

Strengthening Community Partnerships through an Assessment of Residents' Issues and Priorities

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Abstract

Effective university-community relationships require input from community residents. This study, conducted as part of Texas Southern University's outreach program, solicits the viewpoints of the residents of Acres Homes on several issues including the community's needs and priorities. The findings show that the respondents consider job training, youth mentoring and after-school programs, employment opportunities, and demolition of vacant/abandoned buildings as "high priority" issues. The study offers suggestions for follow-up actions by metropolitan universities that seek to be responsive to their communities.

The concept of university-community partnership implies that universities and colleges will collaborate or work hand-in-hand with community residents and leaders to address community problems. As Young (1995) argued, local governments, community organizations and citizens expect institutions of higher learning to apply their resources in addressing community social and economic problems. Within this context, HUD's Community Outreach Partnership Center program is designed to assist universities to form partnerships with local governments, community-based organizations, and community residents and leaders on programs that benefit communities (Al-Kodmany 1999; Stegman 1995). Actually, Bringle and Hatcher (2002) noted that the resources provided by federal programs such as HUD's Office of University Partnership and the agency's Community Outreach Partnership Centers (COPC) have given impetus to the current active and systematic university-community partnerships. Finally, universities and colleges that are designated as "urban universities" are especially expected to engage in community development through research, teaching and service, and to address selected problems in the "clientele" area.

In response to these expectations, most universities and colleges often mention working with communities as one of the pillars of their institutions' social responsibilities, and this concept is often clearly stated in their mission statements. Wiewel, Carlon, and Friedman (1996) noted that the mission statement of 45 universities that had urban planning departments listed university-community interaction or community outreach, partnerships and service in their mission statements or strategic plans. Also, one of the "Five Points of Vision" of Texas

Southern University (TSU), Houston, Texas is a commitment to community outreach—“supporting past activities, developing new programs and services, and collaborating with local organizations in an effort to create a better quality of life for the people and communities it serves” (*Texas Southern University Academic Affairs Magazine* 2005, 2). While university-community partnerships may have multiplied considerably, especially in recent years, Maurrasse (2002) pointed out that the concept is still in its early stages; the contention being that universities traditionally carry out their missions of teaching, research and service without much direct contact with the local communities. Also, as Mayfield and Lucas, Jr. (2000) noted, universities traditionally carry out research and teaching based on the needs and the pedagogical requirements of the academic discipline while service focuses on those rendered to professional organizations and to the university community.

Several researchers (Al-Kodmany 1999; Bringle and Hatcher 2002; Edwards and Marullo 1999; Ramaley 1998; Young 1995) argue that universities must abandon the tradition of “objectively” assessing community problems from a distance but actively involve the residents in identifying and addressing the social and economic problems of the community. As Ramaley (1998) argued, urban problems are complex and ill-defined and cannot readily be solved through a process whereby universities as “experts” define the problem and proffer solutions on behalf of community residents. Bringle and Hatcher (2002, 506) refer to that type of university-community relationship as the expert model that is “elitist, hierarchical, and unidimensional.” The argument for the participatory, cooperative, multidimensional and democratic research model whereby residents’ input is actively sought is compelling. Citizen involvement in the decision-making process has both ethical and pragmatic dimensions.

The involvement of citizens in decisions that affect their lives is an expression of individual rights and responsibilities and the essence of democracy (Foley and Martin 2000). As Higgins (1999) pointed out, citizens are deprived of basic principles of democratic governance if decisions are made solely by professionals. In addition, soliciting residents’ input may ward off the sense of political alienation that according to Berry, Portney, and Thomson (1993) is especially prevalent in marginalized populations and/or communities. Also, university-community partnership programs or initiatives that incorporate the community residents’ viewpoints may enhance the community residents’ trust and confidence in the university participants.

