

## Group 6 - Educators

First of all, thanks for the facility and for your time. I'm David Gilmore with GAI Consultants and we've been hired by CURA to update, if you don't know the background of this and why we are here, but to update the Community Strategic Plan on the West Side which is essentially the old boundaries, the green that you see on the map, that's no doubt are changes with this new update. So, what we're doing is we're actually just getting started on this. Over the last couple of days, we've had a series of focus meetings, you all are known as Group #6 by the way, educators, and we just finished a really good one, just a couple of hours ago on safety with the Police. It's an informal discussion, we'll kind of wind you up and let you go. This is probably the most you'll hear me talk until then. So, but before we do maybe we can just run around the room real fast and introduce each other.

I'm John Wilkerson, I'm the principal here at Stonewall Jackson Middle School.

How long have you been here, how long have you been principal?

I've been principal since last November. I taught here for 11 years, assistance principal for about 20 years, so.

Okay.

I'm Amanda Mays and I'm principal at Edgewood.

Cheryl Clear, Principal at Mary C. Snow West Side Elementary.

\_\_\_\_ Flaherty, I'm on the CURA Board and the Charleston Main Street Board and I've been a resident of the West Side for 40 years.

Bob Hardy, Tuesday morning group, Charleston Branch NAACP. I graduated here in 1962.

My kids went here so.

I'm James Yost, I'm with the consulting team at GAI with Dave.

I'm Adam Krayson, I'm with ZMM Architects and Engineering.

I'm Lauren \_\_\_\_ and we provide afterschool programming on the West Side and a West Side resident.

I'm Lorna \_\_\_\_, I am a retired Kanawha County teacher, 45 years. I'm with the Tuesday morning group and NAACP, \_\_\_\_ Sorority and National Association University of Women, Phi Delta Kappa.

I'm Ron Butler with CURA.

John Butterworth, West Side City Planner.

I want you to define what CURA is too, you know.

We're a quasi-governmental agency, we actually, our mandate is blight, and that's kind of a catch phrase, the mission is a little different, but we try to figure out ways to eliminate blight and re-stimulate the redevelopment of disadvantaged areas for any number of different reasons. We're unique, we are not funded by tax dollars. Most urban renewal authorities in the country get a piece of property taxes, we get ground let from the Charleston Town Center Mall and a couple of other buildings that we own and so that's good and bad. It's really good because taxes are somewhat unreliable although right now the ground let is less reliable than property taxes would be, but it also gives us a little freedom in how we spend our resources, so this is as David said, a 10-year-old plan, has a 20-year shelf life, and we want to take a look at it. The world has changed a lot in 10 years and so we want to see if there are better ways to approach it.

I think we missed a couple of introductions.

Mary Lou \_\_\_\_\_ (too low).

We were just finishing introductions if you want to.

Ryan White, and I'm president of the School Board.

So, that's probably enough about those unless you have some questions. So, really the gist of this plan or what it's supposed to do, it's a strategic plan and this piece is residential in nature. We'll make very high-level strategies in a nutshell on how to improve the community. As a matter of fact, Adam would you mind reading that.

I was just getting ready, so to kind of queue up the discussion on what the plan does, this is what was identified in 2008. The expanded area is in need of a redevelopment plan to stop the continued deterioration of housing and improvements in infrastructure, safety, housing, open space and business opportunities. So, it's a pretty wide-ranging plan that I'm sure you can see how education touches as of those things and that's what we are really here to do today is to listen, but we might try to search out with a guided question so, maybe a good place to start would be, what are the barriers to improving education on the West Side of Charleston? And we'll kind of use that to guide us back to the conversation if we stray a little bit and we'll open the floor to whoever would like to start.

Go ahead.

Not to put you under pressure, but this is our 6th one in the last few days and we found that the other six we basically winded them up and we just had to sit back and listen so you all, and there's been a lot of good information and a lot of people have a lot of good things to say, so anything is on the table and even if it doesn't necessarily have to do with education, we're trying to find out as much as we can from your perspective that might help drive this report.

Well one of the issues that I have at my school and that I'm dealing with as we speak, is the transient population of my students on the West Side of Charleston. Because of the housing issues or issues with the family support systems that are not available for people, my absenteeism is very high, students moving in and out, you know, it's a problem because of housing or lack thereof or insufficient housing for them. Housing that my high poverty population can afford. It has to be affordable housing for them also. That would be the biggest issue I would have that would involve anything that would have to do with community. Also, as you know there is a high crime rate and I think a lot of that is because the situation where you have these vacant properties that people move into or reside in and from those properties drug deals are going on and these are things that have to be cleared up to for the safety of my students, my student population, and for the well being of the community. We have a lot of people that have moved away from the community because of the high crime and so the population of the working class is leaving. We still have the people here who have been residents of the West Side for a long period of time but no one is clamoring to get into the West Side of Charleston because of the issues of housing, high crime, and other things. So, can you add to that.

Yeah, you nailed a lot of it. There's a stigma on the West Side, I've been over here for a long time. I currently reside in South Hills. I lived over here for 7 years and speaking about Stonewall Jackson Middle School in particular, I don't know how to say this.

Just say it.

Stonewall is so synonymous with the West Side that if something happens all the way down you know towards North Charleston, even though it's nowhere close to our campus, we don't have dangerous things happening here, it's don't go to the West Side it's dangerous. Stonewall is on the West Side and one of the things I like to say is all throughout Charleston there are areas that for the lack of a better term, there are bad areas. You know if there's a bank robbery in Kanawha City, that doesn't automatically get associated with Horace Mann, for some reasons over the years with Stonewall it's that bad area, it's that bad school and it's something that we have fought and fought and fought and

you know, I know it's one of the 7 deadly sins, but pride comes out in me and people come in our building and walk around in our classrooms and look at our kids and think oh you know, there's learning going on here. Those kids aren't running around acting all crazy, there's order and that's one of the things that I puff my chest out about is like yeah, we have great kids, we have wonderful students, so the stigma and Ms. Clear knows a lot of stuff, and lack of parent involvement is a big one of ours. Encouraging signs for us, last night we had our open house and in all the times I've been here, it was probably the biggest open house, we have really tried to up our social media presence and really trying to get the word out and try to control and tell our story a little bit more. You know, for all the bad things you hear on the news, there are great things that our students are doing and really really encouraged by the turnout last night. I'll make this all about Stonewall Jackson.

And thanks a lot, because we also had our family night last night and you kept calling my crowd.

We had a bunch Ms. Clear.

I know you did.

We need to work together on timing those things.

No doubt.

We are stealing from the same pot at the same time. Okay, not your fault, mine.

I think sometimes we get way too busy worrying about all, like you said, we just need to get together and plan it out better, it's not really anyone's fault.

