



**McLean County
Urban League
Satellite Office**

Kick-off and Town Meeting “Realizing Our Potential”

**Summary Report with Appendices
August 2002**

Produced by



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Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| 1. Executive Summary | 3 |
| 2. Acknowledgements | 5 |
| 3. Introduction | 6 |
| Why a Town Meeting? | 6 |
| Planning and organizing the Town Meeting | 6 |
| Report structure and limitations | 8 |
| 4. Town Meeting Results | 9 |
| Introduction | 9 |
| Communication, collaboration, and development of human services | 9 |
| Resident input, participation, and development | 11 |
| Education | 13 |
| Economic development: business, employment, and training | 14 |
| Childcare, youth issues, and family support | 15 |
| Housing | 16 |
| Criminal justice and law enforcement | 17 |
| 5. Conclusions and Recommendations | 18 |
| Appendices | 19 |
| A1: Town Meeting invitation | 20 |
| A2: Town Meeting agenda | 22 |
| A3: Round table discussion notes | 24 |





Executive Summary

The newly organized McLean County Urban League Satellite Office of the Tri-County (Peoria) Urban League, Inc. is in the process of establishing its mission and priorities and identifying the services and programs it will provide for McLean County residents. With its focus on building equal opportunities for African-Americans and other similarly disadvantaged people, the Urban League wants both information and “buy-in” from McLean County residents representing a broad spectrum of occupational groups, interests, and needs. “Realizing Our Potential: Urban League Kick-off and Town Meeting” was held on July 18, 2002 to meet these goals.

Town Meeting participants included residents of various races and ethnicities and representatives of the McLean County and Tri-County Urban Leagues, the Applied Social Research Unit, education, business, health care, social service, government, faith-based organizations, and other community-based organizations. Over 100 people participated in round table discussions addressing these questions:

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?
2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?
3. What are the community’s greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?

Participants’ key issues and related advice focused on communication and development of human services; resident input and participation; education; economic development; youth and family issues; housing; and law enforcement. The key to the McLean County Urban League’s success is its ability to engage minority residents and similarly disadvantaged people in fostering equal social, educational, and economic opportunities for themselves and others. Engagement will occur as the Urban League strives to assess minority community issues and needs; include diverse residents in planning and delivering services, programs, and advocacy; and ensure access to opportunities. The Urban League has enormous potential and resources at its disposal as it works with residents and individuals representing existing organizations such as churches, educational institutions, social agencies, government, business, and other community-based organizations. The following recommendations are based on Town Meeting participants’ input.

- **Develop communication channels and skills.** The Urban League must continually develop its communication strategies to advertise its mission and services and to remain aware of community issues, resources, services, and organizational effectiveness (its own and others’). The Urban League can maximize its effectiveness by using information channels specific to diverse residents including meetings, the Internet, direct mail, telephone, radio, t.v., and news media, literature, personal contact and networks, and places that residents gather. Town Meeting planning and organization utilized many of these approaches.
- **Network and collaborate with existing organizations.** The McLean County Urban League Satellite Committee members are already aware of and participate in many community organizations and associations. Through listening, identifying opportunities for collaboration, and fostering the missions of other local organizations, the Urban League will be most effective in achieving its goals.



Executive Summary

- ***Include diverse residents in planning, providing, and utilizing accessible services and programs.*** The Urban League must recognize cultural, class, and economic issues in defining the populations it engages. Services must be conveniently located and timed, culturally appropriate, and affordable. Town Meeting participants who indicated interest in becoming involved with the Urban League may provide a base of support from which to grow.
- ***Use this Report (and other input) to identify key issues and advice,*** especially related to education and training, business and employment opportunities, and family support.



Acknowledgements

In all, about 120 people participated in “Realizing Our Potential: Urban League Kick-off and Town Meeting.” Their contributions to Town Meeting planning, implementation, and discussion support the establishment of the McLean County Urban League Satellite Office and are deeply appreciated. Town Meeting organizers wish especially to recognize the following individuals and organizations:

Town Meeting Round Table Participants

Town Meeting Facilitators and Notetakers

- ◆ Lucinda Beier ◆ Emily Bell ◆ Leotis Brewer ◆ Ola Brown ◆ Cindy Caldwell
- ◆ Cynthia Davidson ◆ Howard Davidson ◆ Javier de la Uz ◆ Tauyna Jenkins
- ◆ Annie Gordon ◆ Jyl Josephson ◆ Sharon Kherat ◆ Annette Martinez ◆ Susan Megy
- ◆ Margot Mendoza ◆ Pamela Moore ◆ Kendra Muhammad ◆ Jim Nelson ◆ Susan Savage
- ◆ Cranston Sparks ◆ Louise Sprawls ◆ Phillip Strong ◆ Gwen Thornton ◆ Nikki Vorpahl
- ◆ Connie Voss ◆ Deborah Webb ◆ Mike Williams

Urban League Satellite and Community Needs Assessment (CNA) Committees

- ◆ Laraine E. Bryson, President and CEO, Tri-County (Peoria) Urban League, Inc.
- ◆ Erwin E. Davis, Chairperson, McLean County Urban League Satellite Office
- ◆ Michael Harrison, Co-Chairperson, McLean County Urban League Satellite Office, and Chair, CNA Committee ◆ Dianne Ashby ◆ Roland Brent ◆ Willie Holton Halbert ◆ Tony Jones
- ◆ Annette Martinez ◆ Diana McCauley ◆ Michael D. McGee ◆ Margot Mendoza
- ◆ Eleanor Mohammed ◆ Phillip Strong ◆ Joseph Thornton ◆ Leslie Williams

Applied Social Research Unit, Illinois State University

- ◆ Lucinda Beier ◆ Cindy Caldwell ◆ Javier de la Uz
- ◆ Sharon Mills ◆ Susan Savage

Other Contributors

- ◆ Heartland Community College ◆ PNUT Banquet Center
- ◆ State Farm Insurance Companies ◆ United Way of McLean County



Introduction

Why a Town Meeting?

The Urban League has a long history of supporting minority residents of many American communities to achieve economic success and leadership roles in business, service, and public sectors. The newly organized McLean County Urban League Satellite Office of the Tri-County (Peoria) Urban League, Inc. is in the process of establishing its mission and priorities and identifying services and programs it will provide for McLean County residents. The Urban League recognizes that McLean County organizations already offer many services to residents; it seeks to identify ways of networking with other providers and using its own capacity to fill service gaps and break down barriers to service utilization. With its focus on building equal opportunities for African-Americans and other similarly disadvantaged people, the Urban League wants both information and “buy-in” from McLean County residents representing a broad spectrum of occupational groups, interests, and needs. With these needs in mind, the McLean County Urban League commissioned the Applied Social Research Unit (ASRU) of Illinois State University to conduct research about local issues of particular interest to minority residents and organizations serving minority residents. Research results will enable the McLean County Urban League to prioritize its goals and involve a larger number of local residents in organizational development and project activities.

Planning and organizing the Town Meeting

Town Meeting development and goals. Collaborative planning began in May 2002 for the “Realizing Our Potential: Urban League Kick-off and Town Meeting” (hereafter referred to as Town Meeting). The goals of the Town Meeting were to:

- Give participants information about the Urban League;
- Begin building relationships with community residents and organizational representatives;
- Give participants an opportunity to become involved in and/or request more information about the Urban League;
- Give participants an opportunity to share their knowledge and experiences regarding key issues facing minority residents, advice on improving services, and community strengths in serving minority residents; and
- Provide the Urban League with information to support its planning and program development.

Members of the McLean County Urban League Satellite and Community Needs Assessment Committees, Tri-County Urban League staff, and ASRU staff planned and implemented all aspects of the Town Meeting. They devised a project timeline; brainstormed about and invited community volunteers for the project; determined questions that participants would address in round table discussions at the Town Meeting; made venue arrangements; compiled a mailing list; secured in-kind support for printing and mailing invitations; advertised the Town Meeting with media and local organizations; and facilitated the Town Meeting sessions.



Two Town Meeting sessions—one from 3-5 pm and the other from 6:30-8:30 pm—were held on July 18, 2002 at Pnut Banquet Center, Bloomington, Illinois. Two sessions were offered to allow for greater participation by community residents and organizational representatives.

Questions for discussion at the Town Meeting. Urban League Satellite Committee members provided input about and then chose three questions to be discussed at the Town Meeting. Participants discussed each of the following questions.

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?
2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?
3. What are the community's greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?

Facilitators moderated each of the table discussions. Notetakers recorded conversation at each table. Facilitators and notetakers participated in training or received information prior to the Town Meeting to help them prepare for their respective roles.

Town Meeting invitation list and advertising. The mailing list for the Town Meeting included representatives of advocacy and service organizations, educational institutions, churches, business groups, and government offices; it also included community leaders, parents, and interested residents. To develop the mailing list, Urban League Satellite and Community Needs Assessment Committee members and ASRU staff provided invitees' names and contact information. They drew from these sources: Black Business Alliance; National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) membership; *Assessment 2000* focus groups; Bloomington Public School District 87 staff, board members, and involved parents; Afro-Ethnic Directory at www.silkysoul.com; Chamber of Commerce mailing lists; City of Bloomington and Town of Normal staff, Council members, and Human Relations Commission members; directory of local, state, and federal elected officials; and personal networks.

Invitations were mailed mid-June to 646 persons on the mailing list. (See Appendix A1 for the invitation.) A follow-up postcard was mailed the second week of July to confirm participation. In addition, the Town Meeting was advertised (and drew additional participants) through personal invitations, churches, Chamber of Commerce email directories, community businesses that hung or distributed fliers, and local and regional radio, newspaper, t.v., and online media. Some media outlets, such as *The Voice*, *The Griot*, and *The Happenings* email newsletter, target an African-American audience.

Town Meeting participation and agenda. In all, about 120 people participated in the Town Meeting planning, implementation, and/or discussion. They represented the community (i.e., residents of various races and ethnicities), the McLean County and Tri-County Urban Leagues, the Applied Social Research Unit, education, business, health, social service, government, faith-based organizations, and other community-based organizations. In session 1, 64 people contributed to round table discussions at nine tables. In session 2, 42 people contributed to round table discussions at eight tables.¹

¹ The number of participants at each table includes facilitators and notetakers who contributed to the conversation when appropriate. In session 2, two tables were merged so that there were two facilitators and two notetakers at the resulting table.



Introduction: Planning and organizing the Town Meeting

Each Town Meeting session followed the same agenda. (See Appendix A2 for the agenda.) Erwin Davis, Chairperson for the McLean County Urban League, opened the meeting by acknowledging participants and other contributors, and by introducing himself, the McLean County Urban League Satellite Office, and representatives of the Tri-County (Peoria) Urban League. In session 1, he also provided information regarding achievement test scores for African-American, Caucasian, and Hispanic secondary school students in Unit 5 and District 87. He said the Urban League wants to address the issue of minority students' lower achievement in test scores.

Sharon Mills (Applied Social Research Unit Director) served as discussion moderator, introducing the format and guidelines that participants were asked to follow in table discussions. She then invited participants to introduce themselves at their tables and begin discussing question one. Participants discussed each question for fifteen minutes. In between questions, the moderator asked for discussion feedback from several tables. Participants were given opportunity to make additional comments anonymously on blank notecards. The moderator also encouraged participants to complete an "interest sheet" if they wanted more information or to become involved with the Urban League.

At the conclusion of table discussions, Michael Harrison, Co-Chairperson for the McLean County Urban League Satellite Office, talked about Town Meeting reporting and next steps for Urban League planning and program development. He also thanked participants for their input and then introduced Laraine E. Bryson, President, Tri-County (Peoria) Urban League, who discussed her involvement in and programs and services of the Tri-County affiliate.

Report structure and limitations

This *Summary Report with Appendices* comprises narrative summarizing round table discussions and appendices including the invitation, Town Meeting agenda, and round table discussion notes for each table at sessions 1 and 2. The narrative is organized into sections corresponding to issues that most tables discussed. Each section provides participants' responses to Town Meeting questions regarding:

- key issues to better meet the needs of minority residents;
- advice on improving services for minority residents; and
- the community's greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents.

This *Report* is based on the experiences, beliefs, opinions, and perceptions of Town Meeting participants including residents and representatives of various community organizations—input that is vital to the planning of programs and services to address real community needs. For this project, the ASRU did not collect other information (e.g., public data compiled by the Illinois State Board of Education or Census Bureau, independent interviews, or surveys) that could confirm or refute participants' discussion points. In a few instances, the reader is directed to other sources for additional information.



Town Meeting Results

Introduction

Town Meeting participants discussed minority-related issues, provided advice to the Urban League about improving services, and recognized a great number of community strengths. This section summarizes their input categorically by the issues discussed most often and in greatest detail—communication and development of human services; resident input and participation; education; economic development; youth and family issues; housing; and criminal justice and law enforcement. In some cases, participants' specific remarks are placed within "quotation marks." The term "community," used throughout this section, generally refers to Bloomington-Normal. Although participants were asked to provide advice to the Urban League, participants' comments also could be useful for other business, service, and community-based organizations.

