school diploma;
- have low job skills.

3. Adults between the ages of 18 and 59 years of age who:

- are homeless or live in subsidized housing;
- have income below the poverty line;
- have an abuse or domestic issue;
- have had a significant loss of income;
- speak English less than “very well”;
- have less than a high school diploma;
- have low job skills.

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS

HOPES CAP, Inc. already has developed some Plainfield community partnerships that include formalized relationships, mutual referrals, and joint projects.

1. **AmeriGroup** – Provides insurance for families who cannot afford other plans, and is specifically set up for low-income families. In addition, AmeriGroup employees volunteer as readers in ECP classrooms, and make donations for items for all the children.
2. **Children Specialized Hospital** – Provides services to ECP children identified as having health issues that need more intensive follow-up.
3. **Community Coordinated Child Care** – Provides outreach and recruitment to help child care centers enroll more children and families as well as present information about Head Start and Early Head Start's comprehensive approach to other child care providers.
4. **Family Development** – Is a welfare-to-work agency that ECP parents are referred for help with career training job placement.
5. **Liberty Community Development** – Provides free computer training for ECP parents.
6. **Neighborhood Health Services Corp.** (was Plainfield Health Clinic) – Provides free dental and eye screenings for all enrolled children.
7. **Parent Teacher Student Org.** – ECP parents are able to enroll in this unique program, which provides training for parents in how to become advocates for their children in the public school system
8. **Planned Parenthood of Greater Northern N.J., Inc.** – Offers high quality, voluntary, and confidential family planning and reproductive health care services.
9. **Plainfield School District** – Provides early childhood educational services that enable HOPES CAP, Inc. to have more qualified teachers in the classroom and to decrease the size of classes.
10. **Raritan Valley Community College** – Plays an important role in professional development of ECP Plainfield staff, including pursuit of the CDA.
11. **SALT (Save A Life Today)** – Is a juvenile program that helps at-risk juveniles stay off the streets. We work with the older siblings of ECP children who are in need of their services.
12. **United Trust** – Offers free seminars and workshops for parents on basic financial services, including wise use of credit, employment readiness, and other subjects

COMMUNITY RESOURCES in PLAINFIELD RECOMMENDED by PEERS

1. **Homefirst** – A Plainfield-based operation that provides a range of programs for homeless women and families in Union County to enable them to regain self-sufficiency, including: providing shelter, food and other basic necessities through 26 host congregations and 36 support congregations, and over 1,500 volunteers. Current initiatives include A Family Success Center funded by United Way to help prevent child abuse by providing classes on financial awareness and parenting enrichment, a Grief and Loss program that uses its graduates to help others, Parenting for Single Moms, Sewing with Cynthia and I Have a Dream Foundation, and Practical Parenting. <http://www.homefirstinc.org/>
2. **Literacy Volunteers of Union County** – a non-profit organization that teaches Union County adult learners to read, write and speak English by providing trained, mobilized and supported volunteers as certified tutors in basic literacy, life skills and English as a Second Language. <http://www.lvaunion.org/>
3. **Neighborhood Health Services Corp.** – a Plainfield-based health focused operation that provides a total care program including internal medicine, obstetrics, gynecology, family planning, pediatrics, dentistry and social work support services, HIV/AIDS treatment and therapy, nutritional counseling, outreach services, a comprehensive parental care program including on-site prenatal and support services. Plainfield-based, its satellite centers include Elizabeth Port Community Health Center in Elizabeth, The Healthy Place in Washington School Elementary School, Plainfield; and the Cardinal Health Center at Plainfield High School for adolescents. <http://www.phcmednet.org/>
4. **Plainfield Service Providers Group** – organized by Donna Morris of the City of Plainfield, Community Development, to serve as a monthly meeting that enables exchanges of information and ideas among all Plainfield community service providers. <http://www.plainfield.com/index.htm>
5. **Proceed, Inc.** – an Elizabeth-based organization that provides a range of social services to non-profits in Union County, including: community education; community development; community health initiatives; individual and family development; multi services; and training, support, and technical assistance. <http://www.proceedinc.com/>
6. **United Family and Children's Services** – a Plainfield-based organization that provides adoption and mental health counseling services <http://www.unitedfamily.org/>
7. **YMCA** – a Plainfield-based organization dedicated to improving the potential of every member of the community through programs that build spirit, mind & body and to educate parents through enrichment and self-sufficiency guidance, including: housing; foster care; emergency shelter; school-age childcare; recreation; and wellness; family programs; senior programs; teen programs, kid programs; aquatics; and social services. <http://www.plainfielddy.org/index.html>