So, do you have a lot of issues with parents, like at the end of the day, do you have students that you don't know where to send them?

Well, and that's why, thankfully, we have gotten some help from Greater Kanawha Valley. I'm right now working with the Bob Burdette Center, we are trying to coordinate our activities so that we could have more places for these students to go after school.

Right, that's where I was headed.

Right, and we do have an afterschool program at Mary C. Snow, however, funding becomes a problem and getting the right personnel to meet the needs, that also is a problem.

It was interesting, the group just before with the police and security, it was eye opening for all of us, I didn't realize how many programs and things like that were in place here, which that's good, but it almost too seems like they are overwhelmed because they've become more social workers than they have police, it's like it's almost flip-flopped and it's like 80% of their job, you know, the things that they do above and beyond just policing crime.

And you mentioned the same things, that's what you guys are doing right.

And it happens to you all as well, your jobs have morphed into that.

Too much of that is going on.

The problems that we have as far as parent involvement, I had a parent last year that came in and there was some anger at something that was going on and it didn't take long for us to find mutual understanding and I said you know angry parents come here never bother me and the lady looked at me like what are you talking about, no one wants to deal with anger. Well angry is not the bad thing, it's the parent that we can't get ahold of, it's the parent we can't get in here. If we get you in here, the bottom line is we all want the same thing, it's just finding that common ground, we're eventually going to find common ground and work together to help your child achieve, but it's the ones that we can't get ahold of, and I realize this may not pertain to.

It does actually.

That's the big issue that we have, involvement.

Well I'm new at Edgewood, I taught at J. Robbins for six years and then I went to Belle to be the principal there and I'm back. So, we see already the same things and we had to make our plans for the end of the day and we have to make contingency plans, who stays after school for the kids to get brought back from the bus, whose parents weren't at the bus, whose parents don't show up in the line, what our protocol going to be, like those are contingency plans that other parts of the county are not dealing with.

So, you haven't had that problem?

I did at Robbins.

Well at least to the extent, right.

I did it when I was a teacher at Robbins, we had that, well not the buses because we didn't run the buses there, that's definitely one of the big things that was on the agenda, as far as afterschool plans, who goes where, and what's the contingency, who stays, how long do we wait before we call the police or social workers or who goes to the house to look for these parents.

So, I was going to say what do you do, you have, when the parents don't answer, what do I do.

Well I have, and I'm sure you have one too, a family, we'll all have families, \_\_\_\_ workers in our buildings, so they're usually our first point of contact and they will go do home visits, the social workers will go, we call the police sometimes if we feel like we need that, they'll come and take us, but we'll go and look for them, if we don't find them, we call CPS, I mean.

I've had several instances where I had to call the police and the police have actually had to go to the home and either the parent is asleep and they have to be awakened and say, you know we have your child. But I have had to involve the police because this is what is going on the West Side.

So is part of, is this an everyday thing now with you all, I mean that's a part of your day.

You know that there's a good chance that there's going to be a child brought back because no one was there to pick them up and these can be children who are kindergarten and there are children who.

So, is that the way it works. Let's say they get on the bus and they go home.

They don't release kindergarteners, they have to have an adult.

Oh, I see.

Would afterschool programs improve that or would it just make the problem later in the afternoon.

It's later in the afternoon.

Yeah, it becomes their problem.

We see the same thing, multiple times a week.

But I think, if we didn't have the afterschool program, it would be worse.

But it does \_\_\_\_ the issue.

Yeah, it does us too. I mean most weeks we have late pickups and sometimes it's where we're going to the houses to see if the parents are there. It's not every week that that is happening but it's hard to get a hold of parents sometimes to pick up their kid, you call everyone on their lists and all of them are disconnected or not in service. Some kids we're more familiar with, we might just go to the house and see if anybody is home. But we don't like doing that because of liability and all that kind of stuff. But our protocol is after a certain amount of time, if we haven't gotten in contact with anybody, we do call the police.

Is there some definitive list of all of these programs.

I don't know that there's a definitive list, but I know that we have been working on a list at Edgewood, she contacted me yesterday about it, she has a pretty good one, I don't know if it's the end-all be-all but the ones that she had on there, I was familiar with. There was one that I wasn't familiar with that wasn't on there. And I told her about it.

We have it ready for our meet and greet today here, here are some options, ideas, if you need afterschool care, whatever.

What I might do, I think that maybe you could put your email on the sign-in list, I'm out of cards, but you might get an email from me sometime next week, that way you'll have my contact information. It would be nice to have and James is more prepared than I am.

I will say in regard to afterschool, a lot of the programs aren't available, I know that we have waiting lists.

So, what happens if you are on a waiting list.

It means you might get called about halfway through the school year. You've just got to find an alternative and I know that one of the reasons we're working with Mary C. Snow, is one of the programs that served this community, has stopped services suddenly and they served about 80 kids between the East End and the West Side and like she said, I mean funding is an issue, there are a lot of programs but all of them for the most part are at capacity.

So, do you need more?

Yeah, we're being able to expand the ones that are currently there. I mean, the partnership that we're working on right now is I think really beneficial, because we are looking at blending resources for the afterschool program, it makes it a little bit more sustainable.

Did the programs concentrate on something specific or was it a wide range of?

Well it can be a wide-range of activities. I know that we provide a variety of activities. The Bob Burdett Center does tutoring, we hire certified teachers to do tutoring with the kids. Not all programs have that. That's probably fewer programs have the certified teachers than we are doing. Most of them do meals, we provide supper and a snack every day and it's a USDA approved meal. You know we do enrichment with the kids, ranging from science to arts and crafts, things like that. So, we do a variety of things, I mean it's hard to say no to parents but you know last year we had waiting lists of up to 20-30 kids.

Yeah, I'm not saying this is the case, but on the cynical side, is it because a lot of parents just don't want to deal with their kid's afterschool so they see this as a.

Some of it is that, but a lot of it is parents are working and they can't afford child care at \$200 a week.

It is expensive.

In our case, we do, ours is academic based but we do have enrichment activities. We have, we are working in conjunction with the Clay Center, so we provide music training for our students. They have

individual music lessons from a certified person and at the end of their time they spend their lessons, they get to keep an instrument. We have keyboard, drums, guitars.

You all good people, pianos?

No, we give them keyboards, I didn't say pianos, keyboards.

Okay.

Keyboards, that's a total different thing.

I was getting ready to say I want to enroll.

And we are required to have certified teachers who actually do our tutoring. We have a one-hour tutoring program for the students and then we provide recreation and then the other arts and music and things like that for our students. So yes, for some parents it is just babysitting maybe, however, we try to choose students who are low achieving students, those are the first students.

The ones who could really benefit from.

Right, we try to choose those students, make a list of those first and they are the ones who are provided for and offered first, then if we have extra space then we get the other students.