Town Meeting participants recognized many positive aspects of the community (e.g., resource and talent rich, safe, and in a good location) and generally described its residents as civil, charitable, caring, and growing in awareness and concern for a diverse population. Participants specifically named many organizations (including faith-based, health care, social service and advocacy, business, education, government, parks and recreation, clubs, and associations) and encouraged the Urban League to network and collaborate with, utilize, and help to improve them. (See Appendix A3 for the notes from each round table discussion.)

Communication, collaboration, and development of human services

Perhaps more than any other topic, Town Meeting participants discussed various aspects of McLean County's human service system. Generally, they recognized as strengths the great number of services and organizations that serve County residents. One participant believes the system is better at serving minority residents than systems operating in other communities. Participants highlighted numerous organizations, services, programs, events, and residents.

Service awareness and communication. According to participants, although many organizations and services exist, many people do not know about them. A few tables commented that not enough information is being distributed, it is not shared with all groups, or it is not shared in a timely manner. One organization representative said it is difficult to develop a communication system to attract the target audience for community educational events.

Participants' advice applies to both the new Urban League affiliate and the network of existing services: "get services out"—communicate about services and take the message to the places and people that may need them. Develop communication channels that will reach various minority populations. Communication could occur in a number of ways:

- Distribute literature (e.g., pamphlets, fliers);
- Put messages in places targeted residents frequent (e.g., grocery stores, malls, movie theatres, hair salons, ethnic retailers, libraries, large daycare providers, churches);



Town Meeting Results: Communication, collaboration, and development of human services

- Use the Internet (and put a directory of services online);
- Gain exposure at community events (e.g., by hosting a booth); and
- Develop press releases, community service announcements, articles, or programs (e.g., talk show) and send through local and regional media. A few tables expressed concern that the media typically portrays minorities in negative ways. The Urban League can be an influence on positive media coverage of minorities and the information minorities receive via the media.

Directory of services. Several tables discussed PATH (Providing Access To Help) as a great informational resource. The Urban League was urged to talk with PATH about existing services and work with PATH to communicate to minority residents. Because some residents may not know about PATH or have difficulty in obtaining its directory, several tables suggested that the Urban League should develop a directory of services or become an information clearinghouse. Another table suggested that PATH reissue its mini-yellow pages of services.

Network and partner with various organizations. Some participants were frustrated with the duplication of services, territoriality, and competition that exists within Bloomington-Normal's social service network. They emphasized the importance of the Urban League working with individuals and established organizations to learn and communicate about services, develop improved services, and provide services. These include fraternal organizations (Black Elks, Moose, and Masons), fraternities and sororities, churches, schools, social service agencies, advocacy organizations, governmental units and elected officials, and business support organizations.

Some suggested that the Urban League could act as a coordinator of social service agencies and facilitate communication among:

- parents, schools, and social agencies;
- social agencies and businesses; and
- among municipalities.

Urban League mission, resources, and structure. Generally, participants were pleased the Urban League is establishing itself in McLean County. Many participants completed the "interest sheet" and indicated they wanted more information or to become involved. Several tables noted the Town Meeting as a positive step in beginning to gain community buy-in and input and develop relationships. One participant, though, expressed concern about the Urban League coming into the community as a Satellite Office of the Tri-County Urban League, potentially to make money.

Several tables recognized the Urban League will have to develop a solid financial base and that to be successful, it will have to make a long-term investment in the community, work to build trust, listen, and alleviate fear and stigmas. Many tables advised the Urban League about its development—who it is; and how and who it serves. The Urban League should:

- Clearly identify the organization's contact person(s) and contact information.
- Understand community conditions and perceptions (see the next section on resident input and participation).
- Find a "niche" or "signature" service—"something that is unique, creative, and that works well with what others already offer."
- Learn from best practices and model programs. Several tables noted programs/services from other cities and Urban Leagues.



- Include diverse persons and sectors of the community during planning which will help to deal with “separation issues.”
- Think (or “rethink”) about the populations it serves. Several participants inquired about the meaning of “minority”—that is, who is the “minority” the Urban League will serve. A few tables suggested the “disadvantages” that people experience are driven more by economics than race. Other tables encouraged the Urban League to be inclusive and serve all ethnic minorities. Another table suggested that women be considered a “minority” although not due to their numbers.
- Provide accessible services—services that are culturally competent (e.g., Spanish translation), located strategically (e.g., “take services to the people” or to the “outskirts” of town where there is new development), operated at convenient times, and respectful of all people regardless of economic status, occupation, or racial/ethnic background.
- Serve as an advocate for minority issues in addition to providing direct services.
- Assess/evaluate other organizations’ services and provide resulting information to minority residents.

Resident input, participation, and development

According to participants, people are one of the community’s greatest assets. They described community members as caring and increasingly diverse and aware. As with their discussion on communication, collaboration, and Urban League development, nearly every table discussed the importance of actively involving minority residents, including youth, in community-based organizations, special agencies, and governmental units. Residents can (and do) serve multiple roles as planners, decision-makers, consumers, service providers, volunteers, evaluators, advocates, etc. Many participants expressed that the Urban League could be a motivational force to interest, involve, and develop minority residents and teach organizations about communicating and working with minority residents.

Developing understanding of and in the community. To effectively develop programs and services, the Urban League must get to know organizations, people, and issues within the community. Networking and partnering with diverse local organizations will strengthen Urban League presence and understanding. Organizations can educate the Urban League about gaps and duplications in services and community needs. The Urban League can take advantage of existing community- and organization-driven assessments.²

Community residents are also at the heart of understanding. The Urban League is urged to become part of the community and “get out and shake your hand” from the Eastside to the Westside. About one-third of tables suggested that the Urban League continue to assess needs of and resources available to minority residents; one table tied this suggestion specifically to assessment of education, social, and health needs of children and youth. Participants recommended using trained volunteers, surveys, and one-on-one communication (e.g., “door-to-door canvassing”) to gain information. Having developed understanding of issues and needs, some participants believe the Urban League also can help increase community awareness of (and advocate for) issues that need to be addressed.

² See for example, *Assessment 2000: Health and Human Services in McLean County: Final Report*, (Bloomington, IL 2000). This comprehensive assessment included input from numerous diverse County residents and organizations concerning many topics that Town Meeting participants also addressed. Contact the United Way of McLean County at 309-828-7383 or visit the Applied Social Research Unit’s Website at www.asru.ilstu.edu to obtain a copy.



Town Meeting Results: Resident input, participation, and development

Culture and class issues. McLean County's population is increasingly racially and ethnically diverse. From 1990 to 2000, there were large increases in racial minority populations and, in particular, in the Hispanic or Latino ethnic population.³ The numbers of minority residents, as a percentage of total McLean County population, are projected to continue increasing through 2010.⁴ Growing language, racial, cultural, and economic barriers "result in unmet needs" and challenge service providers and the community to understand and serve diverse populations. Indeed, all residents can learn from working with and relating to persons of diverse cultures. Stereotypes, racist attitudes and behaviors, and beliefs residents hold about community conditions, though, can frustrate opportunities for growth and celebration of differences and similarities. Of poverty, one participant said, "It's a systemic problem that we just accept that poverty will exist. We've got to change our minds about that."

Although some participants believe the community is becoming more culturally aware, they also recommended several avenues for furthering understanding. The Urban League could:

- Work with libraries to provide materials on various cultures and their histories;
- Develop and provide cultural sensitivity and competency training for staff of schools, social service agencies, and other community-based organizations; and
- Plan cultural events that provide opportunities for socializing among diverse persons.

Diverse committees should plan programs and services and advertise them strongly.

New and long-time residents. Some new minority residents may have a difficult time integrating into the community, and established residents may have a difficult time accepting them. Several participants made this distinction and one participant perceived low attendance of long-time residents at the Town Meeting. New residents (or those who are uninvolved) must be identified and invited to participate in community and organizational projects, programs, and services. Some residents don't know about availability of housing, employment, and services when they come to the community. Several tables discussed the need to target information to new residents through a "welcome wagon" or by providing information (e.g., including culturally relevant material and information about community conditions, norms, and values) through realtors.

Access to resources and services. Knowing about the availability of services may be the first step in obtaining them. Other issues, though, include lack of access to transportation, technology (i.e., telephones and computers), and culturally competent service providers. Several tables discussed the need for outreach to and translators for Hispanic residents and other growing populations including Indian and Japanese residents.

Leadership, role model, and volunteer development. Participants observed the lack of representation by minorities in local political and educational arenas—that is, in predominantly white Town and City government, educational administration, and school boards—and need for support to increase their presence. Participants are concerned that the same people repeatedly play decision-making roles when there are so many others who could get involved—native and new residents as well as "non-corporate" minority people. One participant said, "Unconsciously, when we are in positions where we can help out, often we turn to people we

³ Bureau of the Census, 1990 Census of Population and Housing, Summary Tape File 1 (STF 1), [Internet], <http://www.census.gov>, (April 2002); U.S. Census Bureau, Summary File 1 (SF 1), 2000 Census of Population and Housing, [Internet], <http://www.census.gov>, (April 2002).

⁴ Ervin, D.J., McLean County, IL projections of White, Black, Hispanic, and Other populations based on trends from *Illinois Population Trends: 1990 to 2020* and U.S. Census Bureau Modified Age Race Sex data files, (Normal, IL: Census and Data Users Services, December 1999).



know. We need to take that next step. Think who else can be put in that position who would have a different view?” Another participant shared her feeling that “powers that be” don’t want the minority community to be aware and informed and that they want to “let sleeping dogs sleep.”

The Urban League could be instrumental in leadership development by providing support for minority candidates, helping to organize events, and encouraging minority residents and organizations to support minority issues and to get involved. One participant, who grew up with the Urban League in another state, said she was anxious to get involved, and saw this [the Urban League and Town Meeting] as a “golden opportunity.” With respect to youth issues, employment, and education, participants recommended developing role models. Several participants said that university students (and faculty and staff), especially minorities, may be an underutilized source of volunteers and role models in the community.

Education

Erwin Davis, Chairperson, McLean County Urban League Satellite Office, introduced education and educational achievement as Urban League concerns at both Town Meeting sessions. In session 1, he provided specific information regarding achievement test scores in math and reading for African-American, Caucasian, and Hispanic high school students. Every session 1 table and most session 2 tables discussed the education system.

Many tables talked about the vast educational resources and opportunities as well as intellectual capacity in Bloomington-Normal. They also expressed general concern about education of youth and identified broadly issues regarding:

- Curriculum content (e.g., need for exposure to various perspectives, especially in history), testing, and test scores;
- Availability of tutoring, college preparation, and other educational services (e.g., GED program, pre-K classes in the public schools);
- Representation of minorities among school staff, administration, and boards;
- Parental and school relationships; and
- Racism and favoritism in education and extracurricular activities.

They advised the Urban League to support education and system reform, perhaps by providing services similar to those offered by the Tri-County Urban League.

Student achievement. Several tables expressed disappointment or concern about racial disparities in achievement test scores. They suggested that the Urban League could support students’ academic achievement and aspiration by providing low or no-cost tutoring, providing test preparation classes for college entrance exams (e.g., ACT, SAT, PSAT), sponsoring Black college tours/trips twice annually, and providing scholarships.

One participant said the school districts are working to address achievement test scores and cautioned the Urban League about its interpretation of scores: “. . . Afro Americans who have gone through the Unit 5 schools have respectable scores. Those who entered at different times, who possibly have attended more than one school, are here for shorter amount of time, did not do well. You will gain a lot of respect if you explain this fairly.” Another participant wants a faster response to educational achievement issues and inquired about how she can help her child this summer.



Attraction and retention of staff and board members. One participant related achievement test scores to a shortage of teachers. Over one-third (7) of tables discussed a need to attract and retain more teachers, especially minorities, at all school levels but particularly in the primary and secondary grades. (One participant recognized the funding needed to do this.) Participants also want to see greater minority representation among educational administration and boards. Minority persons, in these positions, will serve as important role models for young people.

Parental involvement with education and schools. Education is a partnership among parents, children, and school staff. Participants said that parental (or home) involvement with education and the schools is necessary to support students' academic achievement. In addition, schools must develop a relationship with parents and guardians. Several participants said some "parents of color" are uncomfortable discussing issues with "white teachers" or that teachers do not understand cultural differences. An additional source of frustration and discomfort for another table was the perception (or practice) of politics within school groups (e.g., sports, cultural). One example was sports teams being chosen by "who's who" and "not on talent." One participant said the schools are trying to address minority issues. Many participants recommended training and education for parents and educators including provision of:

- Cultural competency training for teachers to help them communicate with minority residents and put them at ease in the educational system; and
- Coaching and role modeling to help minority parents assert themselves and get involved in school life (e.g., PTA) and their child's education at home. (Parental involvement also may suffer due to lack of transportation at times school activities or meetings are scheduled.)

In addition to helping support the "civil" community that many participants believe is presently a strength, education has strong economic implications for developing a workforce and attracting businesses and residents. Participants advised the Urban League, educators, and economic developers to market the community's educational resources to current and prospective residents and businesses.

