

# Inaugural Community Conversations: Description and Findings



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## Overview

As part of the Neighborhood Collaborative Project, Community Conversations were developed as one of many approaches to community engagement. The goal is to learn what residents would like to have and how they can contribute to bringing these ideas to life. From November 7th to November 9th, 2023, the first set of Community Conversations were hosted at each of the three NCP anchor agencies. These Conversations were planned and executed by Rosa Marie from Marvelous Minds and Kevin Aiken from ABC Action Front Center. Community Conversations are held quarterly, with the next round happening in February 2024. This report provides an overview of each of the conversations, the content of the conversations, survey results, and next steps.



## Methodology/Original Plan

Cameron Community, S.W.A.N at Montgomery Center, and Father Tracy Advocacy Center (FTAC) were chosen as the locations for the first set of Conversations. The day and location of each Conversation aligned with the same day of the week that outreach walks are held in each neighborhood. For example, Cameron Community hosted the conversation on Tuesday, the same day of walking outreach on Lyell. The Conversations were held 4-6 PM on all three days (i.e., Tues, Wed, and Thurs). Rosa and Kevin worked with the Communications Specialist to create event flyers (see Appendix A). Research team staff then dropped off the flyers to each of the anchor agencies for them to distribute according to Rosa and Kevin's guidance.

Prior to the conversations, the research team developed a short survey to collect participants' responses to questions about their neighborhood as well as demographic information (see Appendix B). The surveys were completed as attendees signed in and mingled with others. Dinner and drinks were provided at all events, along with free childcare through Marvelous Minds. As part of the entertainment for the children, a staff member of Action Front Center (Ms. Rose Hasan) had a station for creating balloon sculptures. Participating community members received a \$10 gift card and could choose from four different types of gift baskets: household gift basket with cleaning supplies, women's hygiene gift basket, men's hygiene basket, and a homeless kit in a drawstring bag (all provided by ABC Action Front Center). A meditation specialist (Deana Cliff, founder of Whole Lyfe Healing), zumba instructor (Leonte), and one of the founders of GIS Scholars, were also included on the agenda.

The original agenda was the following:

4 PM: Dinner

4:30 PM: Welcome and Introduction to NCP

4:50 PM: Meditation

5 PM: Community Conversation

5:45 PM Health Fair and health experience

Participants were encouraged to eat and mingle with their tablemates for the first 30 minutes, as well as fill out the surveys, which were done on paper or on a tablet. This was followed by an opening address that introduced the NCP and the purpose of the Community Conversations. Rosa, being one of the organizers, hosted the events and led the agenda at S.W.A.N and FTAC. Jocelyn Basley, founder of C3 Consultancy and the NCP Project Lead, had to step-in for Rosa at Cameron due to a travel delay. After introductions, the meditation specialist guided the room in meditation to relax and prepare people's minds for having a deeper discussion, and get into a proper mindset. Once the room was prepared, the plan was for each table to have 8 people per table, with both NCP members and community members. A facilitator at each table would conduct the discussion portion, asking 12 questions if time allowed for it, while also encouraging members to discuss their answers. After 45 minutes, a brief health fair for resources would be provided, followed by a short zumba activity.

## Description

Because each Community Conversation was very different, the agenda was modified for all three days. This section will summarize the events of each day, and how the agenda was adjusted to fit the circumstances.

### Northwest Host: Cameron Community- Tuesday, 11/7/23

Cameron Community hosted the first day of Community Conversations in their Teen Center. At least 22 NCP members attended, with members from Cameron, On the Ground Research (OTG), ABC Action Front Center, C3 Consultancy (C3), Community Resource Collaborative (CRC), Lyell Ave Business Association, and Loving Arms Outreach. About 5 community members from the Lyell-Otis area attended. Childcare was provided to three children. Before the discussion started, Jocelyn Basley introduced the NCP and the various organizations present, as well as the Ambassadors, Meditation Specialist, and Zumba instructor. Joseph and Aness from GIS Scholars briefly discussed the virtual maps they created. Next, the meditation specialist guided the room in a breathing exercise and meditation for about 15 minutes. Because the NCP members outnumbered the community members, as well as the structure of the room, Jocelyn asked each question and had participants turn to the person next to them and discuss their answer. Then, everyone regrouped and shared with the larger groups similarities and differences between answers. The questions were significantly modified due to time constraints. They went from twelve questions down to three: What is your best hope for (1) yourself, (2) your family, and (3) your neighborhood. After each question was discussed with a partner, Jocelyn went around the room to each table and invited people to share their discussion answers. The discussion lasted about 30 minutes, and the event ended with a dance from the zumba instructor.

