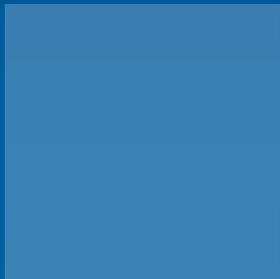




DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR HUNTINGTON-AREA FORUMS



Building Safe
and Strong
Neighborhoods:
What Works?

In November 2009, *BusinessWeek* magazine chose Huntington as the best place in West Virginia to raise kids, citing its large medical centers, historic downtown, museums, parks, and Marshall University. Earlier that year, Create Huntington published a community-wide strategic plan that also noted the many assets the area has to offer. Still, local residents have concerns.

Most Huntington-area residents see community safety as a major challenge, second only to jobs, according to a survey conducted as part of the strategic planning process. In fact, the two are entwined because community safety is one of the qualities that attract businesses and jobs, as are good schools and a well-kept city.

Drugs and property crimes topped the list of concerns about community safety in interviews conducted by the Cabell County Substance Abuse Prevention Partnership, the Weed and Seed Program and others in 2009. Additional concerns included violent crimes, the response time of law enforcement in some areas, poor street lighting, domestic violence, unsafe parks, unsupervised youth, prostitution, and citizen apathy.



Numerous community organizations and city agencies are working together to address the challenges. Neighborhood forums are being held throughout the Huntington-area in Spring 2010 to engage local residents, businesses and others in the process. The goals of the forums are to:

- Think and talk together about ways to strengthen our neighborhoods and improve community safety.
- Collect ideas from our neighborhoods to report at a citywide summit in late spring to plan action steps to make Huntington safer.
- Link people to groups that are working on community issues.

Neighborhood associations and other groups are hosting the forums, and volunteer discussion leaders are moderating the forums. In order to have a productive conversation, everyone is encouraged to:

- Listen and share with respect for others.
- Speak from your own experience.
- Focus on the questions provided in this guide.
- Continue to talk and explore possible actions after the meeting.

While it's easy to become discouraged at times and conclude that tough community problems can't be solved, this is simply not true, according to researchers at the Pew Partnership for Civic Change. In *Solutions for America*, they provide solid evidence of strategies that work in rejuvenating our communities, our families and our economy. They conclude:

“Change demands gifted and persistent leadership. We must expand the ability of our communities to recognize and mobilize the wealth of leadership in their midst — of all ages and races, of all income levels and in all neighborhoods, and in all levels of organizations. Building a broad-based constituency for change is the key to implementing what works.”



Discussion Question

What does a safe and strong neighborhood look and feel like to you?

APPROACHES TO COMMUNITY SAFETY

PUBLIC SPACES

- Well-kept streets and lighting
- Accessible parks and facilities
- Dilapidated building renovation or demolition

HOUSING

- Home ownership
- Affordable rental housing
- Homelessness prevention

LAW ENFORCEMENT

- Crime prevention programs
- Community policing programs
- Extra patrols for high-crime areas

EDUCATION

- Early childhood education
- Mentoring and afterschool programs
- Drop-out prevention

FAMILIES

- Livable income
- Parent education and support
- Substance abuse prevention/treatment

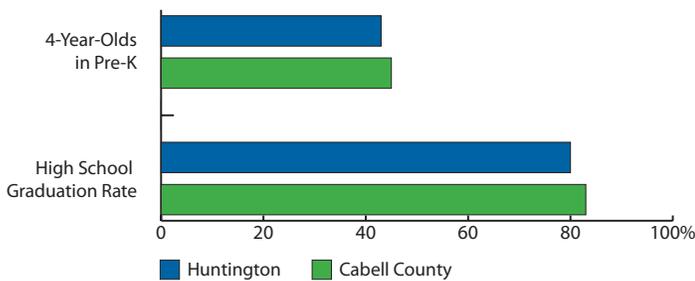
Excerpted from *Solutions for America*, by the Pew Partnership for Civic Change, www.pew-partnership.org.

Snapshot of Community Safety and Well-Being

Cabell County is home to 95,456 people, of whom 49,201 live in Huntington. The county has slightly fewer children (20.4 percent) and slightly more elderly (16.2 percent) than the state overall. The area has greater racial diversity than most of the state, with 12.2 percent of Huntington residents and 8.1 percent of county residents being people of color.