Economic development: business, employment, and training

Many tables praised the community's strong economy, abundant resources (e.g., retail/restaurants), low unemployment rate, and availability of diverse jobs. They named large employers, saying they are charitable, beginning to consider diversity issues and employ fair practices (with respect to minorities), and providing work experiences for young people (e.g., through internship programs). While community growth has brought new resources and talent, however, one participant cautioned in favor of planned growth. A few participants said community affluence leads some to complacency about local issues. One exclaimed, "Bloomington-Normal is for the people who have money!"

Business and employment opportunities. Over two-thirds of tables discussed issues and advice regarding business, availability of jobs, and training. They recognized a need for and advised the community and the Urban League to support minority businesses, entrepreneurship, and marketing to attract minority residents and businesses. One table expressed desire for promotional opportunities for minorities and diversity programs within large employers; one participant said there is a need for more Black doctors. A few tables urged the Urban League to get involved with economic development and to encourage employers to pay a "living wage."



Workforce guidance, training, and support. Several tables identified workforce support needs including:

- Information about careers and job availability (provided at an earlier age and especially for those not going to college);
- Transitional programs for students not going to college;
- Information about and training programs to prepare persons for skilled trades or jobs that are more professional and provide good pay (e.g., “City jobs” or construction);
- Interviewing skills; and
- Appropriate business clothing.

Childcare, youth issues, and family support

Our “caring” community with its “positive climate” is “conducive to raising a family” according to some Town Meeting participants. Yet, several issues related to families and youth stand out among round table discussions—namely, childcare; services, role models, extracurricular activities, and volunteer experiences for young people; and parental engagement and skills.

Parents and families. Many tables generally discussed parenting and family issues. They are concerned about the “breakdown” of families and would like to see the Urban League focus on parental and family strengthening. Parents and families need exposure to opportunities to grow. A few tables advised the Urban League to offer parenting skills programs—for both younger and older parents—that recognize more than one way of good parenting and the strengths that exist in minority and poor families. As with other potential programs and services the Urban League develops, one table suggested that parents, who might use such a program, should be asked about their specific needs and involved in program planning and delivery. Any program and staff would have to overcome mistrust that some residents feel resulting from turnover in other programs and services. Some residents will also resist programming they perceive to be culturally inappropriate or patronizing.

Childcare. Several tables raised issues of “inadequate” [amount] or “unaffordable” childcare, especially for middle-income families who “make too much money” to qualify for assistance or who are not necessarily “poor” or “at-risk.” Having adequate childcare enables parents or guardians to work and may allow them to utilize services and more fully get involved in community organizations, politics, and activities. One table advised the Urban League to encourage residents to take childcare positions as one step to higher paying jobs. In addition, one participant said that regulations for childcare subsidy should be applied consistently and that eligibility for subsidies re-evaluated frequently.

Youth issues. Over half of tables discussed the needs of young people (in addition to programs discussed in the above section on education). Participants suggested programs and activities (for boys, girls, teens, at-risk or troubled youth, and youth with disabilities) such as:

- mentoring and education-related programs (e.g., goal-setting, college preparation and career guidance/information, computer literacy, and tutoring);
- extracurricular activities (e.g., trips to cultural events, speechcrafters);
- after-school programs (e.g., for children beyond third grade);
- youth camps; and



Town Meeting Results: Childcare, youth issues, and family support

- programs and volunteer opportunities (e.g., for pre- and young teens) providing “pre-training, leadership, and employment [experiences], something that might interest them in forming goals for the future.” One participant relayed experience of trying to find volunteer opportunities for her 12-year old and said “agencies won’t take them until they are 16.”

A few participants named local organizations providing after-school programs but they said more programs are needed. The Urban League may wish to model local services on Tri-County Urban League programs or other successful programs. According to participants, programs should target young people’s needs, include them in planning, and provide role models. One table suggested “early intervention” and home-based programs.

Housing

A few participants recognized strong housing development (e.g., numbers of housing permits and new construction) and groups forming to address housing issues. Similar to their general comments about childcare, though, many participants viewed housing options as “unaffordable” or unavailable in Bloomington-Normal. One or more tables also recognized or perceived each of the following as local housing issues:

- Some landlords don’t maintain their properties and charge high prices for inadequate housing.
- Shelters and transitional housing are “overflowing” (and there is great unawareness of this).
- Section 8 has a waiting list.
- The practice of “red-lining” in local housing development, the housing market, and banking exists.

One participant raised an issue with new County residents’ expectations. Some residents who have emigrated from large cities where housing codes are not enforced feel they are being racially discriminated against when they “are told they can’t have 15 people in an efficiency apartment.” The banking industry was specifically named for perceived discriminatory “red-lining” (i.e., denying access to loans based on race) or “predatory” (i.e., pushing expensive refinancing or high-interest loans on homeowners, and in some cases targeting vulnerable borrowers such as low-income families) lending practices. A few tables urged the banking industry to support home ownership among minorities and low-income families.

Participants advised the Urban League to focus on adequate and affordable housing options such as apartments or single-family homes (which are preferred). They suggested programs and education for first-time homebuyers, a co-op for home sharing, referral services to good landlords, and support for traditional neighborhood development and housing rehabilitation. Finally, the Urban League was advised to review the Community Advocacy Network study on local affordable rental housing needs.⁵

⁵ Contact Don Swank, Community Advocacy Network, 309-828-7383, to obtain a copy of *A Comprehensive Study of Affordable Rental Needs in the Bloomington-Normal Community*.



Criminal justice and law enforcement

Participants related issues of crime, justice, and law enforcement to housing, education, and economic development. One participant said that people living in Section 8 housing find it hard to keep the criminal element out. A participant at another table perceived that the crime rate has increased with new residents coming from Chicago public housing.

A few tables advised that the community recognize the relationship between educational attainment, and crime and incarceration. Young people will be less likely to commit destructive or criminal acts if they are helped to achieve in school and are encouraged to engage in constructive and motivational activities. Training programs, integration services, and support also should be provided to persons after returning to the community from jail. In addition, alternatives to jail, including drug courts, should be acted upon. A few participants encouraged minority applications to law enforcement positions and law enforcement personnel to become more involved in the community. One participant said that law enforcement is beginning to address minority issues.



Conclusions and Recommendations

The McLean County Urban League Kick-off and Town Meeting provided a positive forum for diverse residents and organizational representatives to express concerns, advice, and hope for “realizing our potential” as individuals, families, and a community. Participants’ input informs the Urban League’s planning in McLean County. The key to the Urban League’s success is its ability to engage minority residents and similarly disadvantaged people in fostering equal social, educational, and economic opportunities for themselves and others. Engagement will occur as the Urban League continues to assess minority community issues and needs; include diverse residents in planning and delivering services, programs, and advocacy; and ensure access to opportunities. The Urban League has enormous potential and resources at its disposal as it works with residents and individuals representing existing organizations such as churches, educational institutions, social agencies, government, business, and other community-based organizations. The following recommendations are based on Town Meeting participants’ input.

- ***Develop communication channels and skills.*** The Urban League must continually develop its communication strategies to advertise its mission and services and to remain aware of community issues, resources, services, and organizational effectiveness (its own and others’). The Urban League can maximize its effectiveness by using information channels specific to diverse residents including meetings, the Internet, direct mail, telephone, radio, t.v., and news media, literature, personal contact and networks, and places that residents gather. Town Meeting planning and organization utilized many of these approaches.
- ***Network and collaborate with existing organizations.*** The McLean Urban League Satellite Committee members are already aware of and participate in many community organizations and associations. Through listening, identifying opportunities for collaboration, and fostering the missions of other local organizations, the Urban League will be most effective in achieving its goals.
- ***Include diverse residents in planning, providing, and utilizing accessible services and programs.*** The Urban League must recognize cultural, class, and economic issues in defining the populations it engages. Services must be conveniently located and timed, culturally appropriate, and affordable. Town Meeting participants who indicated interest in becoming involved with the Urban League may provide a base of support from which to grow.
- ***Use this Report (and other input) to identify key issues and advice,*** especially related to education and training, business and employment opportunities, and family support.



Appendices

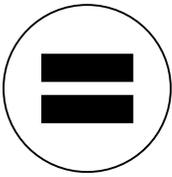
A1: Town Meeting Invitation

A2: Town Meeting Agenda

A3: Round Table Discussion Notes



A1: Town Meeting Invitation



McLean County Urban League

"Building for Equal Opportunity"

P.O. BOX 5645 • 309/438-3983 • (FAX) 309/438-2898 • BLOOMINGTON, ILLINOIS 61702-5645

Satellite Office of Tri-County (Peoria) Urban League, An Affiliate of the National Urban League

SATELLITE CHAIRPERSON
Erwin E. Davis

June 19, 2002

CO-CHAIRPERSON
Michael Harrison

SATELLITE COMMITTEE
Dianne Ashby, Ph.D.
Roland Brent
Tony Jones
Annette Martinez
Michael D. McGee
Margot Mendoza
Eleanor Mohammed
Phillip Strong
Joseph Thornton
Leslie Williams

«First_Name» «Last_Name»
«Title»
«Organization»
«Address_1»
«Address_2_»
«City», «State» «Zip»

Dear «MR_MS» «First_Name» «Last_Name»,

You are cordially invited to *Realizing Our Potential: Urban League Kick-off and Town Meeting* to voluntarily participate in round-table discussions on issues facing minority residents. The McLean County Satellite Office of the Tri-County (Peoria) Urban League affiliate serves African Americans and other similarly disadvantaged persons.

PRESIDENT & CEO
Mrs. Laraine E. Bryson
317 S. MacArthur Hwy.
Peoria, Ill. 61605-3892
(309) 672-4354

Date: Thursday July 18, 2002
Times: 3 to 5 pm and 6:30 to 8:30 pm (choose one meeting to attend)
Place: PNut Banquet Center, 1305 S. Mercer Ave., Bloomington

The Town Meetings invite you to share your knowledge and experiences; learn more about the Urban League; and get involved. Your input will give us information for planning and program development. Before the meeting, please consider:

- key issues you would target to better meet the needs of minority residents;
- advice on improving services for minority residents; and
- the community's greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents.

Please let us know which meeting you plan to attend by July 3, 2002. Contact: Sharon Mills, Illinois State University, TEL 309-438-3983, EMAIL smmills@ilstu.edu. You may invite others (coworkers, clients, neighbors) to come with you, but we need to know how many will attend. Also, advise Sharon if you have questions or require accommodation.

Together we will make our community stronger! Please join us July 18th.

Sincerely,

Erwin E. Davis
Chairperson
McLean County Urban League

Laraine E. Bryson
President
Tri-County (Peoria) Urban League



A2: Town Meeting Agenda

McLean County
Urban League Satellite Office



Kick-off and Town Meeting
“Realizing Our Potential”

July 18, 2002 • 3-5 pm and 6:30-8:30 pm • PNUT Banquet Center • Bloomington

Agenda

10 minutes **Registration and Refreshments**

10 minutes **Welcome and Introductions**

Erwin E. Davis, Chairperson, McLean County Urban League Satellite Office
Laraine E. Bryson, President, Tri-County (Peoria) Urban League

80 minutes **Round Table Discussions**

Sharon Mills, Discussion Moderator, Illinois State University

- 1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?*
- 2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?*
- 3. What are the community’s greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?*

10 minutes **Conclusion**

Michael Harrison, Co-Chairperson, McLean County Urban League Satellite Office
Laraine E. Bryson, President, Tri-County (Peoria) Urban League

Discussion Guidelines

- Confidentiality
- Equal opportunity and voluntary participation
- Focus on the future
- Facilitators will track time and guide discussion
- Use blank index cards to make additional comments



A3: Round Table Discussion Notes

This Appendix provides the notes from each of the 17 round table discussions at the Town Meeting. Each table included a notetaker who recorded table conversation and provided handwritten or typed notes to the Applied Social Research Unit (ASRU). Notetakers' styles varied and are maintained in their reports. In some cases, the ASRU staff made minor edits to the notes to ensure clarity or anonymity. For example, some notetakers provided participants' initials so that ASRU staff could follow the conversations more fully when summarizing information. All initials (or other identifying information) have been removed or altered. In most cases, each bulleted item within the notes signifies one participant's comments in the order they were discussed.

Session 1: Table 1

Notation that Caucasian members feel unqualified to speak for minority community.

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- Housing: no affordable housing for minority community, apartments, etc. Great criminal activity. Single family homes—ownership preferable. Banking.
- Prosperity brings in criminal element—need to deal with problem of amount of growth though do not want to bring on a reverse of prosperity. Growth brings on problems.
- Housing—single mothers, even working at Eureka (good job), cannot make ends meet. Apartment complexes, Section 8 housing bring in population elements finding difficult to keep out criminal element (“relatives” coming in).
- Educator’s perspective: school population based on housing—adults in children’s lives. “Big brothers” needed, school cannot. Nickel and dime jobs. Younger parents can hardly support themselves.
- Inclusiveness—Communication, cultural understanding.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- Why minorities don’t want to be involved, can’t come to their world—see professions. Blacks from State Farm.
- “Social Economics” large factor, need to know what they are up against; (Urban League) cannot come to town and take on leadership not even knowing what community is about. “Have to get out and shake your hand” gap from Eastside to Westside.