Observations: The research team observed lively interactions between NCP partners as well as community members. Important connections were made, like AFC staff learning about Cameron's afterschool program and how they can register a teen as well as the president of the Lyell Otis Community Association (LOCA) attending the event. The room was full, with participants sitting around tables, on the stage, and along the periphery.



### **Southwest Host: SWAN at Montgomery Center - Wednesday, 11/8/23**

The second Community Conversation was held in the gym of S.W.A.N at Montgomery Center. Around 17 NCP members attended, with members from SWAN, C3, On the Ground, Monroe County, ABC Action Front Center, Loving Arms Outreach, and Barakah Muslim Charity. Unfortunately, no community members were present at this event. However, the room was still led in a guided meditation after a longer dinner time. Rather than having the community conversation, Aness and Joseph used the discussion timeslot to show the various maps that they created, and went over how they can be used in different ways and what can be shown on them. The zumba instructor ended the event with a song to get people moving around.

Observations: The research team observed NCP partners and other attendees continuing to get to know each other. During the longer dinner, NCP partners had the opportunity to talk and build relationships. The gym was a large space, however, it could be difficult to hear due to the echo of the gym. While there was no community conversation, the room was still lively with partners interacting with each other and dancing during zumba.

### **Northeast Host: Father Tracy Advocacy Center, Thursday, 11/9/23**

The final Community Conversation was held at the Father Tracy Advocacy Center, in their side room. Around 16 NCP members attended the event, with members from FTAC, On the Ground, C3, ABC Action Front Center, S.W.A.N, and MC Collaborative. Over 30 community members showed up, most of whom were known by FTAC staff. The beginning of the event was slightly challenging, as there were no Spanish interpreters, and most of the community members who attended were primarily Spanish speaking. There also wasn't a Spanish version of the survey, which made it difficult for participants to fill it out on their own. Two FTAC staff offered to help with translation, which greatly helped. Due to the limited space and lack of interpreters, the discussion portion of Community Conversations was removed. Instead, the focus of the event was shifted to having community members complete the survey, and provide them with the gift baskets. Participants were encouraged to stay and eat, but most left as soon as they finished their meal. Since the FTACr closes at 5, there were almost no new participants after 5:15. At the request of some NCP members, the room was led in a guided meditation which was then followed by a zumba dance. The event ended early at around 5:30 PM.

Observations: The room was crowded and consistently filled with people for the first hour. There was one main table, where most people sat and ate, while the GIS Scholars and On the Ground team were located in the back table, helping with surveys. The room was small, but did not seem to hinder interactions between participants. Once there were no new participants, some NCP partners requested meditation and zumba.

## Conversations: What Did Community Members Say?

The conversation portion of the Community Conversations were only done at Cameron. However, there was overlap with the community conversation questions and the survey questions. In this section, we discuss answers from both aspects of the event.

Three short answer questions were asked to the community members:

**What is your biggest hope for yourself?**

**What is your biggest hope for your family?**

**What is your biggest hope for your neighborhood?**

At Cameron, the responses to each question was discussed with a partner and then shared to the group. From the ones who shared their answers, the common themes were around bettering themselves, being healthy, and better connecting with others. For their family, residents hoped for their family to be healthy, to be closer with each other, to take a different path in life, and to have money. For their neighborhood, participants mentioned wanting better communication and a stronger connection with each other.

