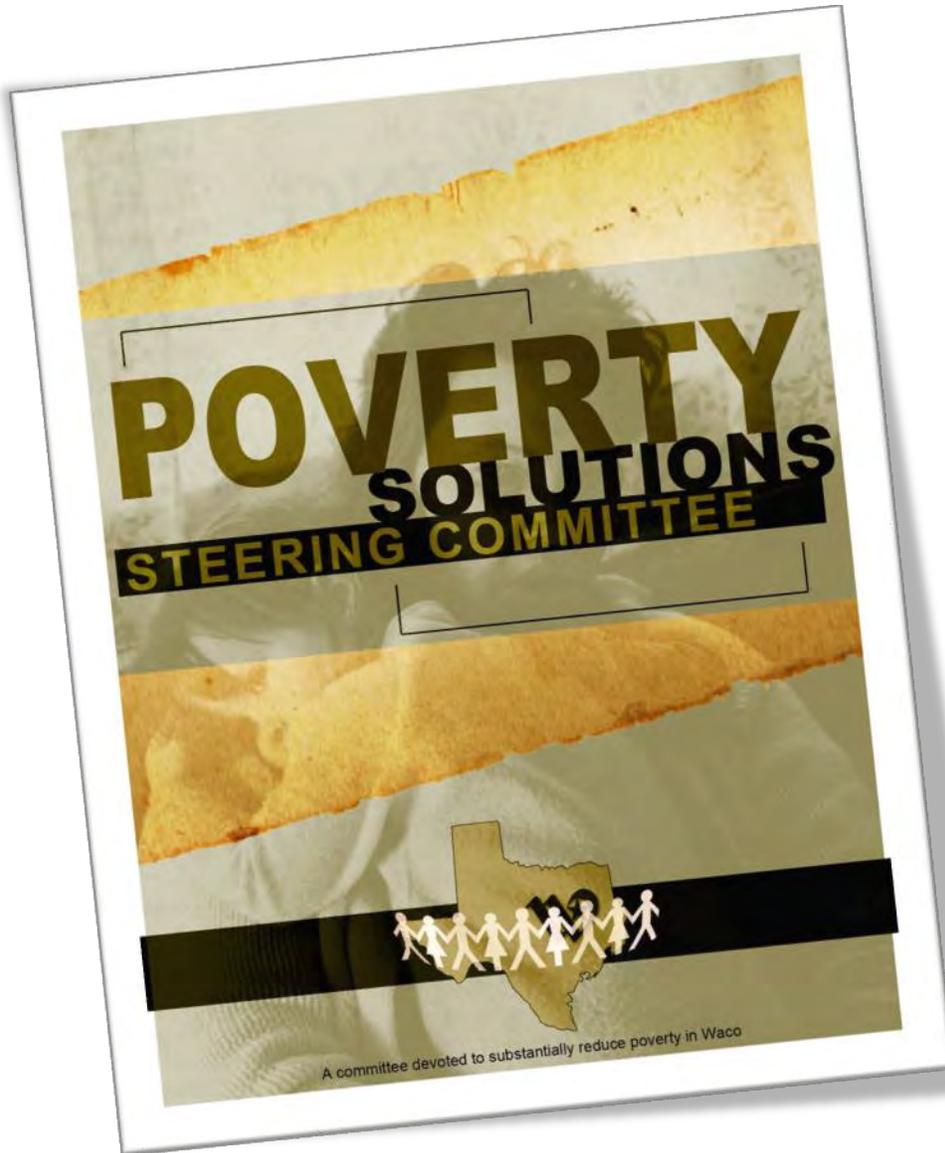


Report from:



Moving from Poverty to Prosperity

June 19, 2012

Key points from the report

Waco is at a crossroads with a poverty rate of 28.7%. This has been a long term problem and it requires a long term solution and complete community involvement. Now is the time to act.

Major themes

- Build our economic strength
- Align support to promote self-sufficiency
- Fortify health and education for our children

Broad strategies

- Establish a common vision; measure and report progress together toward that vision.
- Build a “clearinghouse” for collecting and sharing relevant research and information.
- Spur effective engagement by educating our community.
- Use multiple mechanisms to regularly gather input and ideas from the community.
- Harness the power of focus and continuous improvement.
- Establish an organization to provide on-going coordination and leadership for our work together.

Next Steps

1. Convene a Leadership Board and present them with this plan as approved by City Council. Engage the principals of “Step-Up Savannah” for some initial consulting.
2. Develop a budget and recruit sponsor organizations or individuals who are willing to contribute resources to launch and support an organization as a “seed operation” for the next five years.
3. Engage a Director and Administrative Support Person.
4. Decide on a name for the enterprise and produce communication pieces explaining the purpose and proposed structure of the organization.
5. Design and conduct a round of educational meetings designed to inform the community about the initiative and to recruit members for the organization.
6. Dissolve the current Poverty Solutions Steering Committee and organize an Advisory Council of the membership of the organization.
7. Use the goals developed by the PSSC task teams and the strategies listed above as a starting point to draft an inaugural plan of action.
8. Get input from the Advisory Council and the wider community to shape the draft. It is crucial to include people who are currently living in poverty and people who have come out of poverty in this process.
9. Have the initial plan of action finalized and approved by the Leadership Board.
10. Organize the task teams necessary to work the plan of action – begin work.

**Report from the Poverty Solutions Steering
Committee to the Waco City Council:
Moving from Poverty to Prosperity**

June 19, 2012

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Overview

Imagine our Potential

Waco, Texas, is a town with tremendous assets and the potential to become one of the best places to live in Texas if not the country. To live up to that potential, however, we need to develop and sustain a wider base of financial independence among our residents. Our high and rising rate of poverty is a warning light. It is letting us know that, unless we take action, our financial security, and therefore our livability as a community, will be at stake. We must not ignore this warning light. Building a prosperous Waco and reducing the rate of poverty in Waco are two sides of the same coin; one cannot be accomplished without the other. The question for us at this point is not, “Should we act?” but “What should we do?” The purpose of this report, presented by the Poverty Solutions Steering Committee (PSSC) commissioned by the Waco City Council, is to be a guide for strategic planning and action to reduce the level of poverty in Waco and to assure that all of Waco’s residents share in future prosperity (see Appendix A).

What is poverty and where does Waco stand?

While poverty is commonly thought of as a financial issue, it is inextricably bound to poor health and educational deficiency. To begin moving our community away from poverty toward prosperity will require improvement on all three fronts. Being healthy, wealthy, and wise is still a prize worth working for—for both individuals and the community as a whole.

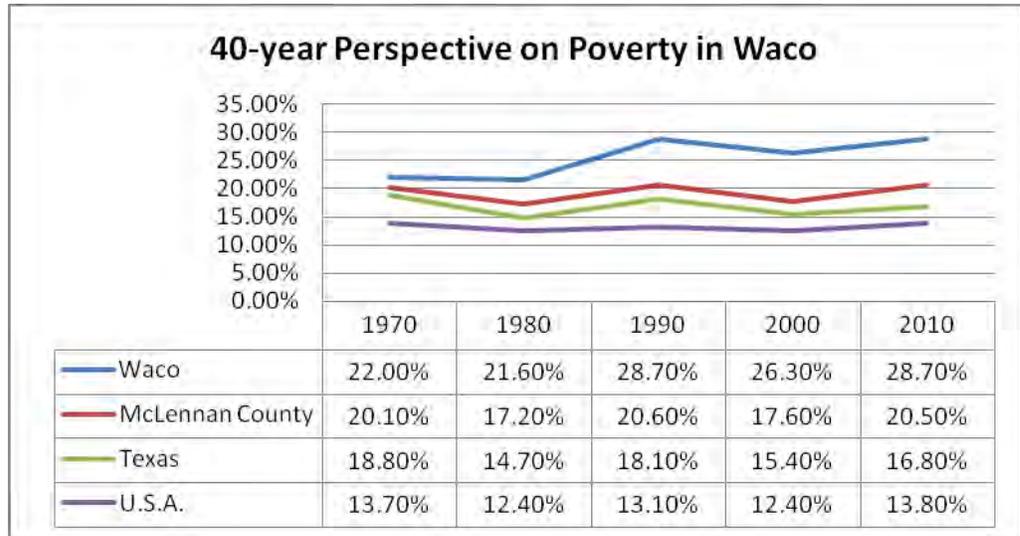
To simplify the discussion for the purposes of this report, however, we will use the federal government’s definition of poverty which considers only income. The federal government determines who is “in poverty” based on a set of income thresholds or “poverty guidelines.” For example, the accompanying chart shows the 2012 poverty guidelines¹.

2012 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia	
Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$11,170
2	15,130
3	19,090
4	23,050
5	27,010
6	30,970
7	34,930
8	38,890
For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$3,960 for each additional person.	

¹2012 HHS poverty guidelines one version of the [U.S.] federal poverty measure..(2012). Retrieved May 23, 2012, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/12poverty.shtml>.

According to 2010 Census reports, our estimated rate of poverty for individuals in Waco is 28.7% (over 35,000 individuals). The child poverty rate is much higher at 35.3% (over 10,000 children). (For information about why you may see different numbers reported as the poverty rate for Waco, please see Appendix B.)

Over the last 40 years, poverty in Waco has grown faster than in McLennan County, Texas, and the United States. The federal guidelines are a minimum standard that indicates income inadequacy, not self-sufficiency. A better guideline



for measuring whether a person is out of poverty is 200% of federal poverty guideline. This is close to the point at which most federal and state aid programs no longer provide support to individuals and families. In 2007 the Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) in Austin published a report, “The Family Budget Estimator: What it Really Takes to get By in Texas,” which estimated that for Waco households, 157% and 250% of the federal poverty guideline are needed to cover a “no frills” cost of living in Waco.

The “200% of the poverty guidelines” figure is readily and easily available as a part of the U.S. Census data and serves as a solid benchmark for comparison with other cities. In Waco, 55% (Over 64,000 people) of the population is below the 200% of the federal poverty guideline².

A comprehensive approach

The question of how to reduce poverty is complicated. It is easy to get “lost in the weeds” of myriad programs, competing priorities, wide-ranging opinions, and cyclical arguments about the merits of systemic change vs. personal responsibility. “Serving the Poor” is not the same as “helping people out of poverty” – each demands a different set of services and strategies and both are necessary to sustain the health and well-being of our city and its residents. Perhaps a way forward is to organize our thoughts and efforts in terms of three major themes. These themes intersect and overlap; they are inextricably

²Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2010 American Community Survey, Table B17002: Ratio of Income to poverty Level in the Past 12 Months.

entwined like three strands of a rope. In order to accomplish one, we cannot ignore the other two; we must work on all three simultaneously.

- **Build our economic strength**– Other cities in Texas with populations similar to ours have significantly lower rates of poverty and low-income than we do. Our high rate of poverty is a signal that something needs to be adjusted in our economic engine. It is clear that a higher percentage of our residents need incomes of at least 200% of the poverty guideline. We need more analysis to determine to what extent those jobs already exist in Waco, in which case we need to adjust our “workforce pipeline,” or to what extent we need to add those jobs, in which case we need to recruit and grow employers who can provide jobs that pay in that range. The highest probability is that we urgently need to do both. In addition to job creation, a strong economy raises the overall “sea level” of resources available in the community to do things like improve schools, parks, neighborhoods and amenities. All of these things contribute in the long run to reducing the rate of poverty and building the prosperity of our city.
- **Align support to promote self-sufficiency** – “Support” in this case means resources, services and training that help people stabilize their home and work lives so that they can move out of poverty. In concrete terms, this might mean help with basic needs like housing, food, utilities, clothing, health & medical, transportation, education and job training, child & older adult care, etc. It could also mean training in financial literacy, budgeting and other life skills so that people can learn how to better manage their resources. In some cases it means help to manage significant challenges such as disability, addiction or ex-offender status. In more emotional and spiritual terms it means help to develop and hold on to hope and a sense of efficacy. Certainly we understand that there are some people who will not be able to move out of poverty. Keeping that in mind, however, we must make it our priority to organize our support mechanisms to promote economic self-sufficiency and financial stability for those who can. Many organizations are already working hard to provide these kinds of support. Our opportunity lies in aligning these services so that they work together more efficiently and more conveniently for the people who need them. For example, some services need to be organized so that they more effectively take into account the schedules and access issues faced by working people and people with limited transportation.
- **Fortify health and education for our children** – Imagine life as a race; now imagine a child born and raised in poverty as starting that race several paces behind a similar child born and raised in a middle-class family. Even if the child born in poverty has the same native intelligence and talent as a middle class child, it is unlikely that she will ever catch up without some intervention. Two big contributors to the uneven start are health and education. Without intervention, children born in poverty are more likely to have health issues that affect their ability to attend school and to learn. Without intervention, children born and raised in poverty start school far behind their middle-class counterparts in terms of vocabulary and pre-literacy

skills. Without intervention they most often fall farther and farther behind. If we want to break the cycle of poverty in our community, we must counteract these negative effects.³

Moving forward

One of the advantages we have as a community regarding this challenge is that we are certainly not starting from scratch. The City of Waco, chambers of commerce, school districts, institutions of higher education, faith-based organizations, businesses, social service agencies as well as individuals are already working on various aspects of these three themes. The work that is already being done in Waco shows us that there is strong interest and energy for building a wider base of financial independence among our residents. The challenge before us is not how to begin this work, but how to leverage the work that is already being done and how to work together better to move toward our potential as quickly as possible.

To that end we offer six broad strategies for moving forward:

- **Strategy 1 - Establish a common vision; measure and report progress toward that vision.** Measuring progress toward a goal helps motivate the action to accomplish the goal. If our goal is to build a wider base of financial independence among our residents, then we must measure and report progress toward that goal. The census reports give us useful baseline data, but such general information about our poverty rate is not enough to make sure we are staying on track. We must establish and track key progress indicators to let us know more regularly and more specifically if we are moving in the right direction. The Aspirations developed by the Poverty Solutions Group and endorsed by the Poverty Solutions Steering Committee can provide such a vision and a framework for developing progress indicators.
- **Strategy 2 - Build a clearinghouse for collecting and sharing relevant research and information.** Our work together needs to be based on facts rather than speculation. A central clearinghouse will expedite our ability to share the information we have, identify gaps in our information base, and pool resources to collect information we need to inform our strategy and our work. Waco is fortunate to have access to several institutions that can supply the research and information we need. We can develop “win-win” arrangements to connect the information

³Toppo, Greg. (December 10, 2008) Study: Poverty Dramatically Affects Children’s Brains. *U.S.A Today*. Retrieved May 23, 2012 from http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2008-12-07-childrens-brains_N.htm.

Zorn, D., Noga, J., Bolden-Haraway, C., Louis, V., Owens, N., & Smith, S. (2004). *Family poverty and its implications for school success: Issues facing Cincinnati’s families*. Retrieved May 23, 2012 from <http://www.uc.edu/EvaluationServices/completed/Family%20Poverty%20and%20School%20Success%20June%209%20final%20version.pdf>

Reynolds AJ, Temple JA, Ou S, et al. Effects of a school-based, early childhood intervention on adult health and well-being a 19-year follow-up of low-income families. *Arch PediatrAdolesc Med*. 2007;161(8):730-739. Retrieved May 23, 2012 from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/m/pubmed/17679653/?i=2&from=/11343481/related>.

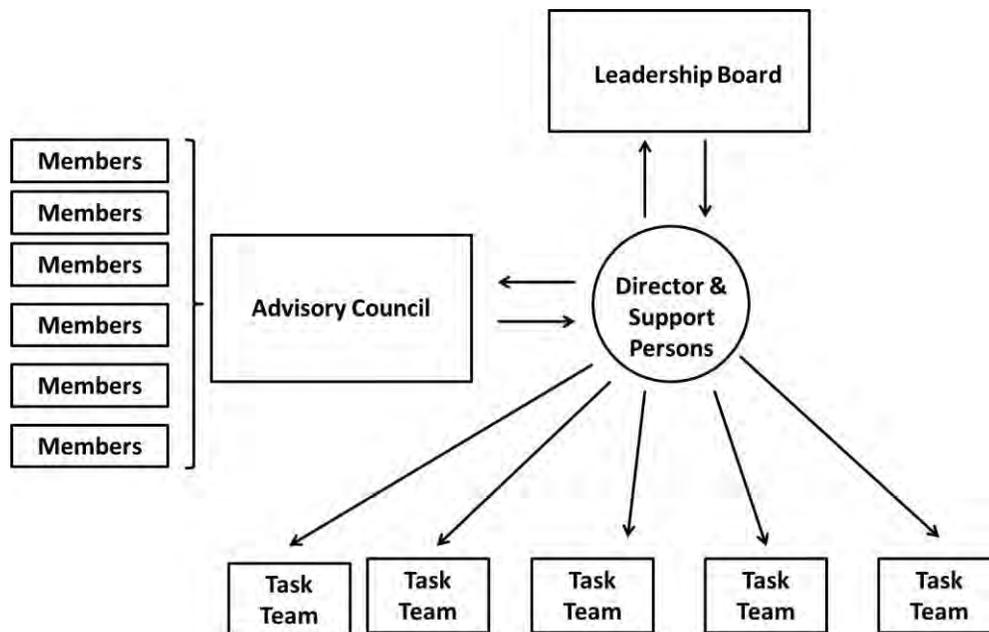
needs of the community regarding poverty reduction with the data/research capacity of our institutions, particularly our institutions of higher education. An information clearinghouse approach will help us organize this effort more efficiently (see Appendix H).

- **Strategy 3 - Spur effective engagement by educating our community.** We need to build the conviction throughout our community that residents of every socio-economic status are a potential source of benefit for Waco, and that to the extent that we can nurture that potential, all residents have the capacity to help make Waco stronger. To do that, more of us must have a deeper understanding of the day-to-day realities associated with different levels of income and wealth. We need to do a better job of spreading the word about services and initiatives that are already available and working. We must also educate our community about key issues that affect our overall economic development and community development – issues such as school funding and how we go about recruiting businesses to the area. When more of us understand how “the system” works, we can better combine our efforts to accomplish our common goals.
- **Strategy 4 - Use multiple mechanisms to regularly gather input and ideas from the community.** As we move forward, we need to continuously inform our efforts with insights from a wide variety of community constituents including teachers, health professionals, social workers, business people, employers, employees, unemployed people, and people from all income levels, ages, races, faiths and neighborhoods. We will need to use multiple methods for soliciting input. These methods could include surveys, interviews, focus groups, house meetings, town hall meetings, public “charrettes,” and inviting diverse participation on task teams and leadership groups. This wide participation will help us avoid the dangers of ill-conceived, “one size fits all” strategies. Gathering and using input from the community will need to be an on-going part of this work, a way of informing and testing our strategies each step of the way (see Appendix I).
- **Strategy 5 - Harness the power of focus and continuous improvement.** Where possible we should take advantage of this insight: focus on a manageable sized group, listen to the needs, provide the scaffolding and services called for, carefully measure progress, and tweak as necessary. Once successful models are established, we can replicate them with other populations making adjustments as necessary based on specific situations. One of the successful poverty reduction efforts already in place in our city is the work of Waco Community Development Corporation and their partners in North Waco (see Appendix J). An important insight from that work is the power of focus and continuous improvement. By focusing effort and resources on a manageable area and a manageable number of people, Waco CDC and their partners have been able to see measurable progress in neighborhood development and in educational gains in the neighborhood school. Because of this focus, they have been able to judge relatively quickly which efforts are working and which are not and to adjust their work accordingly. The impact of the same amount of effort dispersed across a wider area would have been harder to measure.

- Strategy 6 - Establish an organization to provide on-going coordination and leadership for our work together.** Poverty has been a challenge for Waco throughout its history. Success in reducing poverty will require sustained leadership and administration. The suggested goals proposed by the PSSC task teams give us important direction regarding how to move forward, but these goals are only a first step. On-going rounds of planning, implementation and evaluation will be needed to make our aspirations our reality. To effectively leverage our community resources, we need an organization whose central purpose and first priority is to coordinate this work. This organization will not provide direct services, but will provide the organizational scaffolding to stimulate, synchronize and harmonize efforts throughout the community. A key element for the success of this organization will be support and engagement from throughout the community; it must be a city-wide public/private partnership.⁴

Structuring the coordinating organization

This diagram shows how a coordinating organization could be structured. An explanation of the elements of the structure follows:



- Leadership Board** – This board should be composed of the leaders in town who have enough authority within their organizations to influence the resources of that organization for the purposes of the collaborative. Examples of potential Board members might be the mayor, the city manager, school superintendent, school board president, presidents of local institutions of higher education, CEOs of major employers and other businesses, Chamber Presidents, Foundation Directors, etc. (Note: There are boards in town on which these people already serve,

⁴One example of such a partnership is Step-up Savannah (www.stepupsavannah.org).

for example the Community Visioning Board and the Education Alliance Board. It may be fruitful to explore the possibility of combining this effort with those existing efforts at least to the extent of having intersecting leadership boards.)

- **Membership**– The membership of the Collaborative will be recruited from a variety of public and private entities: businesses, financial institutions, social service organizations, governmental entities, schools, faith-based organizations, etc. who agree to work together, participating on action teams and sharing expertise and information (see Appendix K).
- **Director & Support Persons**- This work will require full-time staff of at least an Executive Director and one administrative support person to begin. This small staff could be supplemented, at least at first, by interns, Vista/AmeriCorps participants and “leaders on loan” from member organizations. Professional staff with the leadership skill, experience, expertise and time to organize and administrate the work of the organization is a necessary ingredient for success.
- **Advisory Council** - The Director and Leadership Board will draw together an Advisory Council made up of representatives from the membership. The role of this Advisory Council will be to help the Director shape and prioritize a plan of action (probably an annual or bi-annual process) and to help recruit the task teams necessary to implement the plan of action. The Leadership Board will be responsible for approving the plan of action and helping to find the resources necessary to implement the plan. The Director and support persons will be responsible for coordinating work on the plan of action and reporting progress throughout the year.