- Schools need to try to see Black and Hispanic, etc., kids as individuals, making effort to find adults to care about the individual kid. School system needs help from “homes.”
 - Information needs to work with groups such as 2 lodges in town—Black Elks and Moose, information to them plus fraternities and sororities.
 - Incorporate new people into community.
 - Booklet listing services for minority community.
- 3. What are the community’s greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?**
- NAACP, churches, MAC, MAPP, MCATF, Pflag, Path, Fraternity/Sorority, Elks, Masonic.
 - Feel safe on the street.
 - Health Dept., Chestnut, school system, human relations committees of both Normal and Bloomington, ACLU.
 - [Problem] Need to be destitute to get aid, banking/“red-lining.”
 - Generally “civil.”
 - Good services, [but] not perfect.
 - “Not in Our Town,” universities (need more minority teachers).
 - U.L. draw attention to services and pluses of community.
 - Outsiders vs. born-here community members.

Notecard comments:

- Need for coordination with PFLAG, MCATF on youth programs. No need to duplicate services, we can coordinate on issues such as teen pregnancy and HIV/AIDS prevention.



Session 1: Table 2

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- One big issue—communication with growing Hispanic community. Also, attempting to get input from the minority community—those individuals who need the help; but this is a good start. Why? Maybe many people in need don't get needs met because of language barrier; and how can you help people if you don't know what they need.
- Facilitator—Are there groups growing?
- Yes, some groups for assistance (such as for Latinos) have been forming. Someone from a different country/area/culture might view some things differently. Example—differing views of law enforcement.
- Grew up in shelter; has worked in social service system. Learned from an experience in dealing with a person of different culture; feels she's learning so much from these experiences—we need things like this group around the table. Reading a book that has helped open her eyes to situations that affect African-Americans and their history.
- Works with diversity; YWCA did dialogue circles. First step—to get racism out of the community. The next step, how do we treat people well—inclusion.
- How do we get people involved? Are we developing people to take on leadership roles? How can we do this?
- When I look at the structure of town government and the commissions and boards that we have, they're predominantly white, except Human Relations Commission. Unconsciously when we are in positions where we can help out, often we turn to people we know. We need to take that next step. Think who else can be put in that position who would have a different view? Until you have sort of an epiphany, you don't know that you have a problem.
- We hear a lot about inclusion? Is it necessary before we can make a difference?
- Yes. [lost the rest of comment here] Listening to parents during redistricting—comments about negative changes. Comments about how the “new” kids affected the school and it is hard to push across that line.
- Also need to look at the schools and teachers as leaders.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- Facilitator—Now that we know what the Urban League is really for, what advice do we give the Urban League?
- Interested in comment about helping teachers. Have started a mentoring program in one of the schools and made an effort to use a diverse group of mentors. Need role models, people who have been successful.
- Urban League can help by providing role models.
- It goes further—you need to provide experiences early. Be more proactive rather than reactive and start with younger children. Experience working with a 12-year old trying to find volunteer work in summer (her own children). Making numerous calls, but agencies won't take them until they are 16. We need to start young and give them productive experiences. Give them opportunities when they are young, begin to mold them. Start at twelve. Pre-training, leadership, employment, something that might interest them in forming goals for the future.
- Urban League can help with awareness of labor laws, etc. There is a whole group of young people, with energy, motivation, who are too young to be accepted.
- There are so many community services around, maybe they don't all get attention.



- What can Urban League do?
 - There aren't many programs that children can go to after school that are constructive and motivate them toward job skills, etc. Different set of experiences that can affect educational achievement.
 - Look at the programs that they have in the Peoria brochure. They offer positive things for youths.
 - Facilitator—What are some other areas besides youths?
 - In my experiences, some of the things that I've been involved with. One of the things that I found difficult to do when we're trying to put together an education program [such as specific organization's program]—so far we have not been very successful in getting people to attend the event. Only 5, 6, 7 community members besides [organization's name] people. The Urban League needs to develop a very strong and aggressive communication system to get the message to the people we need to reach.
 - Facilitator—Is communicating our biggest problem?
 - We haven't been able to develop the communications system that get people to come.
 - If you have a specific thing that you are going to address, it gets people to come.
 - Council meetings—that's so. Central Illinois Organizing Project.
 - Representative came and wanted to know what bank can minorities go to for access to the dollars needed to buy homes, etc. Why would we want to take tax payers' dollars and put them in a bank that is not serving us?
 - UL could be instrumental in leadership development. How do you do that? What organization do I need to speak in front of? How can you become a constructive member of leadership in this community? How do people learn to do that? Especially with the [lost rest of comment].
 - UL members have a group of people to attend meetings.
- 3. What are the community's greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?**
- It's a very civil community. It's a safe place type of community. There aren't areas where you're afraid.
 - The economic strength of the community is there. Because of the type of community that we are, in spite of some problems that we've made reference to, it's a fairly well-educated community. There are already some avenues there, although there are some that we need to tweak. State Farm is a strength. 1 out of 10 persons is tied to State Farm.
 - The town is pretty liberal. There are some problems in the court system. Otherwise there is no prejudice in terms of helping
 - Where is that economic gap? What are some strengths to help?
 - As a [organization name removed] we are trying to promote skills to help everyone, no matter where you are. (Gave example of a young woman who is ranting and raving, but won't be listened to because of the way that she presents herself.) We need to help with leadership. Find ways to not keep people down.
 - Changing demographics—Hispanics moving in.
 - There are jobs.
 - There are so many services to help people in transition. We're very rich in that aspect.
 - Facilitator—Do we address problems as they occur?
 - We have begun to. There are groups forming (through the 90's) everything from housing to groups putting together information on where to get housing, etc.
 - Is childcare adequate?
 - [Several voices]—No.
 - And are there openings for subsidized childcare?
 - Once a person earns a little more, their childcare costs go up, so the incentive is gone to work and work more hours.



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 1: Table 2

- Do we respond fast enough? If those education stats are so, we don't respond fast enough. It takes 12 years for us to recognize a gap in a child's achievement. Example—what do I do this summer to help my son maintain and progress and not lose out academically?
- Programs are focused on the children who are in the 78% (low-achieving).
- Those scores are disappointing. Daughter, no homework, intern teaching, change of teachers 4 times in that class. Is it a lack of teachers? Very frustrating that the academics were not there. I can see why the gaps described exist.
- Facilitator—Don't hesitate to use those cards for comments.
- I think I've heard that the community overall does a good job in addressing problems, but we need to do more in some areas. Education has been mentioned a lot.
- We need to do more of addressing everyone's issues. Are we addressing the issue of that minority population? (African-Americans, Hispanics)
- The minorities are impacted the hardest. We need to think about the reason for that. It's my understanding that that is why UL is wanting information on how to do something.

Notecard comments:

- Q.1. More after-school programs for children beyond 3rd grade.
- Suggestion—Review the community needs assessments already conducted by other agencies/organizations, such as the United Way.



Session 1: Table 3

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- Gaps in the scores of academic achievement tests; disparity by race; free lunch; poverty a problem.
- Help for teenagers in high school; troubled youth need an outlet.
- Parental involvement in schools; communication between parents and teachers; unable to attend programs because transportation is an issue.
- Uncomfortable discussing issues because there may be parents of color and teachers who are white; provide coaching and role modeling; bridge gaps; language barrier; helping minority parents assert themselves.
- Parents need to be engaged as a partner of education; cultural differences not understood by teachers; students could be more engaged with content of classrooms; relationships between teachers and students needs improvement.
- Help black kids succeed—they need to overcome peer pressure associated with trying to be “white” by succeeding in school.
- Define a way to engage parents very early with children in learning process even if they are not prepared to do so.
- Low-income housing is needed; Urban League could assist in bridging the gap between needs of low-income minorities and housing options that fit into their pricing category.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- Exposure is needed—maybe use information booths; opportunity to partake in services.
- Personal—one-to-one communication; outreach; partner with churches, or wherever people are, in order to build relationships and trust.
- Urban League education for civil society; go where those persons in need are located.
- Phone # that is a 1st response; get on PATH phone list; minority roll models in school or community could be sought out and utilized to help guide minority youth.
- Getting the word out.
- Buy in from community from various entities.
- Networking with various agencies; focus on information centers or service providers in the community.
- Become part of the community.
- Determine what other agencies provide similar services within community as the Urban League, and if partnerships can be formed to better facilitate meeting the needs of the community.
- Early intervention in families; home programs; advocacy.
- Network between agencies to not duplicate services, and promote working more efficiently to meet community needs.
- Coordination and communication between agencies.
- Urban League could facilitate/coordinate networking of community service agencies.

3. What are the community's greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?

- Big-Bother/Big-Sister program.
- Minority roll models—recruit.



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 1: Table 3

- Using untapped ISU roll models (a program or partnership could be set up for tutoring, hanging out, counseling, etc).
- Engaging minority college students; connect students with community.
- Fraternities/Sororities working with less fortunate; women's forum targeting familial and feminine issues; mentorships.
- PATH.
- Recreation centers; YMCA/YWCA; Links—neighborhood center; Western Avenue.
- Irving Center.
- Boys/Girls Club.
- State Farm's Mobile Classroom; summer school program providing transportation.
- Educational systems are strengths that are underutilized.
- Strength is that we are here addressing needs of community.
- Great ideas but need resources to assist in implementation.
- Urban League should find a niche.
- A lot of human capital in community.

Notecard comments:

- What can be done for single parent families in the way of affordable daycare? There are many single-parent households where there is one parent who works, but does not qualify for help with daycare because he or she is told that they make too much money.
- Where are those services regarding daycare that will help those middle-class families that are not necessarily "poor" or "at-risk"?



Session 1: Table 4

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- Cultural understanding. If parents not involved, students suffer. So parents (and teachers) must understand the cultural differences of the different groups they encounter in school.
- Enabling minorities to be part of fabric of community (the definition of community in this case is exclusive of schools and government), e.g., service clubs. Need involvement of local minorities in this kind of community.
- Affordable housing for minorities. [This participant defined minorities as those who are economically deprived.]
- Minorities need to know they have to be involved, to speak up as part of social/community groups—have to be part of solution.
- Big employers' (Country Companies, State Farm, Mitsubishi) employees need to represent community.
- A method to help mainstream newly arrived families. Minority new families seem more isolated when they move here and they have lost network of people they knew where they lived previously. E.g., parents often are unable to provide their children's care providers any emergency contact person.
- Lack of communication for new diverse population. Need some sort of communication. Affordable housing problem is result of new diverse population who didn't grow up here.
- New study by CAN (made up of 24 agencies) coming out soon about affordable housing. (Doesn't focus on needs by minorities, just housing needs of community.)
- Communication—how do we get news to all concerned people.
- Summary of key issues:
 - Cultural understanding.
 - Integrating minorities, & especially new people, into community (at all levels).
 - Affordable housing.
 - Communication.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- Urban League (UL) should learn who provides what. UL could write letter to service agencies about UL's existence here, and their goals and mission.
- Be sure not to duplicate services.
- McLean County doing collaboration better. Social agencies get local, state, and federal dollars.
- UL should go talk to PATH and listen.
- McLean County is a good place but minorities don't take advantage of what is available, need to be encouraged to utilize what is here.
- Tried the "One Stop" concept before and it didn't work, but are trying it again. However, the present economic situation is not good for it.
- Newly arrived African-Americans seek out churches when they move to a new place. Therefore pastors (churches) could be taught to be a source of information for services available.
- Don't know what would be good sources for Hispanics and Orientals. Have to know communication basis for each minority.
- UL needs to develop "Signature Service" to offer the community—something unique, creative, and that works well with what others already offer.



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 1: Table 4

- Support education without stepping on toes or duplication.
 - How does UL define minority? [From brochure: “African-Americans and other similarly disadvantaged individuals.”]
 - [Several participants expressed the following.] Push economic/class definition. “Working poor” and impoverished (worse off than “working poor”) are what lead to the difficulties of minorities more than race.
 - Services available beyond 8-5, M-F. (e.g., Saturday hours.) Transportation to the services.
 - Getting to the services is more of a problem than the existence of services.
 - Funding.
 - Western Avenue serves Hispanic [but participants weren’t sure what has become of it].
 - Please, no new programs without a Hispanic translator available.
 - Problem—not enough qualified Hispanics available to meet the need for Hispanic translators.
 - Summary of advice:
 - Find out what services already exist—don’t duplicate. Develop Signature Service.
 - Find communication channel for each minority population and communicate appropriate information through those channels.
 - Support education.
 - Funding.
 - Extend service agencies hours.
 - Work on transportation availability to service agencies.
 - Rethink minority definition—may be driven by economics more than race.
 - Provide Hispanic translators at service agencies with Hispanic clients.
- 3. What are the community’s greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?**
- Solid foundation of individuals, organizations, and employees committed to make services available to everyone.
 - Participant has lived here 17 years and feels it one of the most professional and charitable communities. Isn’t sure this will continue as new populations move in.
 - Striving for equality.
 - Community comes together to meet needs when they see the need.
 - E.g., Mayor’s Hispanic Focus Group—very enlightening and educational.
 - UL needs to reach out to Hispanic community.
 - Problem: media tends to often treat crime as a minority problem. Media also needs to point out good things brought about by minorities.
 - E.g., contractor wanted to build some affordable housing in [name of subdivision]. Someone at meeting said he didn’t want any more low-income housing in the area because that meant more low-income children which leads to more crime.
 - HeadStart—it should be expanded to be available to more children and their families.
 - Problem: while some minorities do not know about available services and/or do not have transportation to get to services, some however, seem to know when certain services are available and find transportation to get to them. (E.g., they seem able to get to the malls to shop and able to get to service agency to pick up Thanksgiving dinner.)
 - Problem: expectation of people who have just moved here from big cities where housing codes are not enforced. When they move here and are told they can’t have 15 people in an efficiency apartment they feel they are being picked on because they are a minority.