So, there is an actual selection process?

There's a selection process with that.

That's interesting.

Because it's federal funds, Title I money, so you have to provide those services to the low performing students.

So how would a vocational component work within an elementary school setting? I mean you mentioned housing as a problem, a lot of people, kids, who live in public housing, you know, they never see anybody fix anything so they don't know anything about tools or building materials, you know, maybe not even know how to change a light bulb, just.

Anything would be beneficial, I'm not going to turn anything down. I haven't thought about that, because as I said, my focus is mainly academics, so I didn't think about that, but that would be a great thing to add. But there's a population of people that we have not looked at. We're doing all we can in the schools for these kids but these kids have to go home to parents who don't have parenting skills, who lack in job training so they can get a better or descent job. I think that we're doing all we can to fix the kids, but unless that base is not stable, I don't know if we're doing enough.

I think we need to address the root cause.

That's it, I think the root cause is these people don't have jobs, they don't have jobs because they're not trained for jobs, they are not good at parenting so we need some.

They never got parented themselves, in a lot of cases.

Right, in a lot of cases we have grandparents who are actually taking these children and trying to raise them.

That came up in the last meeting.

And they need some support and as you know we have a high population of students who are in the process of, what is it called, who are foster children. Yeah, our foster care system is, in fact I have a

teacher right now at my school who is fostering a family of children. She already has her children, well I actually have two teachers who are taking students in, trying to keep them in school, and in some kind of a stable situation, so they are taking them into their homes and fostering them.

Is that part of that transient problem too?

Yes.

Because fostering they could be adopted or put somewhere else in the State or the County.

Exactly, exactly.

It sounds like some of these problems are obviously interrelated. If you have the transient situation, is there even really an opportunity to steer the parents into training, opportunities if you're not really sure they are going to stay, so on the other hand when I hear your concern about working on the base, these kids have to go home to parents. I mean you're on the ground there every day. Is it because those opportunities don't exist, people aren't availing themselves of opportunities, we need to educate people about where the opportunities are?

All of the above.

Some of them don't want to take the opportunity.

Or they can't because they have to find some kind of income to support the family.

I'm a firm believer, when people know better, they do better. And I think a lot of this is just lack of knowledge and the reason why I'm saying that is, in my school I have what they call a lawyer in the school, I don't know if you've heard of this, where these lawyers are coming into the school. They are actually working with these families who have either been evicted from their homes and help them with that, helping to educate them on the different programs that they can get to help serve them. So far, they have served, this is old data, they served last year 94 families and they, over \$50,000 in funds were given to families to help them in situations, paying electric bills, things like that. So, that's one thing that I know is working but we need more of that, because we can say these people aren't doing what they're supposed to be doing, that's one thing to say that. But for us, who are in better positions, we need to help them. You know, they for whatever reason are in these situations, sometimes to no fault of their own, you know, it just where they are at that particular time in their life. But we need to help them and I don't mean just by handing out, prop them up, educating them, giving them the services they need and allowing them to be independent on their own. Now how do we do that, I don't know.

Well suppose there was a housing program where you had parents that need some kind of training could be trained to work on some of the houses that we're talking about working on the West Side, is there may be a list of some people that you know of who could qualify for that type of training. I mean this would be the kind of training that pays and because most people who have been dysfunctional or who have gone through a failed school system which we know school systems haven't been the greatest over the last 20-30 years. You know, a classroom setting is not for them, you're not going to be able to set them in a classroom for 3-4 hours and teach them nothing. I mean you are just wasting your time and their time, but you put them in a situation where it's hands-on learning, then they people adapt much, much better and when people see themselves accomplish something that's sustainable and you know like say you help put siding on somebody's house, or windows in somebody's house, and you walk by that house, you know you develop a sense of pride that you actually helped improve somebody's home and then all of the sudden you want to do stuff like that and you really get involved in the work. What's going to happen next when this program ends, you know how.

I think you're on the right track, but because we're so fragmented, these people are doing this and these people are doing this over here and these people are doing this over here. I think we need one particular place, if I could have a vision it would be a one-shop deal where these people can go and get help with education, help with parenting, help with housing, help with financial literacy, everything in

one place. But we've got people who don't have any transportation, they're on foot. So not only do they not know where to go, they wouldn't be able to get there if they did know. It's just so fragmented. If we had just one location like a building, I can go to that building and get all of the services that I need in one area.

That is similar to what came up yesterday in one of the groups and I think it dealt primarily with land ownership and developers is it is so hard to get through the permitting and code processes because you're getting shipped all over town and you've got to get permits and pay for licenses and if it was just a one-stop, you know one person to kind of take you on and guide you through that process.

Now if CURA wanted to do something to build up a community, that would be a great idea. Then you wouldn't have, everything wouldn't be so fragmented. People would know that this is the place to go for anything that I need and I don't have to go anywhere else and I don't have to, and then you could keep track of these people and give them services.

But they need transportation to that place.

Exactly, exactly.

Now if you want to get rid of some of those old beat up houses and put something up like that.

There's a plan to develop an economic development center at 1100 Central Avenue before Governor Justice changed from Democrat to Republican, we were working with some of his people, Dick Casey, Derick Scarsberry, who are no longer with the State Department, to establish that economic development center.

And you're talking about more social services center than.

That's exactly what I'm talking about.

Well this is all in the plan and you would have to see what we've been working on over the past 7-8 years in this one-stop center that does that, that would function like that and all the things you're talking about could be in that one-stop center. But one of the things that happens here on the West Side, is we don't get the support from our governmental officials that we need to get to implement some of the laws that we've had passed. Because we have at least 6-7 laws that have been put on the books through the Charleston Branch of the NAACP that never got funded and really never got implemented. It would help solve some of these problems but you don't hear anything from any of the officials in this city to, you know, power speaks to power, so powerful city officials speaking to powerful government officials would facilitate for the enactment of some of these bills that have been passed and seeing that things get implemented.

Well looking forward and to address what Ms. Clear said, a lot of the people, I mean there are certainly governmental social services, but there is also a whole lot of non-profits that would be involved in this. So, it's not a matter of just passing a law, it's really figuring out a way to foster that cooperation where everybody is working together because as we've heard the last few days, there's programs all over the place, but how do we get people into those programs and help them learn about those programs. So maybe as much and we heard this yesterday too, and certainly it being a space, they must know where to go, there has to be a location but once they are there, it's really, it might be a person because Goodwill has job training resources but they have a location and they're not going to relocate into a new center, but it's getting people to a location where they can find out what all of those resources are and help cobble together the resources that they need.

I think that's probably one of the better ideas that have bleed through all of these meetings.

Right, and what has happened, the schools should become the default location because they are the physical location in the community.