Next Steps

The following action steps are recommended:

1. Convene a Leadership Board as described in the preceding section and present them with this plan as approved by City Council. Engage the principals of Step-Up Savannah (Mayor Otis Johnson and Executive Director Daniel Dodd) for some initial consulting. (Note: It may be possible to coordinate this effort with the existing Greater Waco Chamber “Intercity Visits” program.)
2. Develop a budget and recruit sponsor organizations or individuals who are willing to contribute resources to launch and support an organization as a “seed operation” for the next five years. This seed operation should consist of at least an executive director, an administrative support person and the space, technology and budget necessary for them to work effectively.
3. Engage a Director and Administrative Support Person.

4. Decide on a name for the enterprise and produce communication pieces explaining the purpose and proposed structure of the organization.
5. Design and conduct a round of educational meetings designed to inform the community about the initiative and to recruit members for the organization.
6. Dissolve the current Poverty Solutions Steering Committee and organize an Advisory Council as described in the preceding section.
7. Use the goals developed by the PSSC task teams and the strategies listed above as a starting point to draft an inaugural plan of action.
8. Get input from the Advisory Council and the wider community to shape the draft. It is crucial to include people who are currently living in poverty and people who have come out of poverty in this process.
9. Have the initial plan of action finalized and approved by the Leadership Board.
10. Organize the task teams necessary to work the plan of action – begin work.

Report

Imagine our potential

Waco, Texas, is a town with tremendous assets and the potential to become one of the best places to live in Texas if not the country. To live up to that potential, however, we must develop and sustain a wider base of financial independence among our residents. Our high and rising rate of poverty is a warning light. It is letting us know that, unless we take action, our financial security, and therefore our livability as a community, will be at stake. We must not ignore this warning light. Building a prosperous Waco and reducing the rate of poverty in Waco are two sides of the same coin; one cannot be accomplished without the other. The question for us at this point is not, “Should we act?” but “What should we do?” The purpose of this report, presented by the Poverty Solutions Steering Committee (PSSC) commissioned by the Waco City Council, is to be a guide for strategic planning and action to reduce the level of poverty in Waco and to assure that all of Waco’s residents share in future prosperity (see Appendix A).

What is “poverty” and where does Waco stand?

To understand the current situation regarding poverty in Waco, it will help to agree on some working definitions of the terms “Poverty” and “Minimally Adequate Income” and to have some understanding of how those definitions were developed.

Defining poverty

Poverty is a complicated concept with many possible definitions. Although commonly thought of as a financial issue, it is inextricably bound to poor health and educational deficiency. Being healthy, wealthy, and wise is still a prize worth working for—for both individuals and the community as a whole.

To help simplify this discussion for the purposes of this report we will use the federal government’s definition of poverty which considers only income. The federal government determines who is “in poverty” based on a set of income thresholds or “poverty guidelines. Here is how the U.S. Census bureau defines “poverty”:

“...the Census Bureau uses a set of money income thresholds that vary by family size and composition to determine who is in poverty. If a family’s total income is less than the family’s threshold, then that family and every individual in it is considered in poverty. The official poverty thresholds do not vary geographically, but they are updated for inflation using Consumer Price Index (CPI-U). The official poverty definition uses money income before taxes

and does not include capital gains or noncash benefits (such as public housing, Medicaid, and food stamps).”⁵

The income thresholds were originally developed in 1963-64 by the Social Security administration. They are based on a 1955 Household Food Consumption Survey that found that for families of three or more, the average amount spent on food equaled one third of the total household budget. With that in mind, a home economist at the social security administration developed an “economy” food plan – sufficient to live on in case of emergencies, but not meant for the long term. An amount three times the cost of that food plan became the basis for the original poverty thresholds. That is how the thresholds are still

determined today. The actual cost of the economy food plan has been adjusted through the years for inflation, but the basic “economy food plan X 3” formula remains in place.⁶

The poverty guidelines (a slightly simplified version of the thresholds used for administrative purposes) for 2012 are shown in the accompanying chart.⁷ As the chart shows, the poverty guideline for a family of four in 2012 is \$23,050.

2012 Poverty Guidelines for the 48 Contiguous States and the District of Columbia	
Persons in family/household	Poverty guideline
1	\$11,170
2	15,130
3	19,090
4	23,050
5	27,010
6	30,970
7	34,930
8	38,890

For families/households with more than 8 persons, add \$3,960 for each additional person.

Defining minimally adequate income

It is important to realize, though, that the poverty thresholds are only a part of the story. From their inception, these thresholds were not designed to be a measure of income adequacy, but of income in-adequacy. In other words, if a family’s household income is below the poverty threshold, that family is not “making it” financially. But the opposite is not necessarily true, a household income at or slightly above the poverty threshold does not necessarily mean the family is “making it.”⁸

For the Waco community to be able to fulfill its potential more of our residents must have incomes that are well above the poverty guidelines. More of our residents must have at least a minimally adequate income that allows for some buffer against minor emergencies (such as a flat tire or a few missed days of work because of sickness) and possibly even a little savings. We have identified 200%, or double, the

⁵*How the census bureau measures poverty.* Retrieved May 23, 2012, from <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/poverty/about/overview/measure.html>

⁶*Frequently asked questions related to the poverty guidelines and poverty.* Retrieved May 23, 2012, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/faq.shtml#developed>

⁷*2012 HHS poverty guidelines one version of the [U.S.] federal poverty measure..* (2012). Retrieved May 23, 2012, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/12poverty.shtml>

⁸Fisher, G. M. (1992). *The development and history of the U.S. poverty thresholds — A brief overview.* Retrieved May 23, 2012, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/papers/hptgssiv.htm>

federal poverty guideline as a rough estimate of “a minimally adequate income.” This means that if the 2012 poverty guideline for a family of four is \$23,050, we are saying that we estimate a minimally adequate income for that size family to be twice that amount, or \$46,100.

We recommend this definition based on several considerations:

- The 200% figure is slightly above the income line allowable by most federal and state aid programs. Almost all federal and state poverty related programs (i.e. SNAP, LIHEAP, Free and reduced school lunch, etc.) cut off eligibility at or below 185% of the federal poverty guideline.
- In 2007 the Center for Public Policy Priorities (CPPP) in Austin published a report, “The Family Budget Estimator: What it Really Takes to get By in Texas.”⁹ In that report they estimated that a budget sufficient to cover a “no frills” cost of living in Waco was anywhere between 157% and 250% of the federal poverty guideline depending on whether or not the family had employer provided insurance. A minimally adequate income estimate of 200% of the federal poverty guideline roughly “splits the difference” between the highest and lowest of the CPPP estimates.
- For practical purposes, we need a number for which we can find data to compare Waco with other cities. The “200% of the poverty guidelines” number is readily available as a part of the information available on the U.S. Census Bureau website.

Since most of the data we will be using in this report is from the 2010 Census, here is a chart that shows the poverty guidelines and minimally adequate income amounts (200% of poverty) as they would have appeared in 2010.¹⁰

Family size	Poverty Guideline	Minimally adequate income (200% of poverty)
1	10,830.00	21,660.00
2	14,570.00	29,140.00
3	18,310.00	36,620.00
4	22,050.00	44,100.00
5	25,790.00	51,580.00
6	29,530.00	59,060.00
7	33,270.00	66,540.00
8	37,010.00	74,020.00

⁹Deviney, F., &Hagert, C. (2007). *THE FAMILY BUDGET ESTIMATOR: What it really takes to get by in Texas*. Austin, TX: The Center for Public Policy Priorities. Retrieved May 23, 2012 from http://www.cppp.org/fbe/cppp_fbe_report.pdf

¹⁰*THE HHS POVERTY GUIDELINES FOR THE REMAINDER OF 2010(august 2010)* . (2010). Retrieved May 23, 2012, from <http://aspe.hhs.gov/poverty/10poverty.shtml>

Rate of poverty

Given those working definitions, here is some information about current reality in Waco based on 2010 information from the

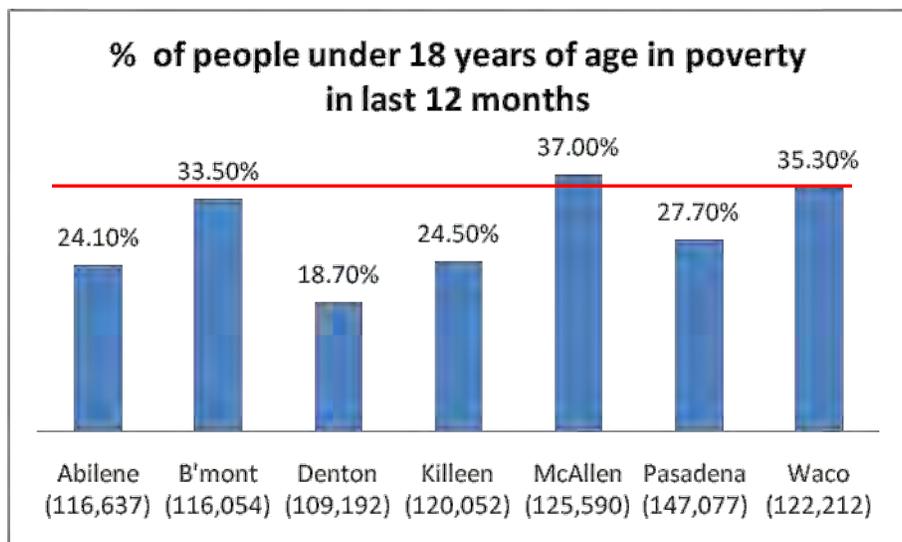
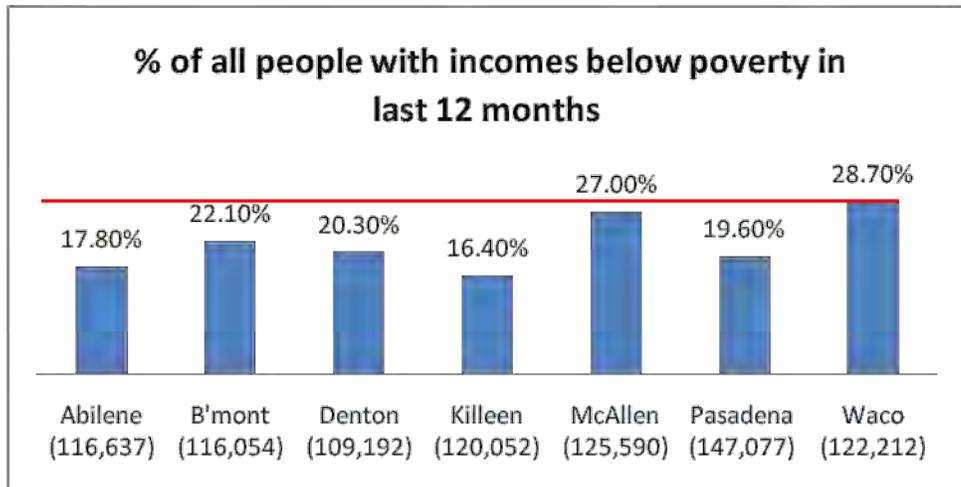
U.S. Census Bureau. The estimated rate of poverty for individuals in Waco is 28.70%.

This is a higher rate of poverty than other Texas cities with populations roughly similar to ours ¹¹(see Appendix B).

Sometimes people

wonder if our poverty rate in Waco seems higher than comparison cities because we have so many students, particularly Baylor students, who are technically “in poverty” because they have little or no income, but who we would not consider to truly be impoverished considering their total life circumstances.

To account for this possibility, the PSSC compared Waco’s rate of child poverty to the rate of child poverty in the other cities. Waco, with 35.3%, has the second highest rate of child poverty among these comparison cities. We have slightly less child poverty than McAllen.¹²



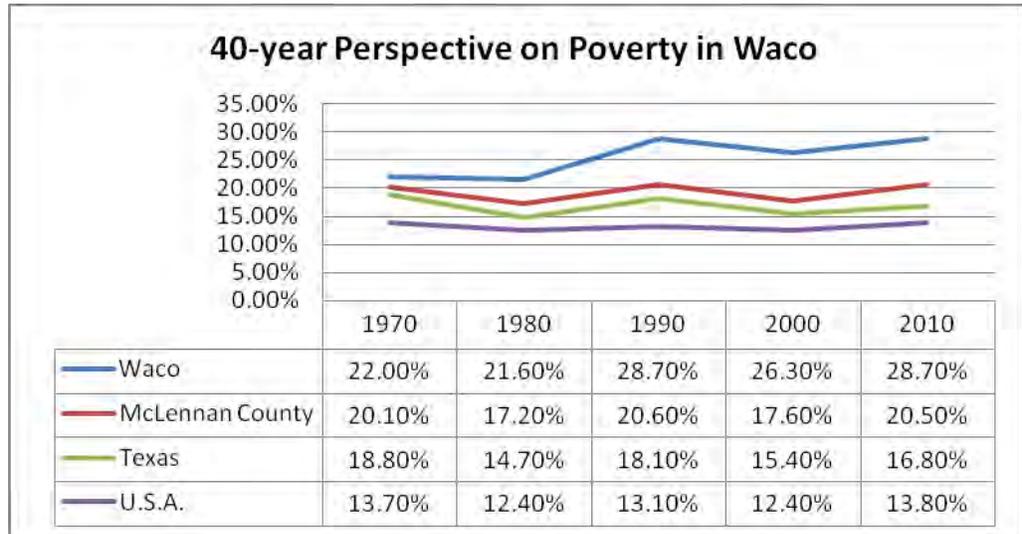
¹¹Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey, Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics

¹²Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey, Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics

A Forty Year Perspective

The chart below shows the trend in poverty rates in Waco, McLennan County, Texas and the United States since the 1970 Census, which was the first census that recorded poverty according to the poverty guidelines.

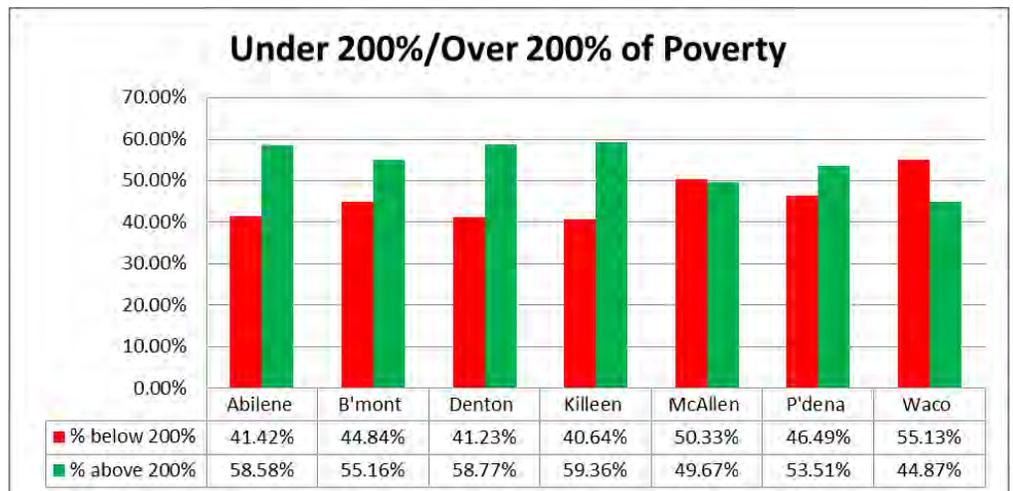
The cause for concern that this graph illustrates is that, while all the areas studied have experienced ups and downs in poverty rate across the last 40 years, Waco's poverty rate seems to



have grown faster than that of the rest of the McLennan County, the State of Texas, and the country as a whole.¹³

Minimally Adequate Income comparisons

The next chart shows how Waco compares to six Texas cities in terms of minimally adequate income levels (200% of the poverty guideline). The more desirable situation is for the green bar, which indicates the percentage of people who are making at least a minimally adequate income, to be taller than the red bar which indicates the people who are making less



¹³ Data for 1970, 1980, 1990 and 2000 comes from the Decennial Census for those years which is available at www.census.gov/prod/www/abs/decennial/. Poverty information was not collected on the 2010 Decennial Census, so the source for the 2010 numbers is U.S. Census Bureau, 2006-2010 American Community Survey Table DP03: Selected Economic Characteristics.

than a minimally adequate income. You can see that the red bar is taller for McAllen and Waco, with the greatest difference being, unfortunately, in Waco.¹⁴

A challenge for us all

To be a financially sustainable community we must have more people with incomes above the 200% line than below it. Our current situation is certainly troubling for the 55% of us who are living at low income. The 45% of us who currently enjoy more comfortable incomes should also be concerned. A high percentage of Waco residents with less than adequate income means a high percentage of us cannot afford to purchase the goods and services that help our existing stores and businesses succeed. Low income levels make Waco less attractive to businesses we might like to entice into our city. A high percentage of residents with low income means a low percentage of home ownership and home investment. This means property values can deteriorate and the tax base that pays for our school system and city wide amenities can stagnate. A high percentage of us with low income means too few of us have the financial resources to support arts and music and a thriving cultural scene. Those are just a few examples of why we should all be concerned about the pervasive low levels of income in our city. It is a challenge that affects us all, and it is a challenge that we must overcome together if we are to live up to our potential as a community.

We have already “done a lot with what we’ve got” in Waco, and we have ambitions to do even more. To accomplish those ambitions, we must build a wider, more sustainable base of financial independence among our residents. It is to everyone’s benefit to work together to increase the percentage of households in Waco who are making an adequate income: adequate to meet daily needs, adequate to provide at least slight protection from minor emergencies and, ideally, adequate to save a bit for the future.

A comprehensive approach – Three major themes

The question of how to reduce poverty is complicated. It is easy to get “lost in the weeds” of myriad programs, competing priorities, wide-ranging opinions, and cyclical arguments about the merits of systemic change vs. personal responsibility. “Serving the Poor” is not the same as “helping people out of poverty” – each demands a different set of services and strategies and both are necessary to sustain the health and well-being of our city and its residents. Perhaps a way forward is to organize our thoughts and efforts in terms of three major themes. These themes intersect and overlap; they are inextricably entwined like three strands of a rope. In order to accomplish one, we cannot ignore the other two; we must work on all three simultaneously.

- **Build our economic strength**– Other cities in Texas with populations similar to ours have significantly lower rates of poverty and low-income than we do. Our high rate of poverty is a signal that something needs to be adjusted in our economic engine. It is clear that a higher

¹⁴Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2008-2010 American Community Survey, Table B17002: Ratio of Income to poverty Level in the Past 12 Months.

percentage of our residents need incomes of at least 200% of the poverty guideline. We need more analysis to determine to what extent those jobs already exist in Waco, in which case we need to adjust our “workforce pipeline,” or to what extent we need to add those jobs, in which case we need to recruit and grow employers who can provide jobs that pay in that range. The highest probability is that we urgently need to do both. In addition to job creation, a strong economy raises the overall “sea level” of resources available in the community to do things like improve schools, parks, neighborhoods and amenities. All of these things contribute in the long run to reducing the rate of poverty and building the prosperity of our city.

- **Align support to promote self-sufficiency**– “Support” in this case means resources, services and training that help people stabilize their home and work lives so that they can move out of poverty. In concrete terms, this might mean help with basic needs like housing, food, utilities, clothing, health & medical, transportation, education, job training, child & older adult care, etc. It could also mean training in financial literacy, budgeting and other life skills so that people can learn how to better manage their resources. In some cases it means help to manage significant challenges such as disability, addiction or ex-offender status. In more emotional and spiritual terms it means help to develop and hold on to hope and a sense of efficacy. Certainly we understand that there are some people who will not be able to move out of poverty. Keeping that in mind, however, we must make it our priority to organize our support mechanisms to promote financial independence for those who can. Many organizations are already working hard to provide these kinds of support. Our opportunity lies in aligning these services so that they work together more efficiently and more conveniently for the people who need them. For example, some services need to be organized so that they more effectively take into account the schedules and access issues faced by working people and people with limited transportation.
- **Fortify health and education for our children** – Imagine life as a race; now imagine a child born and raised in poverty as starting that race several paces behind a similar child born and raised in a middle-class family. Even if the child born in poverty has the same native intelligence and talent as a middle class child, it is unlikely that she will ever catch up without some intervention. Two big contributors to the uneven start are health and education. Without intervention, children born in poverty are more likely to have health issues that affect their ability to attend school and to learn. Without intervention, children born and raised in poverty start school far behind their middle-class counterparts in terms of vocabulary and pre-literacy skills. Without intervention they most often fall farther and farther behind. If we want to break the cycle of poverty in our community, we must counteract these negative effects.¹⁵

¹⁵Toppo, Greg. (December 10, 2008) Study: Poverty Dramatically Affects Children’s Brains. *U.S.A Today*. Retrieved May 23, 2012 from http://www.usatoday.com/news/health/2008-12-07-childrens-brains_N.htm.

Zorn, D., Noga, J., Bolden-Haraway, C., Louis, V., Owens, N., & Smith, S. (2004). *Family poverty and its implications for school success: Issues facing Cincinnati’s families*. Retrieved May 23, 2012 from <http://www.uc.edu/EvaluationServices/completed/Family%20Poverty%20and%20School%20Success%20June%209%20final%20version.pdf>

Vision, aspirations and work already in progress

To work productively on such a daunting challenge we must take a comprehensive, multi-faceted approach – an approach that considers the whole person and the whole community. One place to start is to imagine where we want to end up – to begin with the end in mind. To use a common analogy: if the challenge of building a wider base of financial independence in our community is a giant jigsaw puzzle, what does the picture on the top of the box look like?

Developing a vision

The Poverty Solutions Group (PSG), an ad hoc group of Waco citizens concerned about Waco’s high rate of poverty began working on this question in 2009 (See Appendix C). That group convened a series of “listening opportunities” through which they solicited input from a wide variety of community members including representatives from Baylor, MCC, TSTC, Waco Housing Authority, City of Waco, County Commissioners, Chamber of Commerce, EOAC, the Waco Independent School Board, Waco Community Development, Estella Maxey public housing, Kate Ross public housing, A.J. Moore students, My Brother’s Keeper, Mission Waco and others. Using the information from those conversations, the PSG developed a vision statement and a set of twelve aspirations. The PSSC adopted the PSG vision and aspirations with very little revision as a comprehensive description of the Waco we want to create together.

