

**BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES
INTEGRATION***

for

**WHITE CENTER/BOULEVARD PARK
DESIGN CHARETTE**

June 25 and June 26, 2003

*Composite of data, documents and community discussions

Introduction to White Center

At first glance, White Center does not look like a stereotypical low income community. When driving around the area, you see stores, parks, and few abandoned buildings. Even the low-rise detached units of public housing look attractive.

However, one must take a closer look to see the challenges faced by this community's ever-changing residents. Public housing that was built as temporary housing for returning GI's (WWII) and their young families has deteriorated inside layers of paint and plastic. Adult entertainment stores, predatory lenders, and empty storefronts line main street. Private and government funded community facilities are open for limited hours because of budget cuts, and people feel isolated in many ways.

Some area residents still refer to White Center as "Rat City." What was once a forgotten community of Caucasians, with more limited job options and world view than their neighbors in the region, has now evolved into a poor multicultural, multilingual community with over 25% being first generation immigrants from Bosnia to Somalia, Vietnam to Mexico. Immigrant and refugee families face the same challenges as other low income families—for example, most work but do not earn enough to adequately provide for their families.

White Center residents face multiple challenges that are unique and have little in common with many poor urban inner city communities. Some residents are the working poor who barely made it even during strong economic times and have been there for generations. They live and shop next to refugees and immigrants whose culture and language are different from their own. These new White Center immigrants are typically refugees who fled for their lives under conditions of famine, war, political unrest and dictatorships. They often have the added burden of trauma from war, death, and loss; cultural isolation; lack of language skills; confusion over American systems; tensions created by bringing together different ethnic groups with a history of longstanding rivalries; and family structures turned upside down as children assimilate more quickly than their parents.

Three Important Facts About White Center/Boulevard Park

A Neighborhood Rich in Diversity of Language and Cultural Backgrounds

White Center/Boulevard Park is home to about 32,000 residents with a rich and diverse cultural heritage. Immigrants and refugees make up a significant and growing percentage of the White Center/Boulevard Park population, hailing from countries such as Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Somalia, the former Soviet Union, Mexico, and the Near and Middle East region. Population growth in White Center/Boulevard Park over the past 10 years has come almost entirely from increases in the Hispanic/Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, and African communities:

- People of color make up 44% of the White Center/Boulevard Park population aged 18 to 64 years, representing no less than 10 distinct ethnic groups; this compares to 26% for King County as a whole
- Children of color make up 62% of the White Center/Boulevard Park population under 18 years of age, compared to 34% for King County as a whole
- 33% of White Center/Boulevard Park residents speak a language other than English at home
- 25% of White Center/Boulevard Park residents are foreign born
- About 50 different languages are spoken by White Center/Boulevard Park residents

A Neighborhood of Working but Struggling Families

Most low income families in White Center/Boulevard Park are working, but do not make enough to provide for their families. These families struggle to house, feed, and support their families; pay for child care and health care; and cover transportation costs.

- 58% of White Center/Boulevard Park households with incomes below 100% of the federal poverty level have adults who are working
- 24.3% of White Center/Boulevard Park residents—or 7,900 people—live below 150% of the federal poverty level, compared to 13.8% for King County as a whole
- 33% of children under 18 years of age in White Center/Boulevard Park—or 2,750 children—live below 150% of the federal poverty level, compared to 16% for King County as a whole
- 63% of White Center/Boulevard Park residents living below 100% of the federal poverty level are people of color
- 76% of children living below 100% of the federal poverty level in White Center/Boulevard Park are children of color
- 42.7% of White Center/Boulevard Park renters spend 30% or more of their monthly income on housing
- Between 70% and 80% of White Center elementary school students are enrolled in free and reduced price lunch programs

A Neighborhood Where Climbing Out of Poverty is Difficult

Climbing out of poverty in White Center/Boulevard Park is a difficult process. Challenges include a lack of connections to family supporting jobs, a lack of education and training, limited English proficiency, and difficulty accessing employment, training, and support services.