In addition, community residents are likely to be more aware of community conditions, understand their own needs, opportunities, priorities and special circumstances better than non-resident professionals (LeGates and Robinson 1998; Mayfield, Hellwig, and Banks 1999; Wiewel, Gaffikin, and Morrissey 2000; Zautra 1983). As LeGates and Robinson (1998) noted, communities actually believe that they have a better understanding of community issues and priorities than the university. Within this context, Al-Kodmany (1999) provided examples of situations whereby relying on community residents’ knowledge of the local environment instead of

“expert” opinion led to informed decisions. Also, the recommendations that may emerge from the collaboration are more likely to generate community support.

Furthermore, seeking out community residents’ perspectives is consistent with the literature on neighborhood planning and development that has consistently argued for an open and accessible approach that embraces public participation (Murtagh 1999). The contention is that planning theory and methodology must move away from technocracy and recognize the importance and the need for communication, dialogue and discourse between planners and community residents. As Healey (1992) argued, the biases that are embedded in the professional planners’ interest and values are likely to be predominant—whenever technical knowledge is utilized—as the only basis for addressing community problems.

In contrast to long-distance “objective” observation, collective thinking or group dynamics resulting from active collaboration between universities and the communities are beneficial to both the universities and the communities. Past research indicates that benefits that often accrue to communities involved in such partnerships include the development of local political leadership and community organizing, assistance in job-training programs, neighborhood beautification and clean-up, neighborhood revitalization, assessment of community needs, and the establishment of after-school tutorial and mentoring programs for community high school students (Gilderbloom and Mullins, Jr. 1995; Stegman 1995; Young 1995). Other benefits include family counseling, provision of community day care programs, and the development of affordable housing (Mayfield, Hellwig, and Banks 1999).

The benefits of active university-community partnership, however, do not accrue to the community alone. In addition to encouraging university enrollment of local high school students, working closely with the communities’ primary and secondary schools provides an increased pool of higher-qualified applicants and this may reduce the attrition rate of the universities’ freshmen (Young 1995). Effective university-community collaboration attracts significant positive media attention to the university and thereby enhances the university’s status regarding its social responsibility. Also, the community offers the university an avenue for rigorous testing of the efficacy of theories and concepts and the possibility of increased community-based research funding.

Grant funds that are available through the U.S Department of Education, and Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and several philanthropic and other non-profit organizations for university-community partnerships can be used to foster the university’s mission of research, teaching and service. Actually, HUD has a long-standing program that provides support for collaboration between urban neighborhoods and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) (Stegman 1995). Specifically, HUD’s Office of University Partnership (OUP) has a grant program designed to “assist HBCUs expand their role and effectiveness in addressing community development needs in their localities,” and the identified needs include

“neighborhood revitalization, housing, and economic development, principally for persons of low-income and moderate income” (OUP-About HBCUs). Also, through its OUP Initiative, HUD offers grants for dissertation research on housing and urban development issues (Stegman 1995).

This paper which is a part of a larger project—Texas Southern University - Acres Homes Project—describes one of the attempts undertaken by Texas Southern University to foster the institution’s community outreach program through a participatory planning process. The overall goal of the Acres Homes Project is to develop new programs and services with the Acres Homes community in Houston, Texas. The first step taken by the university in furthering the partnership is to find out the issues, concerns and priorities of the Acres Homes community, and to assess the quality of certain social and physical characteristics of the community as perceived by the community residents. As Foley and Martin (2000) argued, an attitude or opinion survey can be an effective means of involving community residents in the planning process and in establishing policies.

In contrast to most of the past research that utilized entire metropolitan areas as the unit of analysis, this research focused on a specific community. Several researchers (Galster and Mincy 1993; Greenberg and Schneider 1996; Hunter 1979; Ibitayo 1999; Kelly and Swindell 2002; Sawicki and Flynn 1996) have argued that while it is an expensive and time-consuming endeavor, neighborhood-level research represents a more appropriate tool for identifying issues and problems that are relevant to specific communities and neighborhoods. Hunter (1979) argued that a neighborhood is the social unit where urban problems are directly experienced and understood and that in contrast to metropolitan-wide data, neighborhood-level research provides city governments with more specific information that is pertinent to improving neighborhood or community conditions.