Vision: A community united to reduce poverty and build hope. The people of Waco will work together even more effectively than we already are to...

1. **Improve the health of our children and support healthy lifestyles for all.** More children in Waco will be born healthy and more residents of Waco will lead healthy lifestyles.
2. **Prepare our children for success in school and beyond.** Early childhood development in Waco will prepare more children to start school ready to succeed, and more children will succeed all the way through to high school graduation.
3. **Launch our young people into productive working lives.** More young people in Waco will successfully negotiate the transition into careers/vocations that lead to a living wage or better.
4. **Gainfully employ our working-age population.** More Waco residents will find and keep jobs that pay enough for them to sustain a satisfying quality of life for themselves and for their families.

Reynolds AJ, Temple JA, Ou S, et al. Effects of a school-based, early childhood intervention on adult health and well-being: a 19-year follow-up of low-income families. *Arch Pediatr Adolesc Med.* 2007;161(8):730-739. Retrieved May 23, 2012 from <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/m/pubmed/17679653/?i=2&from=/11343481/related>.

5. **Care for our elderly population.** More of the elderly people in Waco will have the resources they need to live out their lives with security and dignity.
6. **Support residents who face special challenges.** More of the Waco residents who face physical, mental and social challenges will have the resources they need to live their lives with security and dignity.
7. **Empower our residents.** More residents of Waco will be able to effectively advocate for themselves and to manage the essential resources (money, housing, education, childcare, food, transportation, health care, etc.) needed to maintain the quality of life of their choosing.
8. **Align our social services efficiently and effectively.** Infrastructure, social-services and policy in Waco will be coordinated to more effectively support upward mobility from economic dependence to independence.
9. **Strengthen our neighborhoods.** More of our neighborhoods and residential areas in Waco will be clean, safe and attractive.
10. **Upgrade our shared spaces.** More of our shared public spaces and commercial spaces will be clean, safe, attractive, accessible and accommodating.
11. **Energize our economic base.** Our local economy will create more job opportunities with the living wages needed to help employees achieve their goals.
12. **Enjoy life together.** All Waco residents will enjoy opportunities to grow socially and culturally.

Current work and goals to consider

One tremendous advantage we have as a community regarding this challenge is that we are certainly not starting from scratch. The City of Waco, chambers of commerce, school districts, institutions of higher education, faith-based organizations, businesses, social service agencies as well as countless individuals are already hard at work. For each aspiration there are organizations in Waco who are already working to make that aspiration a reality.

To plan productive work going forward we need a thorough understanding of the work already being done in our own community as well as good ideas from other communities who are wrestling with similar challenges. In the fall of 2010 the Baylor University School of Social Work Master's of Social Work Advanced Community Practice Concentration class began the process of gathering this vital information. Under the guidance of Dr. Gaynor Yancey, with input from Jeff Wall and Teri Holtkamp from the City of Waco Department of Housing and Community Development, and using the twelve aspirations to help them focus their research, this class conducted a massive information gathering project that resulted in twelve large loose-leaf binders of invaluable background information (see Appendices D and E). Information they gathered included:

- Best practices from other cities
- Current research examples

- Current community resources
- Lists of community members who could be asked to serve on committees related to the poverty solutions initiative, and
- Names of possible partners or collaborators for the initiative.

In January of 2011 the PSSC established four task teams to review the work of the Baylor class, to share additional information about the work already being done in Waco and to develop an initial set of 2 -5 high level goals for each of the aspirations (see Appendix F). These task teams, facilitated originally by Baylor Social Work interns and later by Jan Wengler from the City of Waco Department of Housing and Community Development, met for several months. The following are just a few examples of the work already being done in Waco and a summary of the high level goals suggested by the task teams for each aspiration (see Appendix G):

Aspiration # 1 - Improve the health of our children and support healthy lifestyles for all. More children in Waco will be born healthy and more residents of Waco will lead healthy lifestyles.

Examples of current work:

- **MEND (Mind Exercise Nutrition Do It) program** – This free healthy living program offered by the YMCA is designed to help children 7-13 who are above their healthy body weight and their families become fitter, healthier and happier.
- **Texas Healthy Babies& Transforming Texas** – These grants recently received by the Waco-McLennan County Public Health District focus on prenatal care and health improvements.
- **WISD teen parent program** - The WISD Teen Parent Program works to assure that pregnant and parenting students receive the support they need to stay in school through graduation. Program goals include, among others, to educate pregnant and parenting students so that they can make responsible decisions regarding the health and development of their children and to improve the health status of pregnant and parenting students and their children.

Suggested Goals:

- Educate the community about children’s health, wellness, and health services.
- Provide better accessibility to services that increase wellness.
- Create means of accountability through improved immunization tracking.

Aspiration # 2 - Prepare our children for success in school and beyond. Early childhood development in Waco will prepare more children to start school ready to succeed, and more children will succeed all the way through to high school graduation.

Examples of current work:

- **Poverty related teacher in-service** - Waco ISD has integrated Ruby Payne “Frameworks for Understanding Poverty” information into teacher in-service training. This information helps teachers understand some of the cultural and practical issues affecting students who grow up in poverty.
- **Mentor programs** - The Greater Waco Education Alliance, Communities In Schools Heart of Texas, Big Brothers/Big Sisters and the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce among other organizations in town are working to coordinate and expand mentoring programs. Research shows that one caring adult mentor can have a tremendous impact on a child’s success in school and beyond.
- **Supporting parents & early childhood education** -The Education Alliance, the Waco Foundation, EOAC-Headstart, WISD and other organizations are cooperating on programs focused on supporting parents and addressing early childhood education and preparation for starting school. These efforts have already resulted in a McLennan County Childhood Quality of Life Index study, a handful of community events aimed at improving parenting skills, and SmartBabies Early Childhood Initiative.

Suggested goals:

- Support parents through increased parenting education and training opportunities.
- Provide a system of role models, caregivers, and positive opportunities in which children can thrive.
- Strengthen childcare by increasing access, training and support systems.

Aspiration # 3 - Launch our young people into productive working lives. More young people in Waco will successfully negotiate the transition into careers/vocations that lead to a living wage or better.

Examples of current work:

- **Career Awareness and Dual credit** - School-based career awareness programs and dual credit arrangements between local school districts and TSTC and MCC are already well established in Waco ISD.
- **Collaboration with business** - Waco Business League has a long standing relationship with Waco ISD through which they support career and technology programs aimed at

helping young people develop interest and skill in potentially high paying technology careers. The LEAD program (Leadership, Education and Development) is a business and education partnership that is being sponsored by the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce to develop business leader-student relationships for educational improvement and life success.

- **Summer employment programs** - Communities In Schools (CIS) and Workforce Solutions work together to administer federal programs that provide summer employment for youth and help them acquire the basic skills and experience they need to be successful in the work world. Mission Waco also sponsors summer employment programs for young people.

Suggested goals:

- Coordinate, expand and focus mentoring efforts focusing on helping young people prepare for productive working lives.
- Help more of young people successfully plan a career path beyond High School/High School Equivalency and successfully negotiate the process for accomplishing that plan.
- Maximize the percentage of people in GED programs who complete those programs and successfully move on to the next step in their path toward a productive working life.

Aspirations # 4 - Gainfully employ our working-age population. More Waco residents will find and keep jobs that pay enough for them to sustain a satisfying quality of life for themselves and for their families.

Examples of current work:

- **Work skills programs** - Christian Women's Job Corps, Christian Men's Job Corps, Mission Waco, Compassion Ministries, Workforce Solutions, Goodwill, FaithWorks – all of these are organizations in town that have programs to help Waco residents build work skills and find employment.
- **GED course availability** - MCC adult education offers an array of opportunities for people to prepare for the GED, a critical first step in many cases for getting a job that pays a sustaining wage.
- **Mission Waco/Senior Community Service Employment Program (SER)** – SER has a contract with the Department of Labor to provide training to provide training opportunities for low-income people 55 or older who are unemployed and need to refresh or learn new skills to return to work.

Suggested goals:

- Provide opportunities for people who are already working at low-paying jobs to get the training and support they need to get higher paying jobs.
- Identify and communicate with a variety of employers to determine how the community can work with them to better support their work force needs.
- Inventory existing resources available to help people find and keep good paying jobs; identifying and remedying gaps in awareness, understanding and access regarding these existing resources.

Aspiration # 5 - Care for our elderly population. More of the elderly people in Waco will have the resources they need to live out their lives with security and dignity.

Examples of current work:

- **Area Agency on Aging of the Heart of Texas (AAAHOT)** – This central agency helps to coordinate government sponsored services for older adults in Waco. The agency administers Benefits Counseling, Care Coordination, Caregiver Support, Caregiver Education and Training, Caregiver Support Development and Ombudsman Programs. They also contract with service providers throughout the region to provide nutrition and transportation services to older citizens.
- **Friends for Life**—Founded in 1989, Friends for Life helps the elderly and people with disabilities live independently as long as possible. Areas of service include: guardianship, money management, independent living and quality of life programs, Intergenerational Programs and adult day care.
- **Meals & Wheels: We Deliver!** - Meals & Wheels serves Falls, Hill, and McLennan Counties. They provide home delivered meals to people 60 years old and older, fellowship and food for Senior Center participants, public transportation in rural areas, grocery shopping trips for older adults in Waco, and Groceries to Go for Meals On Wheels clients.

Suggested Goals:

- Expand awareness of services currently available for elderly people.
- Encourage a collaborative and coordinated volunteer structure to connect the elderly with volunteering opportunities.
- Support the exploration of the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and the needs it addresses.

- Expand permanent housing with supportive services for the elderly, especially using HUD's Section 202 program and models similar to Brook Oaks and the Salvation Army's permanent, supportive housing program.
- Increase agency communication, particularly between Adult Protective Services (APS), the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), MHMR, Friends for Life and the Family Abuse Center for the physical, emotional, and financial protection of our elders.

Aspiration # 6 - Support residents who face special challenges. More of the Waco residents who face physical, mental and social challenges will have the resources they need to live their lives with security and dignity.

Examples of current work:

- **Mosaic& MHMR** - Mosaic in Waco provides the following supports: day programs, in-home support, respite care, foster and companion care, day habilitation, nursing, and case management. Mosaic has prepared a check-off list to assist families with the Medicaid process as well as navigating through the MHMR (DADS system). MHMR is dedicated to helping individuals and families cope with mental illness, intellectual and developmental disabilities, developmental delays, and emotional conflict.
- **Reintegration Roundtable** – This group which includes representatives from the city, the county, the Baylor School of Social work and local law enforcement shares information and looks for ways to help ex-offenders successfully re-integrate into society.
- **Cornerstone Assistance Network of Central Texas** - The Waco Regional Baptist Network, Living Word Church of God in Christ and several other organizations and churches in town are working together to bring Cornerstone Assistance Network to Waco. This organization plans to help coordinate resources for ex-offenders and their families.
- **Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH)** – This program is designed to support the delivery of services to persons who are homeless, or at risk of becoming homeless, and who have serious mental illnesses or co-occurring substance use disorders.
- **Heart of Central Texas Independent Living (HOCTIL)** – This community-based non-profit offers non-residential service, advocacy and training for persons with disabilities by persons with disabilities.

Suggested Goals:

Ex-offender status:

- Better prepare ex-offenders prior to release by addressing work release program structure, parole transfer process and re-entry preparation.
- Expand ex-offender reintegration assistance after release by expanding mental health/addiction assistance, mentoring, access to programs and housing.
- Increase ex-offender employment opportunities by increasing awareness of tax credits, advocating for hiring programs and innovative work opportunities.

Mental illness/addiction:

- Expand progressive housing options for individuals with serious mental illness or addiction.
- Explore approaches to increase accessibility to psychiatric care for individuals diagnosed with illnesses not covered by MHMR or are Medicare recipients.
- Expand PATH (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness) program's capacity to bring individuals with serious mental illness into contact with services.
- Increase addiction prevention programs for children and adults by developing programs and initiatives focused on "meeting people where they're at" by serving the identified needs of the particular community.

Physically Disabled

- Increase safe, affordable, accessible housing by requiring a portion of low income housing tax credits be reserved for individuals with disabilities – similar to what is now required for the elderly.
- Expand social support opportunities connecting disabled individuals to the community by supporting HOCTIL in preparation of grant application to develop an accessible center for disabled individuals.
- Investigate increasing funding to health care providers who service individuals in poverty through the implementation of a local hospital district.

Aspiration # 7 - Empower our residents. More residents of Waco will be able to effectively advocate for themselves and to manage the essential resources (money, housing, education, childcare, food, transportation, health care, etc.) needed to maintain the quality of life of their choosing.

Examples of current work:

- **Open Table** – Open Table is a growing collaboration of people from faith communities, state and local government, business, education and nonprofits that are united to

restore families in poverty to full participation in our communities. A Table consists of 10-12 volunteers who bring their professional gifts and life experiences, along with their personal networks, to mentor an impoverished family for approximately one year. The Table works with the family to develop and implement a customized Life Plan to empower the family to live to their full potential as productive members of their community. Currently, there are four congregations in Waco who have tables—St. Paul’s Episcopal, First Baptist Waco, Antioch Community Church and Dayspring Baptist.

- **Financial literacy training**—Antioch Community Church offers financial equipping, through Financial Peace University and Financial Building Blocks, and financial coaching to both members of our congregation and non-members. Family of Faith Worship center provides 2-3 financial literacy workshops throughout the year and partners with local banks, non-profits and financial/budget counselors to facilitate and provide a 2 hour workshop. In the co-partner program at Compassion Ministry, volunteers meet with clients weekly to review budgets and receipts and to give suggestions on ways to manage resources wisely. NeighborWorks Waco and Habitat Waco have similar financial management programs for new and prospective homeowners.
- **Leadership Training** – NeighborWorks offers leadership training and practical leadership experience to build leadership within neighborhoods. Participants in their program implemented the successful “Art on Elm Street” project in April of 2012. The Waco Foundation and several other organizations in town have come together to sponsor “Leadership Plenty” training which provides basic leadership development for participants from diverse socio-economic backgrounds.

Suggested Goals:

- Provide an effective way for residents to be heard about their needs.
- Increase opportunities for the development of community leaders by reaching out to the community for their input into the process and collaborating on leadership training programs.

Aspiration # 8 - Align our social services efficiently and effectively. Infrastructure, social-services and policy in Waco will be coordinated to more effectively support upward mobility from economic dependence to independence.

Examples of current work:

- **L.I.F.T. workshops** - Low Income Families in Transition (L.I.F.T.) workshops sponsored twice a year by First Baptist Church of Waco bring representatives from a wide variety of social services together in one place so that residents who need those services can learn about them and fill out necessary paper work all in one place and in one day.

- **HMIS information system** - Currently in use by the City of Waco and several other organizations around Waco, the HMIS system provides a way for service organizations to keep and share information about service usage in order to streamline services and identify gaps in service.
- **Case Management Services** - The EOAC, Communities In Schools, Restoration Haven and several other organizations offer case management services for individuals with low income to help them find the resources available in town to help them stabilize their lives and move forward.

Suggested Goals:

- Build support for collaboration by conducting a case study to determine the financial cost of poor collaboration vs. organized collaborative intervention.
- Create a standing board to address the needs involved in collaboration between social services organizations to 1) collect and present compelling evidence to inform collaboration between social service agencies; 2) raise public awareness about social services; 3) host stakeholders meetings to draft plans and MOUs designed to pool resources, increase communication, and improve overall collaboration.
- Create a systematic path for individuals to follow for entering and exiting our social services system.
- Develop customized information access portals for special challenges individuals.
- Expand the number of organizations who use the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) in Central Texas.

Aspiration # 9 - Strengthen our neighborhoods. More of our neighborhoods and residential areas in Waco will be clean, safe and attractive.

Examples of current work:

- **Near Northside Community Development** - Numerous organizations including Mission Waco, Waco CDC, the Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce, the City of Waco and Waco ISD, NeighborWorks, and Waco Habitat for Humanity among others have been working for a long time to bring new life to the North Waco neighborhoods. Notable successes include the 15th street “street of dreams” project, new businesses in the neighborhood such as the World Cup Café and Dee’s Mediterranean, and increased support of neighborhood schools and consequent improvements in school performance.
- **Neighborhood Associations** –The City Manager's Office coordinates efforts and services for the Neighborhood Associations via staff (Neighborhood Liaisons) that work with the Neighborhood Associations. In order to assist the Neighborhood Associations the city provides certain services to the Neighborhood Associations at no cost including, among

others, use of city facilities for meetings and activities, roll-off dumpsters for Neighborhood clean ups, and assistance with events such as block parties.

Suggested goals:

- Energize neighborhood associations by helping them engage the residents more effectively.
- Grow our neighborhoods by pulling together private, public and non-profit players to create holistic, sustainable strategies for developing each neighborhood or sub-section of the city.

Aspiration #10 - Upgrade our shared spaces. More of our shared public spaces and commercial spaces will be clean, safe, attractive, accessible and accommodating.

Examples of current work:

- **Imagine Waco** - Greater Downtown has, like many urban areas, lost buildings to surface parking lots, experienced a decline in housing and has seen a marked increase in empty buildings. The intent of this Greater Downtown Waco plan is to capture the interest and momentum in the downtown area and create a vibrant core that evokes memories from the past while guiding growth into the future. Waco's public and private sectors have initiated and supported this renewed focus on Greater Downtown and have reacted by forming a strong public-private partnership to lead Greater Downtown Waco into a vibrant future (www.imaginewaco.com).
- **Heart of Texas Urban Gardening Coalition** – The HOT UGC Supports Waco's farmers' market and helps churches; schools and neighborhoods build community gardens. They partner with numerous community organizations in and around Waco – planting gardens and building relationships – at the grassroots level.
- **NeighborWorks Week** – As part of the annual nationwide "NeighborWorks Week" program, NeighborWorks Waco organizes volunteers from the community to clean up shared spaces such as parks and vacant lots as well as to assist neighbors with clean up and maintenance of homes and yards.

Suggested goals:

- Improve vacant lots and dilapidated properties through aggressive code enforcement, investment incentives, and community participation.
- Improve accessibility to financial services, education, healthy food, recreation, social services and the other building blocks of a positive life.

Aspiration # 11 - Energize our economic base. Our local economy will create more job opportunities with the living wages needed to help employees achieve their goals.

Examples of current work:

- **City of Waco Comprehensive plan** - The City of Waco Comprehensive plan lists “Advancement of diverse and progressive economic opportunities” as one of the ideals shared by our community. The plan lists 16 objectives related to GOAL 1: “Provide a stable, high quality economic environment that encourages high employment levels in order to fully utilizes the region’s human and educational resources.¹⁶”
- **Challenge Greater Waco** - The Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce is two years into a five-year plan called “Challenge Greater Waco II: Next level Plan for Economic and Community Development.¹⁷” Goals and objectives in the plan apply directly to several of the aspirations.
- **Center for Business Excellence** - The Cen-Tex African American Chamber sponsors the Center for Business Excellence which offers training, computer facilities, executive office rental and a professional work room for local entrepreneurs and business start-ups.
- **Mentoring local entrepreneurs** - The Cen-Tex Hispanic Chamber of Commerce engages successful business members to mentor local entrepreneurs and new businesses and helps guide business owners toward utilization of local resources with a spirit of inclusion.

Suggested Goals:

- Determine the current situation regarding jobs, wages and job creation in the community, including strengths and weaknesses as a community and on-going efforts to bring or create more and better paying jobs.
- Develop a more detailed strategy using the findings from the above determination.

Aspiration # 12 - Enjoy life together. All Waco residents will enjoy opportunities to grow socially and culturally.

Examples of current work:

- **Waco Arts Initiative** - Waco Arts Initiative enables creative educational opportunities for children living in areas where there is a lack of artistic resources. By providing access to the fine arts through instructional classes and mentoring relationships, children are able

¹⁶ The City of Waco Comprehensive Plan retrieved May 23, 2012 from www.waco-texas.com/pdf/planning/comprehensive-Plan-2000.pdf

¹⁷ The Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce strategic plan retrieved May 23, 2012 from www.waco-chamber.com/strategicplan.php

to become explorers, innovators and imagine new possibilities for themselves and the world.

- **Brazos Nights** – The Brazos Nights concert series offers a festival of free music concerts at Indian Spring Park near the historic Waco suspension bridge during May and June.
- **Jubilee Theater & Performance Camp**– Housed in an old movie hall, which had been sitting in water and decay the Jubilee Theater, was re-opened in 1995. In the summer of 2012 Mission Waco will offer its first acting camp for children and youth (ages 6-18) from all over Waco. Scholarships will enable for children of all incomes to participate in the first Jubilee Theatre summer “Performance Camp.”

Suggested Goals:

- Identify and remove barriers to participation in currently existing sports, music programs and other recreational and cultural opportunities.
- Communicate sports, music and other recreational and cultural opportunities more effectively to people in poverty.
- Coordinate with mentoring programs to make sure mentors are aware of ways to encourage participation in existing sports, music and other recreational and cultural opportunities.

Moving forward – Broad Strategies

The work that is already being done in Waco shows us that there is strong interest and energy for building a wider base of financial independence among our residents. The challenge before us is not how to begin this work, but how to leverage the work that is already being done and how to work together better to move toward our potential as quickly as possible.

To that end we offer six broad strategies for moving forward:

- **Strategy 1 - Establish a common vision; measure and report progress toward that vision.** Measuring progress toward a goal helps motivate the action to accomplish the goal. If our goal is to build a wider base of financial independence among our residents, then we must measure and report progress toward that goal. The census reports give us useful baseline data, but such general information about our poverty rate is not enough to make sure we are staying on track. We must establish and track key progress indicators to let us know more regularly and more specifically if we are moving in the right direction. The Aspirations developed by the Poverty Solutions Group and endorsed by the Poverty Solutions Steering Committee can provide such a vision and a framework for developing progress indicators (see Appendix H).