- Summary of strengths:
Community—committed, professional, charitable, caring.
HeadStart.
Problems: media coverage of minority crime, new arrivals feel picked on because housing codes are enforced here, and a few minorities exploit system.

Notecard comment:

- Pre-counseling skill development, a minority counseling program.



Session 1: Table 5

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- Categorization of minorities as disadvantaged.
- Participation of minorities in process of planning/solution.
- Way to market community in education professionals, provide community support (i.e., hair dressers/ethnic food), retain minority educators.
- Focus on children, extracurricular activities; promotion of interactions with peers.
- Alleviating stigmas; engage in partnering to further communication.
- Lack of inclusiveness; participation in planning process; focus on similarities; look at why or how to bring the services to the people.
- Need for more parental involvement in schools, issue of transportation.
- “Buy-in”: prefers “similarly disadvantaged” to “minority.” Wants people to be involved in process of planning and solutions.
- Better market community to potential minority residents, education, business. Provide community support—hairdressers, etc.
- Kids: “realistic” extra-curricular activities for youths, including disabled. Interaction with peers with good goals.
- Alleviating mutual stigmas (reputations, stereotypes). E.g., minority’s feelings about Unit 5 are stereotyped and not accurate.
- Inclusiveness: “People we’re talking about are never in these meetings”—we should stop with “Black, white, brown”—these children are our children.
- Role-model successful programs.
- Bring services to the people. Churches will wait for the people to come in.
- Need for parental involvement in schools—particularly African-American parents.
- Use public library to develop resources for minority families.
- Improve transportation systems.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- Inclusion of service consumers in [planning].
- “Get services out”—Internet use to expand awareness of services available.
- People providing services don’t have to be a member of disadvantaged community.
- Partnering/follow-up/through with programs. Long-term investment.
- Physical/financial access to computers; occasional access.
- Get parents involved in school system. Provisions of translators (Spanish-speaking) to address language barrier.
- Additional training/education of teachers to deal or communicate with parents.
- Making directory of services for minority residents larger, better known. Use Internet?
- UL can work on helping develop understanding that it’s not necessary for a service provider to be a part of minority community to serve it and support and care (train non-African-American hairdresser to “do” hair.) Cultural competency training.
- Helping to build trust and get rid of fear.



- Commitment for both UL and partners . . . dedicated partnership.
- Help with access to computers for low-income families.
- Parents need support to get them into schools. Schools must be more parent-friendly.
- Availability of interpreters. Language is key.
- Economic disadvantage affects access not only to computers, but to phones.
- UL could provide facilitators to train teachers/administrators and community/social service providers.
- UL could support interpreter services to schools to help parents get more involved in schools.
- Go beyond 8-5 services for support services (hairstylist).
- Address goal of stabilizing family unit. Parenting skills training.
- Get services to where people are: churches going up outside of community.
- Make use of students at universities—involve African-Americans, Greek organizations in community—ask questions. Ask students from Chicago: “What does your community do that we could do better?”
- General overall recommendations:
 - Cultural [competency] training.
 - Translators/interpreter services.
 - Offering parenting skills/stabilize family unit.
 - Partnering/networking with agencies (Black fraternities).
 - Share best practices with people from other communities.
 - Use public library.

3. *What are the community’s greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?*

- Strong interest/collective will to help serve minorities.
- Growing awareness concern/diversification of population.
- Resources; “multi-generational families”(?)
- Location of town. Growth of faith community services (i.e., Catholic Mass in Spanish).
- Collective will and interest in serving minority residents.
- Great resources: universities, community colleges, major employers.
- Well-educated community.
- Diverse population drawn to attractive location.
- Community shows pride and great appearance.
- Faith community: occasional services in Spanish (but by non-native speaker—better to have native-born).
- Growth brings more resources—and more diverse resources (Wal-mart brings a greater service and low prices.)
- Minority community is itself a resource and strength.

Notecard comments:

- Great opportunity to discuss, share, and brainstorm! Thank you!
- Urban league can work with Bloomington and Normal public libraries to provide more resources on different cultures; more resources on African-American history.



Session 1: Table 6

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- There are two areas: education and employment—turning education statistics around; and employment relates to women coming off welfare going into jobs and availability of jobs and training—to secure jobs and meet the needs of families.
- First is education—without education, you can't get jobs and it creates a downward spiral to crime and breakup of families.
- I had no idea of the numbers of students not meeting standards. What happens to the children after they get out of school?
- We need to relate to the statistics to decide funding, the type of teaching in schools. Part of my job was with scoring those tests for 1-3 graders, the standardized tests, and I could tell if children came from urban or rural districts. If they get a bad start they never catch up.
- We need to address age groups for the future, especially teenagers and young adults and maybe even break it down into gender. Even if we have one teacher to 4-5 students, we need to make sure that in the future we don't have the same problems as today; bring scores up.
- The local NAACP has statistics for lower grades, too—they had looked into this and found a wide gap; some are getting left behind.
- They wanted to put more police on the streets, but the focus should be on education so we don't need more police/prisons.
- If the education component is taken care of, incarceration and employment can be taken care of. If we don't start with education, the future won't change.
- How do we do it? Legislators? But they don't get elected on what they are doing today affecting 20 years into the future. No one remembers long-range. Need money to hire teachers, not just for the minority community. It stems also from structure at home, breakdown of families, TV being more important than schools. More teachers means that someone cares.
- What about the gap between education and employment?
- After these schools, where are they going, if not meeting test scores in high school, then what about college?
- Transition programs are needed, enhancing programs in trade skills for those not going on to college.
- Not every kid wants to go to college, but they still have to make a living. So start younger, let kids know what they need to do.
- Unions are starting programs for kids, career days, for Jr. high, for different trades, and advise for what kind of high school courses are needed. And they have apprenticeships, and kids need to know these are available. Cutbacks are affecting counseling in schools.
- Mentoring makes a difference in children.
- Education is not just books.
- Standardized tests can be biased, just because kids don't do well on them, they will still succeed.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- We need to ascertain what services are here, what's being provided, how, who's being served and who's not.
- If you ask what are the services, there needs to be a communication tool—is that being done on a broad base? We have PATH, so social services know what is available to refer people to, but what about citizens?



- Are the services of the Urban League available for all?
 - Yes, all, for anyone that walks through the door.
 - Has anyone considered door-to-door canvassing, maybe a 4-5 question survey, to go to the community and find out what they need?
 - To be referred to any services in the community, not just the Urban League services.
 - To educate those who don't know—shopping bags, backs of register receipts, to communicate different things each month.
 - Has to be simple, catch attention.
 - Also a lot could be done through churches, not a list, maybe an item on a program each week. Like “This is available,” “Did you know...,” etc.
 - At the police dept. of U of I, a service agency put out a brochure, one side was “Need Money?” or “Need Health Care?” and it told how to get to the welfare office, the employment office, etc. Brochures like that can be posted at grocery stores, movie theatres, kiosks in the Mall, places where people go.
 - And in Val Pak coupons.
 - Tap the marketing people at the university, make it a semester project.
 - The Urban League is a big place, big staff, day care, director of education, etc. Eighth graders referred to special program to stay in school, scholarships, tutoring, parents have to become involved; on the help side, for women coming off public aid; six major programs, including family counseling, paid staff, and references to local social services. There is a teen parent program—WIC program, child care, references for health care, to keep kids in school.
 - Take up the slack with social services because of budget cuts?
 - Yes, and give GED program.
 - How do you coordinate services?
 - There is some duplication, but some for example won't go to regular social services but will go to the Urban League.
 - Should coordinate, put in a list, what agencies provide what.
 - The Urban League is a one-stop shop in Peoria. What about Bloomington-Normal though?
 - We could use the College Hills Mall!
 - What I have found is that there are certain places people will and won't go. For 8th graders, Urban League is the only one that has such a program. And GED are evening classes for those who work during the day. So it doesn't duplicate others held during the day, it fills in gaps.
 - We need to fill in gaps wherever they are, after identifying services—coordinate them.
 - One thing Urban League does is referrals to jobs.
 - One of my pet peeves is duplications of efforts, no one talks to each other; we see duplicates of people using duplicated services. Don't take away from someone else by helping one person twice.
 - Sometimes one agency is jealous of the others though, because money comes from the same sources.
- 3. What are the community's greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?**
- One is private businesses—State Farm, Mitsubishi, ISU, Wesleyan.
 - Students can be tapped into for tutoring, mentoring, help with papers, research, volunteers of students and faculty both.
 - Why is the business base a strength?
 - Monetarily, and staff can be used as volunteers, from a service standpoint; employers can come into the Urban League and tutor, help.
 - State Farm allows employees time for volunteering and State Farm pays.
 - And organization can get \$500, per person who volunteered in past.



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 1: Table 6

- And don't they have a program where they're teaching, substituting?
- Promote that to the legislature.
- You know how supportive a community it is, United Way raised amount of drive 10% and a million for New York in addition. A very giving community from that perspective. More employers should support that base.
- Any more strengths? How about development of the community? Like reports on housing permits, new construction, not dwindling, and even growing. Is it planning by officials? But is everybody sharing in that?
- There is NAACP and MAPP here in town supportive of minorities, a strength, and many more organizations.
- Churches are a great asset.
- Home Sweet Home, Claire House, Safe Harbor, catching those falling through safety nets, even for the people who just need a meal.
- Food banks too.
- There are quite a few people who need food now, and Claire House was depleted.

Notecard comments:

- #1, minority representation in political arena.



Session 1: Table 7

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- Affordable housing—availability. Shelters overflowing, transitional overflowing.
- Job availability; job employment; job training. Low pay to start, not enough jobs; clothes; interview skills.
- Transportation—lack of bus service, hard to get to job.
- Education—more minority teachers; different perspective, especially in history.
- Being the only minority at school in a group or at a school activity.
- Lack of sensitivity of non-minority teachers. Voluntary attendance to diversity training—maybe for kids too.
- Under-representation politically by minority.
- Difficulty being on boards, meetings/political meetings due to lack of advertisement, not being able to take off work during the day.
- Solution how to increase networking with elected officials?
- Need for a consistent level of awareness of what issues need to be addressed.
- Some people at every meeting.
- Families can't come to meetings like this—transportation, child care.
- Incorporating new people as they move in.
- Need to encourage people to attend—invite them—have community leaders.
- Not enough information being distributed—churches enough.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- Networking.
- Incorporating uninvolved people/new people.
- Lack of trust if you are a minority person with State Farm—not a part of the African-American community. Providing services right in the community.
- Need to have representation of minority people from community at large—people others know, familiar faces.
- [Two participants:] Services in area of town where people live—several places.
- Helping people be aware of what programs available.
- Urban League needs to look at what is being offered—be a clearinghouse of information—help people access services.
- Reduce “competition”—“territoriality” of existing services to allow new services to come in.
- Help communication; parental involvement; commitment.
- Bigger issue than just delivery of services—get community to invest in what is happening.
- Help parents/schools/services communicate.
- Clearly identify who is the contact person to get info.
- Give information to realtors to catch new people.
- Re-issue “Mini-pages” of PATH services to people.
- Help people know about services.
- Location of services to be centrally located.
- Communication between cities needs to be assisted.
- Address needs of Hispanic community—communication of services—refresher courses in Spanish.
- Growing population of Indian, Japanese—interpreters needed.



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 1: Table 7

- Help employers increase sensitivity.
 - Creation of a “leadership” program that connects with non-corporate minority people to help create new leaders.
- 3. *What are the community’s greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?***
- Leadership.
 - Boys & Girls Club—the positive place for kids! The Parks and Recreation system!
 - A lot of free programs—or help pay/assist people in programs.
 - Great faith—abundance of churches. Problem—not enough blending of economic populations—middle class and poor.
 - Low unemployment—diverse jobs.
 - Human Relation Commissions—NAACP. Law enforcement and addressing minority issues—problem is the need to help increase application to police of minorities.
 - Never bored here, cultural events—family-oriented.
 - Schools are trying to address minority issues.
 - Lots of choices if you don’t want to use the public school system.
 - Variety of services available—restaurants/shopping.
 - Favorable level of corporate support to community—donor match, volunteering, money.