COMMUNITY RESOURCES INDICATING INTEREST in COLLABORATING

1. **American Red Cross, Tri-County Chapter** (Nathan Rudy) – Collaborate on development of customized, bilingual programs for ECP families and children about disaster preparedness, water safety and skills, fire prevention, first aid, babysitting and more.
2. **Easter Seals** (Sandra Woods) – Collaborate on helping older adults find jobs.
3. **Economic Development, City of Plainfield Re-Entry Initiative** (Leslie Dixon) – Ways of providing child care to Plainfield residents returning from prison and halfway houses.
4. **Families and Community Together** (Kimberly Castaldo) – Collaborate on ways to inform community about FACT's mission and model to help children and adolescents remain with their families.
5. **FISH Hospitality Program, Inc Susan** (E. Baybutt) – Collaborate on providing scholarships to Head Start for children in our 14 bed homeless shelter.
6. **Housing Authority of Plainfield** (Eric Graham) – Collaborate on ways to provide quality family services.
7. **Neighborhood Health Center in Plainfield** (Paulette Hussey) – Brainstorm collaboration possibilities.
8. **Neighborhood Health Services Corporation** (Eugene Baucum) – Collaborate on ways to provide access to primary healthcare to low income families.
9. **Plainfield Community Outreach, Inc.** (Dana Sharpe) – Collaborate on summer programs for children in three schools within the area from 4-6th grade.
10. **Plainfield Community Outreach, Inc.** (Dana Sharpe) and **Prevention Links** (Craig Nowlin) – Collaborate on writing joint grants among several agencies within Plainfield to obtain funds to expand services.
11. **Plainfield Partnership for Healthier Children** (Karen Condron, RN & Raul Flores) – Collaborate on lead poisoning education to HOPES CAP, Inc. parents and caregivers.
12. **Plainfield Y** (Stacy Reh) – Collaborate on ways to provide health/wellness, computer and swim classes to youth.
13. **Prevention Links** (Craig Nowlin) – Collaborate on school day and after school programs.
14. **Probation Services ISP program** (Jamie Grundy) – Brainstorm collaboration possibilities.
15. **Public Schools of Plainfield** (Stacy Greene) – Collaborate on development of ECP child care class in our day care center at Plainfield High School.

Identification of Issues

PROGRAM & COMMUNITY GAPS IN SERVICES BASED UPON UNMET NEEDS

The following gaps in services have been identified based on needs defined by low income community residents.

PROGRAM GAPS in HOPES CAP, Inc. EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM in PLAINFIELD

1. Infant and Toddler Slots

The data demonstrates that while HOPES CAP, Inc.'s ECP Early Head Start program in Plainfield has made a significant impact, but there are many more infant and toddler care slots needed. For many low income families with children 0 to 2 years of age who can't get into the HOPES CAP, Inc. ECP infants and toddlers program, they have to cobble together a range of child care situations, particularly single female head of households. Families are another local child care centers that costs them a substantial amount of money, or using a relative, a grandparent, a neighbor, or paying someone in the community to care for their child while they work, train, or pursue a degree. When it is home care, unless it is by a trained family child care provider, this care is often not optimal for young children. Home caretakers are rarely child care professionals, and there is little or no training or oversight of these "kith and kin" services by outside organizations. Payment for these services places strain on the family budget. Low income parents, particularly single female head of household, need qualified child care.

COMMUNITY GAPS

1. Job Development Services

All respondents indicated more jobs need to be available in Plainfield and surrounding areas. The official unemployment rate in Plainfield is 9.6%, but this doesn't take into account the many day laborers who do not qualify for unemployment as well as those who no longer receive unemployment.

2. More Job Discovery Opportunities

Because there is a high level of unemployment in Plainfield, respondents requested more job fairs be held that residents can attend to discover more job opportunities in northern New Jersey, apply for jobs, and arrange for job interviews. Some of the community services that focus on this need are computer centers at the Workforce Investment Board One-Stop Center, YMCA, both Family Success Centers (Homefirst and Plainfield Board of Education) and the Plainfield Public Library, but more are needed.