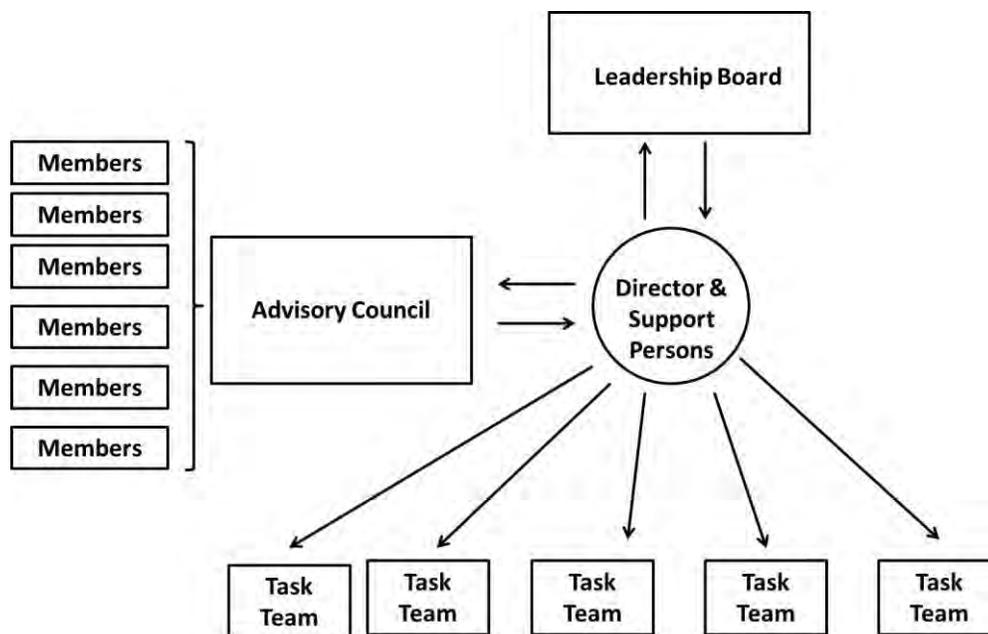
- **Strategy 2 - Build a clearinghouse for collecting and sharing relevant research and information.** Our work together needs to be based on facts rather than speculation. A central clearinghouse will expedite our ability to share the information we have, identify gaps in our information base, and pool resources to collect information we need to inform our strategy and our work. Waco is fortunate to have access to several institutions that can supply the research and information we need. We can develop “win-win” arrangements to connect the information needs of the community regarding poverty reduction with the data/research capacity of our institutions, particularly our institutions of higher education. An information clearinghouse approach will help us organize this effort more efficiently (see Appendix H).
- **Strategy 3 - Spur effective engagement by educating our community.** We need to build the conviction throughout our community that residents of every socio-economic status are a potential source of benefit for Waco, and that to the extent that we can nurture that potential, all residents have the capacity to help make Waco stronger. To do that, more of us must have a deeper understanding of the day-to-day realities associated with different levels of income and wealth. We need to do a better job of spreading the word about services and initiatives that are already available and working. We must also educate our community about key issues that affect our overall economic development and community development – issues such as school funding and how we go about recruiting businesses to the area. When more of us understand how “the system” works, we can better combine our efforts to accomplish our common goals.
- **Strategy 4 - Use multiple mechanisms to regularly gather input and ideas from the community.** As we move forward, we need to continuously inform our efforts with insights from a wide variety of community constituents including teachers, health professionals, social workers, business people, employers, employees, unemployed people, and people from all income levels, ages, races, faiths and neighborhoods. We will need to use multiple methods for soliciting input. These methods could include surveys, interviews, focus groups, house meetings, town hall meetings, public “charrettes,” and inviting diverse participation on task teams and leadership groups. This wide participation will help us avoid the dangers of ill-conceived, “one size fits all” strategies. Gathering and using input from the community will need to be an on-going part of this work, a way of informing and testing our strategies each step of the way (see Appendix I).
- **Strategy 5 - Harness the power of focus and continuous improvement.** Where possible we should take advantage of this insight: focus on a manageable sized group, listen to the needs, provide the scaffolding and services called for, carefully measure progress, and tweak as necessary. Once successful models are established, we can replicate them with other populations making adjustments as necessary based on specific situations. One of the successful poverty reduction efforts already in place in our city is the work of Waco Community Development Corporation and their partners in North Waco (see Appendix J). An important insight from that work is the power of focus and continuous improvement. By focusing effort and resources on a manageable area and a manageable number of people, Waco CDC and their

partners have been able to see measurable progress in neighborhood development and in educational gains in the neighborhood school. Because of this focus, they have been able to judge relatively quickly which efforts are working and which are not and to adjust their work accordingly. The impact of the same amount of effort dispersed across a wider area would have been harder to measure.

- Strategy 6 - Establish an organization to provide on-going coordination and leadership for our work together.** Poverty has been a challenge for Waco throughout its history. Success in reducing poverty will require sustained leadership and administration. The suggested goals proposed by the PSSC task teams give us important direction regarding how to move forward, but these goals are only a first step. On-going rounds of planning, implementation and evaluation will be needed to make our aspirations our reality. To effectively leverage our community resources, we need an organization whose central purpose and first priority is to coordinate this work. This organization will not provide direct services, but will provide the organizational scaffolding to stimulate, synchronize and harmonize efforts throughout the community. A key element for the success of this organization will be support and engagement from throughout the community; it must be a city-wide public/private partnership.¹⁸

Structuring the coordinating organization

This diagram shows how a coordinating organization could be structured. An explanation of the elements of the structure follows:



- Leadership Board** – This board should be composed of the leaders in town who have enough authority within their organizations to influence the resources of that organization for the

¹⁸One example of such a partnership is Step-up Savannah (www.stepupsavannah.org).

purposes of the collaborative. Examples of potential Board members might be the mayor, the city manager, school superintendent, school board president, presidents of local institutions of higher education, CEOs of major employers and other businesses, Chamber Presidents, Foundation Directors, etc. (Note: There are boards in town on which these people already serve, for example the Community Visioning Board and the Education Alliance Board. It may be fruitful to explore the possibility of combining this effort with those existing efforts at least to the extent of having intersecting leadership boards.)

- **Membership**– The membership of the collaborative will be recruited from a variety of public and private entities– businesses, financial institutions, social service organizations, governmental entities, schools, faith-based organizations, etc. –who agree to work together, participating on action teams and sharing expertise and information (see Appendix K).
- **Director & Support Persons**– This work will require full-time staff of at least an Executive Director and one administrative support person to begin. This small staff could be supplemented, at least at first, by interns, Vista/AmeriCorps participants and “leaders on loan” from member organizations. Professional staff with the leadership skill, experience, expertise and time to organize and administrate the work of the organization is a necessary ingredient for success.
- **Advisory Council**–The Director and Leadership Board will draw together an Advisory Council made up of representatives from the membership. The role of this Advisory Council will be to help the Director shape and prioritize a plan of action (probably an annual or bi-annual process) and to help recruit the task teams necessary to implement the plan of action. The Leadership Board will be responsible for approving the plan of action and helping to find the resources necessary to implement the plan. The Director and support persons will be responsible for coordinating work on the plan of action and reporting progress throughout the year.

Next Steps

The following action steps are recommended:

1. Convene a Leadership Board as described in the preceding section and present them with this plan as approved by City Council. Engage the principals of Step-Up Savannah (Mayor Otis Johnson and Executive Director Daniel Dodd) for some initial consulting. (Note: It may be possible to coordinate this effort with the existing Greater Waco Chamber “Intracity Visits” program.)
2. Develop a budget and recruit sponsor organizations or individuals who are willing to contribute resources to launch and support an organization as a “seed operation” for the next five years. This seed operation should consist of at least an executive director, an administrative support person and the space, technology and budget necessary for them to work effectively.

3. Engage a Director and Administrative Support Person.
4. Decide on a name for the enterprise and produce communication pieces explaining the purpose and proposed structure of the organization.
5. Design and conduct a round of educational meetings designed to inform the community about the initiative and to recruit members for the organization.
6. Dissolve the current Poverty Solutions Steering Committee and organize an Advisory Council as described in the preceding section.
7. Use the goals developed by the PSSC task teams and the strategies listed above as a starting point to draft an inaugural plan of action.
8. Get input from the Advisory Council and the wider community to shape the draft. It is crucial to include people who are currently living in poverty and people who have come out of poverty in this process.
9. Have the initial plan of action approved by the Leadership Board.
10. Organize the task teams necessary to work the plan of action – begin work.

Acknowledgements

The report grew from the thought and effort of many, many committed individuals throughout the community. Special thanks are due to at least the following:

- The original “Poverty Solutions Group” an ad hoc group of concerned citizens who brought the need for a plan to reduce poverty to the attention of the city council. Thanks especially to that group’s primary organizers: Kenneth Moerbe and Jimmy Dorrell.
- The City of Waco Department of Housing and Community Development especially Jeff Wall, Teri Holtkamp and Jan Wengler who provided insight and administrative support.
- The Baylor School of Social Work, especially Dr. Gaynor Yancey and the Community Practice Classes of 2010 and 2011. The students in the 2010 class provided invaluable background research including twelve loose-leaf binders full of community resources and best practices. They also did some of the initial seminal thinking regarding the elements of the overall plan. The 2011 class extended the original work by delving more deeply into the challenge of youth in poverty, including conducting over 60 interviews related to that subject. We also thank the Baylor Social Work interns who did much of the “leg work” for the project, especially Kasey Ashenfelter, Stephen Boyes, Ryn Farmer and Alexis Christiansen.
- The numerous individuals who participated on task teams. These individuals spent long hours in conversation and consideration sharing information and suggesting high level goals for each of the twelve aspirations (see Appendix F).
- We also want to thank the countless social service agency employees, government employees, educators, business leaders, volunteers and other individuals throughout the community who are already working hard every day to reduce poverty and to help Waco fulfill its potential for prosperity.

Poverty Solutions Steering Committee (PSSC) Members

The following is a list of all those who served on the Poverty Solutions Steering Committee at any time from January 2011 through June 2012:

- Gordon Fuller, Agudath Jacob Synagogue
- Michael Green, MCC Small Business Development Center
- Tom Gutierrez, VientoFuerte Centro de Adoracion
- John Hudson, Waco ISD
- Shirley Langston, Restoration Haven
- Kenneth Moerbe, Organizer of Poverty Solutions Group
- Gary Moore, Waco Public Housing Authority
- Stan Mason, Waco Police Department
- Ramiro Pena, Christ the King Baptist Church
- Cheryl Pooler, Waco ISD
- Rosemary Townsend, Baylor University
- Ashley Thornton, Act Locally Waco and Baylor University
- Alexis Weaver, Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce
- Gaynor Yancey, Baylor University School of Social Work

Appendices

- Appendix A: Statement of support adopted by resolution of the Waco City Council
- Appendix B: Explanation of Poverty Rate Variance
- Appendix C: History of the Poverty Solutions Steering Committee Initiative
- Appendix D: Baylor School of Social Work Research and Recommendations
- Appendix E: Strengthening Our Neighborhoods
- Appendix F: Participants and Contributors
- Appendix G: Strategic Goals and Actions Developed by the PSSC Task Teams (Detail)
- Appendix H: Baseline Data, Community indicators and an Information Clearinghouse
- Appendix I: Community Engagement Strategy – Seeking Community Input into the Planning Process
- Appendix J: Near Northside Master Plan Overview
- Appendix K: Step-Up Savannah Membership Agreement
- Appendix L: Census Tracts with Percent Poverty (Map)

Appendix A: Statement of support adopted by resolution of the Waco City Council

The vision ...is one of full participation in the system of achievements and rewards available to the larger community...the prospect of shared opportunity for personal fulfillment...*Ascertain baseline quality of life should be a given; every individual should have the reasonable expectation of living productively in a safe, clean, healthy environment with access to life's necessities and amenities...From the vantage point of the present, gaps in the system appear to be deep and wide, but, through commitment and cooperation, they can be bridged.*

From Waco's Empowerment Zone application—
June 1994

Mayor Bush and the City Council recognize and acknowledge that poverty in Waco is a fundamental issue with complex causes and a long history, unique among mid-sized cities in Texas. Chronic poverty drags down our economy and stifles our potential for greatness. We know this through both statistics and experience, and yet, the sheer magnitude of effort required to eliminate the insidious causes and effects of poverty is so overwhelming that the effort has never been undertaken at the community level. To take the first critical steps toward recovery and avoid giving up before we begin, we must keep in mind that *even a small reduction in poverty can significantly improve the quality of life for everyone.*

While poverty is commonly thought of as a financial issue, it is inextricably bound to poor health and educational deficiency. To begin moving our community away from poverty toward prosperity will require improvement on all three fronts. Being healthy, wealthy, and wise is still a prize worth working for—for both individuals and the community as a whole.

Toward this end, the mayor and council commit to work more effectively to develop, advocate for, and implement a results-oriented plan to measurably reduce poverty in Waco over the next ten years.

Since our first priority is always to preserve and advance the well-being of our city and its citizens, we deeply appreciate the many community partners who are already working tirelessly to serve individuals and families afflicted by poverty. We realize that to achieve any measure of success, we must build on their work as we develop a broader, collective understanding of causes, effects, and realistic solutions than is currently available to, or through, any single person or group.

Hard realities and the will to see

- From 2006 through 2008 over a quarter of Waco households had income *and* benefits totaling less than \$15,000, while almost 43% had income and benefits of less than \$25,000. (reported in the Census Bureau's American Community Survey)
- The U.S. poverty rate is estimated at 13.2%, the Texas rate at 15.8%, and Waco's rate at 27.6 %. In other words, poverty in Waco is twice as high as the nation as a whole and one-and-three-quarter times the Texas rate. (from 2008 census estimates)
- Large outlays of public and private funds that subsidize the livelihoods of people barely able to eke out an existence for themselves and their families also subsidize the sustainability and profitability of low-wage employers and, more importantly, low-cost goods and services that we have all come to depend on and demand. Consequently, we all have a vested interest in the status quo and will need to be convinced that change will be broadly beneficial.
- Efforts to improve employment prospects of working-age adults and children (future workers) can make a large and lasting difference in their potential for independence and productivity; however, there are others—low-income elderly and people dealing with severe physical, mental, or social challenges, for example—who will always require public services and assistance. Differences in circumstances must be well understood, and solutions, as well as expectations, must be appropriate to the situation.
- To create the lasting civic resolve necessary to look beyond the status quo and pursue lasting change, we need to see “the poor” for who they are: “They” are “us”—employees, customers, service providers, care-givers, parents, grandparents, educators, students, family, friends, neighbors, classmates, citizens, taxpayers—not a separate segment of the population that needs to be managed, ministered to, and fixed. When Texas' poverty ranks number 8 in the nation, and Waco's is among the highest in the state, statistically, we—the citizens of Waco—are “the poor”.

“Full participation in the system of achievements and rewards”

While improving the financial status of our citizens and our community is a top priority, it is not the only priority. It is equally important to resolve that, in our city, relative wealth will not be a limiting factor in:

- being born healthy
- having healthy lifestyle options and basic health support services at all ages
- achieving academic success—from pre-K through higher education
- maintaining a safe, suitable home in a safe, attractive neighborhood
- acquiring and developing the skills and means to manage essential resources—money, housing, education, child care, food, transportation, and health
- being productive—experiencing personal and social fulfillment
- accessing cultural and recreational opportunities and the natural beauty of our community
- having fun and enjoying life together

Neither the city council nor the City of Waco organization has the resources to act alone in an undertaking of the scope proposed; however, we recognize our dual role as: 1) a convener of institutions, organizations, and individuals currently dealing with various aspects of both poverty and prosperity; and, 2) a supporter of the research and planning necessary to map out a realistic, multi-year, multi-faceted operation.

At a minimum the overall effort must include institutions of government, education, and faith; health-related organizations; community advocates; employers; business associations;

nonprofit agencies; and those with first-hand knowledge of poverty in our community. More specifically, the people and organizations currently engaged in jobs creation and business support must work in concert with the people and organizations focused on social issues—such as education and poverty alleviation. To begin to outflank the problems will require a concerted effort:

- at the *systems* level—to create the knowledge base necessary to develop effective policies, create an infrastructure for cooperation, and change ideas and attitudes that prove to be misguided and/or counter-productive;
- at the *personal* level—to provide effective information and support services to individuals and households; and,
- at the *geographic* level—to focus customized development efforts on specific neighborhoods or blocks.

Given Waco’s recent experience in uniting around the challenges of education and homelessness, and an emerging sense of the community’s readiness to acknowledge and address the debilitating effects of poverty—especially as exemplified by the significant work of the self-initiating Poverty Solutions Group—we, the Mayor and Council of the City of Waco, commit ourselves to a collective effort to begin unraveling the tangle of problems linked to chronic poverty in our city, to developing a comprehensive ten-year plan, and to the vision articulated in Waco’s 1994 Empowerment Zone application—that *every individual should have the reasonable expectation of living productively in a safe, clean, healthy environment with access to life’s necessities and amenities...*

Appendix B: Explanation of Poverty Rate Variance

Most people are familiar with the Decennial (or 10-year) Census. In that process, the Census Bureau surveys 100% of the population once every ten years. From 1970 through the year 2000, the questions used to compute poverty status were asked as a part of the Decennial Census. In 2005 the Census Bureau began administering an additional survey called the “American Community Survey” (ACS). Unlike the Decennial Census, the ACS is not a survey of 100% of the population. Instead, its results are estimates based on a scientifically drawn representative sample of the population from every county in the United States & Puerto Rico for every month of every year. As part of an overall effort to shorten the Decennial Census form, the questions about income, among others, were not included on the 2010 Decennial Survey. That information is now collected and reported only via the ACS; the ACS is now the source for poverty statistics.

The Census Bureau publishes the results of the ACS in three different reports based on three different sample sizes:

- 1-year report – which reports estimates based on the most recent 12 months’ worth of samples from every county
- 3-year report – which reports estimates based on the most recent 36 months’ worth of samples from every county
- 5-year report – which reports estimates based on the most recent 60 months’ worth of samples from every county

The different reports are useful for different reasons. The 1-year estimates are based on the most recent data which is good if you want the most up-to-date information, but the 3 and 5-year reports are based on larger and larger samples respectively. This means the estimates in those reports are more likely to be accurate than the estimates in the 1-year report.

In addition to the three different reports, there are also separate estimates for the percentage of families who are in poverty and for the percentage of individuals who are in poverty. Family incomes are generally higher than those of unrelated or single individuals because, generally, all family members contribute to the income level; hence, family poverty levels are lower than those of unrelated individuals. All of this means that the census reports six different possible 2010 poverty rates for Waco, as shown in the table below.

2010 poverty rate for Waco, TX

	1 yr	3 yr	5 yr
All Families	23.2 %	22%	21.2%
All People	31.3%	29.8 %	28.7 %

For the purposes of this report, we will use the Decennial poverty data for individuals for the years it is available (1970-2000), and we will use the 5-year ACS estimate for individuals for everything else unless otherwise noted.

Appendix C: History of the Poverty Solutions Steering Committee Initiative

In April 2009, the (PSG) began meeting for the purpose of developing and advocating for ways to measurably reduce poverty in Waco and to coordinate actions to achieve that goal over the next 10 years. In an effort to understand poverty in Waco, the PSG solicited input from a wide variety of community members including representatives from Baylor, MCC, TSTC, Waco Housing Authority, City of Waco, County Commissioners, Chamber of Commerce, EOAC, the Waco Independent School Board, Waco Community Development, Estella Maxey public housing, Kate Ross public housing, A.J. Moore students, My Brother's Keeper, Mission Waco and others. Using the learnings the PSG developed a formal mission and vision and 12 key aspirations for building hope, reducing poverty and providing a better quality of life.

The Baylor University School of Social Work Master's of Social Work Advanced Community Practice Concentration class assisted in the development of the poverty plan. In the fall of 2010 the graduate-level class conducted research on best practices of other cities, current research examples and community resources, identification of community members who may be asked to serve and possible partners or collaborators with City of Waco.

In December 2010 the Poverty Solutions Group (PSG) reported to Waco City Council and asked them to consider a resolution supporting the PSG and their mission. The City Council agreed and the PSG was formally established as the Poverty Solutions Steering Committee (PSSC). The PSSC members are a mix of leaders from academics, non-profits, faith-based and social service agencies.

PSSC Charge: Prepare and approve a plan to be presented to City Council for how the Waco community can work together for the next 10 years to measurably reduce poverty and its effects in Waco.

PSSC Vision: A community united to reduce poverty and build hope.

The PSSC began meeting in January of 2011. The original 12 aspirations developed by the Poverty Solutions Group and the Baylor class's research were used as the basis for the establishment four task forces and one special subcommittee. These groups focused on the development of strategies and tactics. The task teams had between 22-34 participants while the special subcommittee was smaller, with 3-5 participants. Community collaboration continued to grow as the task teams expand their work on strategic development.

The Baylor School of Social Work and the PSSC collaboration continued in the Fall of 2011. The Master's of Social Work Advanced Community Practice Concentration and Bachelor's of Social Work Macro Practice classes chose a specific aspiration that targeted successful transition of young adults.

Appendix D: Baylor School of Social Work Research and Recommendations

Fall Semester 2010

The Masters of Social Work Community Practice class assisted the PSG and the City of Waco by gathering information and creating a proposed plan to reduce poverty. The 12 Aspirations were statements created by the PSG that served as general thoughts that could be built upon in reducing poverty in Waco. The 12 Aspirations were used, generally, but not exclusively, to inform the proposed plan that was developed by the class. The project report included research on various deliverables, proposed recommendations and a suggested plan timeline (see Appendix E).

The following deliverables were gathered:

- Best Practices of other cities that have reduced poverty;
- Current Research examples;
- Current Community Resources;
- Identification of Community Members who may be asked to serve on committees related to the Poverty Solutions Initiative; and
- Possible Partners or Collaborators with the City of Waco.