Also, metropolitan-wide data tend to blur salient differences between the different communities; the metropolitan-wide data may differ substantially from that of specific neighborhoods or communities, and therefore preclude the identification of problems located within specific communities (Ibitayo 1999). Also, as Parks and Oakerson (1989) pointed out, the need or preference for public services varies between communities within a metropolitan area and over time, and, therefore, there is the need for time and place-specific knowledge or information. As noted earlier, the objective of this study is to investigate the community residents’ viewpoints about elements of the community’s physical environment and the community needs and priorities.

Community Physical Environment

The physical conditions of a neighborhood provide important clues about that neighborhood, and the presence of features such as graffiti, abandoned and/or dilapidated buildings and unkempt yards are key signals of a threatened community

social order or social control undermining the neighborhood quality (Greenberg and Schneider 1996; Hunter 1979; Ross and Miroskwy 1999). Lewis and Salem (1986) noted that perceived neighborhood physical conditions are more strongly related to perceived levels of crime than either past victimization or personal attributes such as race, age or level of education. The physical environment is identified by Basolo and Strong (2002) as a major indicator of the quality of a neighborhood. Coulter (1988) for example, argued that the condition of streets is a significant factor of the quality of urban life and noted that street condition or repair is the second most frequently-mentioned reason of citizen-bureaucratic contact. Also in relation to needs assessment, Percy (1986) argued that community residents' viewpoints about the community's physical characteristics can be used to predict the nature of desired changes.

Community Needs Assessment

Community needs assessment can be described as a planning process directed toward identifying and prioritizing the needs of a target population or community and can be used for organizational improvement, program planning and the allocation of resources (Lee, Altschuld, and White 2007). In view of the importance of community needs assessment Rubin (1998) identified the concept as one of the major research activities that universities can undertake in a university-community partnership.

However, as Altschuld and Witkin (2000) argued, the focus of community need assessment or analysis should be on the primary target or recipients of the services because members of this group are the reasons for even deliberating on providing the service. Within this context, community needs assessment ought to focus on what community residents consider as issues that are relevant to the community and how they (the community residents) rate the problems or issues. Otherwise precious resources may be directed toward addressing problems that do not exist, especially from the perspectives of community residents (Schuh and Upcraft 2001).

The Mission of Texas Southern University (TSU)

Texas Southern University, designated as a "special purpose institution for urban programming" by the Texas State Legislature in 1973 has a history that dates back to 1927. The different antecedents of the university are extension classes, a junior college, a four-year institution and, ultimately, the first state-supported institution in the city of Houston. For example, TSU was known as Houston College for Negroes in 1935 and the campus was owned by Houston Independent School District. In that pervasive racial segregation period, the college provided African Americans, especially in Texas, with an opportunity for higher education.

In March 1947, the Texas State Legislature formally established the institution, including a law school, as Texas State University for Negroes. The law school which was originally located in Austin, Texas was created following a court battle by Herman

Marion Sweatt, an African American to be admitted into the then all White University of Texas Law School in Austin, Texas. The name change to Texas Southern University occurred on June 1, 1951.

Acres Homes Community

Acres Homes is a community situated 10 miles northwest of downtown Houston and was once considered the largest unincorporated Black community in the “South.” The community was initially named Acreage Homes because land was sold not by the plot but by the acre—large enough to allow small gardens and enough space to keep chicken or farm animals. The purchases were owner-financed, required no down-payment, and payments ranged from \$8 to \$12 per month. The first settlers, predominantly African Americans, who came around the time of World War I were from rural areas and were attracted by the community’s inexpensive land, low taxes and the absence of any building standards or codes. During this period Acres Homes was not just a geographic location but a place that the community residents call “home.” The community residents tended to associate with one another than with people of other communities.

The early settlers dug wells and built sanitary facilities, but the conditions deteriorated rapidly as the population grew. By the time the city of Houston decided to annex the community starting in 1967, it was a dispersed slum settlement, without transportation or educational facilities, substandard housing, and without water and sewer lines. The community now includes a combination of large areas of pine forests, a scattering of small tract homes, interspersed with abandoned and dilapidated homes, and large homes built on well-maintained wooded lots. Several properties in the community are abandoned, vacant, dilapidated or tax delinquent, and there is little or no commercial or industrial development in the community (Kleiner n.d.). In the 1960s, Acres Homes was part of the Congressional district of congressman and future president George H. W. Bush. During that time the future President sponsored an all-star championship women’s softball team, Bush All-Stars.