3. Affordable / Accessible Literacy, ESL and GED Programs

Plainfield has many residents who want to learn to speak, read, and write English well (36.5% speak a language other than English in the home and 25.2% speak English less than well) and/or want to be literate or get their GED (13% of people 25 years or older have less than a 9th grade education and 10.8% do not have a high school diploma). Respondents

indicated that a number of affordable, accessible literacy, ESL and GED programs have been recently closed due to a lack of funding. Some that exist are too costly for low income residents to attend. Other classes in all 3 of these areas are low cost but not within an accessible distance to some low income people's homes or are provided at hours that don't match families' work/child care schedules.

4. After School Programs for Students 5 to 18 Years

Respondents indicated there is a major need for more after school and weekend programs where children of all ages can have safe places to go after school to socialize, talk to counselors, get help with homework, be tutored, and/or work independently. Respondents indicated students also need access to computers where they can be taught computer skills and practice them, or do research and writing. Again, the YMCA, both Family Success Centers (Homefirst and Plainfield Board of Education) and the Plainfield Public Library provide such centers, but more are needed throughout Plainfield, particularly the west side.

5. Participatory Programs for All Youth 5 to 18 Years

All the parents and community service providers stated the need for more programs for young people. While respondents believed that these programs should be for all children up to 18 years of age, they felt it was particularly important for youth between the ages of 10 and 18 years of age. Respondents' comments were not just about after school programs; everyone strongly felt the need for a variety of engaging youth programs that would help young people learn useful skills and information, and provide positive outlets. More specifically, respondents felt programs were needed that would enable youth to explore, discover, and learn about life outside of their daily routine and immediate neighborhood. Requests included organized sports, field trips, camp opportunities, community volunteering, mentoring, and for the 14 to 18 year olds, job shadowing. There are 9,070 young people that live in Plainfield between the ages of 5 and 18 years of age.

6. Legal Guidance

Many residents, particularly non-citizen residents, need legal guidance about a number of issues, including help with housing, citizenship, documentation, entitlements, bankruptcy, foreclosure, etc. For example, there are now 2,010 vacant housing units in Plainfield. Almost 1 of every 2 (47.8%) of occupied homes (14,588) is a rented house. Some home owners, or home renters take advantage of undocumented residents whom they rent rooms to, overcharging them for the space and utilities. Other home owners need foreclosure advice. According to www.zillow.com, the average price of a Plainfield home has dropped from a high 3 years ago of \$323,000 to a current low of \$227,000.

7. Health Care Resources and Programs

Families need access to affordable and nearby primary care physicians and specialists. They also need access to programs and support that will help them be better informed, such as about lead poisoning and good nutrition, and to incorporate healthy practices into their lifestyles. The loss of Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center has left a huge gap in medical services.

8. More Job/Work Preparation

More job and work preparation programs need to be made available to low income families, particularly those living on the west side. Respondents indicated many young people 18 years and older are often not familiar with all the basic, practical and/or subtle requirements of obtaining a job and/or maintaining it. They also are not familiar with the effort required to plan and develop a career that enables them to earn a “living wage”. (34.1% of the young people between the ages of 18 and 24 years do not have a high school diploma). Some families are first or second generation residents who are not familiar with certain aspects of American life, including the availability of a wide range of careers and how careers can be developed (30.2% of the population are foreign born).

9. Affordable Transportation

Transportation options need to be developed that enable low income residents to significantly lower their transportation costs for child care and work. Low income families are spending a significant percentage of their income on transportation for themselves and their children.

10. Emergency Food Banks

Food continues to increase in cost and there are only a few emergency food banks in the area. Children are the most affected, since they have hunger that is sporadic, temporary and cyclic rather than continuous.

11. Mental Health and Family Counseling Services

Many low income residents experience a range of mental health and family issue stresses, and need mental health and family developmental support. There are few services that effectively respond to either need. The result is that people mistakenly try to minimize mental health or family issues, which often only aggravates situations. They need more counseling services like those of United Family and Children’s Services and Homefirst’s Grief and Loss program, which trains participants from the first program to be advocates for subsequent program participants.