EDUCATION

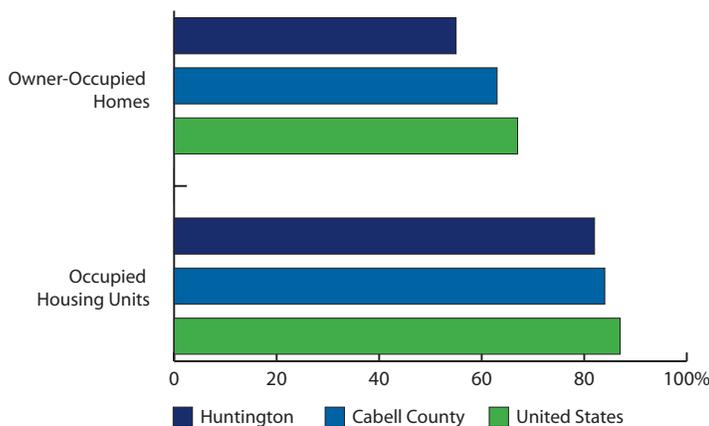
Education is a cornerstone of success, leading to better jobs, health and income, as well as lower rates of incarceration. About half of county (49.3 percent) and state (50.6 percent) four-year-olds are enrolled in pre-kindergarten programs. The high school graduation rate is 80.5 percent for the county and 83.8 percent for the state.



Sources: Pre-K data from WV Kids Count 2009 Databook; High school graduation rates from WV Department of Education.

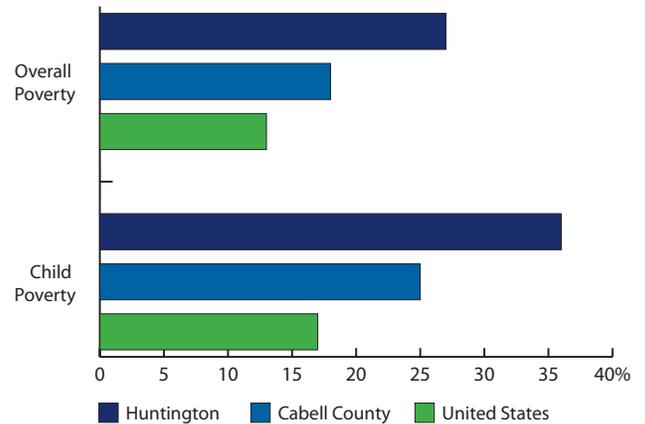
HOUSING

Home ownership and high occupancy rates of housing units contribute to neighborhood stability. Huntington lags behind the county and nation, with only 56 percent of its homes owner-occupied, compared to 66 percent for the county and 67 percent for the U.S.



POVERTY

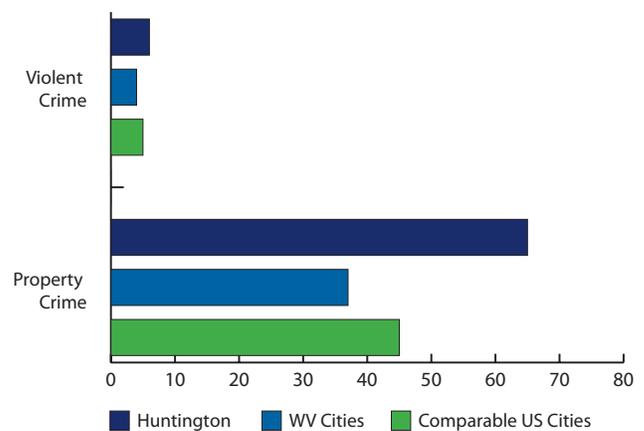
Poverty is a major stressor for families and communities and is particularly damaging to children. More than a quarter of Huntington residents and a third of its children live below the federal poverty level. The recession has made matters worse, driving the state's unemployment rate to 10.5 percent in January 2010. Cabell County fared better than average with an unemployment rate of 8.7 percent.



Source: American Community Survey, 2006-2008

CRIME RATE PER 1,000 RESIDENTS

Huntington's crime rates, though higher than those of comparable cities in the U.S., have been on a notable downward trend in recent years. The violent crime rate is 6.4 per 1,000 residents and the property crime rate 65.1 per 1,000.