- Over 10,000 White Center/Boulevard Park residents—or 33.5%—live in families with less than family supporting incomes (due to unemployment or underemployment)
- White Center/Boulevard Park residents tend to be over-represented in low wage sectors and occupations. For example, 18% of White Center/Boulevard Park residents work in service jobs, compared to 13% for King County as a whole
- 26.8% of White Center residents aged 25 years or older lack a high school diploma or GED, about double the rate for King County as a whole
- 37% of high school seniors dropped out or had to repeat a grade, twice the rate for King County as a whole
- 14% of White Center/Boulevard Park residents are limited English proficient
- White Center/Boulevard Park residents report that lack of access to housing, health care, transportation, child care, and other support services keeps them from getting and keeping family supporting jobs

Problem Statement and Desired Outcomes

Increasing the number of White Center/Boulevard Park residents employed in family supporting jobs requires increasing the availability, accessibility, and appropriateness of employment, training, and support services. Currently, there are over 10,000 White Center/Boulevard Park residents who live in families with less than family supporting incomes, due to unemployment or underemployment, and are likely to need some of these services.

During community conversations, White Center/Boulevard Park residents identified the need for:

- More information about available services and resources
- More job training; help with jobs, especially family supporting jobs; and follow up services
- Work supports such as food stamps, and health care and child care benefits
- Better transportation options and more child care
- Service providers who speak their own language and are familiar with their culture
- Community and faith based organizations as part of the service delivery system
- A community center that supports families, including working families

Neighborhood service integration results in the following outcomes:

- More families employed in jobs that provide family supporting wages, benefits, and career advancement possibilities
- Increase in the affordability, availability, accessibility, and appropriateness of needed services
- More families receive services that are coordinated, culturally competent, and for which they are eligible.

The Partners Group

White Center/Seattle *Making Connections* has assembled a wide array of partners to achieve a set of results in an intensive, sustained, and visible way. Chaired by Bob Watt, vice president of government and community relations for the Boeing Company, the Partners Group consists of key local, state, and private sector leaders. They are actively engaged in *Making Connections*, contributing their time, energy, and resources to plan, develop, and implement powerful strategies. Their goal is to create a broad public and private partnership designed to improve the lives of children through strengthening families, and the community of White Center and Boulevard Park through joining forces with the AECF *Making Connections* Initiative.

The Partners Group launched their work by convening 250 community residents who met in 28 focus groups. The groups poured over the data to identify family and community priorities. The summit was conducted in 17 other languages in addition to English.

During the November 2001 Community Decision meetings, White Center and Boulevard Park residents chose four “life aspects” as the most important to improving the well-being of community families and the life chances of their children. These aspects were:

- Safe neighborhoods and streets
- Schools
- Work and earnings
- Strong families

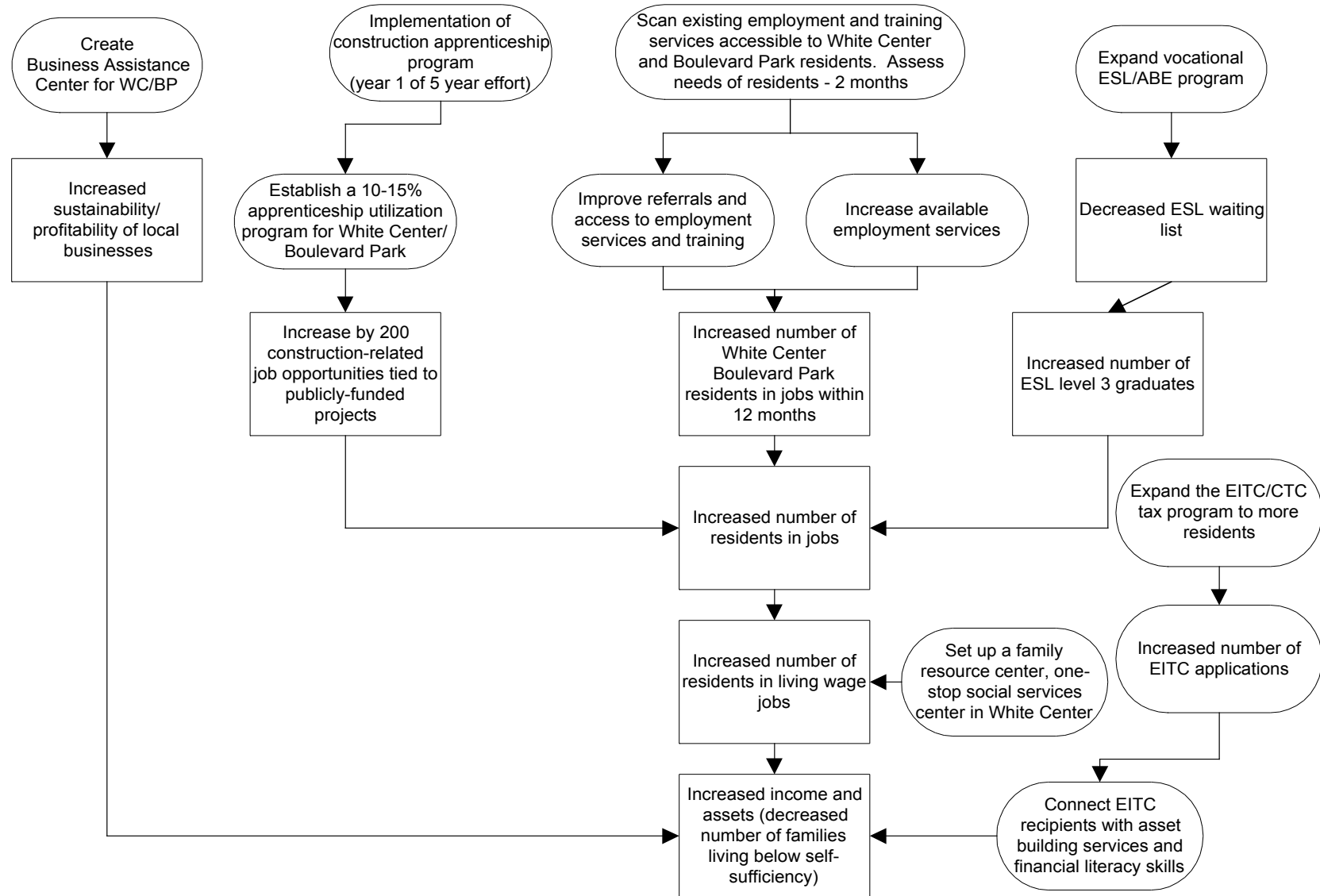
Subsequently four work groups – one for each life aspect -- consisting of community residents and agency representatives met and worked through July to discuss the problems, decided needed changes or outcomes and proposed strategies and actions designed to make those changes. Each workgroup reviewed and discussed successful change strategies and best practices used in other areas as well as White Center and Boulevard Park, and considered what could be strengthened, enhanced or simply expanded. The Work and Earnings and Family-Centered Social Services workgroups identified strategies that can be characterized as services integration. The charts below depict the problems both workgroups identified to be addressed through short term and long term actions.