You're right.

A lot of jurisdictions do serve, but.

Yeah, historically schools have.

But our schools have a limit because there is no space, there's no space at Mary C. Snow to do all that. But in other jurisdictions they've gone with what is called a Community School, I think they've done exactly that at the school.

Well that was the idea for Mary C. Snow at the beginning because we also have a family clinic at the school, we have a dental clinic and a health clinic. Now we have the lawyer in the school, so we're taking on a whole lot but the operation of that within a school system itself becomes difficult. As a principal, I have to make sure that all of these are happening along with educating 300 students.

So, it's almost that you need a principal as the academic head of the school and somebody who is leading the social efforts of the school, all the afterschool programs, if you want to offer parenting classes at night, if you want to use, I may have public meetings there all the time.

Exactly. All the time.

I mean somebody to manage that effort as well as the educational effort. So, it can be used as a community resource.

Well we're seeing to just in the last 10 years that the functions of libraries have morphed into this and is there one in place here?

There's one on the West Side.

But that's become, libraries are no longer just about, they have become places for client service and plays and research and so.

One of things I would interject is my wife, she has worked in social services for several years and that's what senior centers do for that.

That population.

Yeah 55 plus and that's what they are, somebody calls and says I'm having trouble with my house, and it's oh you need to talk with so and so, Catholic Charities, those housing programs or you need to talk with your senior services who does Medicare facilitation. So yeah, there's, we almost need a senior center and family center that can do that sort of facilitation.

When I heard the description for the need for some adult education and such, Kanawha County provided some of that already right, but maybe not here.

Yeah, it's so far away, they've got a center in Dunbar.

I have personal experience with adjust education and it ain't good.

The family resource centers.

And I think there's a cost to that too.

Adult education, there's definitely a cost, it's a high cost.

These people can't afford to, and I'm not saying you've got to give them everything, but education should be free anyway, you know, and like public schools are free for children. Well these people went through the public system and it didn't work for them, so what can we do for them now. Because we found out, public schools as they are now, are not made for everybody and that's why you're having such a high dropout rate and things like that because we're not meeting the needs of those people. Everybody doesn't need to learn Algebra, they don't. But some people need to learn to fix cars like mine, and things like that but they can earn money doing that. So, we need to do something about educating our people who the schools have failed.

Right.

So, if it's free, fine, because you're either going to pay now or you're going to pay later. You're going to pay here to educate them or you're going to pay to incarcerate them.

Do either of the other schools have the either learning schools or the clinics.

Grandview is going to have, I think starting this year.

They're going to have the lawyer, Grandview is.

The lawyer is a great thing, can Edgewood use Mary Snow's services at all.

Our students go to the dental clinic there.

Oh good, okay.

The dental clinic services an area, each dental clinic serves an area.

So, the legal, you have to have a student in Mary Snow?

Yeah, you're right.

And I \_\_\_\_ and try to expand that, because they do some real good stuff.

Oh amazing.

They help them get driver's licenses, help grandparents to get ability to get medical care. I mean think about it, you can't take a kid to the hospital if you're not the guardian, all that good stuff. What about the mental health side of what is going on?

That's what Edgewood, we have a Chance Program, it's for elementary school students and we house Presteria in our building as part of that program. It's students who are identified throughout the county are bused to Edgewood, we take up to 14 at a time.

That's a little separate wing at the back of the school.

Yes.

Forgive me my limited knowledge, but if the kids are experiencing mental health issues, the parents probably do to.

Oh that.

Do we \_\_\_\_\_.

Not typically, but that's something, that's one of those root causes that we definitely see.

But here's a component at Chance, I think the parents have to come in one day a week.

Parents are supposed to but they don't. It's a requirement in the program for family counseling.

This is the real challenge of everything we talked about, is you know you create these opportunities and this is how they participate, this is how you reach back but if they won't participate, how do you.

I'm new at Edgewood so I put it out on social media because everybody checks Facebook, I'm the principal, blah, blah, blah, and this is what is going on, come and meet me, if you want to come and talk I'm available from this time and this time and two showed up. I have 400 students, 2 parents showed up.

Well Facebook is not the greatest form of communication.

It's not, but that's the fastest way we can get it out. It went on Dojo, that's our communication, getting that information out.

Maybe it's a generational thing.

Do you think it's maybe because the parents, obviously the kids are, but do you think maybe the next generation aren't on Facebook?

Their parents are.

The parents are, the kids aren't on Facebook.

No Facebook is not cool enough for them.

Are you sure about that?

They're on Instagram.

And you can do robocalls.

Yeah, we have a lot of communication tools, but parents, I mean I've always found that parents who had negative school experiences pass that onto their kids, so it's not oh you get to go to school. We just had open house, where we brought them down here for preschool this morning and you wouldn't believe the parents that came in and said you're just going to hate this, school is awful, I mean there were 4, stop it.

Yeah you don't need to be doing that.

But I mean if they had a negative school experience they're relaying that to their children so they're already setting them up.

And that's why I'm trying to bring in as much positive things at the school so that they may have had a negative, but we're doing things, running things different now, yeah.

If you tackle that aspect of it, get these parents that are saying that type of stuff, I haven't heard of that, are you trying to tackle that aspect to try to get them to stay.

I mean I've been to enough of the LISC meetings with Ms. Clear to know, they can't get the kids to school. I mean they can't get the parents, I mean it's just not important, so how do you reach back, the idea that you're going to reach out and change a parents mind when they haven't identified that it's just important for me to get my child to school.

Right, and that's the key right there. You know, we can do all we can at school, feed them breakfast, take care of their wounds, send them to the clinic and all this, but unless we get the parent buy-in.

And where the social end comes in is you're dealing with kids whose parents got evicted the night before, kids, all of those social issues that are preventing that success.

Talking about that relationship with the parent, just like from their perspective, the parents that didn't have a positive experience in the school setting, if that didn't happen overnight, rebuilding that relationship doesn't happen overnight either. I'm thinking of one parent that I had last night, in 6th grade, and she was a student that went here when I was teaching here. And I can remember some of the difficulties that this parent had, so when her child started having issues in 6th grade, man it was everyone's fault but her child. Over the last couple of years, we have really really worked with that parent and sometimes it's been great and sometimes we've had some struggles, but finally like she comes in last night to open house with a smile on her face, going around talking to different adults here, that she has now established with good relationships over time. The point I'm making, it takes time and it takes a willingness not only from the school but it also takes a willingness from the parent to continue to communicate and what I say about this parent is that she loves her child, she wants him to be successful, so she is willing to keep coming back in. But it's an ongoing thing, it's not a well, we come in and have one conversation and bam, they think school is awesome again, it takes time, and it takes willingness from lots of individuals, it's not just the principal, it's individual teachers, assistant principals, the clerk, it takes everyone to get onboard to try to work on these relationships.

