

Social Services

Introduction

During the recent Reality Check Workshops, topical experts and members of the public worked together in small groups to examine a particular topic in-depth. During the two-hour workshops they worked with a trained facilitator to complete the following exercises:

- 1) Review of Ideas. Participants reviewed all of the ideas related to their topic that were collected during the community Idea Gathering Sessions.
- 2) Critical Questions. Participants engaged in a discussion of two Critical Questions, which had been identified by the *Vision for Staten Island* Steering Committee. The facilitator recorded the results of the discussion on flipchart paper, and then helped the group summarize major areas of agreement and disagreement.
- 3) Implementation Recommendations. At the end of the discussion period, each participant wrote down two practical, specific strategies or implementation steps to help Staten Island achieve its vision for their topic.

The results from the Social Services group are provided below. Note that responses have been recorded verbatim, and some errors may remain due to handwriting legibility. Responses are numbered for reference purposes only; this does not indicate any sense of priority.

Critical Question 1:

What are the gaps in existing social service provision on Staten Island?

1. Funding – Money not equally divided among borough's, responding to city RFP's, for example – SI needs to get equal share of social service funding
2. Specialized services for special needs children
3. SI – there is no public shelter for homeless adults (only borough that doesn't have one)
4. Need more youth program to combat new problems – bullying, prescription drugs abuse, etc., and need to preserve the money that exists currently
5. Funding for senior housing equated to their actual income – these housing facilities and provisions of services
6. Expand services: previous family services, day care (and make services more affordable, sliding scale, subsidized)
7. Services for parents of special needs children (support services, networking services, medical)
8. Need supportive housing for people with special needs: mentally ill, drug addiction, mentally ill, disabled, families with mental illness
9. Affordable housing across the board
10. Better health services (mental health, domestic violence help, drug/alcohol abuse, etc.) to lower middle class who can't afford it themselves but do not qualify for subsidized services
11. Need more community centers or recreation centers for youth and families and it needs to be affordable
12. Need for domestic violence services – provide support for children in the family, the children of victims, prevention, early intervention, emergency services, emergency housing, better training for social service workers, specialized immigrant services within this issue
13. Services for non-English speaking people: to help them get all the services they need, translation services, and to learn english themselves
14. Food pantries and access to healthy foods in low income areas. Educating people about healthy choices and making low cost and free food available. Need for more social services in the East, South and West sides of SI and North Shore, throughout the entire Borough
15. Help for teens who are pregnant/parenting – both the young moms and dads

16. Need for elected officials to recognize that SI has its fair share of serious needs. Also city-wide and state-wide officials and foundations need to recognize this

Critical Question 1 SUMMARY:

1. Fair share of social services funding proportionate to the population in terms of numbers, demographics, including needs of specialized populations
2. Need to sensitize city and state political leaders to the needs of the SI residents. Develop community process to develop plan for sptv housing for special needs population and low income housing. Need to create context for political will
3. Acknowledgment by city, state, borough residents and officials that SI is a borough with significant influx of new immigrants and services need to be responsive to needs of new immigrants
4. All above must include youth, elderly, special needs families, homeless, hungry, low income, gay and lesbian LGBTQ, immigrants, domestic violence families, adults and children with mental disabilities, drug addicted, unstably housed, veterans, disabled

Critical Question 2:

What can the Staten Island community do to address these gaps? Be as specific as possible.

1. Create a binding community process resulting in new support and low income housing units being built. Must be in proportion to needs of specialized and low income community. May include “upzoning.” Elected officials, county boards, civic leaders must make it happen
2. Need to educate schools, communities and service providers
3. Developing abandoned property into housing that takes care of Staten Islanders needs. Include homesteading
4. Needs Staten Islanders to recognize that these problems exist – including elected leaders. Need to recognize unpopular needs
5. Need to make our elected leaders and city-wide foundation leaders more accountable and need to make them take action to address all these needs
6. Seek equal funding for: see #4 under critical question 1 summary
7. New immigrant communities need services responsive to their needs and to help them welcome integrated in life of borough
8. Build homeless shelter

Critical Question 2 SUMMARY:

No summary was provided.

Implementation Recommendations:

Consider the draft vision statement, the ideas gathered from the public, and your group’s discussion of critical questions. Please recommend two practical, specific strategies or implementation steps that you would recommend to help Staten Island achieve its vision for your topic.

1. Survey the abandoned properties and homes, buildings that are vacant and plan, build housing that is affordable and needed on S.I.
2. Survey each communities needs to provide the social services the population in the area needs and build centers and play areas to keep children and families active, healthy, safe along with education
3. Educate Staten Islanders to the complex needs that exist

4. Look to political leaders to support funding for all social service needs, even if these needs may be unpopular politically
5. Have schools, communities, non-for-profits, civic groups, medical community and emergency responders join and work together to force elected officials to admit, recognize and help get funding for services well needed (our fair share)
6. More education, information and outreach to communities/neighborhoods, schools, doctors, providers etc, political officials
7. Sensitize city-wide and state-wide leadership about the needs on Staten Island to ensure that the Island gets its fair population-based allocations
8. Develop the political will on the Island to create environment to implement services responsive to the population needs
9. Create a binding community process that will identify sites for the development of new supportive housing units and new low income housing units on SI proportional to our housing need
10. Create a process of public education that will result in community acceptance and elected official support for additional social services on the North Shore and social services throughout SI for DV families, families with special need children, the homeless and unstably housed, the hungry, youth, mentally ill, drug addicts, and alcoholics, and new immigrants

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