ISSUES and TRENDS of GREATEST IMPACT

1. Unemployment – There has been a consistently high level of unemployment (over 10% in 2009 and still 9.7%) in Plainfield, and higher among low skilled workers. Economists are predicting that the national economy will be struggling to recuperate for several years.

2. Gang Activity - Gang issues are a growing influence in Plainfield. Young people, particularly young males, are joining gangs in increasing numbers. In addition, young people are becoming involved in gangs at an earlier age. In 2010 there appears to be an ongoing turf battle between rival gangs in Plainfield, which is believed to be the cause for many recent attacks in 2010, including 13 reported shootings and 3 shooting deaths. Until this year, it had seemed that this trend was being reversed. In 2009 the Plainfield Police Department recorded the lowest rate of reported crimes ever committed, 1,654 violent and non-violent crimes committed, a 12 percent reduction from 2008 when there were 1,891

crimes reported. This might be because illegal residents fear reporting crimes against them to the police. These crimes occur much more often than reported.

3. **Housing** – Low income families continue to pay more than 30% of their income for housing and utilities (65.8%), and are doubling and tripling up in rented houses; some illegal immigrants live in the attics and basements.
4. **Health Care Services** – With the loss of Muhlenberg Regional Medical Center, some of the affiliated physicians and other medical specialists are no longer providing care in Plainfield.
5. **Home Foreclosures** – Many families in Plainfield that had balloon mortgages have not been able to keep up with payments. Plainfield is reflective of the national bank repossession rate, which increased 38% in the second quarter of 2010 from the same period a year earlier for a record total of 269,952 in one quarter, according to RealtyTrac.
6. **Homelessness** – The number of those becoming homeless increased by 70% between 2008 and 2009 in New Jersey, many of them due to evictions from rental properties. The rate continues to grow, but not as drastic. Corporation for Supportive Housing in New Jersey indicated that the results of their point in time count indicated that in 2010 there are 2,998 homeless in Union County, with approximately 500 to 700 of those homeless in Plainfield.
7. **Lost of Government-Funded Programs** – Losses in government funding, due to the national recession and New Jersey State’s budget cuts, and the reduction in Plainfield’s tax base, have caused multiple programs to be cut totally or partially, including ESL, literacy, GED, and programs for children and youth of all ages. For example, the highly successful ESL program of 5 years could no longer meet at the Plainfield Public Library due to funding cuts.
8. **Food Insecurity** – There continue to be food shortages in food pantries that support low income residents. As a result there is an increase among individuals and families requesting food help. According to the Community Food Bank of New Jersey, there are more than 400,000 children in New Jersey who are eligible for free or reduced price meals at school. Food is scarce for their families and many children do not have the option of eating three nutritious meals each day simply because there is not enough food.

Conclusions

1. HOPES CAP, Inc.'s Early Childhood Program in Plainfield meets Head Start Performance Standards as it relates to program philosophy, objectives, services, program options, recruitment and service areas, program locations, and criteria for recruitment and selection.
2. HOPES CAP, Inc.'s Early Childhood Program in Plainfield implements a bilingual recruitment and selection process to serve children with significant disabilities, who are homeless, in foster care, and who are from families with the lowest incomes and have challenges such as domestic abuse, substance abuse, and mental health issues.
3. HOPES CAP, Inc.'s programs serve the lowest income residents.
4. Clients gave high ratings to HOPES CAP, Inc.'s programs for program satisfaction.
5. Programs that HOPES CAP, Inc. offers are valued by clients and community partners.
6. Clients rated HOPES CAP, Inc. well on knowledge, delivery, and reliability of services.
7. Many low income residents have lost jobs or day work due to the recession, and desperately need and want a job.
8. Many low income residents need effective ways to find jobs and opportunities. There are very few job fairs, and they want to be able to carry out job search opportunities.
9. Many of Plainfield's low income teenagers and young people do not have the skills and/or knowledge that enables them to acquire a "living wage" job with growth potential and/or effectively pursue a pathway that enables them to build a career or business.
10. Besides HOPES CAP, Inc.'s ECP Early Head Start program, there is an absence of enough slots for center-based infant and toddler care programs for children from low income families in Plainfield.
11. Many families are concerned about their personal safety. They fear the increasing number of gangs, gang violence, and the influence of gangs on young people and related crimes.
12. Some low income families with children, particularly non-citizen residents, are doubling and tripling up in Plainfield houses and paying a substantial amount of their income for rent.
13. As food costs increase and food budgets buy less, some low income residents do not have enough food and seek help from food banks, or stretch their food budget by purchasing low quality foods high in fats, carbohydrates, and chemicals. Consumption of this low quality food is increasing the likelihood of obesity, diabetes, cancer, and other chronic and long term health issues.