Acres Homes is and has always been a predominantly low income, African American community. According to the 2000 Census, African Americans represent 86.4% of the community’s population, and 53.1% of the community’s African American households earn less than \$25,000 yearly. This observation of the predominance of low income African Americans makes Acres Homes a good community candidate for Texas Southern University, a HBCU regarding university-community collaboration. Also, the history of TSU and its designation as an urban university makes it incumbent on the university to address urban communities’ problems in general and low income minority communities in particular.

Research Methodology

Prior to developing the questionnaire, several meetings were held with community leaders to express TSU's desire in establishing a strong working relationship with the community and to find out what the expectations of the community were regarding the partnership. Also, I attended the monthly meetings of the Acres Homes Citizens Chambers of Commerce (AHCCC) in May and June 2005 and a Town Hall meeting convened by Houston City Council Member - District B, Carol Mims Galloway, at the Acres Homes Multi-Service Center on April 14, 2005. Several issues such as high and increasing property taxes and the need for business and employment opportunities that are of interest to community residents were discussed at the AHCCC meetings. Also, the town hall meeting provided the community residents and stakeholders the opportunity to present their complaints and seek solutions to problems such as street drainage, signal lights malfunctioning, street widening and ditch cleaning. During each AHCCC meeting, I had the opportunity to speak briefly and distribute flyers about the purpose of the proposed survey. Also, during a two-week period, two TSU graduate students distributed flyers regarding the survey in the community. (The decision to use the community's high school students to distribute flyers, and eventually be directly involved in data collection was dropped because of liability issues. This was upon the advice of TSU's Office of General Counsel.)

Elements of the physical environment included in the survey were culled from past research, issues that were discussed at the April and May 2005 meetings of the AHCCC, and at the Town Hall meeting. The issues are abandoned vehicles, street flooding, stray animals, open channels/canals, graffiti, abandoned/vacant buildings, vacant lots with tall weeds, and traffic congestion. Some elements of crime are included in the questionnaire in view of the concerns expressed at the meetings. Elements of crime include home burglary, vandalism to personal property, illegal drug sales, domestic violence, car theft, vandalism to city property, presence of youth gangs, and youth gang conflicts. Another element of the survey is the investigation of the goods and services which community residents purchased in the community. The respondents were requested to indicate on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=not at all, 2=rarely 3=sometimes, 4=often and 5=very often) the extent to which each of the listed items/activities occurs in Acres Homes.

A comprehensive list of 24 items culled from past research and especially from the Town Hall and AHCCC meetings were included in the community needs section of the survey. The respondents were requested to indicate on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1=not at all a priority, 2= not a priority, 3= somewhat a priority, 4=a priority and 5=a high priority) the extent to which each of the listed 24 programs or facilities can be considered as a priority for Acres Homes community. Other elements of the survey included what the respondents like and do not like about Acres Homes. Also, during the public meeting some residents complained about the absence of businesses within the community, hence the questionnaire includes a section on the types of commercial establishments that the potential respondents patronize within Acres Homes.

The questionnaire was pre-tested with a convenience sample of ten community residents. Subsequently, the survey questionnaires (including stamped self-addressed envelopes) were mailed to a random sample of 200 community residents, and after two weeks reminders were sent to those same 200 potential respondents. Seventy-two completed questionnaires were returned for a response rate of 36 percent, a response rate typical of such surveys.

Results and Discussions

Regarding the socio-economic characteristics of the respondents, Table 1 shows that 50.8% of the respondents' households earn less than \$30,000, and only 13.5% earn \$50,000 or higher. This observation is similar to the observation of the 2000 Census which noted that 53.1% of African American households in Acres Homes earn less than \$25,000. Regarding education, Table 2 shows that "some college" or lower is the highest level of education attained by 76.4% of the respondents. The relatively low level of educational achievement is typical of low-income minority communities. About 65 percent of the respondents are more than fifty years old, about 85 percent of the respondents own their home, and almost all (95.5%) of the respondents have no intention of moving out of Acres Homes.

