

Community dialogues took place in the community of Marin City, Marin County in April/May 2008. Participants discussed their vision for a healthy Marin City, talked about the issues currently preventing their vision from being a reality and the action steps that would help their community move toward positive change.

Following is a summary of the discussions.

PART 1 – SHARING OUR STORIES, SETTING OUR VISION

First discussion:

HOW ARE OUR LIVES BETTER/WORSE THAN OUR PARENTS/GRANDPARENTS?

- We have more education
- More material things: 2 vacations and one conference in four months
- Women don't have to stay home to raise the children/they get to get out in the work force and contribute
- I have more opportunities to be all I can be:
 - Right to go to college
 - Grandparents were right out of slavery
- Racism isn't as latent, even though there still are inequalities
- We have more freedom, more rights and more of a voice

HOW DOES LIFE LOOK LIKE FOR OUR CHILDREN?

- Children have nothing to do, too much idle time – lack of imagination, they have nothing to create because technology has taken over
- Kids can't afford to play because they are not safe: Predators
- "It takes a village" is not enforced
- Fear of system that preys on African-American males – the streets may be raising my grandson.
- Lack of structured parenting that may put African males in jeopardy of going to jail
- Parents are not approachable, one can't discipline another person's child
- Fear male kid will be viewed as intimidating
- Depends on the raising. Black males who "misbehave" go to jail
- Children are overstressed by high standards to qualify for college – child has had a migraine for three weeks because of pressures to measure up in school

WHAT MAKES YOU MOST PROUD OF MARIN CITY?

- A sense of security and community for those who have lived here for a long time
- There are no gangs and we have no bars in this neighborhood – we're not burying our kids every week. I went over to Richmond to visit a relative and kids insisted on sleeping on the floor because of fear of flying bullets.
- Children are free to ride their bikes without fear of getting shot
- Marin city is one of the safest places in the Bay Area, even though the perception is different
- Grandchildren will have even more opportunities than we do
- Marin city's history: what our ancestors came here to do with the ship yards
- Family-oriented community
- A community of faith – we have four churches
- Strong leadership from the faith community
- When something goes wrong, the community gathers to solve problems

SHARE YOUR VISION OF A HEALTHY COMMUNITY:

- A community where God comes first. That's where the healing will begin. God is our strength.
- A healthy community has diversity of people/cultures
- A healthy community creates opportunities for people to own a home and send kids to school
- A healthy community has a community swimming pool
- A healthy community has active bike paths
- A healthy community offers indoor/outdoor recreation opportunities
- A healthy community encourages local business opportunities
- A healthy community has a grocery store with affordable, fresh fruit/vegetables
- A healthy community has a resourced clinic
- A healthy community is family-centered
- A healthy community offers good and equal education opportunities for all its residents
- A healthy community has a church
- A healthy community has homes
- We need to be able to see nature
- A healthy community has a healthy food store
- A healthy community has a functional teen center
- A healthy community has a Walmart
- A healthy community has love/joy/peace
- A healthy community has an accessible transportation system

GROUPS WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE THE LIFE OF THE COMMUNITY:

- Our Sister's Keepers support group: reaching out to women and partnering with local organizations has been very effective – started when founder attended support group in Vallejo and they helped her through a difficult period of her life. Then, she decided to start a support group of her own, to help other women in Marin City. Was victim of verbal and emotional abuse as a child. A woman's presence, when transformed, affects everyone around them positively and reflects onto their families.
- Terrie Green, ISOJI and the health clinic opened in 2006
- GLN established the Martin Luther King Jr. annual celebration, joining in collaboration with other community leaders and residents
- Melvin Atkins' "Follow Him" group – developing healthy lifestyles for people. Group provides really good information for people who are trying to change their lifestyle and the way they eat. I have attended the group meetings and my attitude about my personal health has changed, even though I went there to get information for my children.

PART II - WHAT ISSUES PREVENT OUR COMMUNITY FROM BEING HEALTHY?

"Marin City's issues are complex. We have them and *do not have the resources* that we need or have the wherewithal to make change happen, but need to get help from people who can help us get it. We have the opportunity to make change, but if we don't take it we are going to lose it."

IF YOU COULD IMPROVE ONE THING IN YOUR COMMUNITY RIGHT NOW, WHAT WOULD IT BE?

- Is there going to be public or affordable housing?
- Affordable housing in Marin is not really "affordable" for really low income people in Marin.
- There are generations of families in Marin City who live in public housing and don't own their housing. How do you come up with a policy that will make government invest in this community to develop housing and give back to the community who lives here? If the will is there, we can do this.
- Marin City is prime real estate. The powers that be don't want poor people in Marin County living in this piece of land. Marin City looks like the County dump. Over 6 million dollars were spent less than 4 years ago to fix the tall buildings (public housing) and now they want to tear them down. They are not putting people back in here who used to live here. They are bringing people from other places in the Bay Area to live here and then they are given money to leave the city. Since they have no ties to this community, especially if they have a drug addiction, they take the money and go.
- Windows need to be replaced in public housing. We also need to save money on PG&E. "They" want this land.

- The community hasn't taken advantage of community-managed models like the co-ops. The public housing community needs to be given an opportunity to manage the property and be on a path to ownership. There are people who have lived in their homes for over 50 years and by now should have paid for their property many times over and now they are on the brink of being displaced.
- Finding social integration and solutions for adults and children to prevent them from finding unproductive things to do
- Lack of activities and opportunities for young adults and kids to get involved
- I would change the morale of the people – people are sad and depressed, they don't want to do anything, women don't care about their appearance and they mask their sadness with alcohol and drugs to cover-up that pain
- We need to improve the way information is transferred and come up with a strategic way to get accurate, timely information out to people to get them mobilized.
- The community is unhealthy due to lack of exercise and safe, open space to exercise in
- How did Marin City miss the boat on the shopping center? Outside businesses came in and replacing local businesses.

WHAT'S KEEPING OUR COMMUNITY FROM DOING WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- There's a lack of cohesiveness in the community and its leadership that others have taken advantage of.