14. HOPES CAP, Inc. has established substantial credibility with families attending the ECP Early Head Start and Head Start programs.
15. HOPES CAP, Inc. has established strong credibility among community service providers with whom they have already interacted. Of the 46.2% of community service providers responding to the survey with whom HOPES CAP, Inc. has had a collaboration, HOPES CAP, Inc. received a 94.3% very effective/effective rating in all 3 key areas, including

Plainfield Community Service Providers That Have Collaborated/Interacted with HOPES

HOPES CAP Inc.	Very Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not Effective
Expertise Knowledge	50%	50%	0%	0%
Delivery of Services	66.5%	33.5%	0%	0%
Reliability of Services	50%	33%	17%	0%
Total	55.5%	38.8%	5.7%	0%

16. Many Plainfield community service providers responding to the survey (53.8%) indicated they were not qualified to rate HOPES CAP, Inc.’s level of performance because they have not collaborated/interacted with HOPES CAP, Inc. yet.
17. HOPES CAP, Inc. is well prepared for capacity building in terms of: (1) expansion of existing services; (2) initiating new services.
18. If HOPES CAP, Inc. programs were not available it can be projected that there would be far fewer slots available for infants and toddlers and pre-school children. The loss of HOPES CAP, Inc.’s services would have a major negative impact on the structure of pre-school education in Plainfield.

Recommendations For Proposed Changes

1. **Expand the ECP Early Head Start Infant/Toddler Care Programs.**
Expand the number of slots for infant and toddlers to enable more single female head of households with children under 3 to go to work or attend training classes.
2. **Develop / Collaborate on Job Development/Acquisition Initiatives.**
This effort could include resume development, organizing job fairs, training how to do job searches on the computer, building computer-based skills, training in job / career path planning, training in college planning, and in general, helping parents and young people become job-ready.
3. **Develop / Collaborate on Expansion of English as a Secondary Language Initiative.**
Support the development of more low cost or free ESL classes that are based on local successful models, such as the ESL group at the Plainfield Public Library. This program has a social component which facilitates individual involvement, helps create networks, and better enables language acquisition and use of English more often in the home. Make these programs available where low income people can geographically access during hours that accommodate residents' work and family schedules.
4. **Develop / Collaborate on Expansion of Housing/Citizenship/Entitlement Initiatives**
Provide or expand an existing program/service that provides guidance to residents about a range of topics directly and indirectly related to housing, citizenship, and entitlements.
5. **Develop / Collaborate on Expansion of Low Cost or Free GED and Literacy Programs.**
Upgrading low income families' literacy skills and educational accomplishments is critical to enabling them to acquiring improved job skills and jobs. Develop or collaborate on expansion of existing programs with community partners who have a history of success and formulas that work well. For example, for reading and writing, relate it to realistic life skills such as consumer economics, community resources, health issues, and employment. Reinforce skills with learning computer software. To enable individuals to use math with confidence, build analytical thinking by requiring them to apply math skills to home, school, and work. Provide GED programs where low income people can geographically access them and at times that accommodate their work and child care schedules.
6. **Collaborate on Creation/Expansion of Youth Career Development Initiatives.**
Collaborate with youth focused community organizations to expand careers programs that help Plainfield youth between the ages of 10 and 17 learn about careers, pathways leading to careers, and how to develop a step-by-step approach to enter targeted careers. Provide a similar program for young people between the ages of 18 and 24. Hire or use available Career Counselors who can deeply support participants' interests and provide guidance. Explore the existence and/or possible inclusion of a mentoring and/or job shadowing initiatives. Consider including such organizations as the Plainfield Housing Authority, Plainfield YMCA, Second Street Youth Center Foundation, Plainfield Public Library, Family Success Centers, Venture and Venture, Plainfield Police Department, and of course, local colleges, corporations and businesses.