Instead of taking each aspiration individually, the Baylor class envisioned these aspirations as groupings and put them in four distinct categories, with the aspirations within them. The PSSC adopted the recommendation and established these task teams in early 2010:

- Children--Aspirations 1 & 2
- Economics--Aspirations 3, 4, & 11
- Resources--Aspirations 5, 6, 7, & 8
- Environment--Aspirations 9, 10, & 12

Recommendations were also made on moving forward:

- Participatory bottom-up involvement should be employed rather than a top-down approach in order to ensure community ownership of the plan as it is created and implemented.
- The plan should be implemented emphasizing an asset-based development approach rather than a needs-based relief oriented perspective.
- Interdisciplinary interns should be utilized to provide multiple perspectives in the implementation of plans and research. Proposals for interns should be made a year prior to their placement.
- There should be a continuous search for funding proposals including government, private, and corporate sources. A marketing and fundraising team could conduct this task.
- Committees should continue to conduct research in areas of best practices and current studies on aspiration topics.
- Each Subcommittee should have at least one representative from the Steering Committee.

- Residents of the Waco community should be discussed, considered, and treated with dignity and respect.
- At least one representative that resides in the selected zip codes should serve on the committees and participate in the planning and implementation of any activities that occur in his or her neighborhood or zip code.

Fall Semester 2011

The MSW Community Practice class, in conjunction with the BSW Macro Practice class assisted in further developing Aspiration 3, which reads as follows:

Launch our young people into productive working lives. - More young people in Waco will successfully negotiate the transition into careers/vocations that lead to a living wage or better.

A report was developed and presented to City Council, detailing the process the classes created to contextualize this aspiration for youth and representatives of the community who engage youth between the ages of 14-24 (e.g. parents, school staff, pastors, government officials, social service agency representatives) in Waco.

Valuing the voices of the youth, the class decided to incorporate their thoughts into the process as well through creating and facilitating focus groups with youth, ages 14-24 years old. The focus groups are currently in process; thus, the findings will be presented in May 2012 at Baylor University School of Social Work Colloquium.

The class identified three themes: Adolescent Development, Direct Relationship, and Systemic Factors. Focusing on the potential these themes carry, the class encapsulated them into three future possibilities:

- Educational and Development Team
- Assets Mapping
- Scaffolding

An Educational and Development Team (EDT) is a summation of passion, inspiration, and opportunity for youth in Waco. EDTs represent an interdisciplinary collaboration of people that surround a specified middle school, a junior high school, and/or high school to provide a supportive network in order to launch our young people into productive working lives. The interdisciplinary team would consist of individuals from various fields of expertise, who bring their knowledge to youth. Seven areas of expertise that would be needed to comprise the EDT. The seven fields of expertise are as follows:

- Business
- Faith community
- Mentoring
- Education
- Social services
- Parental involvement
- Government

This comprehensive response must be fine-tuned, but the classes believe it is the beginning of transformation for our youth in Waco. It may take a village to raise a child, but, in Waco, it takes a community to launch a young person.

The second future possibility is creating an assets map for each school neighborhood. The purpose of an assets map is to recognize the needs, strengths, and resource capacity of the community. Assets include agencies, programs, individuals, and any other resources within the geographic area. It is important not only to possess the knowledge of resources, but to have physical representation of where these resources are located and who has access to them. Assets maps reveal the true needs in the community. Assets maps must accompany the EDT process; however, they can stand alone—becoming useful for any strategy or plan. Waco’s diversity far surpasses race or ethnicity, each community within Waco is unique and deserves to be explored individually.

The third and last possibility is the concept of scaffolding. Similarly to a building project, there must be a framework for construction to take place. Youth need scaffolding to transition them successfully into productive working lives. Scaffolding for youth implies a long term, gradual process of investment by all community members through relationship, mentoring, and skill development. Lev Vygotsky, a cognitive development psychologist, created the theory of the zone of proximal development to explain “the difference between what a learner can accomplish independently and what he or she can accomplish with the guidance and encouragement of a more skilled partner.”⁶ Scaffolding was the term he used to define the support mechanisms the “skilled partner” provides.

⁶Zastrow, C. H., & Kirst-Ashman, K. K. (2010). *Understanding human behavior and the social environment*. (8th Ed.). Brooks/Cole: Belmont, CA. 122-123

Appendix E: Baylor School of Social Work Reports

Strengthening Neighborhoods: A Poverty Reduction Initiative

A Report
Presented to the Waco City Council
on
Monday, December 6, 2010

From the Advanced Community Practice Concentration
of the
School of Social Work
of
Baylor University

Strengthening Neighborhoods: A Poverty Reduction Initiative

According to the Census Bureau, Waco's poverty rate is 26%. During the past 10 years, however, Waco has been listed in the top five cities in Texas with the highest rates of poverty. Depending on the source, the percentages of people in poverty have been listed from about 23% to about 27.5%. Part of the reason for the variation is due to counting college students. The children's poverty rate for Waco has been listed as high as 31%. Specific neighborhoods and parts of zip code areas have been identified as having as much as 44%, overall, of the neighborhood living "in poverty." As one drills down even further, one would see that many of these lower socio-economic neighborhoods are the very places that are identified by the City of Waco (COW) as being recipients of CDBG (Community Development Block Grant) funding. These zip code areas known as 701, 704, 705, 706, 707, 708, or 710, for example, become identifiers of the neighborhoods that can be strengthened through an investment of governmental financial resources, such as CDBG funding.

With this brief introduction, it is encouraging to know that this project is a collaborative endeavor of students, community, civic, and academic leaders have come together with a common purpose for addressing the needs of the Waco community, especially among those neighborhoods that are marginalized and under-resourced. Strengthening neighborhoods ultimately should help continue building on the foundation that has made Waco a city with such positive attributes. Conversely, strengthening Waco as a city should result in strengthening neighborhoods. We assert that poverty reduction is a two way venture. What is good for Waco is good for a neighborhood. What is good for a neighborhood is good for Waco. With that understanding, the following report will outline our work on The Poverty Reduction Project.

Background

Mr. Jeff Wall, Director of Housing and Community Development for the City of Waco, invited this class of graduate students to develop a plan for poverty reduction in Waco. This was a next step in following the year long work of the Poverty Solutions Group (PSG), which was composed of concerned individuals from various sectors of Waco. Dr. Jimmy Dorrell and Rev. Kenneth Moerbe moderated the meetings of the PSG with Mr. Jeff Wall and Ms. Teri Holtkamp, of the COW, coming alongside them

Our class is extremely grateful to the Poverty Solutions Group for the good foundation that was created through the development of the 12 Aspirations. Beginning in April 2009, the (PSG) began meeting for the purpose of developing and advocating for ways to measurably reduce poverty in Waco and to coordinate actions to achieve that goal over the next 10 years. In an effort to understand poverty in Waco, the PSG solicited input from a wide variety of community members including representatives from Baylor, MCC, TSTC, Waco Housing Authority, City of Waco, County Commissioners, Chamber of Commerce, EOAC, the Waco Independent School Board, Waco Community Development, Estella Maxey public housing, Kate Ross public housing, A.J. Moore students, My Brother's Keeper, Mission Waco and

others. With this input in mind, the PSG developed extended mission and vision statements including **twelve aspirations** for Waco's future. These will be referred to throughout this report.

This poverty reduction project has been the sole focus and learning of the advanced community practice class, taught under the direction of Dr. Gaynor Yancey. The community based theory class of the advanced community practice concentration is taught by Dr. Jon Singletary. The knowledge base and skills set taught in this concentration have informed the work on this project.

This report reflects the work that the advanced community practice and theory courses of 17 graduate students in the Advanced Community Practice Concentration did in creating a plan to strengthen neighborhoods by reducing poverty in Waco. This has been referred to as "the poverty reduction project" although we have termed this project "Strengthening Neighborhoods." To us, this title best describes the heart of our class and of Waco in ensuring that Waco's residents are referred to with dignity and respect, regardless of their socio-economic status.

This project was nested in the 12 Aspirations that the PSG had developed over the past year. Instead of taking each aspiration individually, the class envisioned these aspirations as groupings and put them in four distinct categories, with the aspirations within them. The following categories are reflective of the students' vision for how best to do this work during the semester:

- **Funding/Economics**--Aspirations 3, 4, & 11
- **Children**--Aspirations 1 & 2
- **Resources**--Aspirations 5, 6, 7, & 8
- **Environment**--Aspirations 9, 10, & 12

The purpose of the poverty reduction project of this Fall's semester was to assist the PSG and the COW by gathering information and creating a proposed plan to reduce poverty. The 12 Aspirations were statements created by the PSG that served as general thoughts that could be built upon in reducing poverty in Waco. The 12 Aspirations (see Appendix A) developed by the PSG included the Mission and Vision statements of the PSG. The Mission was: To develop and advocate for ways to measurably reduce poverty in Waco and to coordinate actions to achieve them over the next 10 years (2010-2020). The Vision was: A community united to build hope, reduce poverty, and increase the quality of life for all Waco residents. The 12 Aspirations were used, generally, but not exclusively, to inform the proposed plan that was developed by the class. The class received the following items from the PSG: the 12 Aspirations, included with them the mission and vision statements; some of their notes, and their expressed vision for a "champion" to be employed, ultimately, by the COW to move forward with this poverty reduction initiative.

For the purposes of this project, we planned to gather the following deliverables:

- **Best Practices** of other cities that have reduced poverty;
- **Current Research** examples;

- **Current Community Resources;**
- **Identification of Community Members** who may be asked to serve on committees related to the Poverty Solutions Initiative; and
- **Possible Partners or Collaborators** with the City of Waco.

The Deliverables

The following deliverables will be found in each of the 12 notebooks that are being left with Mr. Jeff Wall, Director of Housing and Community Development:

- **Best Practices** of other cities that have reduced poverty;
- **Current Research** examples;
- **Current Community Resources;**
- **Identification of Community Members** who may be asked to serve on committees related to the Poverty Solutions Initiative; and
- **Possible Partners or Collaborators** with the City of Waco.

Notebooks

Twelve (12) notebooks, each detailing the five deliverables, have been developed throughout the semester. Each notebook is similarly formatted as listed below for the ease of the reader.

Summary of Research:

These reflect research indicators and main highlights.

Current Resources in Waco:

Agency/Project Name: these are descriptions on this resource. Agencies are recommended here as a contact as a possible partner/collaborator. Contact information also will be located here.

Agency/Project Name: these are descriptions on this resource. Included here may be any person at this agency who would be recommended as a possible partner/collaborator.

Identification of Community Members to Serve:

Type of Individual

- **Descriptive Title:** this is an explanation of the recommendation of the type of person who is being recommended to serve.

Community Members

- **Name of Individual:** this is an explanation of the reason for recommending this individual, the name of the organizations/he works for and their work contact information.

Possible Partners or Collaborators:

- Organization name

Summary of Best Practices:

These are based on what the research indicates and Waco's resources.

These notebooks will serve as an initial resource bank for the Commission and the sub-committees that are to be created. In order for the suggested plan to be successfully considered and implemented, reading and discussing these materials is essential to understanding what other communities are doing, or have considered doing, to reduce poverty in their towns and cities. Additionally, we have students who will be remaining in Waco either for more education or their jobs. They have offered, and are willing if asked, to be of help to any of the staff or members of committees to provide rationale and understanding of best practices and suggestions that were made within the respective categories of work.

The Timeline and Plan

The Timeline and Plan (see Appendix B) detail the years of 2010 -2015. The timeline reflects the general work aspects of the PSG and this class of graduate students as it was conducted in 2010. For historical reasons, we wanted to be sure to include this as a general beginning of work. The PSG did a great job, in our opinion, of providing broad language of the 12 Aspirations to be inclusive of our neighborhoods, as a whole, and the needs and assets of all.

Current Initiatives

Waco has many initiatives that are currently underway. The work of Ms. Teri Holtkamp, through the city's Homelessness services, has received state recognition. The work of the Salvation Army, the Meyer Center, Compassion Ministries, and others point to our on-going concern about those who are extremely marginalized in our midst. The efforts of Waco Community Development have been recognized nationally for its efforts in establishing the "Street of Dreams" on 15th Street as has the good work of NeighborWorks and Habitat for Humanity. The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) program continues to serve as another example that exists in Waco that has been nationally recognized. We have a strong and important Individual Development Account (IDA) program to help our residents in obtaining homes, saving for an education, or starting a small business. Other good and strong initiatives include, but are not limited to, the work of the Education Alliance, the Hunger and Housing Coalitions. Besides these, we are fortunate to have the exemplary models of the World Hunger Relief Farm (WHRF) and the Texas Hunger Initiative (THI). These are only a few examples of the many good initiatives that are presently functioning in Waco and throughout our community that benefit not only us, as a geographic community but also the state, the nation, and in several cases, other parts of the world.

Part of our hope is that Waco will see itself even more as a part of the global community. Through the overseas efforts of so many of our congregations of religious faith, of agencies such as Mission Waco, and the efforts of our colleges and universities to bring people from their native countries and for our residents to go to countries elsewhere, we hope that Waco will not only be home, the place to go to or stay, but that it also will be the launching pad for efforts for poverty reduction in the rest of the global community, among the numerous people groups who are our neighbors.

Because these efforts and initiatives are in place, we chose not to address them in our plan. Our expectation, however, is that anything that is city-wide will, invariably, make its way to the local neighborhood level. We trust that, as a director or “champion” for Strengthening Neighborhoods, is employed, this person will help coordinate all of the above efforts into a part of the plan, if that is determined to be needed, and wherever it is appropriate to do so. In our minds, these initiatives are already developed and making meaningful contributions in Waco. The yet to be named Commission will make the determination, along with the ultimate director, about how closely to bring these initiatives into the Strengthening Neighborhoods Plan.

The Strengthening Neighborhoods Timeline Plan

The plan that follows (see Appendix B) includes goals, action steps, those who are responsible for the tasks, especially through 2012, and a suggested timeline. The work of the Commission and subcommittees will be to create and establish a budget and the metrics for on-going evaluation. These will be done as the COW is able to attain grant funding and perhaps, municipal government funding which will focus on this initiative. We also anticipate the generalized steps through the goals and actions outlined in the timeline and plan will become much more specific to the zip code or neighborhoods that are selected as a focus of the COW’s plan.

This plan is contingent on two basic philosophical underpinnings.

1. The focus of this plan is on **strengthening zip code by zip code area**, knowing that the PSC and the sub-committees will be the ones best positioned to make the determination of whether to cover an entire zip code area or a selected neighborhood within a zip code area. In this plan, we have referred to this selection as ZC #1, for instance, as recognition of the selection and implementation of work to be done in ZC#1. Following that, becomes the selection and implementation of work to be done in ZC#2, for example, as follows:

2011=Selection of Zip Code #1

2013=Selection of Zip Code #2

2015=Selection of Zip Code #3

Because of the COW’s involvement with CDBG funding in zip code areas and specific neighborhoods, the focus of this plan is on what is being referred to as the CDBG zip code areas or neighborhoods. The suggestion here is predicated on our understanding that much

information will be known and available to the COW and that this information will serve as a strong basis for the selection of the focused zip code areas or the selected neighborhoods. Partializing these selections for intense work, at least in the first five years, is at the heart of this plan. Just as the example of Habitat for Humanity's one house construction or of what Mission Waco and Waco Community Development have accomplished on 15th Street, we believe there is wisdom in creating examples of success. Our thoughts are that success will produce success, energy, enthusiasm, commitment, volunteers, and resources. While many of Waco's residents care deeply about poverty and social justice issues, the reality is that strengthening neighborhoods will be most successful when it is accomplished one neighborhood at a time, one step at a time.

2. The process of following the "staggered" steps listed below will provide continuity and consistency for the expected number of people who will become a part of this process through the years ahead, and to the COW, knowing that this is a multi-year endeavor. These steps get repeated every time a new zip code or neighborhood is selected.
 - a. Step 1: Choosing Zip Code
 - b. Step 2: Develop Plan
 - c. Step 3: Implement at beginning of yr
 - d. Step 4: Assess & Evaluate Progress at the end of year
 - e. Step 5: Evaluation and Determination of Next Steps

Counting 2010, the plan that is being submitted is a six (6) years plan. The initial year (2010) acknowledges the work of the PSG in establishing the 12 Aspirations, initial thoughts, and the items that were transferred to the graduate advanced community practice class.

The Pivotal Year—2011:

The timeline reveals the intense foundation work that must be accomplished in 2011. The work that is planned to take place in each year thereafter is contingent on the tasks to be performed in 2011. Our understanding is that the Poverty Solutions Commission (PSC) members will be named in December, 2010. We are suggesting that there be four subcommittees named, hopefully, no later than January, 2011. These subcommittees will reflect the four (4) groups with the 12 Aspirations established by the class for the gathering of information throughout this semester. After functioning as four committees throughout this semester, we believe that creating more than four subcommittees will be too overwhelming to coordinate.

By the end of 2011, the following must have been accomplished:

- Choosing and organization of the four (4) subcommittees;
- Development of the personnel positions: this includes the "Champion", cross disciplinary interns from Baylor and MCC, grant proposals researched, developed, and submitted for VISTA/Americorps workers and all other positions, as appropriate;
- Reading the five deliverables in the notebooks;
- Examination and possible visits to some of the sites identified in the Best Practices;

- Selection of Zip Code #1 (or Neighborhood #1)

For this plan to be effective and successful, 2011 establishes not only the foundation but also the initial infrastructure for the rest of the plan. Once the staggered selections are in place starting in 2011 with the selection of the first zip code or neighborhood which will be the initial focus of the plan, then the steps listed in #2 above continue to be followed and added to the overall plan. We also have suggested that more input be sought from agencies and residents in 2011. Input was sought from these groups in 2009, but as this plan begins to be implemented, it is important and necessary to continue those conversations that provide input.

Recommendations

- Participatory bottom-up involvement should be employed rather than a top-down approach in order to ensure community ownership of the plan as it is created and implemented.
- The plan should be implemented emphasizing an asset-based development approach rather than a needs-based relief oriented perspective.
- Interdisciplinary interns should be utilized to provide multiple perspectives in the implementation of plans and research. Proposals for interns should be made a year prior to their placement.
- There should be a continuous search for funding proposals including government, private, and corporate sources. A marketing and fundraising team could conduct this task.
- Committees should continue to conduct research in areas of best practices and current studies on aspiration topics.
- Each Subcommittee should have at least one representative from the Steering Committee.
- Residents of the Waco community should be discussed, considered, and treated with dignity and respect.
- At least one representative that resides in the selected zip codes should serve on the committees and participate in the planning and implementation of any activities that occur in his or her neighborhood or zip code.

Conclusion

Waco's neighborhoods (communities) and the residents within each are of great importance to all of us. Focusing on **Strengthening Neighborhoods**, one by one, is ripe with possibilities. Neighborhoods: rebuilding; renovating; restoring; making them livable again. Then the 12 Aspirations will be fulfilled.

Poverty Solutions Group—12 Aspirations—Appendix A

Mission: To develop and advocate for ways to measurably reduce poverty in Waco and to coordinate actions to achieve them over the next ten years. (2010 – 2020)

Vision: A community united to build hope, reduce poverty, and increase the quality of life for all Waco residents. If we are successful, the people of Waco will work together even more effectively than we already are to...

1. **Improve the health of our children.** – More children in Waco will be born healthy and will lead healthy lifestyles regardless of socio-economic status.
2. **Prepare our children for success in school and beyond.** -- Early childhood development in Waco will prepare more children to start school ready to succeed, and more children will succeed all the way through to high school graduation regardless of socio-economic status.
3. **Launch our young people into productive working lives.** -- More young people in Waco will successfully negotiate the transition into careers/vocations that lead to a living wage or better.
4. **Gainfully employ our working-age population.** - More Waco residents will find and keep jobs that pay enough for them to sustain a satisfying quality of life for themselves and for their families and to reduce dependency on “welfare.”
5. **Care for our elderly population.** – More of the elderly people in Waco will have the resources they need to live out their lives with security and dignity regardless of socio-economic status.
6. **Support residents who face special challenges.** -- More of the Waco residents who face physical, mental and social challenges will have the resources they need to live their lives with security and dignity regardless of socio-economic status.
7. **Empower our residents.** – More residents of Waco will be able to effectively advocate for themselves and to manage the essential resources (money, housing, education, childcare, food, transportation, health care, etc.) needed to maintain the quality of life of their choosing.
8. **Align our social services efficiently and effectively.** - Infrastructure, social-services and policy in Waco will be coordinated to more effectively support upward mobility from economic dependence to independence.
9. **Strengthen our neighborhoods.** – More of our neighborhoods and residential areas in Waco will be clean, safe and attractive regardless of the socio-economic status of the residents.
10. **Upgrade our shared spaces.** – More of our shared public spaces and commercial spaces will be clean, safe, attractive, accessible and accommodating.
11. **Energize our economic base.** – Our local economy will create more job opportunities with the living wages needed to help employees achieve their goals.

12. **Enjoy life together!** – All Waco residents and visitors, regardless of socio-economic status, will enjoy opportunities to appreciate natural beauty, to have fun, and to grow socially and culturally.