In September 2002, another community summit reviewed the recommendations of the workgroups. As a result, the Partners Group memorialized their commitment to the following community strategies in a Memorandum of Understanding and formed a Deputies Group to support and implement the commitments of the Partners Group that included:

- Create a plan for a multi-service center described in the Workgroup reports by January 1, 2003 – Department of Social and Health Services, Highline School District, Employment Security, King County Housing Authority, King County and not for profit organizations. The plan will include actions necessary to carry out the intent of the Workgroup recommendations to expand the use of “Trusted Advocates” and create an “Information Services” pamphlet.

Long Term Strategies and Actions Selected by Family Social Services Group

LONG TERM STRATEGIES	LONG TERM ACTIONS
<p>Provide better access to coordinated, culturally competent, preventive, family-centered social services within the WC/BP community. This will strengthen families ability to deal with their children’s behavior and result in reduced abuse/neglect cases and removals from home.</p>	<p>Create a Family Resource Center. The Center would have meeting rooms for local groups and common areas to host various community and social events. It would also offer residents the opportunity to access a variety of formal social services in that center or through satellites in other parts of the community.</p> <p>Move towards a “one-stop” or “integrated service delivery” model for the formal social services housed within that center and perhaps in some of the satellite centers.</p> <p>Staff the Center with bilingual, multicultural workers and a group of interpreters and translators from community and faith-based organizations.</p> <p>Develop a “directory” and an updating process of information on the services and supports; both formal and informal that is available to support White Center and Boulevard Park families.</p>
<p>Connect formal social services to a network of ethnic, community and faith-based formal and informal organizations that support and sustain WC/BP families and ethnic communities. This will help lead to increased use of alternative, less expensive services earlier and prevent more serious problems later.</p>	<p>Develop a program that trains resident leaders to work with institutions as mediators in family crisis areas, providing education, prevention and mediation.</p> <p>Train institutional service providers to partner with and serve each local ethnic group.</p>