Session 1: Table 8

Facilitator's prompting questions/comments are in CAPITAL LETTERS.

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- “Housing—availability of affordable housing.” “Bank loans—ability to get, attitudes of the banking industry.” “Criminal justice—stacked against youth; ideas for alternatives to jail, including Drug Court.” Housing in process: North Beach, West side of Bloomington
- Community Advocacy Network (CAN) study on affordable housing: Rental...7000 (units) less than/equal to 60% of area medium...to some degree subsidized
- “More minority representation in key positions in the community.”
- “Childcare. Many fall between categories. Some are eligible for money from the state, yet are seeking job interviews; and others are not eligible, yet can't afford childcare.”
- Hiring practices. “Kids don't see us in positions of power. Thus, they think those positions are unattainable.” E.g., look at minority teachers, law enforcement.
- [Urban League program] Tomorrow's Scientists, Technicians & Managers (TSTM) might be of interest to McLean County.
- “Stereotyping. All-ways: Black/Korean, White/Black...Because we don't know each other. Housing. Employment.”
- New Legislation, “No Child Left Behind.”
- “What is the funding source for the Urban League? Do we need both the NAACP and Urban League?”
- [Tri-County UL budget] \$1.2 million. NAACP advocates; while UL does some of that, its focus is more about programs.
- “Make sure programs are coordinated.”
- “We have a lot of this [UL programs]. The problem is in communicating. Duplicating. Spreading out on the outskirts. We have all this; but is a matter of who does what where and why. For example, McLean County Community Compact gets computers into schools.”
- Consistency regarding regulations where state offers subsidy of childcare. “If we could get people in charge to be fair when evaluating people...don't pre-judge.”
- HOW?
- “Follow guidelines.” E.g., when newly employed, don't have paystubs. Have a standard [system for indicating eligibility for childcare assistance].
- [Avoid those problems by] using a computer.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- There are [UL] offices in Chicago?
- YES.
- “When Chicago tears down Section 8 housing, (they refer residents to B-N). They don't tell residents about \$7/hour jobs without benefits; lack of affordable housing; that the public transportation system is lacking. Ten years ago the Social Services Network was adequate. Now, its overburdened. Especially after 9/11.” So many families with hours cut to less than 40 (to 25-30 hours/week).
- ADVICE FOR URBAN LEAGUE?



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 1: Table 8

- “Make sure people know the conditions.” There are 1000 jobs [available] across I-55. [Employers need to] pay \$10/hour so people can live, afford a car. “Yet the drumbeat is to go to government. We need to deal with employers, provide [living-wage jobs]; [UL to] be a burr under the Chamber of Commerce saddle.”
 - Funding source. “Go where people are: churches, schools, sporting events. How to succeed—Town Meetings are not enough.”
 - WHAT ISSUE COMES FIRST? AS CEO.
 - Education arena. “Now there is the perception that if you go to Bloomington schools, scores will be lower [reference to the Achievement Gap]. Combine all efforts of Unit 5 and District 87. Until we break barriers of separation, families feel they are not getting the same benefits. Opportunities have got to be there.”
 - As CEO, can’t pay \$10/hour and then face a \$12,000/year insurance premium. Playhouse mirror = \$100. Encourage people to go out. Childcare [jobs] as (step toward) higher paying job. Government assistance needed in some areas, e.g. childcare for working parents, not for those playing the system. Evaluate for [eligibility for childcare assistance] frequently.
 - URBAN LEAGUE ROLE?
 - Make suggestions. Monthly determinations, not every six months. Make it easy; turn in checkstubs.
 - Remember job training eligibility.
 - “Go to people providing services. What gaps do they see? Go to people who need services/use services.”
 - “Handbook is available. Yet we say services (referral system) are not coordinated. My [child] teaches at an inner-city school in Springfield. Parents are typically stressed about survival, so if [my child] gets two parents to come [to a meeting] that’s good. Parents are working two jobs.”
 - RECOMMENDATIONS?
 - “School has to take responsibility to hold parents accountable. PTA works in upper-middle class.” (Yet even at) Metcalf and University High, less than 50% of parents [attend meetings, get involved].
 - “Not ‘user-friendly.’ Talk to the Board (of Education). I have seen change in over eight years. More training about diversity sensitivity.”
 - User-friendly.
- 3. What are the community’s greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?**
- Services to offer.
 - Childcare program, needs bugs worked out...DCFS.
 - “By being small (vs. Chicago), being an education community, opportunity for student teachers; different topics, internships in this community. Lot of caring people in the community; so many willing to try.”
 - “My wife and I go to [many] meetings. This meeting is rare, I don’t know more than 90% [of participants]. [This community has] two universities, a Community College. Education is the key. Housing and day-care revolves around money. If one quits after 8th grade, (one is not going to earn enough money).”
 - “Cadre of volunteers. Chestnut Health, Project Oz were started by volunteers with United Way seed money. Habitat for Humanity—is on their 76th house. Help desk. Strength of people willing to help. Head Start, EOC...started on a volunteer basis before receiving a government grant.”
 - In 1964, the Urban League was started by volunteers. Informal. Got CAT (Caterpillar Corporation) to throw in money. Hired Frank Campbell, (who served for 30 years).
 - “This is a wealthy community. The people in Decatur would love to trade problems. Unemployment (Decatur) is 10% versus (Bloomington-Normal) 2%.”
 - “Volunteers willingness refers to both those who formally volunteer, and receive human resource development training and recognition, and among cultures where ‘volunteering’ happens informally, as part of being an extended community.”
 - Noted the database of referral services. NOW PRIORITIZE ISSUES:



- “Education.”
- “More communication. Housing.”
- “Education.”
- “Gap between incomes. Lots at the top. Lots at the bottom. Not many in-between.”
- “Not great awareness that the shelters are full; families are living in cars. If one could cut housing costs by \$200, (that would provide) \$50/week for childcare. The ISU Farm sold for \$39,000/acre. Figure 4 1/3 houses per acre. Developer is responsible for sewer/utility lines. New construction costs \$55-60/sq. foot. Need \$1,000/month for housing to (pay-off).”
- TRANSPORTATION? Need all-night ride.
- Vs. Peoria or Urbana-Champaign, where the transit authority with its own taxing. “We do get what we can from the federal government, and ask cities to make up the difference.”
- “Two months ago we turned down Section 42 (housing) for Raab & Parkside, because there are no services there yet.”



Session 1: Table 9

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- More services to at-risk youth with a vision of where we need to be 10-20 years.
- Church/faith-based involvement with community and need for male mentorship/role modeling, e.g., numbers of homes without male figure.
- Offer hope—more than empowerment. Without hope, ideas, futures, people will not flourish.
- Lack of affordable housing—cost of living is high and for low-income individuals/families, lack of housing options is critical.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- UL needs representation and collaboration with current groups; e.g., economic development.
- Access to loans, predatory lending practices.
- Access/awareness of current resources, e.g., 827-PATH.
- Bridge community communication gaps by involving a diverse population.
- Be willing to go beyond the “office” and undertake outreach.
- Concern for sharing of participant/client info.
- Don’t try to be everything—identify two or three unmet needs, focus on one, e.g., affordable housing might be too huge.
- Urban League can be a voice, advocating concern; calling attention perhaps when all others are silent.
- Look at nationwide broad issues, such as Community Reinvestment Act, to determine if [lost rest of comment].
- Lack of child care/youth camps—programs need to be well [thought?].

3. What are the community’s greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?

- So much happening, overlaps of meetings (e.g., NAACP is meeting this evening and another group concerned about African-American needs).
- Diversity on the increase due to employment.
- Robust economy.
- Ability to effect immediate social, demographic change when we want to.
- Resources are available to become a model community.

Notecard Comments:

- [Comments made by one participant]: Key issues not addressed and other ideas to consider. 1) Educational support services needed similar to ones listed in Tri-County (Peoria) Urban League. 2) Help to coordinate (Ed) services and communicate with other organizations that are providing services for children and youth—examples, Black churches, NAACP, ISU, IWU, Heartland College, Big Brothers/Sisters, etc. 3) Do annual assessments on unmet needs for children and youth—educational and social and health needs. 4) Try to get a grant to assist young people to get summer job and work experience (not just working at fast food). 5) Test prep sessions provided to prepare students for ACT, SAT, PSAT, etc. 6) College prep counseling. 7) Help to coordinate a Black College Tour.



Session 2: Table 1

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- Services for adolescents, to make their future okay.
- Provide training and education in fields not usually taught in universities, which tend to be more professional fields. We need training in fields, such as construction, that pay well and could provide a good future.
- Youth services and programs, beyond athletics, for both boys and girls.
- “When I was growing up, there was nothing to do. You could go to the movies or go to the mall—not very constructive. Teenagers need something to do. If they aren’t doing something constructive, they will do something destructive. This town needs something for young people to do.”
- I want kids to feel competent.
- There are so many young men in this town who have nothing to do. They work at McDonald’s. They may not have finished high school. There is nothing else available. We need to work towards opening up workplaces like construction, city jobs, that don’t require a degree. If there was something to do, they wouldn’t be in gangs because they would have an alternative to trying to take it away from somebody else.
- Problem: “We’ll fund something for awhile, then shift to something else. It’s a systemic problem that we just accept that poverty will exist. We’ve got to change our minds about that.”
- We also have to look at affordability. Many youth activities cost too much for low-income families.
- I’m not knocking the churches, but do our children feel worthy enough? Also, are those activities available to people who don’t belong to the churches.
- People don’t know about the services that are available.
- People need greater access to services. People who don’t have a phone don’t know how to do business on the phone.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- Growing up in East St. Louis, we had a CETA program—an all-summer program that provided constructive things for people to do.
- I grew up in Chicago. We had neighborhood youth centers where kids in a 2- or 3-block radius who would have projects and counselors to help guide us. One of the counselors probably kept me out of prison.
- We have to have services that reflect the community and that are respectful of all people who come in the door—everyday people. I think the Urban League can work at getting this community to see individuals not as a case or a client, but people. If the Urban League can do that we would all be better served.
- I like to know what’s out there. I think of a single mother with two children; how will she know what services are out there. It’s hard to pick up and get out there. I want someone to be out there with a white flag—this is how to do it, this is what to say.
- PATH does that. Everybody doesn’t know that. Urban League could be instrumental in getting information out—also to getting churches to see beyond their four walls.
- Culturally appropriate parenting training that recognizes that there is more than one good kind of parenting—and the strengths that exist within minority and poor families. “If I were to be told that I wasn’t dealing with my child correctly, I would be highly offended.”
- Urban League could be a catalyst to get the ministers to work together and not to hold their sanctuaries sacred. There is something outside the building.



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 2: Table 1

- My wife worked in social services. Her advice is that McLean County has a lot of good social services. A new organization can't come into town and tell them what to do. The new organization should say, "How can we help you meet your needs." Urban League has to work with the rest of the agencies if it is going to be successful.
 - If parenting classes were offered in this community, go to apartment communities and ask the residents about the issues they are dealing with.
 - Involve the people in planning and delivering services.
 - Urban League could help to provide a support system for people who are displaced from their community. It could rent an apartment in north Normal, work with residents to provide services.
 - Youth preparation for careers.
 - Urban League could help us improve what we have. Trained volunteers out in the community—in churches, housing developments, high density neighborhoods—listen, hear what's being said, and report back. Also be a resource for existing services to be more effective.
 - It would be useful to have people who are powerful in the community get involved in the community—police, for example.
 - Urban League should listen.
 - Urban League should put its weight behind housing rehabilitation, traditional neighborhood development, planning that supports needs of minority and low-income residents.
- 3. *What are the community's greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?***
- Wide variety of services.
 - Good social service network.
 - Churches, but . . .

Notecard comments:

- Problems between people who live on the west side and the State Farmers. Poor people feel both intimidated and worried about being pushed around. Feel that they can't go to church, because they don't have the right clothes.