I have a question, over the past 1.5 - 2 years, the schools over here on the West Side have met with our groups, the Tuesday morning group, at the board of education and at that time you principals could go through your programs and different things that are going on in your schools and how you were making progress, is that going to continue this year or has you know the bill that established that hasn't sunset and we were just wondering if you all were going to continue to do that. I know Ms. Garner was a vital person in that and now that you have a new person in that, but is that still going to be a part of, well first of all I would like to know what did you all think of that? I know you were involved in it for a couple of years and you were at a couple of meetings that we had and I don't know if you ever attended, but you know, because my response to that is wide-open and people who attended those meetings could understand what you all were trying to do in your schools that enhanced the academic possibilities and also should draw the interest of people who are really interested in education because they could see the efforts that you were putting forth to make education interesting and effective, and I was just wondering.

I don't know if it's going to continue or not, but if you want to use last year's success as a maybe a guide to whether it's going to continue or not, at the last meeting we had there were 5 people there from the community.

The last meeting.

That last one in May, there were 5 people.

I was there.

Then you were one of the five.

No, I mean, remember there was hardly anyone there. All of the presenters were there.

And a lot of school board people were there and filled that room almost. Because I know you had a couple of your teachers there right?

I have 5 teachers there. I had three of my assistant principals.

It was in the morning so it wasn't like people who work could show up.

You know I think it was good in doing that, but it got to the point that we were presenting all of these things, and presenting what we were doing and everything, but we weren't getting anything back, we

weren't getting any kind of support to help with the problems that we were having, people were just hearing us.

I think if it was in the evening when more people had an opportunity to show up.

Well, whatever reason, whether it was the timing or whatever. This is what I felt, I'm spending my time, this is time I'm taking away from my children at school to put together a presentation to give to people just to be giving it.

Well really, I mean.

I tell you, I have been in an urgent situation at Mary C. Snow, we are the lowest performing school in Kanawha County and one of lowest performing schools in the state. I'm at a sense of urgency, I don't have time to waste on doing something to show people what I'm doing and then to get no kind of feedback from it.

And that's actually what I wanted to, I think this has been a recurring theme and it's hard to make recommendations in a strategic plan that deal with the complacency of, you know, that's a social issue. But the question I wanted to get, because I know you have to leave, when we start to look internally and I heard this yesterday and I had to scratch my head about it because I was so shocked, somebody brought up and it had to do with Mary C. Snow, that it was 100% turnover each year, is that accurate.

In teachers.

But it is a high rate, I'm curious about the 3 schools.

I was shocked.

Even Edgewood now, you're the third principal in four years right.

But what would you, that seems almost crazy.

It's not 100%, it's high. That would be everybody.

I guess that's the question, is it higher than the schools in this district than it is across Kanawha County, is the teacher turnover higher?

I had one, a big year at Belle was 2.

And how many did you replace at Edgewood this year?

I've heard of 7 so far.

Eleven.

And what about Mary C. Snow?

Uh, two. We need something to get the quality, we get these brand-new people, they're excited, don't get me wrong, I love brand new excited teachers but we kill them. I mean they get in there and they've only had the ideal student teaching situation where somebody has supported them, somebody has been in the room with them, someone has given them feedback, someone runs interference with the parents, someone runs interference with the principal, so I mean they have not, they're turned to the wolves, we get them as puppies, lovely, smiley faces in my building today and by noon they're looking at me like, what did I do with my life I mean I'm, we need something and it's probably money, there's got to be something that entices people to want to work but we need to find the quality people who have the experience so they don't have that learning curve to overcome and that are trained. They're trauma trained because we get these kids that are in trauma all the time. But there's got to be something, but why would you choose if you live in Clendenin, I taught at Belle, you're thinking she's

crazy, I am and that's okay. I mean I'm like you, my school is ranked 390 of 399 in the state right now. I know exactly where we sit and I left a school district that was 21st because I believe in coming to Edgewood and fixing it.

That's not your fault at all, the reason it's that way is the socio-economic status of the majority of families that go there.

But it doesn't have to be that way, I want to turn it around, I don't care how much money anybody makes, I want those kids to succeed because one day they'll turn 18 and they're not.

Well there are unintended things that happen that impact that. If you're a teacher and you're told that you're going to be judged based on the academic performance of your students, you will not teach on the West Side. Every experienced teacher is going to move somewhere else. So, there are policy changes that can help that.

We need to find a way to get our best and brightest teachers to want to teach at these schools, because that's where they are needed the most.

So that kind of pulls it back to housing, but before that, it seems to me especially in any profession, I'll speak from a consultant and so can Adam, I mean it's a disaster when I have turnover in my staff because when you lose the continuity of the work product.

And the stability.

You're always retaining somebody.

And it's worse for kids, they have no continuity.

Kids that already don't have it at home and then come to school and they're looking for Ms. Jones that doesn't teach here anymore, she went to a school that doesn't have the same issues.

Right.

Well, they don't know how to build relationships because they are afraid and fearful of getting involved with somebody who is going to leave them, they have people leaving them from their lives all the time and I don't like the message that we're sending out to those children and that's why when I interview people I said do you really want to commit to being here at Mary C. Snow and I give them the real deal. You might be called a bitch, you're going to have to be dealing with kids who want to come in and kick you and all of this and this is the real deal here, so if you don't want to do that, then please go somewhere else. The first year I was, I hired 7 new teachers, the second year I was there 7 teachers.

That's no way, no continuity.

That's not specific to West Side though.

It's getting better, however, you know whenever you think things are getting better, I had a phys. ed. teacher who was hired at the beginning of the year, he spent 3 weeks there and because he had a first-grade group of students, first grade now that he could not control, he went back to Middle School, because that's where he came from. Don't come from Middle School to Elementary School and think you're going to get, it's going to be more work, going to be more.

We have a program that I don't know if CURA is the one that implemented it, but the City did, where you provide housing to police officers here on the West Side. Why not extend that to teachers.

We are, I'm working with principal Clear.

That's exactly where I was leading that too, as it starts to morph back into some of the recommendations that, I mean it's tough to tackle social issues, in fact for the strategic plan, you can bring them the light but it's still a social issue.

It's putting the framework in place to allow those issues to be dealt with.

But some things can be positive and that's what I would pull this back to is, especially on this piece that deals a lot with housing, is are there some programs and things, you just brought that up, that might bring some incentives in place to help build that continuity in staff as far as programs and housing. Do you ever have people leave because of the bad housing stock or they just can't find that?

I'm curious, how many of your teachers live on the West Side.

Not many.

Less than 20%.

So, if there was a way to increase home ownership with educators on the West Side.

Or even make it more attractive to buy.