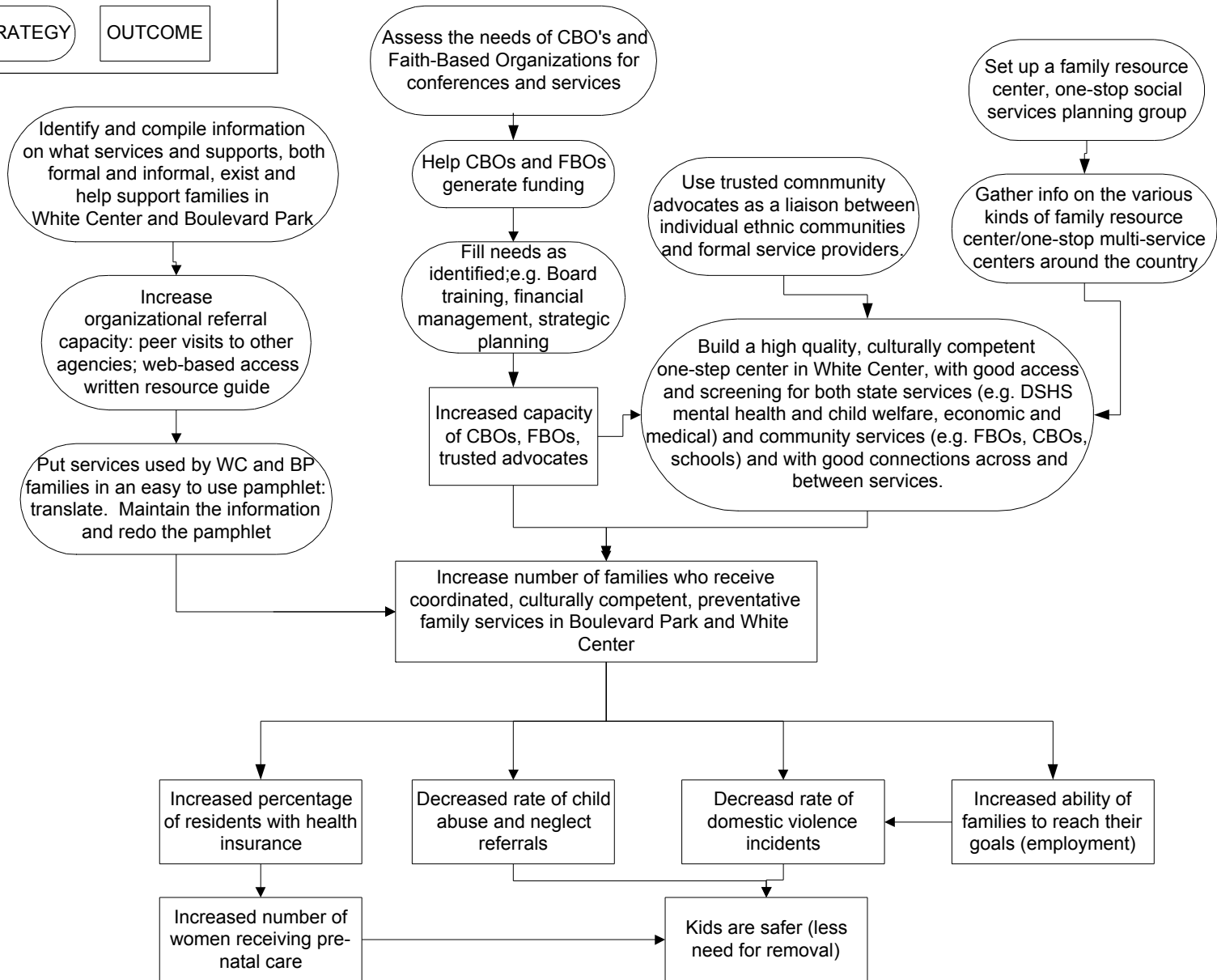


Family Social Services Worgroup Results

Long Term Strategies and Actions Selected by Work and Earnings Group

LONG TERM STRATEGIES	LONG TERM ACTIONS
Improve referrals and access to employment services and training for WC/BP residents.	Create an employment services and training center in White Center. Identify and coordinate existing employment and training services.
Remove communication (language) and educational barriers to employment.	Increase access to comprehensive ESL, Vocational-specific ESL, and ABE training. Improve GED completion and basic computer literacy.
Create opportunities to improve incomes for White Center and Boulevard Park residents and local businesses.	Establish a construction apprenticeship and trades program in conjunction with Hope VI and Highline School District projects. Develop a business administration center to assist and consult with small local businesses.
Improve the proportion of low-income White Center and Boulevard Park families in establishing their Earned Income Tax Credit.	Expand the EITC/Child Tax Credit program to more residents. Connect EITC recipients to asset building services and classes in financial literacy.

KEY:



Work and Earnings Workgroup Results