Session 2: Table 2

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- Had an opportunity to participate in leadership in McLean Co. Because Bloomington is a very affluent community, people don't understand that there are still local issues and that leads to complacency. She has a child now and it has increased the interest she already had in the importance of education. Example, no pre-K in schools. Not having that in the public school structure, she is fortunate that she has the means to pay. Also had an opportunity to serve in a school. There needs to be an advocate to address those issues. Members of the school board say there is a viable force. She was concerned that they did not feel that there was a need for it. Need advocates for parents. There needs to be another group that helps meet the needs.
- Education. Although he is not personally connected with the school system in any way, according to what he reads, it seems that the schools are having difficulty in meeting needs. Maybe there could be things like tutoring programs, etc., that could help meet the needs of those in need.
- Transportation was an issue that always came up in her previous job. Mass transit does not go where they need to go.
- Housing. Some people cannot read a bus schedule.
- Activities for teenagers.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- Things like this town meeting are good; maybe have some that try to reach more layers of the community.
- Point—transportation; look at who made it here today, and were there people who were not able to get here.
- There's an opportunity to take assessment of what is here in the community. If you talk to some of these existing agencies you'll find some of those layers who are not here. You can pull out some of the greatest needs. If they can do that, they [Urban League] will show the community that they can be a viable force.
- You need to meet with school leadership and assess what they are doing now; also with the Bloomington-Normal economic development and determine what is their vision. Is it a vision that the Urban League wants to pursue or not? Keep Urban League visible. Meet with NAACP.
- The big key is an assessment. The issues here can be different than in Peoria.
- You said something important—having a presence. People need to see you and you need to partner with others, such as the Y for example. People come to her at a meeting because she is the only minority there. People are seeking to have involvement.
- [Urban League] Make friends with the media. Bombard with press releases. Let them know when there will be focus groups. Keep a positive slant.
- That gives a voice. Establish that presence and combat a typical portrayal that is in the media. Media talks.
- Facilitator: What would you like to see the Urban League do?
- Get on those morning talk shows. Look at all the viable sources that are out there. Find the issues, find ways to partner, access the channels where minorities will be.
- Marketing. When you tell someone about something, you have to hit them repeatedly. Never make assumptions regarding how information is grasped in the community. There are typical ways that reach the white community; assess what are the best ways to reach minorities.
- Like *The Voice*.
- What if Urban League developed a community talk show where people are drawn in and you have a hook?



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 2: Table 2

Maybe radio stations. Not only services—activities, information, etc.

- Maybe we can [check] some other communities as well and partner with others. [Relative] is an attorney in Chicago and partners with organizations for causes. See how the Urban League can help. There are unique and creative ways.
- We don't have to reinvent the wheel. There have been studies done. Do the libraries or someone have this information?
- There are some good resources there. You can involve students. Bring issues to the forefront.
- I like the partnering concept. When you're gearing up there are certain people who are good workers and they're going to burn out. You need to partner. And people need to know that when it's the Urban League, it's quality.

3. *What are the community's greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?*

- It's just the people of Bloomington-Normal. Maybe it's just the way people are in the Midwest. I believe that there are people here who are willing to help. Have met Mayor Markowitz and she seems open. We have a lot of wealth in this community—a lot of resources: schools, churches, fraternities, sororities. It's here. How do you tap into it?
- We have a community with good education system—public and university. We have a community with a very effective environment in terms of raising a family. Some of the changes within corporate entities, bring so much more talent diversity. And then again I think about the job situation (reference to busing people here from Chicago)—so what. We have jobs that can help people, but we don't have the workforce.
- One of the greatest strengths is the already existing very strong network of services. (Maybe more that community can support?) There are many organizations with similar focus. It's a matter of tapping into that. Tapping into that existing network and use its force for focus groups and assessment.
- Comment: If someone could find a way to say we want you to be involved, we need you to be involved; and say we want the collaboration, we want you to get out there and help people, but we don't want you to kill yourself. There are people doing, doing, doing, but what are they doing?
- You tend to see the same people. Those are your workers who are willing to get something going and maintain it. There is complacency. You don't need the same people over and over. You need to be able to reach out more. "Let people know we do need you; we value you."
- People at State Farm tend to make assumptions that when they know something, others do. Not necessarily so. There is a great strength of people who are "doing" and they're tired. But there are others who don't have that. It's an interesting dynamic. There's a "me and mine" attitude. There are many assumptions that are formed on the premise that the wife stays home.
- I want to be a part of a solution; but I cannot fault those who are working to maintain their families. Everyone is part of the community. Need to extend that "Me and mine." The Urban League needs to put that invitation out there.
- There are cycles. Those people who are home with kids or whatever will be productive again. We have a very strong community in terms of people who want to do.
- Our community is fairly easy to navigate. We're fortunate that we can find the right ways to get to people. Now we have a local CNN component. That's major.
- People are willing to listen. (She described going to meeting about racial profiling. It was impressive that people were there—and active.) There's a no tolerance sign at edge of town. The two communities work together. To have two school systems—think how much stronger the schools could be if they come together.
- Grew up in a town of 15,000 with two school districts. The town was split in half, and I never understood that.
- I've gone to school board meetings and thought, my goodness, are we still in the dark ages?



Session 2: Table 3

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- Education/services needed for persons of the community are difficult to actually receive.
- Participation from community regarding employment issues; address disenfranchised persons; realize opportunities; relationship between incarceration and educational attainment; emphasize training; early intervention and help re-acclimating into society after serving jail time.
- Not in our community; The Bloomington-Normal community is in the need of more diverse faculty within the educational system.
- Need parental involvement in the educational system.
- Need to target the needs of young persons.
- Train a parent on how to be a parent; help young parents; help parents to find an existence beyond just survival.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- Inform minority communities of what services are available.
- Inventory of services available; assessment of services; program that made those services available; evaluation of various services; market services available.
- Minority radio station/newspaper; communication necessary; some entity is needed to give information to those persons in need of social services.
- Counselors of schools, social service workers, etc., need to communicate.
- Bridging gap between what is available in the way of social services [and] what is not; identifying who/where services are available; an evaluation system of social services effectiveness; and cooperating with all social service agencies to insure that services are not duplicated.
- Website that provides database of services with evaluation of those services that help agencies link needs of society/families/persons with best services; central registry of services.
- Utilize churches to get information out about services available to the community.

3. What are the community's greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?

- Daycare subsidy program; Big-Brother/Big-Sister program.
- The Urban League is just coming to the Bloomington-Normal area to capitalize on the economic prosperity. They are coming here to make money. That is why anybody does anything. It is about money. I mean look at this handout—it says that the Bloomington-Normal or McLean County Urban League is a Satellite office. What does that mean? To me that means that it is the bastard child of the Peoria office. They are just coming here to make money. They should consider how that reads to prospective supporters of their mission. They should consider how to market themselves, and to me this is not a good method. Calling themselves a satellite office is the wrong way to go about it.
- While I think that input is valid and could prove to be helpful, we should try and concentrate on the question at hand. Maybe you could fill out the notecard with any additional comments that the questions do not address or that we do not have time to get to during this session. This question is asking [read question again]. Does anybody have any examples of strengths?
- Western Avenue Community Center.



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 2: Table 3

- Need a catalyst to organize corporations/organizations that provide community services; corporate sponsorship.
- Bloomington-Normal is better than most communities at serving the needs of minority residents; “Not in Our Town”; economic strength.
- Claire House.
- Level of affluence.
- Need to improve educational system; more minority teachers.
- Minority representation on school board, teachers, administrators, etc.—the minority community needs a voice.



Session 2: Table 4

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- **Parenting**—helping parents focus on their children and the needs of their children, concern with parental support of community programming (this was identified as the most critical need).
 - ✓ Lack of training on basic parenting skill sets.
 - ✓ Mistrust from those that have seen “training” programs come and go, leads to limited use of available programs.
 - ✓ Lack of exposure to opportunities that can broaden learning.
- **Housing**—affordability issues, limited selections at lower income levels, resources to assist home seekers at lower levels, educational programs to assist home buyers.
- **Racism**—impact on self-esteem especially for the youth or false sense of “superiority,” this impacts all of these issues.
- **Economic Barriers**—how to merge the distinct economic groups in the community.
- **Cultural Barriers.**

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- **Needs assessment**—from those that will actually use the services.
- **Encouraging community involvement**—from those that have “achieved a measure of success.”
 - ✓ “Community Volunteer Fair”—educate community on how to get involved.
 - ✓ Directory with contact names & phone numbers, organization mission, volunteer opportunities, etc.
 - ✓ Educate community on all available resources.
 - ✓ Create a “pool” of volunteers that can make a short-term commitment (3-6 months) to organizations, can capitalize on energy without over-burdening volunteers, also gives volunteers exposure to variety of organizations.
- **Coordinate a directory of services.**
 - ✓ Survey of those using services.
 - ✓ Set action plans based on input.
- [Note: PATH currently has a resource, but needs to be purchased and difficult to obtain, question if others know about this service.]
- **Resource collaboration**—understand resources provided by other organizations and assist in the collaboration of all groups.

3. What are the community’s greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?

- **Community interest**—encouraged by those in attendance and their interest in being involved, dedication of community members.
- **Existing programs**—a number of good programs, still need to get people connected with programs.
- **Positive community climate**—welcoming atmosphere.
- **Spirituality**—internal drive of people to do good.
- **Local Businesses**—interest of local business organizations to be active in community and employee incentive to become involved (i.e. resume building).
- **Available resources**—growth of community.



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 2: Table 4

- Strong sense of community.
- Central location.

Notecard comments:

- Hope for the future provides for school-age children: tutoring/learning center; mentoring; programming—trips to cultural events; speechcrafters; goal-setting; preparing for college; and many more programs. Trips to colleges twice per year; Scholarship Ball and scholarships.
- What advice would you give Urban League about how to improve services, provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Include at the table those who are the target population of the services. Ask that population how you can help and what is needed.



Session 2: Table 5

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- As a young black female, there are no social outlets, outside of ISU. No city-life. Nothing to do outside of church, physical fitness center, work or if friends provide it. (Has resided here for two years.)
- Not enough black-owned businesses. Not enough availability or access to businesses they can get to. Nothing for the youth outside of the few things provided by the school. No real cultural experiences. (From the South and has lived here for 20+ years.)
- Information is not provided to all groups. Example: If you're not on a specific committee in schools, clubs or organizations, you will not get the information needed. Information provided by school is often late. People in organizations are not receptive and make you feel as if they really don't want you to be a part. Too much politics with groups in school, i.e., sports, cultural, etc. Entrepreneurship in the area is not good. People don't frequent minority businesses. Food business is suffering because of health codes specifications (i.e., health—commercial kitchens). (Has resided here for 10+ years.)
- Lack of communication with the faith-based community. How to bridge the gap is a major question.
- The feeling that perhaps the “powers to be” really don't want the minority community to be aware and informed. A general feeling of “let sleeping dogs sleep.”
- Not a minority radio station. If you stay in your place—then you are okay. However, if you have an issue, where can you turn? Issues that involve minorities are not supported by local minority groups, i.e., NAACP. You have to fight your own battles for answers dealing with housing, banking, car dealerships, economic, etc.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- Need a black radio station, newspaper, etc. (not only catering to black people but to everyone). An organization that caters to minorities. BBA, Inc. (Black Business Alliance, Inc.) wrote a proposal to obtain a station, however, to this date, they have never heard back!
- Need better services to the youth. There is a big gap between the “haves and the have-nots,” (especially in the technical field). Need better computer technology programs for minority groups and greater access to those programs. If there is an organization that does provide (i.e., Heartland), however, there is no way to get there. The transportation needs throughout the area needs to be improved greatly.
- Improve transportation to the community to better enable the people to take advantage of the services that are available in the area. No minorities in the political area. Support for getting a local minority candidate is non-existent. Minority community talks about support but does not go out to the polls. Diana McCauley has been effective, but not any other.
- Get the information out via pamphlets, etc., like the Office of Professional Standards.

3. What are the community's greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?

- HED—Educational system is better than what he experienced in [another state].
- Free tutoring has just started in the area with retired teacher. Prior to that, families had to pay \$17.50 per hour. Need better access to study the SAT, etc. Heartland has a program that if you pay \$70.00 per student, they will help you study. Access to minorities to play sports is not available if you're not in the right “click.” Parents had to transport child to Peoria to play sports. Unit 5 area selects students on “who's who” and not on talent. If you don't have the money, you don't have the access. One parent had to build a basketball court



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 2: Table 5

indoors and hired a professional coach from ISU to train him in order to get a scholarship. There are a lot of clubs here, but no one is doing things together. Heartland has started Upward Bound and student support services. Still, many people in the community do not know the services that are available. There are the park services, however, how many of those services are being afforded to the minorities? There is a Boys & Girls Club; however, there are no free sports teams. Heartland & ISU help support youth camps, along with the McLean Chamber of Commerce.

- Food baskets at holiday times are given out, however, each group is trying to do things by themselves. Same groups of people are being utilized to do the same things.
- Strength is also a weakness because there is still separation because people that are highly educated are communicating with themselves and those who are less educated are still communicating with themselves. Groups are serving their own groups and not sharing/serving with the families that do not have the same opportunities.
- As long as you are on the straight and narrow you are fine. However, if you're outside the area of that, you do not see any source. (Has lived here for 10 years). There was a black-owned Shell owner who was run out of business when another gas station was allowed to open. Isn't there a government law that states that you are not supposed to run minority business owners out of business (the new business was also a Shell). The minority business could not get the support from the community and he did not have the money to fight the system. There are not any services for children who cannot afford the services.
- Bloomington-Normal is for the people who have money!

Notecard comments:

- Support for Black businesses.