Timeline Plan--Appendix B

2010

- PSG-functioning all year
- Presentation to CC working session led by Jeff Wall with Kenneth Moerbe and Gaynor Yancey
- CC approve handing off from PSG to Advance Community Practice Concentration to create a proposed poverty reduction plan to be presented to CC Dec. 2010
- Transfer from PSG to BU SSW (12 asp., their best thinking, determined for first year)
- SSW hands off notebooks containing 5 deliverables, report, and timeline through presentation to CC

2011

- **PSC (Poverty Solutions Commission) approved by CC**
- **Focus groups among agencies and departments**
- **Strategic plan meeting for agency directors**
- **Citizen survey to prioritize needs and strategies**
- **Period of public comment where their plan is available for any citizens to make comments whether electronically or in print**
- **Choosing Sub-Committees**
 - 4 groups (w/flexibility): Economics, Children, Resources, Environment
 - Membership reflects both citywide & neighborhood interests
 - Alignment of chairs of each subcommittee
- **Development of Personnel Positions (PSC)**
 - Champion: Description, role/purpose
 - Interns: BU and Americorps- (Request/ Proposal must be within in 2011)
 - Community Members
 - C.C.: HR Procedures
- **Examination & Visits to Best Practices (Subcommittees: Dudley St. Neighborhood Initiatives, Harlem Children's Zone, Open Table, Parent Support Workshop(Judy Stacy), Union de Vecinos, Envision San Jose, CA-all encompassing, Oakland CA-economics, Teen Empowerment Program, Prospect Park Alliance , Wisconsin-Online Resources Guide, Kiosks, Boston Private Initiative Council-Economic**
- **Choosing Zip Code #1 (PSC)**
 - Priority given to CDBG
 - Inclusive of asset/needs assessments (Interns)

2012

- **Hire champion and personnel positions: needs funding to take place**
- **Zip Code #1**
 - Choose area in Zip Code #1 to begin implementation
 - Select aspirations that need to be developed and partnerships to be created
 - Develop a plan to apply best practices (Sub Com)
 - Identify & Enlist Community Leaders
 - Dialogue with and/or at community hubs (churches, school, mom n pop stores, libraries, cafes)
 - Work alongside neighborhood to establish partnerships to raise associations and create buy ins

2013

- **Zip Code #1**
 - Implement Plan for Best Practices at the beginning of the year
- **Zip Code #2**
 - Choose New Zip Code

2014

- **Zip Code #1**
 - Celebrate benchmarks of progress
 - Evaluation at the end of the year
- **Zip Code #2**
 - Develop plan

2015

- **Zip Code #1**
 - Continual evaluation and determination of next steps
- **Zip Code #2**
 - Implement plan
- **Zip Code #3**
 - Choose New Zip Code

**Baylor University School of Social Work
in Collaboration with the City of Waco Presents:**



Strengthening Connections and Collaborations
for Youth and Young Adults in Waco
Fall 2011 Report

MSW Community Practice Concentration

BSW Macro Practice Class

Baylor University School of Social Work

December 5, 2011

In June 2009, a group of concerned community members gathered to discuss poverty in Waco. Through much dialogue, time, and effort the group birthed the Poverty Solutions Group (PSG). Members of the PSG consisted of City of Waco staff, individuals in the community, and people from several disciplines. The PSG created mission and vision for its work, imagining “a community united to reduce poverty and build hope. The people of Waco will work together even more effectively than we are to...” [achieve the 12 Aspirations created by the PSG]. Today, the PSG is a City Council commissioned group, renamed the Poverty Solutions Steering Committee (PSSC) that presides over the initiative and four task teams (Children, Economics, Environment, and Resources) in collaboration with the City of Waco and the Baylor School of Social Work.

The City of Waco Housing and Community Development Department, led by Director Jeff Wall, provides strong support and staff for the initiative. Mr. Wall also has cultivated a relationship with the Baylor School of Social Work, housing many social work interns over the past seven years. In the Fall of 2010, Mr. Wall asked the Master’s of Social Work Community Practice class, under the direction of Dr. Gaynor Yancey, to develop a plan for poverty reduction in Waco. The class built upon the work of the PSG to create the Baylor Poverty Plan, a pathway to begin creating a formalized plan. They formulated 12 Aspirations, which were the collective hopes and dreams of the PSG for Waco’s future. Through the work of last year’s class, the aspirations were grouped into four categories: Children, Economics, Environment, and Resources. From these, there were four task teams established. Additionally, the class created 12 binders filled with best practices concerning poverty reduction in other cities, research, current resources in Waco, along with possible partners in each area.

This fall, the MSW Community Practice class, again under Dr. Gaynor Yancey’s direction worked in conjunction with the BSW Macro Practice class, taught by Becky Ellison. Together the classes assisted in the building of the Poverty Initiative through further developing Aspiration 3, which reads as follows:

Launch our young people into productive working lives. - More young people in Waco will successfully negotiate the transition into careers/vocations that lead to a living wage or better.

This report details the process the classes created to contextualize this aspiration for youth and representatives of the community (e.g. parents, school staff, pastors, government officials, social service agency representatives) in Waco. We decided to incorporate the voices of the youth into the process as well by creating and facilitating focus groups with youth, ages 14-24 years old. The focus groups are currently in process; thus, the findings will be presented in May at Baylor University School of Social Work Colloquium. Outlined below are the methods for data analysis, the findings from the data, and suggestions for future possibilities as Waco leaders from all sectors work together to strengthen our youth.

BACKGROUND

Population and Race/Ethnicity

“Waco is the 26th largest city by population in the state of Texas and is the County seat of McLennan County” (Waco Community Development Corporation’s *Executive Summary: Neighborhood Revitalization Strategy Area Plan*, 2007, p. 2). In 2010¹⁹, there were 124,085 residents in Waco, 29,488 of these residents fall between the ages of 15-24. This population accounts for 23.6% of the City of Waco’s total population. In East Waco²⁰ there were 10,237 residents; 16.7% of these residents fall between the ages of 15-24. In North Waco²¹ there were 25,669 residents; 17% of these residents fall between the ages of 15-24. In South Waco²² there were 15,368 residents; 59.8% of these residents fall between the ages of 15-24.

¹⁹ All statistics are taken from the U.S. 2010 Census, unless otherwise noted.

²⁰ This report defines the East Waco area as Census tracts 14 & 15.

²¹ This report defines the North Waco area as Census tracts 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 & 13.

²² This report defines the South Waco area as Census tracts 1, 2, 4 & 19.

The City of Waco's racial and ethnic make-up predominantly falls in three categories, White, Black/African American and Hispanic/Latino. The White population was estimated to consist of 57,217 people or 45.8% of the population. The Black/African American population was estimated to consist of 26,184 people or 21% of the population. The Hispanic / Latino population was estimated to consist of 36,947 people or 29.6% of the population. All other racial and ethnic identities were estimated to make up less than 1.5% of the population. Over 64% of residents in South Waco are White compared to 44.5% in North Waco and 21.3% in East Waco. Over 67% of all residents in East Waco are Black/African-American, compared to 28.3% in North Waco and 16.4% in South Waco. Over 47% of residents in North Waco are Hispanic / Latino compared to 17% in East Waco and 23.5% in South Waco.

Income and Poverty Levels

The City of Waco's median household income according to the 2000 Census was \$26,264. When comparing the median income with the county and state, Waco's median income level is consistently lower. Over 26.3% of all individuals living in Waco fall below the poverty level. Comparing this to McLennan County and the State of Texas, Waco's percentage of poverty doubles both at 17.9% and 13.8% respectively. The median household income for East Waco is \$15,459 and over 34.7% of all individuals fall below the poverty level. The median household income for North Waco is \$24,738 and over 27.4% of all individuals fall below the poverty level. The median household income for South Waco is \$10,655 and over 59% of all individuals fall below the poverty level.

The City of Waco's median family income according to the 2000 Census was \$33,919. Over 19.3% of all families in Waco fall below the poverty level. Again, when comparing this to McLennan County and the State of Texas, the percentage of families living below the poverty level is again higher for Waco. The median family income for East Waco was \$20,107; over 34.2% of all families fall below the poverty level. The median family income for North Waco is \$27,536; over 25.9% of all families fall

below the poverty level. The median family income for South Waco is \$23,230; over 31.9% of all families fall below the poverty level.

METHODOLOGY

We chose to focus on Aspiration 3 which states:

Launch our young people into productive working lives. - More young people in Waco will successfully negotiate the transition into careers/vocations that lead to a living wage or better.

We gathered information on 14-24 year olds in East, North and South Waco by conducting interviews with representatives from the community. Based upon these interviews, we constructed assets maps that outline youth specific organizations, agencies and positive influences within East, North and South Waco.

To begin the interview process, we created an initial list of 80 individuals within the community who work directly with or have experience with 14-24 year olds in Waco. We chose to do a convenience sample based on class members' knowledge of services, organizations, and individuals covering a wide range of disciplines (i.e. faith-based programs, law enforcement, government, education, and businesses). A multitude of direct and indirect factors affect youth; therefore, we recognized the need to include a diverse representation of constituents in the interview process. Attention was made to include transition counselors, mentors and administrators of mentoring programs, youth ministers, community center facilitators (e.g. YMCA), and similar figures in these communities because of their direct contact with youth. Direct contact offers a window into the lives of youth and the ability to detect phenomena that others may not perceive.

We consulted with at least one member of the PSSC in order to gain clarity about the thoughts of the PSSC related to this aspiration. As a result of that consultation, six questions were carefully designed to help assess the strengths and needs of our community. Our questions focused on

educational goals and perceptions, positive programs like mentoring, and the ability of a youth to gain and maintain employment in Waco. The six questions asked are listed below:

1. What individuals or programs influence 14 – 24 year olds in Waco?
2. What prevents 14 – 24 year olds in Waco from gaining and maintaining employment?
3. What are the factors that encourage or inhibit educational goals for 14 – 24 year olds in Waco?
4. Through your work and knowledge of 14 – 24 year olds in Waco, how do their perceptions of earning a GED, high school diploma, or college degree impact their future job and career opportunities in Waco?
5. What methods are used to effectively communicate opportunities to 14 – 24 year olds in Waco?
6. What are your hopes and dreams for 14 – 24 year olds in Waco?

Before we began interviewing individuals in the community, five consultants were chosen to review and edit the questions. We adjusted the questions as a result of their input. After adjusting the questions, interviews were then scheduled and held with the consent and convenience of the particular individual. At the close of each interview, respondents were asked for other contacts with whom we might speak. There were a total of 66 respondents.

Collecting the Data

Both classes, totaling 32 students and 16 teams, divided into teams of two to conduct the individual interviews, which allowed one student to take notes while the other team member asked questions. Each team reviewed the notes and wrote down key answers for each question on color-coded notecards. The team labeled the top of each notecard according to the type of organization represented (non-profit, for-profit, educational, religious organization, government institution, or individual), the area of Waco receiving the agency services (East, North, South, or all), and the location of the community member or community agency (East, North, South, or all). Key quotes from the interviews were also documented on separate color-coded note cards.

Analyzing the Data

The process of coding the collected data involved reading the individual notecards and placing them into categories according to topic (e.g. generational poverty, lack of guidance). For example, Question #1 notecard answers of “teachers”, “coaches”, or “neighbors” were placed into a category titled “Role Models”. The categories and themes emerged from within the information shared by the respondents. The entire class engaged in the process of categorizing notecards. The established categories, sub-categories, and their frequencies were entered into a MS-Excel spreadsheet. The data analysis team, as well as representatives from the writing team, presentation team, the PowerPoint team, and the editing team analyzed the categories further to identify correlating themes between questions and categories, referring to the cards throughout the process to provide accuracy and a clear representation of the data.

Finally, thus far we have conducted two focus groups with youth ages 14-24 in Waco. We constructed a list of 10 questions for middle and high school students and 13 questions for GED students for the focus groups in order to gain the youths’ perspective. We received approval from Baylor’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to conduct up to nine focus groups. These groups are currently in progress; one group was conducted in Spanish and is currently being translated into English. The focus groups are being transcribed and coded into themes from the responses of the youth. After all focus groups have been completed and all data analyzed, data results from focus groups will be presented in May at Baylor University School of Social Work’s Colloquium.

Assets Mapping

Assets mapping is a process of identifying community strengths and resource capacity. The maps created for this project provide an inventory identified as assets for youth in Waco. It is not all-inclusive; rather, it is a representation of the agencies and people with whom we spoke. The interview responses yielded a total of 66 resources in East, North and South Waco. The assets mapping team separated into 3

categories resulting in 3 within the Economic category; 5 within the Governmental category; 10 within the Congregations category; 34 within the Social Services category; and 14 within the Educational category. Once the resources were divided into categories, the assets mapping team located and labeled each site on a map of the City of Waco with color coded points. In addition to a city wide map, the assets mapping team developed 7 maps that provide an in-depth, enlarged view of the assets' locations.

Overall, the findings of the assets map gives the information needed to identify and eventually address areas of needed growth, and evaluate and/or expand upon identified resources in a process of strengths-based community change.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the responses from community respondents, three overarching themes emerged from the data analysis: adolescent development, direct relationships, and systemic factors. The three themes encompass the relevant issues affecting the capacity to launch our young people into productive working lives.

Adolescent Development

Adolescent development contains several influential factors, one of which is character development. Issues affecting character development include lack of self-esteem, lack of self-control and apathy, all of which may affect a youth's level of resiliency and impede his/her personal aspiration to continue or complete his/her education. A representative from the McLennan Community College Adult Education program stated "I have some kids that have dropped out but they are brilliant and I tell them that they were probably great in school. But their answer is always, 'Well, I could have been...'"²³

Another factor is mature decision making, which affects the ability for youth ages 14-24 to gain and maintain employment. According to respondents, the youth in Waco face temptations related to

²³ This quote and all other quotes are from interviews conducted in the Fall of 2011 by MSW and BSW Community Practice students. These are the direct quotes from our respondents; no names were cited to ensure anonymity.

drugs, alcohol, gangs, teen pregnancy, and violence that require healthy decision-making. One respondent said, "Teen pregnancies can have a huge impact on their life. Keeping the baby, giving it up for adoption, or having an abortion will change them forever. I don't want them to take this lightly."

Within the adolescent development theme, negative perceptions that were found to affect decision-making were a lack of confidence, a mindset that education is financially unfeasible, a lack of long-term planning or future-oriented thinking, anti-intellectual bias, unrealistic media perceptions of wealth, and negative locality. As one respondent commented, "perceptions affect behaviors." The perceptions youth acquire inform their worth and value, affect their potential, and impact areas of their life, including their capability and motivation to obtain employment and pursue educational goals.

A lack of education and skills denote a fourth factor which respondents proposed. These included GED and/or training, job experience, and skills related to jobs: writing skills, interpersonal skills, life skills, social skills, job search skills, speaking skills, interviewing skills, and professionalism which may influence the feasibility for youth to enter productive working lives. According to one respondent, referring to the job application process, "Some students that I've had did not know how to apply, how to ask for an application, or who to talk to."

Finally, within the adolescent development theme respondents shared that media affects educational and employment opportunities. Some young people base their understanding of society on the media. A respondent described how technology impacts youth,

My hope for them is to be able to decipher the vast amount of facts and figures. When I say facts I don't mean true facts but the media bombarding from all angles [with] texting, emails, television, and radio. [That] they can decipher between what is relevant and what is not. I think that is going to be real key for the kids in that age group.

Respondents recognized that the societal shift toward technology impacts educational and occupational opportunities for youth. However, that does not mean that all of the youth in Waco have

access, or the means to obtain access, to many of these technological resources. For example, not all youth in Waco have a computer, which may impact their ability to look for internships, find job opportunities, apply for college, and scholarships. One respondent stated “To get information to these kids, you have to have a connector, a person they know. My kids don't use Facebook or Twitter to get information... has to be someone from the community they know and respect.” Overall, media has the potential to influence opportunities, both negatively and positively, but can act as a significant bridge for youth.

Direct Relationships

Direct relationships influence a young person’s effort to pursue education and gain and maintain employment. A respondent stated, “Mentoring is very important and many kids don't have access to it.” Respondents identified many people and professionals who influence the youth, including family, peers, friends, significant others, and religious individuals and groups. The respondents specifically mentioned other influential people such as professionals who work in schools and social service organizations, neighbors, community leaders, probation officers, and adults outside the family. Sports heroes, leaders, and Baylor students who interact with the youth were also listed. Respondents identified drug dealers as unhealthy influential individuals in the lives of Waco youth.

Direct relationships can be positive or negative. Positive relationships, according to respondents, provide encouragement and support, which can motivate youth to invest in their education. Respondents shared that positive relationships come from the people and professionals identified above. One respondent said, “We take for granted the blessings of nurturing families. Students need outside support if they cannot get it from home.” On the contrary, respondents defined negative relationships as a lack of encouragement and support. Negative relationships can occur as a result of interactions with friends, peers, teachers, and family. Several respondents shared that broken families produce negative

relationships with the youth. One respondent stated, “Ideally you should be learning as a teen from family by example and kids aren't getting that.”

For example, some parents do not know how to support and encourage the youth and some did not have positive experiences with the educational or occupational realm which then influences their children’s perceptions of education and employment. One respondent stated, “Parental support is a major factor that influences student's behavior; however, some parents do not know the availability of opportunities and resources in education or how to navigate them which can be a deterrent.”

Some respondents also expressed the belief that a lack of college-educated role models and positive relationships can inhibit youth from pursuing productive working lives. One respondent said, “I remember when I was that age. I thought I knew it all, but I needed to have someone come alongside of me. We have a very low tolerance for dealing with, especially young men.” Another respondent shared a similar point of view, “The people working with the youth need to understand who these kids are, where they come from and need to be more respectful and patient.”

The data revealed that affirming relationships, positive role models, encouragement, parent involvement, mentoring, and intentional individual investment in the lives of young people impact the potential for youth to enter productive working lives. As stated by one respondent, “It is important to have people close to their age that have overcome difficult backgrounds that have made it through college or a better paying job to come and talk about their experiences.” Direct relationships represent a recurring theme influencing youth in multiple ways that affect their perceptions, impact their motivations, beliefs, goals, values and guide them both personally and professionally.

Systemic Factors

Systemic factors consist of outside influences that affect the youth in Waco. These systemic factors are often beyond their control. One systemic factor is the economy. The respondents recognized that the scarcity of jobs, job competition, small wages, and lack of bridging between businesses and young people impact the educational and occupational possibilities for youth in Waco. One respondent said, "They have trouble finding job opportunities in Waco, so they leave and don't come back." In the same vein another respondent stated, "Many know education is essential, and most have hopes of finding a job in other cities."

Education is another factor which impacts youth regarding the quality of their education and educational expectations in Waco. One respondent stated, "The youth in Waco have encouragement from the high schools to pursue higher educational goals, but what they choose will have immediate effects on their future."

Government is the third systemic factor that impacts youth in the form of budget cuts, infrastructure and zoning, legal issues, and programs. Respondents acknowledged the governmental factors that influence the systems surrounding youth. One respondent said, "The paradigms the youth carry around about education and government is that the system is not there for them. They have to be smarter than the system. They've been on the losing end."

Community relationships represent another factor within the systemic factors theme. These relationships related to matters of racism, drugs, lack of good role models, social stigma, bias, and lack of attainable resources which influence the direction and motivation of youth to engage in productive working lives.

Respondents' answers addressed the importance of school-community connections, partnerships, seminars for college, and faith community involvement in the lives of youth. A respondent stated that, "The lack of awareness about opportunities is probably attributed to the lack of connection

between systems in Waco. There needs to be a coalition between businesses, schools, city, and churches.”

Lack of positive role models in the community and poor modeling contribute to learned behavior which is also influenced by locality, drugs, alcohol, and gang activity. The factor of generational poverty reveals the influence of the family system in the lives of youth. As one respondent said:

It's really complicated for people in poverty. In order for a mother to get a job, she has to go to school; in order for her to get childcare for school, she has to sit at a computer at Work Force for 40 hours a week. In order to finish school, the mom has to pay for a test and take time out of Work Force to study. In the meantime, the mom's 14-year old daughter is watching her juggle the system and the girl says, 'What's the point in even trying?'

Respondents expressed that the influence of parental experiences, occupations, and views toward education impact the youth and their potential to pursue educational advancement and employment. Individuals with first generation status are the first in their family to go to college, obtain a GED, or finish high school. This greatly affects their educational advancement and employment opportunities.

The three themes address prevalent issues identified by the respondents and affect each other in a cyclical pattern as opposed to a linear progression from one issue to another. For example, direct relationships affect adolescent development, and adolescent development affects systemic factors. Systemic factors impact direct relationships and adolescent development. The data analysis findings and identified themes represent the primary factors influencing the capacity for youth in Waco to lead productive working lives and provide direction for the proposed future possibilities.

FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

After careful consideration of our three themes, adolescent development, direct relationships, and systemic factors, we asked the most pertinent question of all: Where do we go from here? Focusing

on the potential these themes carry, we believe future possibilities are quite endless; however, we encapsulated them into three possibilities, stated as follows:

1. Educational and Development Team
2. Assets Mapping
3. Scaffolding

The concept of an Educational and Development Team (EDT), originates from the literal dream of one of our classmates. This dream is a summation of passion, inspiration, and opportunity for youth in Waco. EDTs represent an interdisciplinary collaboration of people that surround a specified middle school, a junior high school, and/or high school to provide a supportive network in order to launch our young people into productive working lives. The interdisciplinary team would consist of individuals from various fields of expertise who bring their knowledge to youth. We identified seven areas of expertise that would be needed to comprise the EDT. We recognize that there may be additional areas that could be added, as needed. The seven fields of expertise are as follows:

1. Businesses
2. Faith communities
3. Mentoring
4. Education
5. Social services
6. Parental involvement
7. Government

Each of these fields has identified roles, strengths, and value they bring to the EDT. For example, businesses would be asked to provide internships, apprenticeships, and jobs for youth, but also be willing to mentor students. Faith communities, in addition to businesses, are a potential hub for

mentors, but can also partner with a school in their neighborhood as a support mechanism. In regards to mentoring, we suggest supporting and strengthening existing mentoring programs, while including training for new mentors by using best practices to ensure quality mentorship experiences occur. We suggest a coordinated effort of recruitment and training within our community. The field of education is necessary due to the fact that EDTs surround schools. School and administrative personnel, as well as higher education institutions will need to be involved. Schools will be the lead channel of communication between fields of expertise and youth. Next, the social service realm provides support for multiple areas like job and skills training, health services, truancy reduction, social service fairs, addiction and trauma, recovery, and law enforcement. This list is not comprehensive, however it provides a basis of holistic care for youth.