Although the respondents were requested to indicate on a 5-point Likert-type scale their assessment of community needs and priorities, the responses were collapsed into three categories—not a priority, somewhat a priority, and a high priority to facilitate parsimony in terms of data presentation and discussion. Also, for the question that requested for the respondents' opinions regarding how often certain activities or behaviors occur in the community, the responses were collapsed from a 5-point Likert-type scale into three categories: not at all, sometimes, and often/very often.

The respondents' assessments of the extent of the priority of various community needs as depicted in Table 1 show that more than 90 percent of the respondents consider many "needs" as high priority items. These include job-training programs (100%), a youth mentoring program (98.8%), health clinics (96.4%), demolition of vacant buildings (95.2%), employment opportunities (94.4%), and an after-school tutorial program (93.8%).

The results of the community needs assessment opinions are interesting for several reasons. Land assemblage that is considered as a "hot" issue by the city as a prelude to attracting businesses is considered a priority/high priority by only 29.4% of the respondents. In fact, about 42 percent of the respondents (higher than for any other issue) consider land assemblage as "not at all a priority/not a priority." Also, compared with after-school tutorial programs and youth mentoring programs, a much lower percentage (60.7%) of the respondents consider after-school recreation programs as being a priority/high priority issue. The observation that homeowner counseling is considered as a priority/high priority issue by only 30 percent of the respondents is not surprising because most (85 percent) of the respondents are homeowners.

The percentage of the respondents that identifies affordable housing as a priority/high priority issue depends on the sub-group under consideration—relatively high for the elderly (77.4%) and people with disabilities (71.9%) and low for people with HIV/AIDS (48.8%). Also noteworthy is the observation that only 38.8% of the respondents consider community centers as a priority or high priority issue, and 20 percent (third highest percentage) consider the item as “not at all a priority” or “not a priority.” The need for a community center was emphasized by community stakeholders at the Town Hall and one of the AHCCC meetings.

The respondents’ viewpoints regarding the quality of the physical environment and the perceived frequency of the occurrence of certain “depreciative” behaviors and activities are depicted in Table 2. As Table 2 shows, more than 60 percent of the respondents perceive the following activities or behaviors as occurring often/very often—vacant lots with weeds (98.8%), abandoned/vacant buildings (85.9%), prostitution (61.7%), and illegal drug sales (61.6%). All the other activities/behaviors are perceived as occurring often/very often by 20 percent or less of the respondents—street flooding (20%), public drunkenness (18.3%), traffic congestion (15.3%), open channels/canals (11.1%), and youth loitering (10.7%). Of particular significance is that except for illegal drug sales, several criminal activities or anti-social behaviors such as the presence of youth gangs, home burglary, youth gang conflict, and graffiti are perceived by less than 5 percent of the respondents as occurring “often/very often.”

What do the respondents like about Acres Homes? The most frequent response as depicted in Table 3 is the history of Acres Homes mentioned by 84.7% of the respondents, followed by location (76.5%), friendly neighbors (52.9%) and community spirit (37.6%), with safe neighborhood (8.2%) and job availability (2.4%) as the least mentioned. What do the respondents dislike about Acres Homes? The responses are increasing property taxes (73.8%) followed by illegal drugs (76.2%) and absence of grocery stores (36.9%). The observation in this study that increasing/high property taxes is the most frequently mentioned issue that the respondents dislike about Acres Homes is interesting because it is one of the issues mentioned and discussed at one of the monthly meetings of AHCCC.

When asked if the respondents put their money in a bank branch/financial institution located in Acres Homes, of the 71 that responded to this questionnaire item, most (64 or 90.1%) indicated that they do not. When asked about the type and amount of purchases or services obtained within the community, virtually all the respondents indicated that they do not “purchase” or obtain the following services in Acres Homes: groceries, hairdressing, restaurants, clothing, laundry, auto repairs, home furniture, home air conditioning and heating, legal services and landscaping. Some of the respondents volunteered to state that these services are not available in Acres Homes.