Sources: FBI Uniform Crime Report, 2008; Huntington Police Department

Actions to Improve Safety and Well-Being

Many Huntington-area residents and organizations are already taking action to improve community safety and well-being. This sampling of stories from *The Herald-Dispatch*, in Huntington, illustrates the wide range of efforts underway.

MANCHIN TOURS DILAPIDATED STRUCTURES IN HUNTINGTON (MARCH 1, 2010)

As Governor Joe Manchin toured several dilapidated structures in Huntington Monday morning, he said there is plenty of evidence for two bills he wants legislators to pass. House Bills 4034 and 4038 both provide cities the legal tools they need to more quickly tear down abandoned or burned-out properties and place liens on insurance proceeds to recoup expenses. *(Both bills passed.)*

UNITED WAY EVENT ON MARCH 6 TO HELP CHILDREN GET READY FOR KINDERGARTEN (MARCH 1, 2010)

On Saturday, March 6, families from around the Tri-State are invited to attend United Way's 10th annual Super Kids, Super Families, Super Saturday event. The event is offered by United Way's Success by 6 initiative, in partnership with St. Mary's Pediatrics, The Herald-Dispatch and 93.7 The Dawg. The free event aims to get all children ready physically, mentally, developmentally, emotionally and socially to begin kindergarten.

YOUTHBUILD SHOWCASES NEW HEADQUARTERS (FEBRUARY 26, 2010)

YouthBuild showcased its newly renovated headquarters Friday on 5th Avenue in Huntington. The program provides 40 youths, all of whom dropped out of high school, an opportunity to gain a GED, construction-related job skills, educational tutoring and leadership development. YouthBuild is funded with money from the U.S. Department of Labor and sponsored by the Huntington Housing Authority.

RACIAL PROFILING FOCUS OF TALKS AT LOCAL FORUM (FEBRUARY 11, 2010)

State and local officials participating in a forum Thursday urged people who feel they are victims of racial profiling to report the incident to authorities so that the issue can be addressed properly. The message came from panelists participating in forum sponsored by the Huntington-Cabell Branch of the NAACP and the Huntington Black Pastors Ministerial Alliance.

CREATE HUNTINGTON BOARD APPROVES FIRST MATCHING GRANT FOR COMMUNITY PROJECT (FEBRUARY 9, 2010)

Create Huntington's Board of Connectors approved last week its first matching grant of \$500 for a community project. It was given to the Huntington Area Revitalization Committee to beautify Harris Riverfront Park. Create Huntington's community project grants are open to any community organization or group of volunteers working on projects that improve the quality of life in Huntington.

UNIVERSITY, CITY CONSIDERING AN "ARTS INCUBATOR" (FEBRUARY 5, 2010)

Marshall University President Stephen Kopp and Huntington Mayor Kim Wolfe have written a letter to U.S. Rep. Nick Rahall requesting \$8 million in federal funds to possibly move Marshall's visual arts program downtown. It would be an "arts incubator" within the city's Empowerment Zone. There are ample examples of how an infusion of the arts can benefit a community's downtown, said Charles Holley, director of development and planning for the city.

EDITORIAL: EVERYONE HAS A STAKE IN FIGHTING DRUG ABUSE (JANUARY 23, 2010)

For those who attended or read about the fourth annual Cabell Drug Prevention Summit last week, there is a growing awareness that this is not only a very pervasive problem, but a very complex problem. At first blush, we often see the drug problem as a law enforcement problem. But that strategy alone does not work. To make a real difference, law enforcement efforts must be combined with greater treatment, rehabilitation and prevention efforts.

PROGRAM AIMS TO HELP AT-RISK YOUTH REACH POTENTIAL (JANUARY 12, 2010)

The Recovery Education and Development Project is a new after-school program for middle and high school students who are on the verge of being suspended, expelled or dropping out of school. The program will be held at the Barnett Center and is sponsored by Huntington's Weed and Seed Program, the Salvation Army, Goodwill Industries, Cabell-Huntington Health Department, Cabell County Board of Education and Prestera Center.