Parental involvement is the key to success of the EDTs. Providing opportunities for parents to get involved in a young person's successful transition creates a sense of empowerment and value within the parents. These opportunities could include information like tips on how to interact with your adolescent's mentor or initiating positive parent-school-community interactions. Having parent liaisons has the potential for acting as a broker or bridge in connecting parents to the process of transitioning their youth successfully. The last field covered by the class was the government. From our perspective the best way to implement the EDTs is through the Economics Task Group which is connected to the City of Waco's Poverty Solutions Steering Committee. Aspiration 3 was assigned to the Economic Task Group last spring and this group has been functioning throughout this year. This group would function as the facilitators and coordinators of the various EDTs. It would be the responsibility of this team to initiate this process. The Poverty Solutions Steering Committee would function as an oversight committee for the Economics Task Group.

This comprehensive response must be fine-tuned, but we believe it is the beginning of transformation for our youth in Waco. It may take a village to raise a child, but for us, in Waco, it takes a community to launch a young person.

The second future possibility is creating an assets map for each school neighborhood. The purpose of the assets map is to recognize the needs, strengths, and resource capacity of the community. Assets include agencies, programs, individuals, and any other resources within the geographic area. It is important not only to possess the knowledge of resources, but to have physical representation of where these resources are located and who has access to them. Assets maps reveal the true needs in the community. Assets maps must accompany the EDT process; however, they can stand alone—becoming useful for any strategy or plan. Waco’s diversity far surpasses race or ethnicity, each community within Waco is unique and deserves to be explored individually.

The third and last recommendation is the concept of scaffolding. Similarly to a building project, there must be a framework for construction to take place. Youth need scaffolding to transition them successfully into productive working lives. Scaffolding for youth implies a long term, gradual process of investment by all community members through relationship, mentoring, and skill development. Lev Vygotsky, a cognitive development psychologist, created the theory of the zone of proximal development to explain “the difference between what a learner can accomplish independently and what he or she can accomplish with the guidance and encouragement of a more skilled partner.”⁶ Scaffolding was the term he used to define the support aspects the “skilled partner” provides.

CONCLUSION

⁶ Zastrow, C. H., & Kirst-Ashman, K. K. (2010). *Understanding human behavior and the social environment*. (8th ed.). Brooks/Cole: Belmont, CA. 122-123

Through the themes, findings, and future possibilities presented in this report, our hope is that we have represented the voices of the respondents with great care and accuracy. We see the potential for great work to be done surrounding these findings with consideration to the above mentioned possibilities. The hopes and dreams for youth in Waco are not merely words, but are deep passions and yearnings of committed residents of Waco. Yes, the youth are our future, but they are more than the future; they are ever present and in need of guidance from our community. As a city, we must take ownership of this group of individuals, placing worth and value on them. Waco is an extraordinary place, filled with many compassionate and dedicated people. We applaud the work that is taking place in our city. We also present this information as a challenge to act. As we move forward in this process, please consider the upcoming findings of the focus groups, the voices of the youth, concerning this aspiration. Their voices are crucial to this process. Thank you for your time, energy, and dedication to the youth of Waco. Together we can strengthen connections and collaborations within our community.

Appendix F: Task Team Participants

Children Task Team

Alexis Christensen	Baylor University
Alexis Weaver	Greater Waco Chamber
Amber Jekot	World Hunger Relief Inc.
Anna Wilgus	Baylor University
Ashley Weaver	Waco Foundation
Brisa Trinidad	Arrow
Cheryl Pooler	Waco ISD
Diane Navejas	Baylor University
Janie Martinez	Care Net of Central Texas
Jeff Wall	City of Waco
Jill McCall	Compassion Ministries
Jodi Stacey	Education Alliance
Kasey Ashenfelter	Baylor University
Kathryn Farmer	Baylor University
Kenneth Moerbe	Organizer of Poverty Solutions Group
Kretcha Roldan	Avance
Kyle Knighton	Talitha Koum
Linda Rains-Russell	City of Waco
Lisa Robertson	Big Brothers Big Sisters
Melissa Tran	Baylor University
Michaelann Roe	Arrow
Morgan Wyatt	City of Waco
Nancy Grayson	Rapoport Academy
Rehan McNeil	McLennan County Health Department
Sasha Roskos	Baylor University
Shannon Dunn	Waco ISD
Shawna Bolen	City of Waco
Sherry Williams	City of Waco
Shirley Langston	Restoration Haven
Susan Schafer	Community
Teri HoltKamp	City of Waco
Tiffani Johnson	City of Waco
Tiffany Forsyth	Baylor University
Virginia DuPuy	Education Alliance

Economics Task Team

Al Pollard	McLennan Community College
Alexis Christensen	Baylor University
Alexis Weaver	Greater Waco Chamber
Amy Jacober	Baylor University
Ana Salinas	Waco Public Housing Authority
Andrea Dixon	Baylor University
Anne Mitchell	Neighborhood Association
Ashley Thornton	Baylor University
Carlton Willis	Mission Waco
Cynthia Cunningham	NAMI
Doris Holtman	Waco Public Housing Authority
Doug Hill	Atmos Energy
Gail King	Cen-Tex Chamber of Commerce
Heather Mustain	Baylor University
Jeff Wall	City of Waco
Jennifer Mikeska	Baylor University
Josh Lawson	Antioch Community Church
Julie Sutherland	Baylor University
Kathryn Farmer	Baylor University
Kenneth Moerbe	Organizer of Poverty Solutions Group
Linda Stanford	McLennan Community College
Megan Henderson	Heart of Texas Council of Governments
Megan Lewis	Baylor University
Michael Green	McLennan Community College
Natalie Allen	Baylor University
Pat Atkins	Community
Phil Adkins	Community
Robin Newman	Methodist Children's Home
Sheryl Kattner	Texas State Technical College
Stacey Kinsey-Kerr	Communities in Schools
Teri Holtkamp	City of Waco
Tiffany Forsyth	Baylor University
Todd Ewing	Texas State Technical College
Wesley Carter	Cargill

Environment Task Team

Alexis Christensen	Baylor University
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Anastasia Collier	Habitat for Humanity
Ashley Thornton	Baylor University
Bethel Erickson	World Hunger Relief, Inc.
Britt Duke	Habitat for Humanity
Chris Lazaro	City of Waco
Chris McGowan	Greater Waco Chamber
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Emily Fau	Habitat for Humanity
Jeff Wall	City of Waco
John Alexander	Habitat for Humanity
Kasey Ashenfelter	Baylor University
Kathryn Farmer	Baylor University
Kenneth Moerbe	Organizer of Poverty Solutions Group
Lokey, Kathleen	Baylor University
Michelle Starr	City of Waco
Mike Stone	Waco Community Development
Paige Panter	Baylor University
Ron English	Baylor University
Roy Nash	NeighborWorks
Sara Elliott	Baylor University
Stan Mason	City of Waco
Teri HoltKamp	City of Waco
Tiffany Forsyth	Baylor University

Resources Task Team

Alex Scheibner	Baylor University
Alexis Weaver	Greater Waco Chamber
Ana Salinas	Waco Public Housing Authority
Antwone Taulton	Baylor University
Ashley Thornton	Baylor University
Ashley Weaver	Waco Foundation
Barbara Tate	Heart of Texas MHMR
Buddy Edwards	Caritas
Cynthia Cunningham	NAMI
Cynthia Riedel	Texas Department of Family Protective Services
Dan Worley	The Freeman Center
Debbie McElveen	Potter's Vessel
Donovan McNeil	Senior News
Earnest Ward	Waco Public Housing Authority
Ed Jordan	Heart of Texas Council of Governments

Gary Luft	Heart of Texas Council of Governments
Gordon Fuller	Agudath Jacob Synagogue
Jan Enders	Heart of Texas Council of Governments
Jeff Wall	City of Waco
Jessica Alford	Heart of Central Texas Independent Living
Jim Ellor	Baylor University
Kathy Reid	Family Abuse Center
Kenneth Moerbe	Organizer of Poverty Solutions Group
Laura Pennington	Baylor University
Laurel Cluthe	Baylor University
Loretta Lambert	Texas Department of Family Protective Services
Phil Weaver	Texas Department of Family Protective Services
Natalie Williams	of Waco
Naomi Dews	Baylor University
Nina Ruff	Baylor University
Rachel Svrcheck	of Waco
Steve Graham	Heart of Texas Council of Governments
Teri Holtkamp	City of Waco
Tony Lamb	Community
Vicki Halfmann	City of Waco

Appendix G: Strategic Goals and Actions Developed by the PSSC Task Teams (Detail)

The PSSC adopted the Baylor report recommendation of dividing the twelve aspirations into groups in early 2010 to aid in identify strategies and tactics for related aspirations. Four task teams were established, one for each group of aspirations. The task teams were:

- **Health and Education (Originally named Children)**
- **Economics**
- **Resources**
- **Environment**

Members of the task teams represented social service agencies, faith-based organizations, public schools, universities, non-profits, government and the community. Together they developed a wide range of strategies, some very detailed and including suggested tactics and some more broad and overarching.

Education and Health Aspirations 1, 2 and 5

Aspiration 1: Improve the health of our children and support healthy lifestyles for all.

Strategy 1.1: Educate the community about children’s health, wellness, and health services.

Tactics:

- 1.1.1: Educate about, raise awareness for, and help parents better utilize WIC.
- 1.1.2: Implement a local program that provides communication to all parents about milestones and time-sensitive medical needs of their children, modeled after the Texas Health Steps Program
- 1.1.3: Collaborate with SmartBabies Initiative to educate childcare providers about early childhood health.
- 1.1.4: Promote collaboration between local area agencies providing health education and Waco ISD/other districts to allow access of the agency into the classroom to assist educators.
- 1.1.5: Support and develop the WISD School Health Advisory Council (SHAC)
- 1.1.6: Work with health care facilities to develop program explaining which type of health care facility to go to for different level of care (preventive, routine, emergency).

Strategy 1.2: Provide better accessibility to services that increase wellness.

Tactics:

- 1.2.1: Improve accessibility to health care and immunizations by increase collaboration between the City of Waco, McLennan County Public Health District and the Family Health Center.

- 1.2.2: Assess barriers to health care related to the difficulty in filling out or understanding forms and/or the process of signing up for services.
- 1.2.3: Support local area organizations that assist and educate residents about community resources and provide assistance in filling out forms/paperwork.
- 1.2.4: Reach out to healthcare-services eligible children and families who are not receiving services to ensure they are aware of resources offered and receiving the service needed.
- 1.2.5: Explore the possibility of a case management pilot project patterned after the Open Table concept of a group of individuals focusing on individual families in poverty.

Strategy 1.3: Create a means of accountability through improved immunization tracking.

Tactics:

- 1.3.1: Advocate for all physicians to utilize the immunization tracking database, ImmTrac.
- 1.3.2: Create more training for childcare providers about immunizations
- 1.3.3: Encourage Family Health Centers to attain 100% ImmTrac utilization.

Aspiration 2: Prepare our children for success in school and beyond.

Strategy 2.1: Support parents through increased parenting education and training opportunities.

Tactics:

- 2.1.1: Create culturally sensitive parenting skills classes based on/divided by age of children and develop a way to provide creative and desirable incentives for attending these classes.
- 2.1.2: Introduce parenting awareness classes into school curriculums for all students starting in middle school.

Strategy 2.2: Provide a system of role models, caregivers, and positive opportunities in which children can thrive.

Tactics:

- 2.2.1: Use existing buildings in neighborhoods as community centers.
- 2.2.2: Expand and develop the understanding that all citizens are role models for our children.
- 2.2.3: Research creative funding opportunities to support already existing efforts and agencies.
- 2.2.4: Build and coordinate a volunteer base to utilize in schools and other areas of communities.
- 2.2.5: Support Low Income Families in Transition (LIFT) Workshops
- 2.2.6: Increase awareness of the greater need for housing for families with children

Strategy 2.3: Strengthen childcare by increasing access, training and support systems.

Tactics:

- 2.3.1: Provide better access to quality childcare.

- 2.3.2: Support grandparents who are raising children and find creative ways to provide childcare for those grandparents who are ineligible for childcare vouchers.
- 2.3.3: Offer more pre-K in Waco ISD.
- 2.3.4: Support Touchpoints training for child care, health care, mental health, and faith-based service providers.
- 2.3.5: Increase awareness and support the maintenance and expansion of the Texas Rising Star (TRS) program through professional development, use of mentors, and provision of materials, equipment, and facility improvements.
- 2.3.6: Maintain and expand Texas School Ready! certified classrooms and increase awareness of this program.

Aspiration 5: Care for our elderly population.

Strategy 5.1: Expand awareness of services currently available for elderly people.

Strategy 5.2: Encourage a collaborative and coordinated volunteer structure to connect the elderly with volunteering opportunities.

Strategy 5.3: Support the exploration of the Aging and Disability Resource Center (ADRC) and the needs it addresses.

Strategy 5.4: Expand permanent housing with supportive services for the elderly, especially using HUD’s Section 202 program and models similar to Brook Oaks and the Salvation Army’s permanent, supportive housing program.

Strategy 5.5: Increase agency communication, particularly between Adult Protective Services (APS), the Area Agency on Aging (AAA), MHMR, Friends for Life and the Family Abuse Center for the physical, emotional, and financial protection of our elders.

Economics Aspirations 3, 4, & 11

Aspiration 3: Launch our young people into productive working lives.

Strategy 3.1: Coordinate, expand and focus mentoring efforts focusing on helping young people prepare for productive working lives.

Tactics:

- 3.1.1: Inventory current mentoring programs and find out how much they emphasize preparing for working life.
- 3.1.2: Call a “summit” of people in town who coordinate current mentoring programs and engage them in working together on a plan for accomplishing this goal.
- 3.1.3: Come up with a system for tracking participation in mentoring programs and some ideas for measuring success and sharing best practices.

Strategy 3.2: Help more of young people successfully plan a career path beyond High School/High School Equivalency and successfully negotiate the process for accomplishing that plan.

Tactics:

- 3.2.1: Develop a system for tracking success at helping young people make this transition.
- 3.2.2: Inventory and assess programs already in place for this purpose.
- 3.2.3: Gather input from people in the community who (a) have crossed the bridge successfully and (b) have not been able to cross the bridge, (c) people who have first-hand knowledge from trying to help young people cross this bridge and use that input to plan a strategy for increasing our success in this area.
- 3.2.4: Expand internship and service learning opportunities for high school youth.
- 3.2.5: Support and expand high school programs that teach life skills, especially personal finances.
- 3.2.6: Expand the involvement of local businesses, MCC and TSTC in our high schools.

Strategy 3.3: Maximize the percentage of people in GED programs who complete those programs and successfully move on to the next step in their path toward a productive working life.

Tactics:

- 3.3.1: Inventory current GED programs and figure out a way to measure/track participation and “success” rates.
- 3.3.2: Collect data from people in the community who (a) have participated in GED programs and succeeded, (b) have participated and failed or dropped out before finishing, (c) have first hand knowledge from helping people with this program and can inform us about some of the barriers to success.
- 3.3.3: Use the data above to call a “summit” of GED prep providers and to develop a plan for coordinating work, overcoming barriers and sharing best practices.

Aspiration 4: Gainfully employ our working-age population.

Strategy 4.1: Provide opportunities for people who are already working at low-paying jobs to get the training and support they need to get higher paying jobs.

Strategy 4.2 Identify and communicate with a variety of employers to determine how the community can work with them to better support their work force needs.

Strategy 4.3: Inventory existing resources available to help people find and keep good paying jobs; identifying and remedying gaps in awareness, understanding and access regarding these existing resources.

Aspiration 11: Energize our economic base.

Strategy 11.1: Determine the current situation regarding jobs, wages and job creation in the community, including strengths and weaknesses as a community and on-going efforts to bring or create more and better paying jobs.

Strategy 11.2: Develop a more detailed strategy using the findings from the above determination.

Resources Aspirations 6, 7& 8

Aspiration 6: Support residents who face special challenges.

Ex-offender Strategies

Strategy 6.1: Better prepare ex-offenders prior to release by addressing work release program structure, parole transfer process and re-entry preparation.

Issues to be address by Tactics:

- 6.1.1: Minimal prisoner re-entry preparation
- 6.1.2: Confusing work release program structure
- 6.1.3: Lengthy parole transfer process

Strategy 6.2: Expand ex-offender reintegration assistance after release by expanding mental health/addiction assistance, mentoring, access to programs and housing.

Issues to be address by Tactics:

- 6.2.1: Limited mental health/addiction assistance
- 6.2.2: No access to government programs for felons (food stamps, housing assistance, etc.)
- 6.2.3: Open table concept
- 6.2.4: San Antonio-style program (don't recall the name)
- 6.2.5: Would Dream Center model (Los Angeles) be appropriate?
- 6.2.6: Sex offender housing and placement

Strategy 6.3: Increase ex-offender employment opportunities by increasing awareness of tax credits, advocating for hiring programs and innovative work opportunities.

Issues to be address by Tactics:

- 6.3.1: City of Waco hiring policy – 7 years after felony
- 6.3.2: State/federal felony hiring policies
- 6.3.3: Advocacy program for hiring felons
- 6.3.4: Tax credits for hiring felons
- 6.3.5: Business incubator focused on ex-offenders
- 6.3.6: Develop “WacoCorps” allowing ex-offender participation
- 6.3.7: Would Homeboy Industries model (Los Angeles) be appropriate?
- 6.3.8: Advocate for program to replace Project Rio (bonding program)

- 6.3.9: Allow offenders to perform community service in lieu of incarceration.

Mental illness/addiction Strategies

Strategy 6.4: Expand progressive housing options for individuals with serious mental illness or addiction.

Tactics:

- 6.4.1: Evaluate the housing continuum for individuals with mental illness and addiction, from entry into the system to permanent supportive housing (including in-patient indigent care and detoxification), to determine the most effective way assure safe, appropriate housing at every phase.
- 6.4.2: Increase permanent supportive housing for individuals with serious mental illness or addiction.
- 6.4.3.: Explore innovative incentive-based housing programs.

Strategy 6.5: Explore approaches to increase accessibility to psychiatric care for individuals diagnosed with illnesses not covered by MHMR or are Medicare recipients.

Tactics:

- 6.5.1: Investigate the possibility of expanding Baylor and MCC’s resources and engagement in serving the mentally ill.
- 6.5.2: Explore the establishment of a local hospital district.

Strategy 6.6: Expand PATH (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness) program’s capacity to bring individuals with serious mental illness into contact with services.

Tactics:

- 6.6.1: Explore additional grant possibilities
- 6.6.2: Work with neighboring counties who utilize the program to assist with funding.

Strategy 6.7: Increase addiction prevention programs for children and adults by developing programs and initiatives focused on “meeting people where they’re at” by serving the identified needs of the particular community.

Tactics:

- 6.7.1: Conduct research to determine the extent of various types of addiction, age, location, etc.
- 6.7.2: Develop specific programs focusing on most critical areas as determined by research.

Physically Disabled Strategies

Strategy 6.8: Increase safe, affordable, accessible housing by requiring a portion of low income housing tax credits be reserved for individuals with disabilities – similar to what is now required for the elderly.

Strategy 6.9: Expand social support opportunities connecting disabled individuals to the community by supporting HOCTIL in preparation of grant application to develop an accessible center for disabled individuals.

Strategy 6.10: Investigate increasing funding to health care providers who service individuals in poverty through the implementation of a local hospital district.

Aspiration 7: Empower our residents.

Strategy 7.1: Provide an effective way for residents to be heard about their needs.

Tactics:

- 7.1.1: Hold town meetings, led by trusted neighborhood leaders, at regular intervals.
- 7.1.2: Train community members to conduct neighborhood research/surveys within their neighborhoods.
- 7.1.3: Strengthen neighborhood associations (addressed in Aspiration 9 Strengthen our neighborhoods).
- 7.1.4: Increase community members' awareness of all resources at their disposal through both formal and informal networks and organizations. For example:
 - Formal: City of Waco, Waco CDC, Habitat for Humanity, 2-1-1, governmental funding, newspaper, billing inserts, etc.
 - Informal: Churches, volunteer organizations and neighborhood associations

Strategy 7.2: Increase opportunities for the development of community leaders by reaching out to the community for their input into the process and collaborating on leadership training programs.

Tactics:

- 7.2.1: Include leadership encouragement in life skills training conducted by local organizations.
- 7.2.2: Request potential leader recommendations from local organizations working within the communities; with additional targeted efforts on women and teens.
- 7.2.3: Conduct focus groups (general, women and teens) to gather input on how to get them engaged as leaders in the community and what they need to become leaders.
- 7.2.4: Develop collaborative program connecting recommended potential leaders with appropriate leadership training opportunities.
- 7.2.5 Adjust or expand, as needed, current leadership training opportunities using information gathered from focus groups.

Aspiration 8: Align our social services efficiently and effectively.

Strategy 8.1: Build support for collaboration by conducting a case study to determine the financial cost of poor collaboration vs. organized collaborative intervention.

Tactics:

- 8.1.1: Utilize HMIS to identify an individual who bounces from agency to agency without resolving the underlying condition/need, and who, in the process, incurs costs to the community throughout the process.
- 8.1.2: Calculate the expense as he moves from organization to organization, duplicating services.
- 8.1.3: Collaborate on organizational involvement and measure the costs as the individual's needs are met permanently through personal empowerment.

- 8.1.4: Use research publications and best practices to inform the collaborative efforts of Central Texas organizations.

Strategy 8.2: Create a standing board to address the needs involved in collaboration between social services organizations to 1) collect and present compelling evidence to inform collaboration between social service agencies; 2) raise public awareness about social services; 3) host stakeholders meetings to draft plans and MOUs designed to pool resources, increase communication, and improve overall collaboration.

Tactics:

- 8.2.1: Enlist three to four individuals, in addition to temporary members with expertise necessary to address particular collaborative opportunities.
- 8.2.2: Identify a facilitator a “champion of collaboration”, who can remain unbiased.
- 8.2.3: House/host the board at a neutral third party such as the City of Waco.

Strategy 8.3: Create a systematic path for individuals to follow for entering and exiting our social services system.

Strategy 8.4: Develop customized information access portals for special challenges individuals.

Strategy 8.5: Expand the number of organizations who use the Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS).

Environment Aspirations 9, 10, & 12

Aspiration 9: Strengthen our neighborhoods.