Session 2: Table 6

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- Adequate affordable housing, moved here in [the 1970s] for college, could not afford housing, denied housing because of color, economic.
- Representation in political arena, no minorities on Council.
- When they do run, no support (school board).
- No information is being distributed; need to get information out; have a session to explain the political system; what qualifications are.
- Racism in schools (Normal).
- New to community, only here one year, asked how the crime rate was.
- Say that it has increased [with] relocating residents from Chicago public housing.
- Welcoming committee (“welcome wagon”) for newcomers. Is there a way to identify? Got a lot of information through company (State Farm), but did not include African-American material.
- People from projects are often stereotyped to be bad.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- Minorities on the board, what does it take to get on the boards (Urban League)?
- Does not understand why saying housing is a problem. \$725 per month, there is a lot of housing but affordable qualifications on assistance available.
- Have Section 8 but the list is long.
- People who are in shelter get units first.
- Why do people in mission get unit over me who is paying premium price for a unit and has qualified for Section 8?
- What about township? Only wanted them to pay deposit, told her to pay first and then they would reimburse.
- Community Action helps with power bill.
- Know we have programs but getting the information to the people. Bloomington Day Care should have packets of information there for people.
- Should Urban League have these packets to distribute?
- Maybe Urban League can be a co-op for home sharing.
- Landlords (scumlords) don’t take care of property, charge high prices for inadequate houses and people settle for them because they need a place to stay.
- Urban League can be a clearinghouse for housing.
- Community Action has certificates to pay for services and cooling units. Get a referral service going to have people refer to the good landlords.
- Urban League could help people who want to run for office.
- Need for services to address issues in the schools to assist minority students when they have problems in the schools (racism).

3. What are the community’s greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?

- Community in general diverse, but don’t know what they are doing.
- Are you saying that is a strength, the diversity?



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 2: Table 6

- Yes, people in all areas. Are people becoming more segregated? Agencies like Section 8, township.
- Habitat, also some agencies, pay phone bills.
- There are services in this community to assist people in the community (minorities) to secure housing.
- Peace meals.
- These agencies help all people, not just minority people.
- Minority not just blacks but disadvantaged people.
- “Greatest strength in Bloomington/Normal is the resources for a variety of services.” Neville House.
- What Urban League can do is connect the people to the resources.
- Through the resources people can move to a level of self-sufficiency by availing themselves to the variety of services. Mt. Pishag Church has a food pantry and clothing give-out on certain days, will not give cash but will pay bills.
- Does not think the questions were drafted for the general definition of the term minority, looks at question to be asking based on racial minority; is there anything that you can identify that African-Americans or Hispanics don't have that others have, other issues than racism?
- The minority is not the majority that is the definition, not strictly a racial minority.
- Questioned what the author of the question defined as minority, she thought it was a racial minority.
- Women are a minority even though they are 51% of the population.



Session 2: Table 7

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- Education— (powerful) —must maintain education so people maintain themselves.
- Education needs support from home—help to get to kids early and help make parents comfortable at schools—need more like Project Oz, Western Avenue—after-school programs with more professional staff to help with computer literacy, tutoring (more kids need input); need understanding of cultural differences; cultural training for more than school entities from people who themselves understand the topic.
- Make all people feel comfortable within the community by celebrating cultural differences.
- The commitment to create times, places, situations to share information, about each other's cultures.
- Churches could help be a facilitator for information.
- Cultural events—more of what exists—there are events, let everyone know.
- Always be conscious of selecting—diverse and different community people (recruiting) with creating planning committees.

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- How to get these things implemented—have Urban League to be a spokesman for school board.
- Have every one at the planning table as you build programs (community, clergy, etc.), helps get rid of separation issues.
- Communication, Education—exists but who knows—bridging to services will be the key.
- Look at what exists and then expand from there. Urban League must be collaborative with existing programs.
- Need influence of Urban League to get things in place.
- Identify the need—then ask how do we, Urban League, get on board to help. (I.e., How do people get to what they need?)
- Funding will be needed.
- Get involved with existing entities providing services and go to table and vice-versa, and be there for policy-making decisions.
- Community survey to help people feel empowered.
- Moving from good ideas to action plans that are inclusive.
- Bonding of churches of all cultures could be stronger, more inclusiveness, more togetherness of all, more sharing in a community effort to get to know each other.

3. What are the community's greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?

- NAACP—working hard to be heard of importance of education.
- Great minds from each culture—are they being heard is the question? Those minds need to have a say at the big table.
- Churches, sorority groups—organized institutions because that's where minorities are—[places] people go to get their needs met (the table is already there).
- Community Social Services—i.e., Head Start, Center for Human Services—good that they exist and what they are doing. But need to bridge the discomforts of receiving the services available that people of communities feel—more real friendships need to occur.
- Services geared to communities.



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 2: Table 7

- Studies in intermingling of cultures.
- Major companies (State Farm, colleges, businesses)—hiring practices have played a major role in opening up the ceiling on these issues.

Notecard comments:

- Concern—Urban League may need to sound more inclusive than “to improve . . . for African-Americans . . .” to serve all ethnic minorities.



Session 2: Table 8

[Tables 8 and 9 merged for discussion.]

1. Which key issues would you target first to better meet the needs of minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County? Why?

- “Culturally sensitive social agencies, who look and talk like me.” [Experiences with] health agency in Chicago violating civil rights of lower-income African-American (clients).
- “More minority teachers, both in Unit 5 and District 87. Promises have not been fulfilled. Minority teachers are needed to be role models.” 2) “Retailers/employers. Don’t see diversity programs in the (stores). Mitsubishi—don’t see Blacks in upper management, even though you see them around town (serving managerial positions). As Minorities, need a level playing field.” “I commend Peoria, on behalf of the city, to support the new [African-American] superintendent [of schools].”
- Echo what’s been said about education. “I raised two children, [named local high schools they attended]. We need Minority teachers.”
- [Talked about the education gap data that was shared during the intro to the 3:00 session.]
- “My children were the only two children of color (many years ago). Now look at the [school] yearbook, (and how many children-of-color). Still, the teacher is Caucasian. The teacher ratio is too low. Yet we hear that (Minority) people are applying and are qualified.”
- Facilitator: WHY?
- Same issue (among police departments). “In 1992, Bloomington Police had one Minority. In 2002, three—1 Black male, 2 women. One Chief-of-Police said ‘they don’t like to work evenings.’ Normal had one.”
- “Multicultural events are not enough. Cultural Festival is once per year.” Other than the Martin Luther King banquet. (UL should) attempt to put on a calendar.
- “People do not want to get involved. We need help to get events organized. We’re not volunteering.”
- [Example of lack of attendance at performance by African-American entertainer.] “We don’t support our own.”
- “At the Blues Festival [previous weekend], a Caucasian friend asked ‘where are all the Black people?’”
- Urban Leagues around the country all look different.
- During previous session, affordable housing was an issue. Upscale here, yet people are on limited income. Economy. Availability of housing. Red-lining practices.
- “Red-lining. So obviously going on. East side of town, homes for \$200,000. Or on Eastside, North Normal, in Orlando.”
- “There is definitely a class issue, too, in this community.”
- National Urban League’s definition (of “Minority”) is “African-American and other disadvantaged individuals.”

2. What advice would you give the Urban League about how to improve services provided to minority residents in Bloomington-Normal and McLean County?

- “Promoting programs; making people aware of programs. I had heard of the Urban League. Yet out of sync. Now, with grandchildren, I want to have input. Lot of it is knowledge. Might be enthused, tell me about it first. Have a zeal to learn about services.”
- “We do have the NAACP. We can’t recruit from among our own. Urban League needs to motivate people themselves. Take an interest in our own lives, make a difference.”



Round Table Discussion Notes Session 2: Table 8

- “People are talking about, yet not letting enough (know). Need commitment to get involved.”
 - Facilitator: HOW TO IMPROVE AWARENESS?
 - “Do a newsletter. (Feature) what services are available.”
 - “Being accessible.”
 - Services of the Urban League (Peoria) have developed over 35 years. McLean County Urban League—initial priority on education initiatives: Minority teachers and serving those below poverty level. Start with a smaller piece of activity. Then, with staffing, broaden.
 - Process. Urban League reflects the context. Education is a big issue, based on test scores. Compile/computer. (Tri-County Urban League) did sit-ins, lie-ins, etc. Local NAACP leading the change. Town Fathers got together, passed the hat, and started the Urban League to address a myriad of issues. In Peoria, economic jobs at the outset. The Urban League needs to know why people don’t get information, don’t respond.
 - NAACP is more the advocate, the Urban League is more direct service.
 - “How does the NAACP and Urban League Tri-County work together?”
 - An icon of NAACP (Peoria chapter) recently died. (NAACP) thrives on membership. Urban League . . . (generates participation through programs).
 - “NAACP (McLean County) has targeted education hiring.”
 - Piece for everyone.
 - Facilitator: FEELINGS ABOUT COLLABORATION AMONG SERVICE PROVIDERS?
 - “Supposed to be collaborative, yet are territorial. I work with another agency. We serve the same families, yet we never sit down at the same table.”
 - Is that due to confidentiality?
 - “Yet people sign release of information. What’s the issue? It doesn’t make sense.”
 - As Urban League looks at provision of services, look at existing services (PATH Directory).
 - Facilitator: WHAT’S THE REASON (for being interested in these issues)?
 - “I live in this town. Want them (children) to have something better.”
 - Strived for . . . parent . . . now have time to get involved.
 - “(I was) anxious (to get involved) when I saw the flyer. I grew up with Urban League [in another state]. I want to make a difference; this is a golden opportunity.”
 - “Personal issue. I have bi-racial children. I was told by a [criminal justice professional] that the child was disadvantaged [because people of two ‘races’ married]. That person is no longer in the position.”
 - “How do we know what channels to use to express such a concern. How receptive are we as a community to hearing about issues?”
 - “I told an attorney. Also NAACP. Yet the local media didn’t touch it. The *Springfield Journal* picked up the story. The local media . . . *Pantagraph* said the comment was taken out of context.”
- 3. What are the community’s greatest strengths in serving the needs of minority residents? Why?**
- “There’s a lot of money in McLean County. They love to give to social services. Babyfold. Children’s Foundation. Give to mom’s not doing well. Makes them feel good.”
 - “In a tangible way. Yet we don’t see them giving means to the ends.”
 - “They’ll give you a fish, not to teach you to fish.”
 - “Challenge for Social Services, too. We want to empower them (clients), yet we do for them.”
 - “We have as a (State Farm) logo, ‘We live where you live.’”
 - “Yet can’t afford rates, jacked up 16%.”
 - State Farm, Mitsubishi, Country Companies, Universities . . . higher education, excellent partners.
 - “People who care.”



- “As an outsider, area is ‘progressive.’” [Was asked what she meant.] “Given the size of Bloomington. Thinking and intellectual capability. It’s not as conservative as it might be.”
- Asked in comparison with Peoria.
- Don’t know if can say “more” (compared with Peoria).
- “Major strength is the low unemployment. This has been a plus for 15 years. Not just entry level (jobs).”
- People come to Peoria looking for \$7-10/hr jobs.
- “State Farm is experiencing the same losses. In California: 6,000 employees. Closing 20 of 66 claims offices. Closed Deerfield, IL, office (100 employees).”
- “On the other side: State Farm has an internship program. Earn \$14/hour as an intern for summer.”
- State Farm spends \$X million for diversity. Cost constraints. We have not had large lay-offs.
- “State Farm is going through ‘best choices,’ lose (employees) through attrition. Yet with more money losses, attrition will not be a total solution.”
- Another strength: teachers come here. Start at \$30,000. Police come in at \$30,000.
- I’ve been in Bloomington 30+ years . . . reason I’ve stayed. I’ve always had desire (to move to St. Louis) metro area, yet stay. Need to sharpen tools, make (services) readily available.
- Facilitator: WHAT CAN THE URBAN LEAGUE DO TO HELP? TO MAKE IT BETTER?
- “Education and diversity big for me. When I don’t see that, it troubles me. Headcount, out of 100, why are there only four who look like me? Response is, ‘we tried.’ People just don’t come out. How do you try? Like Blacks (are like deer) staring in headlights. Why are there only one or two stores with African-American hair products?”
- “We are a diverse community. I recently moved back. State Farm is more diverse. But once we leave work, do we do anything with them?”
- Click? If we work together, we will socialize together. Class structure: Black and Black, White and White.
- What can the Urban League do?
- “Talk about it. Acknowledge it as a problem. I’m not making \$250,000 a year. I make \$40,000.”
- What to talk about . . . food in common . . . kids . . . as a people.
- “If making \$240,000 or \$40,00, if a Minority, facing some of the same problems.”
- When I came, I had no desire (to get involved). “Environment and arrogance that I felt from within my own ethnicity. Assumption that I was a newcomer. There are other employees. Barrier from [State Farm] building to building . . . 6th floor (corporate Tower employees) are driving Black Mercedes. We deal with from day-to-day.” From the title (director or Vice President), they know about how much you make.
- At (State Farm) Corporate, no Minorities (among top managers), but (a few) women. No Hispanics, No People-of-Color. (I called Public Relations to ask if the newspaper ad was a mistake. I was told by State Farm “We have Minorities” and they referred me to the three (Caucasian women).
- “Get us to dialogue. Focus group is great.” YWCA Focus Group [Study Circles]. “Who shows up? Nobody who looks like me.”
- I registered for that, in August.