I mean if you have teachers in similar as the policemen, if you have teachers who live on the West Side, they're going to be more like these parents that probably won't ever be better. If the teachers actually live on the West Side, they would probably be more likely to help with those kids who need the help, because there are going to be some parents, I mean.

That's what I think, we've done these in other parts of the world, but it's a handy approach. Nobody wants to spend 4-5 years training somebody and you have a really good staff member that you lose and you're got to start over.

Is there any chance, that you could change some of the rules where teachers would get paid more if they're in some of the disadvantaged schools?

That's a state issue, and hey I'd be all for that, but I mean, I think it could happen, but you're going to have to get a law passed by the legislature.

And part of what we want to talk about is dreams, I mean if you must fix a state law, let's start working on it.

But that's, I agree, I'm 100% with you, I mean there's probably different ways to fund that, you know, but you would almost want to tie it, like an incremental thing, it's so much additional the first year, to meet that incremental bump anyway, but it bumps more if you stay at one of these schools that really needs that level of expertise.

If we can't get through to the legislature, there are still other ways to do it. We could set up a non-profit thing, supplement people's salaries based on that.

You just don't, criteria, I'm thinking criteria too. You just don't want to take, just because you taught 30 years means that you're good at it.

Should be able to pick and choose.

Yeah.

And sometimes we don't get to pick and choose.

Like I said, who hires teachers.

Principals, but here's what we run into at the end of the school year, so I'm sure you've done this, but at the end of the school year, anybody who was RIF, reduction in force, happens and you have an opening, those teachers automatically the only teachers you get to choose from. So, I had a 3rd grade vacancy at the beginning of summer, I could only choose from teachers who had already been hired and were RIF'd last year. I could not get, there's a board of certified teachers, I mean that's a huge to be board certified, I could not get her because I had to take someone on that.

Is that a teacher union issue?

That's a state law issue and yeah, it's the teacher union \_\_\_ that.

But wasn't there a law passed a few years ago, they kind of changed it particularly for schools.

It affects schools that \_\_\_\_\_.

(too many talking).

Who chooses which teachers are the ones?

It's based on experience.

Lead senior teacher.

\_\_\_ this position because we lost enrollment, so the lead senior teacher in that building that's who gets RIF'd. It's not who is the least effective.

This is how bad it is, okay. If 2 teachers have the same exact amount of experience on the same exact day, they don't allow you to choose based on those that you think are better, they make you go to a hat and draw, which is ridiculous.

Couldn't agree more.

Well, you're the president of the school board.

It's state law.

I tried to get them to change it but then the problem is, when I tried to get them to change it, the Republicans went way overboard and tried to do something even more, so everyone goes crazy.

I'm just going to be honest, I have a double whammy on my school because my school is one of two schools that is on a totally different calendar from all of the other schools in Kanawha County. So, a lot of teachers don't want to come there because I'm on what's called a balanced calendar where the kids go to school for 9 weeks, then they're off for 3 weeks. and it's okay if everybody in the county is doing that, but when 2 schools are doing that. Like my kids have been in school now for 5 weeks, you guys are just opening up. What's going to happen to my enrollment when that happens?

So, it makes what Ms. Clear expressed before, it makes their absenteeism, which is already a bad situation and it makes it look way worse because for this first 5 weeks of school, based on what your final enrollment is, you're probably like at 70% attendance or something like that.

You're right.

And it messes up the ratio for the whole year for them and it just exacerbates the whole problem.

So, no one wants to come there, if you have children and you're teaching and they're on one calendar and you're on a different calendar, it's a nightmare. I don't know how the people in the community do

this. How in your household have one kid on this calendar and they go to Stonewall, they're on a totally different calendar?

The challenge is, the other school that it happens at is very successful, right. Piedmont and their kids are the same way, they have kids on two different calendars and they're successful there, but it hasn't been working here.

And it's not working at Piedmont either.

Why not, in terms of attendance.

Well this year, they're scores are just low. What's happened, I'm going to tell you the difference in Piedmont and us. Piedmont is on the East End, right we're on the West. They don't have the transient population. They have a pretty stable population.

The difference is, in Piedmont, we have a higher income. I mean there is a lot of low income in Piedmont, but there is 20-30% in Piedmont that have higher incomes, that's what makes Mary C. Snow —.

And I have the challenged students not, the people of my community are highly challenged.

And your thought is, and I'm just expressing what I heard before, the idea was when they have them on this balanced scheduled, they have these 3-week windows where the kids could come in and make it up, she has trouble staffing those, or getting anyone to attend. With the feeling that if she could get that moved to the summer, if they really had kids they needed to work with to catch up, they would have more success because the parents, it's almost like child care.

Right.

Getting them to attend to cover that time for them.

And it would be on the same calendar as everybody else and it's not just that, it's like all the meetings, the staff developments and everything for teachers are scheduled on the traditional calendar. I had 5 brand new teachers last year, right. They should have gone to beginning teacher training before they entered a classroom.

They got it two months in.

They got it, while school was going on, didn't get the extra pay that other teachers got for going to beginning teacher training earlier, and they got it 4 weeks later.

It ended up paying for itself.

And then I had 5 subs in my building at the beginning of the school year. You know, 5 weeks and I had 5 subs. My behavioral were terrible at my school that day. These are the kinds of issues that have been going on. I don't know how any learning was taking place at that time, I don't. I feel like my kids actually lose at least 5 weeks of learning.

That's a whole semester, almost.

Almost a whole nine weeks, I've heard you talking about.

Technology wasn't available for them either.

If you think of systemic things and changes you could make that are social issues, it's how you deal with the number of students that you have on out of school suspension that are not getting educated.

Exactly.

And there's really not a resource, so if there was a program or place for them to go instead of just staying home where they're already not getting support when they're on out of school suspension, because there were some pretty high numbers last year, I forget what they were but they were significant.

They were significantly high, they were. They were one of the highest in the county, on the same level as Stonewall and we're an elementary school and what really bothered me is not only did I have to suspend a lot of kids, because of lack of being able to get in-school suspension or whatever, when you have to expel a first or second grade student, the first year of school, what kind of message are you sending that student. And I've had to do that, that has been done to first and second grade students at my school.

So for the infrastructure that's needed are maybe the afterschool situation, but there's also maybe some infrastructure that is needed in the school to deal with that.

And that's poor parenting, I'm sorry when you have a kid who is 5 or 6 years old and will kick a policeman, then you've got a problem. When you have kids who actually kill animals, you have a deep problem and that's what I'm saying, you're talking about root causes, we're putting band aids on things that will eventually be huge problems if something isn't done.

And it's a reoccurring thing, what we heard yesterday, if you don't improve the schools, you'll never improve housing because people aren't going to want to be here and until you improve the housing, how do you improve the schools, I mean it kind of.