Strategy 9.1: Energize neighborhood associations by helping them engage residents more effectively.

Tactics:

- 9.1.1. Strengthen, centralize, and find sponsoring organizations for Neighborhood Associations.
- 9.1.2. Identify and strengthen community centers that can serve as place to gather for recreation, disseminate information, provide access to/support with applications for services, etc.
- 9.1.3. Create neighborhood individuality, identification, and pride through the use of systems such as markers, signs, or banners to identify neighborhoods.

Strategy 9.2: Grow our neighborhoods by pulling together private, public and non-profit players to create holistic, sustainable strategies for developing each neighborhood or sub-section of the city.

Tactics:

- 9.2.1. Identify economic development strategies for neighborhood districts to help bring businesses into neighborhoods, create jobs, and foster a sense of neighborhood identity.
- 9.2.2. Facilitate strategic planning in neighborhoods to model North Waco and Downtown planning already done.

- 9.2.3. Strategically design/plan neighborhoods to promote safety, create mixed income neighborhoods without displacement and cluster growth in specific, strategically chosen areas.
- 9.2.4. Provide a range of affordable, safe, and quality housing that meets the needs of residents at all life stages—the continuum of housing—rental and ownership.
- 9.2.5. Improve rental inspection and accountability—re-visit the rental inspection program proposed to City Council years ago.
- 9.2.6. Strengthen and build avenues to communicate with faith-based organizations.

Aspiration 10: Upgrade our shared spaces.

Strategy 10.1: Improve vacant lots and dilapidated properties through aggressive code enforcement, investment incentives, and community participation.

Tactics:

- 10.1.1: Strengthen neighborhood codes/ordinances and empower resident reporting and enforcement.
- 10.1.2: Be more aggressive with tax foreclosure on vacant lots.
- 10.1.3: Focus growth on vacant lots, utilizing the lot sale to build houses.
- 10.1.4: Communicate and promote incentives and benefits of investing in vacant or dilapidated properties. Raise awareness about the profitability of improving lots and renting them for profit.
- 10.1.5: Enhance the ability of non-profits to buy vacant lots in strategically planned locations.
- 10.1.6: Use vacant lots for gardens, possibly working with the City of Waco to provide free or discounted access to water.
- 10.1.7: Find ways to bring art to vacant spaces.

Strategy 10.2: Improve accessibility to financial services, education, healthy food, recreation, social services and the other building blocks of a positive life.

Tactics:

- 10.2.1: Continue to improve sidewalks, and do so strategically, utilizing schools or high traffic areas in order to better meet the needs of pedestrians and bicycle riders.
- 10.2.2: Strategically plan bus routes around central route.
- 10.2.3: Provide access to quality financial services as well as education, healthy food, recreation, entertainment, parks, and social services.

Aspiration 12: Enjoy life together.

Strategy 12.1 Identify and remove barriers to participation in currently existing sports, music programs and other recreational and cultural opportunities.

Tactic:

- 12.1.1: Bring culturally relevant entertainment, recreation, and activities into neighborhoods.

Strategy 12.2: Communicate sports, music and other recreational and cultural opportunities more effectively to people in poverty.

Strategy 12.3: Coordinate with mentoring programs to make sure mentors are aware of ways to encourage participation in existing sports, music and other recreational and cultural opportunities.

Tactic:

- 12.3.1: Provide mentoring through faith-based organizations.

Appendix H: Baseline Data, Community Indicators and an Information Clearinghouse

Baseline data and Community Indicators

Measuring progress toward a goal helps motivate the action to accomplish the goal. It's hard to keep people interested in "playing" if you don't keep score. The decennial census data gives us useful baseline data, but checking our status once every ten years is not often enough to make sure we are staying on track, and one or two broad income statistics are not enough to direct our work and allow us to see progress. A regularly updated overall community "progress report" that pulls that information into one spot will make it easier for us to keep track of how we are doing and to plan our work together.

We suggest producing a regular community progress report with two general sections:

Decennial indicators

In this section we recommend showing trend information for the following data points from the decennial census:

- The rate of poverty (household and individual)
- The rate of people living below 200% of the federal poverty guideline
- The rate of child poverty (18 years old and younger)

We also recommend showing some comparison data. Waco's data should be compared with McLennan County, Texas and the United states. We should also establish a set of cities with whom to compare ourselves in order to put the information in context.

Interim progress indicators

The Aspirations provide a vision that breaks the complex problem of poverty into more workable pieces. We can use the Aspirations as a guide to establish a set of "community progress indicators" that we track together. A common set of progress indicators will help us coordinate our efforts and help us judge whether or not our efforts are moving us towards our ultimate goal. Many organizations in town are already keeping progress indicators; by pulling together a common set of indicators we can encourage more collaboration and discussion about how we can support each other in reaching the community's goals.

We do not have to re-invent the wheel in this respect. Other communities have already seen the value of keeping a common set of progress indicators and we can learn from their example. Some examples we might use include:

- Jacksonville, FL - <http://www.jcci.org/indicators>
- Springfield, MO - http://thelibrary.org/focus/2011_report/communityfocus11.pdf
- Austin, TX - <http://www.cancommunitydashboard.org/>

Information Clearinghouse - In addition to baseline data and progress indicators, we need information to guide our planning. Our work together needs to be based on a firm foundation of facts. A solid body of shared data can inform our strategies and help us make wiser decisions about what action to take and how to use our resources. Data can even help generate resources: granting agencies expect to see data about why their grant money is needed and data about the results of the initiatives they have sponsored.

Many local organizations who are working on poverty and low income issues already know this and are already collecting and keeping data to inform their own work. We need to set up a clearinghouse, perhaps a website or some other system for sharing this data. At the very least, we can save each other the time and energy involved in collecting the same information over and over at different organizations. Here are just a few examples of the kinds of things we could be sharing:

- Relevant statistics drawn from the census data – especially those that have already been converted into charts and graphs that are easier to read.
- Statistical data, charts and graphs from other sources – TEA, Bureau of Labor Statistics, HMIS, Kids Count, etc.
- Asset maps and lists
- Focus group and interview results and analyses (For example the recent work being done by the Baylor School of Social Work Community Practice class regarding young people in poverty)
- Research reports such as the TECEC study sponsored by the Waco Foundation and the East Waco study commissioned by Neighborworks
- Grant application information
- Economic analysis
- Information about best practices and ideas from other communities (for example the work done by the Baylor School of Social Work Community Practice class in 2010. See Appendix E.)
- Strategic plans and goals from various organizations so that we can see possible points of collaboration and identify gaps

In addition to sharing the data we already have, a central clearinghouse will allow us to identify gaps in our data and to pool resources to collect information that might serve several purposes. By sharing more data we might also develop more effective ways of collecting data as a community. Tools such as HMIS (the system currently being used to track information about services to homeless individuals) become much more valuable as more and more organizations participate in their use.

Waco is fortunate to have access to several institutions that both share an interest in the success of the community and have some capacity for supplying the research and data needed. We need to develop effective, “win-win” arrangements to connect the information needs of the community regarding poverty reduction with the data/research capacity of our institutions, particularly our institutions of higher education. An information clearinghouse approach could help us organize this effort more efficiently.

Examples of data collection/research that could potentially benefit our efforts to build a wider base of financial independence in Waco might include:

- More in depth research on trends and contributing factors to poverty in Waco. (Similar to the report in the Step Up Savannah Action Plan <http://stepupsavannah.org/sites/stepup.christianyates.com/files/ActionPlan200605152-2.pdf>)
- More in depth analysis of our pay/job situation – What kinds of jobs do we have that pay adequate wages? Are there openings in those kinds of jobs? Do we have a workforce prepared to fill those openings? What are the workforce needs of our employers who pay adequate wages? How can we help them meet their workforce needs?
- Research and information directly tied to the Aspirations – For example, an in-depth analysis of our high school to career “pipeline” and how well that is working.
- Information comparing us to other cities to help us answer the question “Why does Waco have a higher rate of poverty than other Texas cities our size?”

Appendix I: Community Engagement Strategy – Seeking Community Input into the Planning Process

PART 1: Host 2 Community Planning/Input Sessions for entire city, or 1 session per neighborhood (geared at taking action in their neighborhood)

Utilize outreach mechanisms such as Education Alliance & Community Visioning newsletters as well as agency contacts to invite participants. Ask Education Alliance to promote as “Community Event”. Ensure plan is on website where it can be viewed ahead of time.

Aim of the event: seek broad community input from diverse stakeholders into the Poverty Solutions Plan, including action steps (tactics). Utilize a modified Ketso Community Planning outline:http://ketso.com/resources-downloads/available-resources/ketso-workshop-plans#community_planning.²⁴

Briefing – 20 minutes

Overview of poverty data & brief history, best practices
Share 4 task teams and strategies (examples of tactics)

Workshop – 90 minutes to 2 hours

Participants are allocated to workshop groups in each of 4 task team areas.
Tables of 6 to 8.

In each group, everyone introduces themselves briefly.

Review of strategies for the area (on table) and ask for written answers to questions:

- What works well
- Future Possibilities
- Key Challenges
- Solutions to Challenges
- Prioritization

Include time for reviewing other table’s ideas.

Groups Report Back – 30 minutes to 1 hour

Have everyone report back to main group top priorities and actions

PART 2: Identify focus groups (6 to 10 people) to review plan in each task team area.

Utilize group meetings that are already occurring – waiting rooms of agencies, monthly business meetings,

Ask for feedback on the strategies and tactics (can utilize similar model to that above). “How would this/could this work for YOU”

Potential focus groups:

²⁴Ketso means action in Lesotho, Southern Africa, where it was invented.

- Parents
- Teachers
- Inner-city churches
- Businesses – Chamber board, Waco Business League, Rotary

Appendix J: Near Northside Master Plan Overview



Near Northside Masterplan Overview

Imagine Waco on Small Area Planning:

- Encourage Neighborhood Revitalization
 - Energize small neighborhood commercial centers to attract homeowners.
 - Prepare small area plans to implement zoning and development regulations in key areas”

Near Northside MasterPlan:

Goals

- Create balance and stability: Balance business and residential uses in the neighborhood while providing a stabilizing force.
- Improve safety and perception of crime: Make the neighborhood safe for all including school children and change the larger community’s perception of the area.
- Improve business viability: Help to create a vibrant community that attracts small businesses, artisans and ethnic restaurants.
- Beautification and infrastructure improvements: Recommend improvements to streetscapes, road ways, home design (uniformity of architecture) and multi-modal transportation infrastructure.
- Economic development and funding: Find funding to promote and entice new development and redevelopment opportunities in the area.
- Promote diversity throughout the neighborhood: Including racial, income, business, housing, school population and economic diversity.

Implementation Strategies

- Revise the local zoning to be more compatible with the neighborhood vision and develop a set of development standards to guide future development.
- Develop an organizational structure to advocate for the revitalization of the Near Northside area.
- Create a detailed economic development incentive program for the region.
- Work with partners to positively control the redevelopment of Parkside Village.
- Develop a marketing campaign to promote the economic advantages, quality of life, current momentum and real estate opportunities within the Near Northside.
- Develop a Real Estate Strategy to assemble and sell property at key catalyst locations within the neighborhood.
- Continue the City’s Housing and Community Development Incentive policies to encourage reinvestment in the area.

Current Status: Near Northside Stakeholder Implementation Team is actively working to implement and address masterplan strategies. Download and review the entire plan at www.greaterdowntownwaco.com.

Appendix K: Step-Up Savannah Membership Agreement

<http://stepupsavannah.org/sites/stepup.christianyates.com/files/Step%20Up%20Collaborative%20Agreement.pdf>



<http://stepupsavannah.org>

Daniel Dodd
Project Director
101 East Bay Street
Savannah, Georgia 31401



VISION
Savannah is a community where all people have HOPE and OPPORTUNITY, where we challenge injustice, and where all community members Step Up to eliminate poverty.

MISSION
The Step Up Collaborative will reduce poverty in Savannah by encouraging residents and organizations to identify then work to reduce barriers to self sufficiency; by finding, redistributing or creating the necessary resources; and by evaluating outcomes.

GOAL
To reduce the poverty rate by 2010 in the city's five census tracts with the highest poverty rate, according to the 2000 census.

Step Up Savannah's Poverty Reduction Initiative

Structure for ongoing collaboration

The structure, purpose and composition of Step Up, its leadership and advisory boards, and its action teams are defined in the "Poverty Reduction Action Plan," adopted in 2005, and the Initiative's Operating Procedures (8-15-05).

The Action Plan recognized that implementation depends entirely on the cooperation of Step Up's partners. The Plan calls for a structure for ongoing collaboration.

Collaboration defined

Step Up will act as a catalyst for community and faith-based organizations and leaders, businesses and government. Its relationships with these partners will be established through written agreements, or memorandums of understanding. The collaborative will commit annually to accomplishing specific goals for the year.

Step Up will work to build consensus among its partners to advocate for the best use of resources to reduce the number of citizens living in poverty in our community. The leadership of Step Up recognizes this is a long-term effort with specific outcomes that can be measured on an annual or semi-annual basis.

Step Up will:

- be non-partisan and data-driven, systematically examining poverty in Chatham County;
- build bridges and facilitate the open exchange of information;
- act as a mediator when obstacles arise; and
- raise public awareness about how poverty inhibits the entire community from realizing its full economic potential and how citizens and organizations can take actions to reduce poverty.

Process: Sharing for success

Step Up will work cooperatively to identify gaps in services or public policies and procedures that act as barriers to those living in poverty. It will advocate for new approaches using existing resources, in partnership with agencies and the private sector, as appropriate.

Step Up may assist or join with organizations and agencies in the creation of innovative programming and act as an incubator for new ideas. It will seek out the best partners to operate any new programs or services. It may assist in specific fundraising efforts that rely on written agreements. It may also work with other agencies in the start-up phase of a new program and, with its partners, develop program accountability standards and review processes. Step Up, with its designated partner will set target spin-off dates for any new programs it helps to launch.

Step Up will not seek funding to run new programs independently, nor will it compete to operate direct services.

Statement of Agreement to Collaborate

Date _____

We, the undersigned representatives of _____ hereby affirm the principles outlined in Step Up Savannah's Poverty Reduction Initiative collaboration policy adopted by the Initiative's Leadership Board.

We recognize that almost 22 percent of Savannah's citizens live at or below the federal poverty level, according to the 2000 U.S. Census. We understand this is a long-term problem that requires a commitment to specific, measurable goals that need to be evaluated annually. It is our mutual intent that by collaborating we will strengthen our capacity to reduce poverty in our community. We share the commitment to reduce Savannah's poverty level by the 2010 U.S. Census.

We further agree that through linking our expertise and efforts our collective impact will extend far beyond our individual abilities to affect our community's economic development and prosperity.

Step Up will:

- be non-partisan and data-driven, systematically examining poverty in Chatham County;
- build bridges and facilitate the open exchange of information;
- act as a mediator when obstacles arise; and
- raise public awareness about how poverty inhibits the entire community from realizing its full economic potential and how citizens and organizations can take actions to reduce poverty.

We agree to:

- participate in the action teams that address barriers to getting out of poverty including but not limited to workforce development, asset-building, affordable housing, transportation, healthcare and dependent care;
- utilize our organization's expertise, encouraging staff members to participate in establishing annual goals with the action teams and to work toward accomplishing those goals;
- share data and relevant information with Step Up so that gaps in services and duplication of effort may be eliminated in furtherance of the goal of reducing poverty and
- share recognition and credit for our work in the collaborative process, provide representation at an annual poverty symposium and meet with the Step Up Leadership Board once per year to evaluate our collaborative effort.

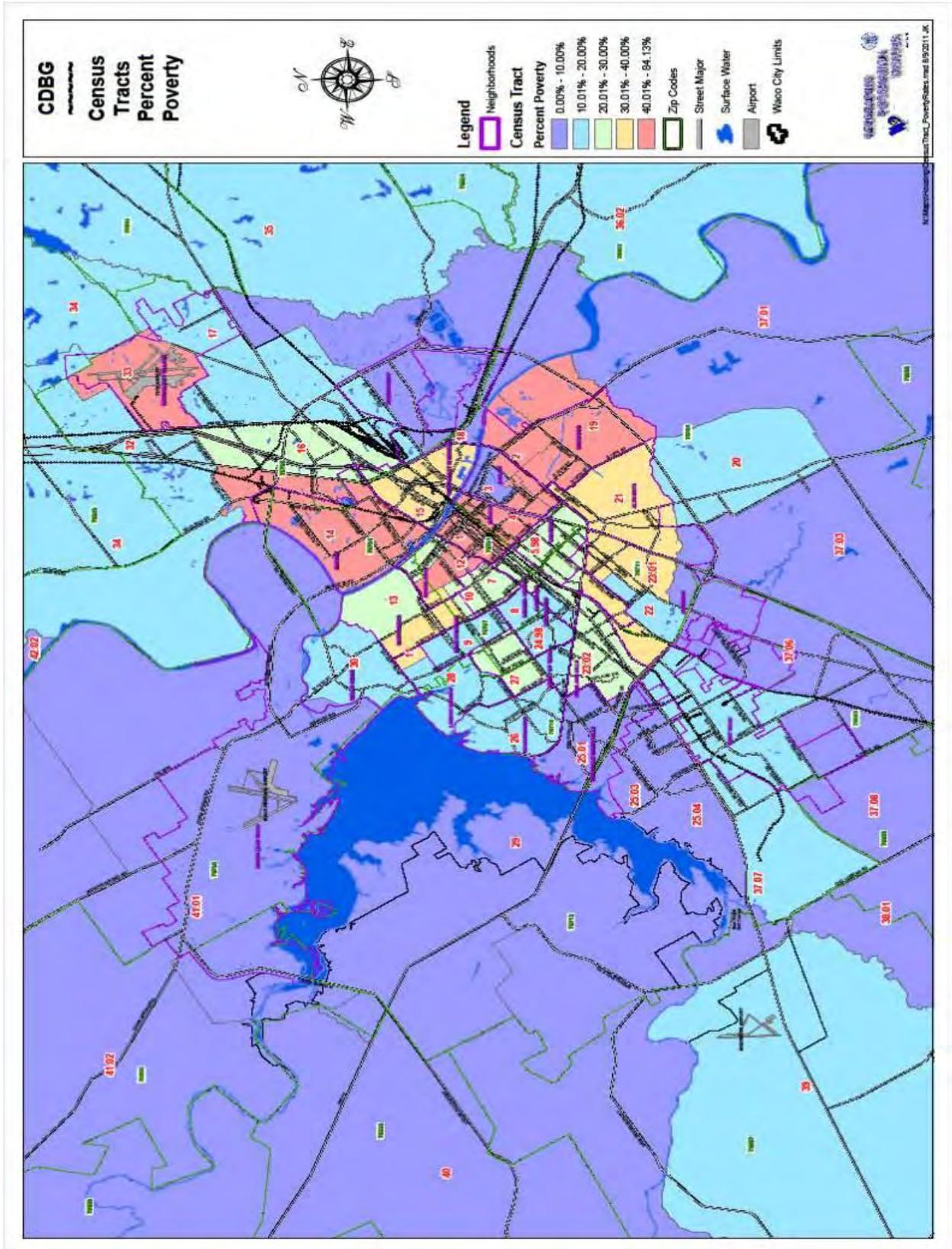
Representative of Organization (please print)

Representative of Step Up (please print)

Signature

Signature

Appendix L: Census Tracts with Percent Poverty (Map)



Poverty Solutions Steering Committee (PSSC)

Members

The following is a list of all those who served on the Poverty Solutions Steering Committee at any time from January 2011 through June 2012:

- Gordon Fuller, Agudath Jacob Synagogue
- Michael Green, MCC Small Business Development Center
- Tom Gutierrez, VientoFuerte Centro de Adoracion
- John Hudson, Waco ISD
- Shirley Langston, Restoration Haven
- Kenneth Moerbe, Organizer of Poverty Solutions Group
- Gary Moore, Waco Public Housing Authority
- Stan Mason, Waco Police Department
- Ramiro Pena, Christ the King Baptist Church
- Cheryl Pooler, Waco ISD
- Rosemary Townsend, Baylor University
- Ashley Thornton, Act Locally Waco and Baylor University
- Alexis Weaver, Greater Waco Chamber of Commerce
- Gaynor Yancey, Baylor University School of Social Work

Vision:

A community united to reduce poverty and build hope. The people of Waco will work together even more effectively than we already are to...

1. **Improve the health of our children and support healthy lifestyles for all.** More children in Waco will be born healthy and more residents of Waco will lead healthy lifestyles.
2. **Prepare our children for success in school and beyond.** Early childhood development in Waco will prepare more children to start school ready to succeed, and more children will succeed all the way through to high school graduation.
3. **Launch our young people into productive working lives.** More young people in Waco will successfully negotiate the transition into careers/vocations that lead to a living wage or better.
4. **Gainfully employ our working-age population.** More Waco residents will find and keep jobs that pay enough for them to sustain a satisfying quality of life for themselves and for their families.
5. **Care for our elderly population.** More of the elderly people in Waco will have the resources they need to live out their lives with security and dignity.
6. **Support residents who face special challenges.** More of the Waco residents who face physical, mental and social challenges will have the resources they need to live their lives with security and dignity.
7. **Empower our residents.** More residents of Waco will be able to effectively advocate for themselves and to manage the essential resources (money, housing, education, childcare, food, transportation, health care, etc.) needed to maintain the quality of life of their choosing.
8. **Align our social services efficiently and effectively.** Infrastructure, social-services and policy in Waco will be coordinated to more effectively support upward mobility from economic dependence to independence.
9. **Strengthen our neighborhoods.** More of our neighborhoods and residential areas in Waco will be clean, safe and attractive.
10. **Upgrade our shared spaces.** More of our shared public spaces and commercial spaces will be clean, safe, attractive, accessible and accommodating.
11. **Energize our economic base.** Our local economy will create more job opportunities with the living wages needed to help employees achieve their goals.
12. **Enjoy life together.** All Waco residents will enjoy opportunities to grow socially and culturally.