This observation of the lack of several services in Acres Homes is surprising because several companies that supposedly offer these services are listed in the AHCCC

directory. A closer look at the directory shows that most of these companies are located outside Acres Homes' zip codes 77088 and 77091. For example, of the nine companies that are listed under "Restaurants/Food Services," only four are within the Acres Homes zip codes. This observation is true of many other companies that are listed in the directory. Only one of the two listed under "dental," one out of eight listed under "insurance," and two out of eleven listed under "health care services" are within zip codes 77088 and 77091. The numbers of these companies inside Acres Homes may even be less, because the zip code boundaries are outside of Acres Homes. The responses to the question "Are you planning to move out of Acres Homes?" indicate that most (96.2%) of the respondents are not planning to move out of Acres Homes. This observation is hardly surprising as most (85 percent) of the respondents are homeowners.

Need for Action

The collection of data on needs assessment is of little or no value if the information obtained is not communicated to the community and if the information is not used. The first step, therefore, is to communicate the findings of the study to the community residents. Also, the viewpoints of the respondents are clear and unambiguous and, therefore, the need for action on many of the issues cannot be overemphasized. For example, the conditions of the streets and sidewalks are perceived highly negatively. Also, the respondents seem persistent about "removal of tall weeds" as almost all (98.8%) the respondents indicate that "vacant lot with weeds" occurs "often or very often." Another issue that needs to be addressed is abandoned/vacant buildings that are perceived to "occur" "often or very often" by almost 86 percent of the respondents. In addition, most (95.2%) of the respondents consider the demolition of vacant/abandoned building as a "priority or high priority" issue. Abandoned and dilapidated buildings are not only eyesores but serve as havens for drug dealers and prostitutes and are potential precursors for arson and vandalism (Wilson and Kelling 1982).

As noted earlier, several depreciative behaviors and criminal activities are perceived as occurring "often/very often" by less than five percent of the respondents. However, the observation that relatively high percentages, slightly over 60 percent consider prostitution and illegal drug sales as occurring "often or very often" should be of concern not only in terms of public safety but also in terms of attracting businesses to the community. Similarly, a high percentage (76.2%) of the respondents cited sale of illegal drugs as one of the issues that they dislike about Acres Homes. The community obviously needs to declare another "new independence day." In a speech at the Acres Homes in 1989, President Bush (elder) stated that "by 1987, 25 to 30 drug dealers were operating right here, right here in Winzer Park. That's when your community and your police came together to declare *a new independence day*—April 9, 1988" when "a thousand people swept into the park" and swept the drug dealers out. "And you not only put the drug dealers out, you put your pride back in" (Bush 1989).

Regarding community needs virtually all the respondents consider job-training programs, employment opportunities, youth mentoring programs, after-school tutorial programs, health clinics, and demolition of vacant/abandoned buildings as “priority/high priority” community needs. While employment opportunities are identified as one of the high priority needs, the solution, like many other problems of urban decay may reside primarily outside the community boundaries. As noted by past research (Burns and Gober 1998), bringing jobs closer to low-income minority neighborhoods does not necessarily imply increased employment opportunities for the residents. The provision of employment opportunities, therefore, has to be combined with job-training programs and the granting of incentives to potential employers to hire the residents. Incidentally, job training is mentioned by all (100 percent) the respondents as a priority/high priority issue.

Finally, in addition to the programs that TSU currently provide at Acres Homes, the university can play a major role in fulfilling some of the community’s stated needs. As noted earlier, universities have a responsibility not only in collecting information from the community residents but also more importantly in acting on the information collected. The urban university in particular is programmatically directed toward providing solutions to selected problems in its clientele area and must also be capable of bringing together components of the university’s academic and other special divisions to address the urban condition. Within this context, TSU can utilize its various academic programs and programmatic emphases to establish or expand programs such as community service projects, service learning projects and internships that focus on skill development, after-school tutorial and youth mentoring programs. Such programs will fulfill in part the university’s social responsibility, increase TSU’s visibility among the secondary schools in the community, and provide access to an increased pool of higher-qualified applicants with the potential of reducing the attrition rate of the university’s freshmen.