The survey results consisted mostly of people who attended the Community Conversation at FTAC. In the survey, there was a wider range of themes than at Cameron. For themselves, the most frequent theme was health: mainly in staying healthy or becoming healthier. The second most common theme was bettering themselves. This showed up in different ways, such as one respondent who said that their best hope for themselves was,

*“To get my life back on track and have some faith in myself. Work towards getting stronger for myself and for my family.”*

Other topics revolved around getting clean from drugs, being with family, and getting a job. For their family, community members often mentioned that they hope their family can better themselves, as well as strengthening their connections with each other, and to be healthy.

*“To finally get a home for my kids and build our communication skills.”*

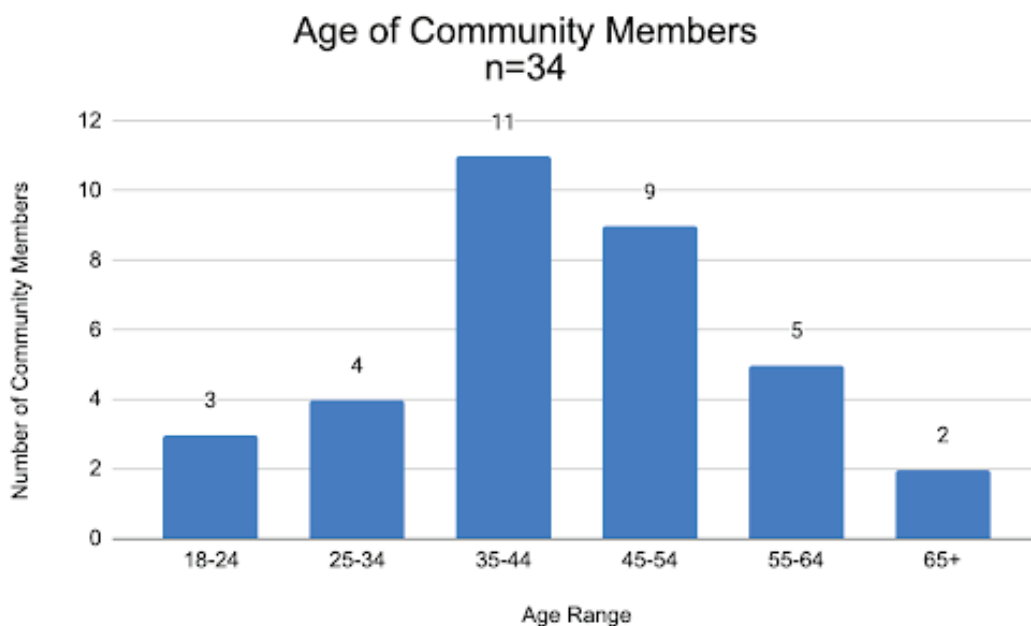
For their neighborhood, community members largely mentioned connecting with each other, as well as decreasing the drug usage and violence in their area.

*“To live in peace and get all their needs.”*

## Survey Findings

The survey that community members were asked to fill out consisted of three (3) sections: short answer, ranked responses, and demographic questions. As mentioned above, the short answer questions asked about the participant's best hope for themselves, their family, and their neighborhood, while the ranked questions asked about perspectives on neighborhood aspects, such as trust in their neighbors, happiness, and quality of life. It is important to note that of the three days, only community members from the Northeast and Northwest quadrants filled out the survey, and these results reflect that.

