

Allegany Franciscan Ministries Common Good Initiative – *Wimauma Community Dialogue Report*

Allegany Franciscan Ministries launched the Common Good Initiative in the Wimauma community in June 2014. The goal of the initiative is to work with residents and stakeholders in Wimauma, to create opportunities, develop strategies and make investments that lead to a healthier, safer and more prosperous places for residents to live, learn, work, and play. Through the Common Good Initiative, Allegany hopes to utilize current resources to build in-depth relationships in each community, involve residents in developing creative and innovative opportunities, and direct investments towards the long-term success of those initiatives and programs.

Over this past year, Allegany Franciscan Ministries has been engaging with community members and stakeholders in Wimauma, listening and learning to gain a greater understanding of the community's needs, interests and appetite to engage in change. We worked with community residents, nonprofit groups, local government, the education system, business owners, faith based and system leaders and youth to understand the challenges facing Wimauma and their vision for the future. During this time, Allegany Franciscan Ministries invested nearly \$750,000 to support existing efforts and leverage opportunities in Wimauma (a list of investments is available on our website, www.afmfl.org).

As a result of this work, Allegany identified areas of synergy and concern, and summarized what we heard into eight priorities. On Saturday, November 7, 2015, over 180 community residents and stakeholders gathered at Wimauma Elementary School for a three-hour facilitated community dialogue to identify the most important of the priorities, those which community members are most interested in working to address. Information was also shared to help community members understand how they can assist and support the initiative.



Given the uniqueness of creating a dynamic conversation simultaneously in Spanish and English, several modalities were used to receive and share information. A voting tabulation system was utilized to rank the priorities. The dialogue also generated many ideas and solutions from community members through open conversations and prompting questions. Individuals were also encouraged to complete a feedback form and share additional views.



Though a series of interactive activities, two priorities rose to the top:

“Options for Youth During Out of School Time”
and
“Economic Opportunities”

Results were aggregated and analyzed based on the language of the voter: out of school time and economic opportunities were consistently top priorities for both groups. The results did vary slightly between English and non-English speakers when ranking the third and fourth priorities. The overall counts by individuals of their top four ranked priorities include two other issues of importance: **“Safe Communities”** and **“Public Places for Children and Families to Play”**.



The eight priorities are listed below, with the total percent of the vote received during the community dialogue. Approximately 157 individuals participated in the ranking of top priorities.

	Community Priorities	Community Concerns	Percentage
1	Options for Youth During Out of School Time	Lack of after school options for youth; isolation and risky behavior by youth.	23%
2	Economic Opportunities	Lack of financial and institutional supports for enterprise development and entrepreneurship; lack of job training programs and low utilization of programs that do exist.	19%
3	Safe Communities	High rates of violent crimes.	16%
4	Public Places for Children and Families to Play	Lack of sufficient 'public spaces' for family activities, physical exercise and community gathering.	15%
5	Quality Health Services	Health services not available at accessible times; low utilization rates for services that are available.	12%
6	Accessible and Safe Transportation Options	Public and private transportation sources are insufficient to support needs of residents; transportation barriers impact access to employment, health options, etc.	9%
7	Pathways to Citizenship and Community Acceptance for All Residents	Barriers for community, civic and employment participation for immigrant populations and formerly incarcerated populations.	4%
8	Access to Healthy Food Options	Healthy food options aren't accessible and/or affordable enough.	3%

Additionally, there were a number of write-in priorities submitted by individuals during the community dialogue:

Submitted Community Priorities
Affordable Housing
Alliance of Spiritual Leaders
Culture of Love and Growth
Land usage/Built Environment Concerns
Quality Childcare Centers
Cleaner Community – Beautification
Small Business /Entrepreneurship Supports
Community Center
Organization to Speak on Behalf of Wimauma
Library
Social/Neighborhood Service Center
Love

Participants then spent time brainstorming together and sharing their ideas and potential solutions. A variety of questions were posed on flipcharts, including the following:

- **What changes have you noticed are happening in Wimauma?**
- **Write three words that describe Wimauma.** (Responses ranged from “family, love, church” and “Home!” to “Forgotten, abused, used” and “Scary, dirty, violent”.)
- **What do you love about Wimauma?** (Responses included Church, the people, Spending time at Bethune Park, small community, diversity ...)
- **How long have you lived in Wimauma?** (Responses ranged from 3 years to 60+ years!)

Feedback forms were used to engage individual participants’ responses to the following:

- *What is the greatest opportunity that the Common Good Initiative provides for Wimauma?*
- *What is your greatest concern about the Common Good Initiative?*
- *What do you suggest the next step should be for Cheri and the Common Good Initiative Staff?*

Many respondents acknowledged their desire to support a community where all voices can be heard and all concerns could be lifted. A transcript of all written notes (feedback forms and flip charts), voting tabulation scores and comments from the participants will be available in mid-December 2015, posted on Allegany’s website, www.afmfl.org.

The next steps for the Wimauma Common Good Initiative include working with community members and other key supporters to develop strategies and investments to address the top priorities. Through the winter of 2016, best practices and opportunities related to the priorities will be researched. Throughout the process, community members will have opportunities be actively engaged in the Common Good Initiative.



For more information, please go to www.afmfl.org, or write to us at wimaumacg@gmail.com.