Right.

Somebody that looks to move into an area, they're looking at schools, they're looking for housing, and believe it or not one of the top three are recreational opportunities, parks, greenways, corridors, playgrounds.

And there's not that on the West Side either.

No.

We've got a basketball hoop up by our house and all the neighborhood kids come there because there's not a playground.

You know, we'll be addressing that too, but that's on equal footing with education and housing and people underestimate it, but that's what people look for when they're trying to.

Social services, you've got to think about social services.

Our attendance is not great, we have more issues with parties than anything else.

Well what I was thinking, and I know this for a fact, when our children are out, they need somebody to keep the kids at home because mother and daddy are working and they'll pull a kid out, they will, they'll pull a kid out of middle school to stay home with that kid while they work, because they cannot.

And that's something that is on-going on the West Side, the older sibling is sometimes the second parent.

The primary parent in some of them.

And that's just, I mean if you start looking at the realities of what you're dealing with and then you fix those things, you meet the needs of those people first.

Her school is so bad, socio-economic thing is so bad, and that's what I'm saying, your school is good. But the circumstances are so bad. I have parents that live on the West Side that are upper income and they will say, can I get my kid out of Mary C. Snow and I'm like, please don't do that, that's the worst thing we need is for the upper income, socio-economic people to not be in the schools, and same with Stonewall as well.

We have one of our biggest and it is my biggest soap box and I try to make sure that I talk about things in a respectful way because policies are in place for a reason, but every year there are kids that transfer out of here and the way the rules are set up, this is no one's fault, the way the rules are set up they can take a piece of paper that is notarized and say, I'm living with Uncle Bob in your district and you go to school there. Last year, and this is not counting, this is talking about test scores, because that's what we're judged on. We lose so many of the Shoals kids, the Ruffner kids, the Piedmont kids and it doesn't give a true representation of what our scores should be. Last year alone, with our incoming 5th graders, we had a data wall set up for our incoming kids, the ones that should be coming here. We lost 12 kids that had scored distinguished on reading/language arts, math or both and that's not talking about being proficient, I'm talking about distinguished. If we got the kids every year that should come here, the perception over a short amount of time would change about Stonewall Jackson. But it is a huge problem.

It affects housing too. I can tell you I live 2 blocks north of here, up on Helena Avenue where we raised our kids. And we had neighbors who do the same thing, they grew up on this piece of asphalt and we were walking labs, but you get your kids to school age, and half of these people start saying how do I get into a better school district, where am I going to move to, because you're going to try to find the best opportunity for your kids to succeed and it's that cycle and until the schools start to perform better, people move and how do you get the schools to perform better. It's an extremely frustrating thing. I challenge anyone, anybody that is here right now, any day you want to come over and walk through Stonewall Jackson Middle School, you want to go to classes, you want to see what's going on here and the amount of work that our teachers are doing, our kids. We have wonderful kids, the kids that come here, I love my kids. Last night we had open house and I can't wait for Monday, but you come here and see the hard work that's going on and people come in here and go wow, this is a nice school and the kids are really well behaved. Yeah, we have good things going on over here but again because of that stigma, they're overcrowding Horace Mann and sending kids to South Charleston and all this other stuff and.

John Adams.

It really really hurts what I think that Stonewall Jackson Middle School, what it would really look like if we had all of the kids that we should have and you know it's very easy to start pointing fingers at different individuals and I'm just talking about it, because it is an issue that we struggle with every single year and I know that the Board of Education has made strides and taken our concerns at heart and made it a lot more difficult for people to do certain things, but at the end of the day, just being to so easily and we're spread so thin, you know, here you go. We have a luxury of having a full time social worker here. We sent her yesterday working with Shannon Tweedy over at Horace Mann because they are busting at the seams. They don't want our kids, they want their own kids because their school is not designed to have that many. Our social worker went over there yesterday and is going back today to work with their part time social worker to go and do home visits on the people that say that they've moved into that district. But Kanawha County Schools doesn't have the manpower to do that. But it's a very frustrating thing, it's probably the biggest, I really have to watch myself because you know how it is, when you get passionate sometimes your words just start spilling out of your mouth, so I have to keep myself composed but it's hard.

It's hard.

Yeah, it's very hard, it's hard because you care. It would be different if you just came to school and came here to get a paycheck but I've been over here for a long time and I tell our kids all the time, yeah you were born on the West Side, but I've been on the West Side longer than you've been alive. I've been over here.

Since you appreciate the community participation, one of the things that we heard yesterday was the need for recreational opportunities and with the elementary school gone up the hill now, there's really not a lot of recreational opportunities in this zone. I mean would you be opposed to seeing some of that happen or for us to look at how that could happen on this campus.

Not at all, all right so West Side basketball started over here decades ago and sometimes having outside entities in your building can lead to things getting broken, I don't care as long as I am principal here, West Side basketball is going to be able to be here. It serves the whole community from like, they have a little age group, like 4-year-olds coming in here. It gives them something positive to do, so we are 100% on board with that, I will support it. We make it extremely affordable for them to be able to come over here and supply a lot of help with that. So, to answer your question, it is yes. We're very much open to anything like that for any part, I mean these kids are our kids and they just haven't made it here yet. You know what I'm saying, Edgewood kids are our kids they just haven't made it here yet. I'll tell him, again back to what I said, I don't want anybody else's kids, I don't want the kids over there on the hill, I don't want the kids across the river, I just want our kids. I want them to have opportunities, so yes.

And that's why I am here too. Because I could be on my porch drinking lemonade. I could be retired.

Yeah, this lady, our hats are off to her because she retired and came back to Mary C. Snow just because she felt the need and the sincerity that needed to be there and I continue to congratulate you and pray for your health and strength.

Prayers are what I need.

I think a lot of this, like I said, we would wind you up and let you go and it's been a lot of great information. But kind of looking back and there are a lot of social things that get tossed about, but it seems like looking at it, there are some direct things, some recommendations that can come out of this strategic plan that will at least start to help out in that regard. One of them that came out was all of the fragmented programs and this came up several times, including the one before with the police, that all of these programs.

And the non-profits yesterday.

Yeah, there doesn't seem to be, for the lack of a better word, a one-stop shop where people can just go and that seemed like that might be definitely something that needs to be addressed as a strategy in here.

I think if you take care of the basic needs of people, then if you think about a hierarchy of, then if you take care of their basic needs, shelter, proper shelter, food.

It's common sense.

Safety, then everything else is going to work. And that's what I try to do at the school, I want the kids to be healthy, that's why we have the clinics and everything. I want them to feel safe and I want them to be fed and I think once that's taken care of, then we can kind of do the rest, we can move up the hierarchy.