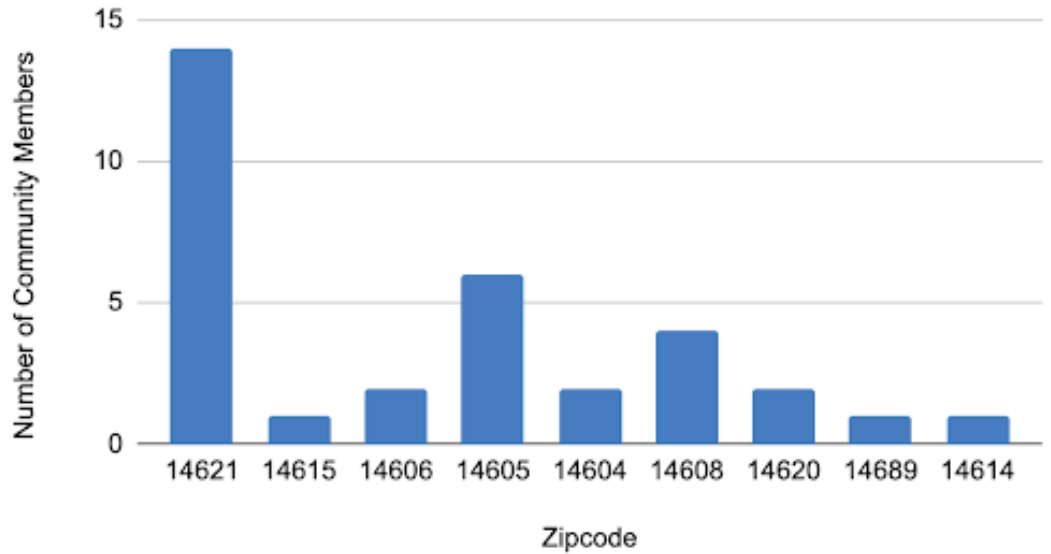
A total of 37 community members completed the survey, with 73% of them reporting that they were male, and 24% reporting that they were female, while one person preferred not to answer. Most community members were between the ages of 35-44 (30%) and 45-54 (24%), with those over the age of 65 being the least common (5%). Of all the participants, a total of 66 adult household members were reported, with an average of about 1 child per household.



Given that 31 community members who completed the survey were from the Northeast Quadrant, it is unsurprising that a majority of community members were Hispanic/Latinx (62%), with the second most commonly reported race/ethnicity being Caucasian/White (14%). Additionally, most community members lived in the 14621 zip code (42%), followed by the 14605 zip code (18%). However, there were nine different zip codes represented by the community members. Though five of these respondents were homeless, most reported living in those zipcodes. The amount of time that people lived in or have been involved in the community ranged from a few weeks, to their whole lives. The longest time spent in the community was 54 years, with the shortest time being only one month.

# What Zipcode Did Community Members Live In?

We asked community members six (6) questions and had them rank their perspective from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree:



**I am happy where I live.**

**I can make a difference in things that matter to me and my neighborhood.**

**Everyone in my neighborhood is included and supported.**

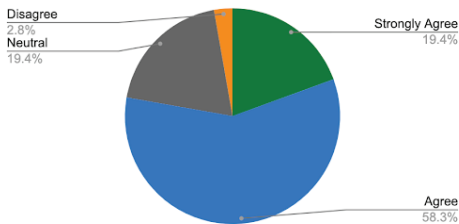
**I trust my neighbors.**

**I can thrive in my neighborhood.**

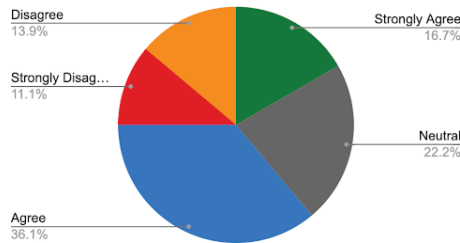
**There are places in my neighborhood that bring people together for good things.**

In general, most responses to each question were positive, with Agree and Strongly Agree the most frequent responses. The question that had the most negative responses of Disagree and Strongly Disagree was #4, as 33% of the responses fell in those categories. The two items with the strongest agreement were that respondents feel they can make a difference in their neighborhood and that there are places that bring people together for good things in their neighborhood. However, in many of the items, about one in five of the respondents reported feeling neutral. The chart below shows the breakdown of each question.

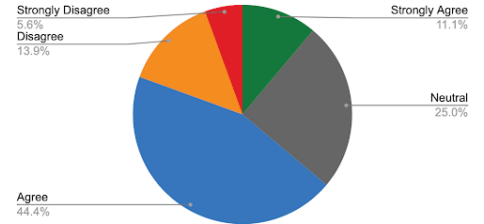
**I can make a difference in things that matter to me and my neighborhood.**