7. **Establish Plainfield-based Family Resource Centers**
The services provided by the HOPES CAP, Inc.'s Family Resource Center in Hoboken have had a significant impact on the lives of many low income residents in Hudson County. Similar physical resources in Plainfield will become an important center for low income families, including helping them build computer and job skills while also learning about, and easily accessing, a wide range of community based programs.
8. **Provide Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced Computer Classes.**
Provide basic, intermediate, and advanced computer classes by well trained trainers to help residents with minimal computer knowledge gain skills. Recognize residents' accomplishments as they achieve various levels. Also provide complex skills training for common applications used in work environments, such as MS Word, Excel, PowerPoint and Publisher at advanced levels, how to research information on the Internet, etc.
9. **Explore Medical Transportation for Families.**
Determine program requirements, budget, and feasibility of offering medical appointment transportation to low income families and adults for out of area medical/dental appointments.
10. **Collaborate on Expansion of Existing Food Support Services.**
HOPES CAP, Inc. currently offers a low cost food program to Plainfield clients. Consider how to expand this effort by working with other community services providers to take advantage of local food resources, such as organizing low cost sales of fresh foods by local farmers at a centralized location accessible to low income families, or offering classes about how to stretch food budgets using smart nutritional practices. Poor nutrition is a portal to a range of health problems that increasingly plague low income residents (obesity, diabetes, heart disease, etc.) and have direct implications on learning, decision-making, problem-solving, mental health, behavior, physicality, work patterns, lifestyle, etc. Good nutritional practices can have life changing implications. To facilitate low income residents' learning of good nutrition and to motivate the practice of it on a daily basis, consider developing a series of fun but practical workshops in or near low income housing.
11. **Collaborate on Business Incubation Initiative.**
Working in collaboration with a consortium of other organizations, develop a business incubation initiative, or help expand an existing one, for low income residents, with each consortium member bringing to bear a specialty or resource for the initiative, i.e. business faculty members from a local university willing to help structure and provide ongoing guidance, local business people willing to mentor participants, city or corporate representative willing to offer facility space, etc. Initiative priorities could include exploration of opportunities to support the needs of local industries such as "Green" services, transportation, solar energy, etc.

12. Develop a HOPES CAP, Inc. Marketing Strategy and Implementation Plan for Plainfield.

Several community service providers indicated they were interested in learning more about all the services HOPES CAP, Inc. could bring to Plainfield, as well as the need for more communication between all Plainfield service providers, and the need for better marketing strategies for all service providers to the community, including creating a positive community-brand campaign. Develop a multi-channel public relations/marketing/branding initiative that consistently informs community partners, resources, low income residents, funding resources, and the public of HOPES CAP, Inc. programs, services, activities, and accomplishments in Plainfield.

13. Develop New Community Partners Based on Expertise, Experience, and Structure.

There are many community resources available with a wide range of specializations in Plainfield. HOPES CAP, Inc. has substantial credibility as an accomplished community action agency experienced at structuring/re-structuring programs and initiatives to enable low income residents to succeed. As program and initiatives require, HOPES CAP, Inc. should utilize its expertise where appropriate, to collaborate with well-structured, experienced agencies with clearly differentiated expertise and successful track records in the Plainfield community.

14. Expand Efforts To Develop A Broad Array Of Funding Streams.

Despite the recession there are an array of funding opportunities from government, foundations, corporations and individual sources to support HOPES CAP, Inc.'s current and new initiatives and programs, particularly those that focus on the needs of Union County and low income groups. Present HOPES CAP, Inc. funding priorities in a way that powerfully matches targeted group's funding priorities, i.e. a government grant developed in tandem with a local college or vocational school (i.e. Union County Community College) to train low income residents in "Green" capacity building, energy, or non-traditional jobs for women (i.e. Dept. of Labor or PSEG foundation); a foundation grant for preventative health care education for young mothers or young fathers program (i.e. Robert Wood Johnson foundation); a corporate grant to train high school graduates how to identify, plan, finance, develop, and grow a small business using branded products (i.e. Home Depot); and/or develop a donor campaign targeting private individuals or groups with specific interests in certain HOPES CAP, Inc. initiatives and/or goals.

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