Well and that's kind of the point of this, you know Adam read that off, but if you steal it down, it's still those basic, we're trying to put in strategies that help out with those basic needs and then a lot of it also seems the fragmented stuff, but it also comes down to kids coming back to housing, shelter, and certainly that's going to play a big role in this too. But I think if we can get some of these things in place, recommendations, will make it easier.

I think you're going to get more bang with your money doing that, than doing something with social services, than putting up another monument or another piece of artwork, that's going to rust, fade, and go away. We've got to put our money into these people.

Yeah, you have to have basic infrastructure.

You've got to have that.

We love public art as well as anybody.

I do.

And that will be a recommendation, we like to build that into any.

Well you've got a nice bike thing over there, that's nice.

Do you ever get out there and walk, it's nice.

I walk around my building.

Well, I think, you identified, you were talking about how you deal with the parents, but we all want the same thing and that's really the whole West Side, we all want the same thing to improve people's condition and we've heard good strategies the last couple of days that I think we could hopefully come up with some framework that starts to address these and they are all interrelated. We hear about education when we're talking to homeowners and we hear about social services when we talk to educators, you know it's pretty clear what some of these major issues are that we need to address.

We like to do these focus groups because it gives you a lot of focus, perspective, that quite honestly nothing happens in a vacuum and that's proven itself. I mean Bob will attest, he's sat through them all and there are strategies, there are things that come up in everyone that have overlapped with concerns and problems.

I don't know if this would work, but maybe coming up with some sort of movement or PR campaign for the West Side, for the families on the West Side, to try, I don't want to say guilt, but it should probably guilt the upper income people to send their kids to their schools. I mean I thought about that, in terms of public education in general, I think there should be some sort of overarching thing pushing for public education, saying look it's not good when you take your kid out of public education and put them in a private school, it's not good if you take your kid out of Stonewall and put them into John Adams.

I want to say something on that, the person that I care about most in this world is a little 13-year-old boy named Ray Wilkerson. We live in South Hills, live over in the Fort Hill area, Ray Wilkerson goes to school at Stonewall Jackson Middle School and he comes here and he thrives and he is blessed with being very intelligent, he got some kind of math skill from someone and I have no idea because it's not me. But the point I'm making he comes here and forget about grades, his previous smarter balanced scores, his last GSA scores are right in line with what they were at Shoals Elementary. He is a high achieving kid. The point I'm making is, we have a good school, we have teachers that are working extremely hard and I'd put my staff up against any, I would go to John Adams right now and that's just not boasting because I see it, but you're right, you're exactly.

When it comes to the upper income kids, it doesn't matter. If you have good parents the kids are going to thrive, period. So, getting the kids back into the schools where they need to be should be one of the main goals.

And that to me, and you're right, that's another one that has come up multiple times, but I think a PR campaign that would include that.

Make no mistake though that goes along the lines of you know.

Are there any athletic programs here, football?

Yeah.

I mean if I had a kid that was half descent football player, I wouldn't bring him to school here.

Well let me tell you though.

I don't care, he won't get to play.

Oh yeah, we are awesome in art, our band program, I mean we have some extremely talented kids over here along a lot of spectrums, I mean really talented kids. One of my pushes this year, is I feel like we need to get that word out, you know, we're not dropping the ball, may not be the right word, but we're responsible for that. How are we going to show what we're doing and the only way, that's the only thing we can control. We can't control, we can't go into someone's home and I can talk to people until I'm blue in the face and I plan on doing that, I'm going to some of the Fall Festivals this year, at some of our feeder areas that we don't get, and try to talk to some parents over there.

We certainly do get the negative publicity. When your school is one of the only ones with an "F" they put that all over the paper you know.

It's easy to pub the bad news on.

It's one thing, the Main Street Program is really focused on is that we reach out and develop some strategic relationships with media specific to that, so you don't wait until something happens and then report it, you reach out to them and say here's all the great things going on at Stonewall, let's do a story about it and it's just you have to foster that and they do. It doesn't matter where something happens over here, we talk about the same thing, it happened on the West Side, that's all they have to say.

Yeah, if you're waiting for the media to do it, they're just looking for the bad.

Yeah, what sells the paper.

As testimony to what you're both saying right now, my kids went to Stonewall and Capital High and I could have sent them to Catholic or anywhere else, but they, to this day and they're like 40 and late 30's, they feel like they got the best education about life at Stonewall and Capital, plus good academics, I mean they, my son went to NYU, so I learned about life at the schools I went to and I functioned in New York City so well because I knew what life was about. It was so diverse, the kind of kids that came. They said it was really beneficial to them.

I think that is again another easy thing as a strategy is a PR campaign for the West Side and how that gets rolled out, I don't know yet.

We could do little snippets, little video clips from former students, like my son who talks about it all the time, and there are tons of those kids out there who can say how they benefitted from going to Stonewall and Capital High.

That would be more and happy, and I'm sure you would be too, to be interviewed.

Sure.

I think that's an easy, tangible.

But it's that, while still dealing with the real challenges.

Do you have some \_\_\_\_ with WVU.

Yeah, I know some people there.

Well your husband was a.

Not any more, he was.

I mean there was some things at WVU promised that they were going to help us do on the West Side, but it really didn't happen.

There were some flaws in those plans, some fatal flaws, is my understanding, we'll talk about that later.

Yeah, that's a really big conversation.

What is the name of this group.

I don't know, is there a title so I can write this down.

Well, we're updating the West Side Community Renewal Plan.

Okay.

GAI and ZMM were hired to do that, but that's what we're doing. We're stakeholder groups that are updating the West Side Community Renewal Plan.

Okay.

There's no acronym for that.

That will be completed by the end of the year, is that correct?

Yes.

There is no 1 o'clock, we are trying to confirm.

Any time you all would like to use our facility again.

How many seats is in the auditorium, give or take.

Oh man, we just redid that a few years ago.

Probably about 500 people. I mean we use it, it's used. Different groups in our community use it and I don't charge anything to come in here, it's like come on.

You all have the police here twice a month or every two months for neighborhood watch or neighborhood grip session.

And Detective Whitehead has been with us a few times and we definitely want to open up our doors. We're not closed off over here, he sits upon this hill, but it's an open invitation.

It's really just the beginning and I'm sure we'll be talking with you all in the next few months or so.

Yeah, probably will have a meeting on September 11, but still haven't confirmed the location but we're trying to get that done, and we'll get that information out and then they're be some time where we kind of process everything we observed up till then and then some more public meetings following that so.

The first public meeting will be more of a workshop again just listening and people will be very involved, then the second one is where we kind of filter out and share the results of all of this information we've been gathering and then get some feedback on that and then the last one will be just kind of showing the draft report. There will be a lot of public involvement and I'm sure there will be more discussions with you folks. We appreciate it, thank you.