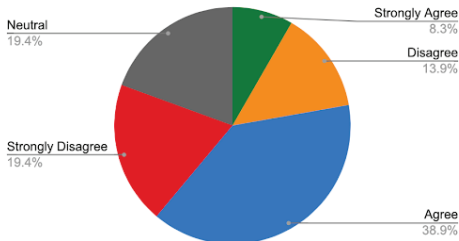
**I am happy where I live.**



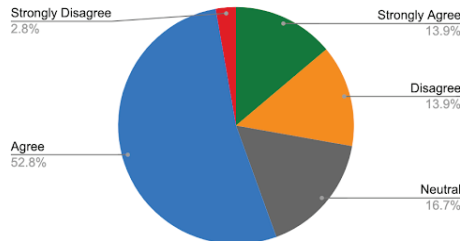
**Everyone in my neighborhood is included and supported.**



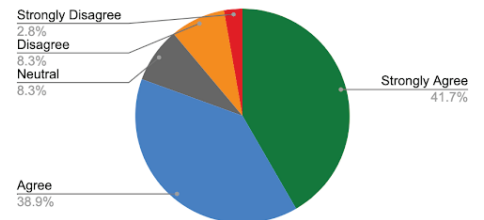
**I trust my neighbors.**



**I can thrive in my neighborhood.**



**There are places in my neighborhood that bring people together for good things.**



## Discussion/Next Steps

Overall, the first set of Community Conversations went well. Since many of the community members knew about the anchor agencies, it would be helpful in the future to hear from community members who are not as aware of or connected with the agencies. Further, resident recruitment was an issue, as SWAN did not have anyone from the neighborhood attend. One suggestion is for the facilitators to coordinate with the anchor agencies around recruitment. For example, attend the senior nutrition program at SWAN to share information about the upcoming community conversations and invite them to attend.

Each day reflected the differences in the three neighborhoods, which NCP staff understood and adapted to. An example of this is the different types of people seen at each location. The Northeast quadrant has a high Spanish speaking and homeless population, so community members were more focused on the food and gift bags compared to Cameron, where most community members were families. There was the limitation of not having a Spanish interpreter at FTAC, which further shows the difference between the two days. Participants were receptive to the guided meditation and zumba, and both children and adults requested balloon sculptures from Ms. Rose Hasan.

The next set of Community Conversations will be held in February. Prior to this, a debrief of the first set of conversations is recommended. A debrief will also be a valuable time to suggest recommendations for future Conversations. A meeting between the Community Conversations planning group and the hosting agencies should be scheduled before each one to ensure that each organization is up to date on the agenda.







presents 3 free evening events - no pre-registration required - just show up!  
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# COMMUNITY CONVERSATIONS

11/7 - Cameron Community (48 Cameron Street, 14606)

11/8 - S.W.A.N Inc. at Montgomery Neighborhood Center (10 Cady Street, 14608)

11/9 - Father Tracy Advocacy Center (821 North Clinton Avenue, 14605)

*all events 4pm - 6pm | food, refreshments, door prizes, child care*

**4pm**

Dinner

**4:30pm**

Opening Address and  
Meditation

**4:45pm**

County Comments

**5pm**

Community Conversation

**5:45pm**

Health Fair + Experience

## Our Partners



This project is supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRP0206 awarded to Monroe County, New York by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.



register for childcare at [www.marvelousminds.xyz](http://www.marvelousminds.xyz)

# Community Conversations

Thanks for joining us today! Please answer the following questions so that we can better understand how you feel about your neighborhood and the services offered.

## Appendix B: Community Survey

1. What is your biggest hope for yourself?

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2. What is your biggest hope for your family?

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3. What is your biggest hope for your neighborhood?

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4. Please rank your agreement with the following statements

Mark only one oval per row.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
I am happy where I live.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can make a difference in things that matter to me and my neighborhood.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Everyone in my neighborhood is included and supported.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I trust my neighbors.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I can thrive in my neighborhood.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
There are places in my neighborhood that bring people together for good things.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

5. What is your address or street name?

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11. What is your race/ethnicity?

Mark only one oval.

- Caucasian/White
- African-American/Black
- Latino or Hispanic
- Asian
- Native American
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Two or more races
- Other/Unknown
- Prefer not to say

12. How old are you?

Mark only one oval.

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+
- Prefer not to say

13. Is there anything else that you want to add?

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