EDITORIAL: POLICE EXPLORER POST OFFERS SEVERAL BENEFITS (SEPTEMBER 8, 2009)

The Huntington Police Department’s plan to re-establish an Explorer post is another sign that the department has climbed a long way back from the depths of staff cuts early this decade. The program is open to youth ranging in age from high school freshmen to 21-year-olds. It includes 60 hours of instruction on law enforcement, giving young people a taste of what police work is all about.

FUNDS ALLOW HIRING OF SIX OFFICERS LOCALLY (JULY 29, 2009)

Police departments in Huntington, Ceredo and Kenova will receive \$988,052 in federal stimulus funds to hire six police officers. The Huntington Police Department received the most money in West Virginia. It will use its \$698,860 award to add four officers, expanding its roster to 105. That staffing puts the department beyond the level of 103 officers it had before layoffs in 2001 and 2002.

CHILDREN PLANT FAIRFIELD COMMUNITY FLOWER GARDEN (JULY 20, 2009)

It was exactly what Marcella Murphy had in mind when she started planting community gardens seven years ago. Murphy joined other Fairfield residents and representatives from the city’s Weed and Seed Community Gardens program, Habitat for Humanity and others for the planting and dedication of the new garden Sunday. It’s the fourth community garden this summer to be built through the city’s Weed and Seed Community Gardens program.

Discussion Questions

If you could change three things about our neighborhood or community to make it a safer and healthier place, what would they be?

For each of the above, what specific actions could be taken by (a) individuals, (b) organizations, including businesses, non-profits, faith-based groups, and (c) public agencies and officials?

A Toolbox for Neighborhood Action

TIPS FROM HUNTINGTON'S NEIGHBORHOOD INSTITUTE

- **Neighborhood Institute:** to find your local **neighborhood association meetings**, contact Stacy McChesney at stacy.mcchesney.firefly@gmail.com, (304) 638-7894.
- **Create Huntington:** get engaged with the exciting projects happening in Huntington by visiting www.createhuntington.com and adding your e-mail to their mailing list.
- **Chat n' Chews:** visit the brainstorming sessions hosted by Create Huntington every Thursday 5:30-7:00 p.m. in the lobby of the Frederick Hotel. Can't make Thursday nights? Join the conversation online at www.createhuntington.ning.com.
- **Adopt Your Block:** get involved to pick up litter, monitor signage and street light outages: Richard Cobb, richardcobbsr@comcast.net, <http://herald-dispatchblogs07.blogspot.com/>.
- **Community Garden:** to get involved or start a garden in your neighborhood contact Jennifer Williams at seedsoflove76@yahoo.com or call (304) 840-2500 or visit www.huntingtoncommunitygardens.com.
- **Citizen Support Center:** Use this resource at www.cityofhuntington.com to get information, make requests or report crime tips, potholes, or other problems related to city services. Or contact Jim Johnson at johnsonj@cityofhuntington.com or call (304) 696-5540.
- **Neighborhood Watch Programs:** contact Captain Hank Dial with HPD at (304) 696-5560 for help with starting a program in your neighborhood.
- **To report suspicious activity**, call (304) 696-4444; to reach the non-emergency 911 line, call (304) 526-8444.
- **Safer Huntington WV:** visit this website www.saferhuntingtonwv.com.
- **Weed and Seed Initiative and the Barnett Center:** for information visit www.htngweedandseed.com or contact Tim White at whitet@cityofhuntington.com or call (304) 751-6251.
- **Greater Huntington Parks and Recreation Dept:** for information on activities in the park system visit www.ghprd.org or call (304) 696-5954.
- **Cabell County Substance Abuse Prevention Partnership:** for information on this and other initiatives sponsored by the **United Way of the River Cities** visit www.unitedwayrivercities.org or call (304) 523-8929.
- **City Hall:** visit from your computer at www.cityofhuntington.com or visit Mayor Wolfe during an open house and voice your concerns. Call (304) 696-5540 for more info.
- **City Council:** Contact your representative regarding issues your neighborhood is facing – visit www.cityofhuntington.com for information.
- **West Virginia Center for Civic Life:** Learn more about hosting and moderating community forums by visiting, www.wvcivicle.org or call (304) 344-3430.

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