Also TSU may be able to assist in providing formal job-training programs through federal or state grants. Such a proactive stance is necessary in order to build a trusting relationship between the community and TSU and to show that the interest of the institution is not based solely on collecting information for research and teaching purposes, but that the result of the survey will also be used for the benefit of the community. A citizen survey which is not followed by specific follow-up action may lead to withdrawal on the part of the citizens regarding any future relationship with the university. Also, such inaction fosters community residents’ perception of communities as objects of research and universities as exploiters.

Table 1
Respondents' Reported Household Income

Amount	Percentage (Number)
Less than \$10,000	4.5 (3)
\$10,000 to \$19,999	12 (8)
\$20,000 to \$29,999	35.8 (24)
\$30,000 to \$39,999	17.9 (12)
\$40,000 to \$49,999	16.4 (11)
\$50,000 to \$59,999	4.5 (3)
\$60,000 to \$69,999	4.5 (3)
\$70,000 and above	4.5 (3)

Table 2
Highest Educational Level Attained by Respondents

Educational Level	Percentage (Number)
Some High School	10.3 (7)
Completed High School	32.3 (22)
Some College	33.8 (14)
Completed college	23.4 (16)

Table 3
Respondents' Assessment of the Priority of Community Needs

Variable	Prioritization of Community Needs (in percentages)		
	Not at all/ not a priority	Somewhat a priority	Priority/ high priority
Job-training programs	0.0	0.0	100.0
Employment opportunities	0.0	5.6	94.4
Youth mentoring program	0.0	1.2	98.8
Health clinics	0.0	3.5	96.4
Demolition of vacant buildings	0.0	4.8	95.2
After-school tutorial program	1.2	4.9	93.8
HIV/AIDS prevention program	0.0	16.3	83.8
Police patrol	1.2	20.5	78.3
Senior day care centers	0.0	24.4	77.7
Affordable housing – elderly	0.0	22.6	77.4
HIV/AIDS treatment program	0.0	22.9	77.2
Affordable housing - people with disabilities	0.0	28.0	71.9
After-school recreation program	0.0	39.3	60.7
Recreational centers	12.3	32.1	55.5
Adult literacy program	4.9	35.4	59.7
Day care center	7.2	36.1	56.7
Affordable housing – people with HIV/AIDS	5.0	46.3	48.8
Enforcement on tax delinquent properties	11.4	40.5	48.2
Homeless shelters	7.2	45.8	47.0
Community centers	20.0	41.3	38.8
Home ownership counseling	6.3	63.8	30.0
Shopping center	38.8	31.8	29.4
Land assemblage	42.6	28.0	29.4

Table 4
Respondents' perceptions of the frequency of occurrence of activities/behaviors

Variable	Perceptions of frequency of occurrence (in percentages)		
	Not at all	Sometimes	Often/very often
Traffic light malfunctioning	94.9	6.0	1.2
Home burglary	76.3	20.0	3.8
Car theft	64.2	28.4	7.4
Graffiti	62.8	22.2	4.9
Abandoned vehicles	61.7	24.4	14.0
Youth gang conflict	54.2	42.3	2.6
Presence of youth gangs	46.9	50.6	2.4
Open channels/canals	35.8	53.1	11.1
Public drunkenness	25.6	56.1	18.3
Youth loitering	25.0	64.3	10.7
Street flooding	22.4	57.6	20.0
Traffic congestion	15.3	69.4	15.3
Illegal drug sales	8.2	30.2	61.6
Abandoned/vacant building	5.9	8.2	85.9
Prostitution	3.5	34.9	61.7
Vacant lot with weeds	0.0	1.2	98.8

Table 5
What Do the Respondents Like About Acres Homes?

Item	Number/Percentage of respondents (50% or higher)
History of Acres Homes	(72) 84.7%
Location	(65) 76.5%
Friendly neighbors	(45) 52.8%

Number of respondents in parentheses. Percent exceeds 100 because many respondents gave more than one factor.

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