



## Somali Community Services of Maine, Inc.



# Somali Families in Hillview

**Assessing Needs, Setting Priorities,  
Building Consensus**

Prepared jointly by Somali Community Services Inc.  
and Clark University

In cooperation with the Hillview Action Committee  
With Assistance from the City of Lewiston



The pictures on the cover portray the three partners that have made this assessment successful. The view of the community members on the playground drawing sketch maps (the final products appear on pages 4 and 5 of this booklet) represents the first partner, the Somali Hillview community and Somali Community Services of Maine. The second, the Hillview Resource Center, represents the City of Lewiston that provided backing and endorsement of the process and is now working with the Hillview community to implement some of the recommended actions. The third shows a Clark University graduate student facilitating one of the group exercises. Students were an integral part of the assessment, both in helping to conduct the exercises as well as write up findings, including this case study. All three partners benefited from the activity — hence all partners came away from the experience as winners. Win-win situations are the ideal goal for community-driven development. Lewiston’s Somalis achieved that goal.

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# **Somali Families in Hillview**

**Assessing Needs, Setting Priorities,  
Building Consensus**

Findings and Recommendations  
Of a Community-Based Needs Assessment

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with

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## Table of Contents

Table of Contents	ii
List of Figures	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Foreword	v
Section I - Background	1
Section II - Data Gathering and Analysis	3
Section III - Problem Analysis	14
Section IV - Ranking and Community Action Plan	23
Section V - Conclusions and Recommendations	32
Annex I - PAPP Data Collection Workbook: Hillview, Lewiston, Maine	35
Bibliography and References	41

## List of Figures

Figure 1A - Sketch Map of Hillview Neighborhood	4
Figure 1B - Downtown Lewiston	5
Figure 2A - Gender Calendars in Hillview: Women's Views	6
Figure 2B - Gender Calendars in Hillview: Men's Views	7
Figure 3A - Institutional Analysis: Inside Community	10
Figure 3B - Institutional Analysis: External Groups	11
Figure 4A - Accomplishments and Assets in Lewiston	12
Figure 4B - Preliminary and Unranked List of Needs	13
Figure 5 - Hillview Problem Analysis	15
Figure 6 - Ranking of Needs	24
Figure 7 - Action Plan	25 - 31
Figures in Annex I	35 - 40
Property of Household	
Sources Average Family Income/Monthly	
Time to Amenities/Monthly	
Itemized Average Household costs/Monthly	
Average Total Monthly Income/Expenditures	
Status of Well-Being	

## Acknowledgements

Many people and organizations have contributed to this field guide. First and foremost are Lewiston's Somali residents of Hillview. Since their arrival, beginning in 2001, they have faced numerous challenges including weather, language adjustment, a new community, interviews and journalists for about 400 articles and publications, innumerable television interviews, social science researchers, and an enormous struggle to find gainful employment. They provided food and housing for 15 Clark graduate students over three weekends. During two of the weekends, the Somali community organized plays and poetry in truly memorable productions. Beyond the hospitality, many of the residents gave generously of their time for the data collection, analysis, and planning.

Of equal value was support from the City of Lewiston. The Housing Authority generously made the Hillview Community Center available for all of our meetings, the Assistant City Administrator, Phil Nadeau, was a critical resource during the planning and design stages of the assessment, and Victoria Scott, Immigrant and Refugee Program Manager, was another strong advocate for "listening to the people."

Abdirizak Mahboub of Somali Community Services and Hani Mohamed were key players in informing Hillview residents of the plan, providing leadership, managing day-to-day details about the workshops, and keeping everyone informed about schedules and meeting places.

Another important group, more in the future potential they bring than in the support thus far, are the stakeholders who attended pre- and post-assessment briefings and meetings. City, state, federal, religious, educational, charitable, and social service agencies were in abundance at these meetings. They sent a clear message that there are many friends of the Lewiston Somali community. They are ready to consider where Somali priorities may fit with their mandates and how partnerships between the Hillview Somalis and their agencies can create win-win situations.

Finally we wish to acknowledge the support from Clark University's Department of International Development, Community, and Environment and its energetic graduate students. They were the core group of facilitators who actually conducted the assessment. In particular, Shukri Abdillahi spent many hours meeting with residents and leading discussions in Somali. We all feel positive about the initial results of the assessment and hope that the energy that carried Hillview to design the action plan will continue through to its implementation and evaluation.

*Laura Hammond, Richard Ford, Abdirizak Mahboub*

## Foreword

Lewiston, Maine has attained international notoriety in the last three years. To absorb 1100 refugees into a community of 37,000 residents (about 3 percent of the population) is an overwhelming task. On top of the Somalis, there was the press corps. Upwards of 400 newspapers and magazines have carried stories about Lewiston and its new Somali citizens. Several TV documentaries and video productions complement the newspapers. Beyond that are the researchers, bureaucrats and documentalists who have opted to record the Somali experience of Lewiston.

At one level, the arrival of a fully “different” cultural community in Lewiston created a political and social tension beyond anything Lewiston has experienced in recent years. At a second level, the capacity of the Somali residents to understand the additional work their arrival created for City agencies AND the energy that Lewiston agencies have invested to make the Somalis adjustment as smooth as possible suggests that both sides want the system to work. We hope that this Action Plan can help to capture that energy and enthusiasm in order to create lasting collaboration among all stakeholders

The Clark involvement is part of a strategy to pass ownership and initiative to the Somali community for planning their own programs. It focuses on strengthening capacities of Somali groups to look after their own needs. It is based on three principles:

**Knowledge:** local institutions possess considerable knowledge about their needs and accomplishments but this knowledge needs to be organized

**Resources:** local institutions have many resources – e.g. land, labor, management skill – but these resources need to be mobilized

**Partnerships:** when a community organizes what it already knows and mobilizes what it already has, it can create consensus for a Community Action Plan and attract outside partners to join with them to implement the plan.

The Hillview assessment confirms that the Somali community has knowledge and resources and that stakeholder agencies in Lewiston have resources they are prepared to invest to match the resources of the Somalis. The assessment ushers in a new level of community self-reliance and offers a method for Somalis to achieve it.

This booklet is prepared to describe how the process worked in Hillview as well as to help the thousands of immigrant and refugee communities across America to understand that there are concrete steps they can take to assume control of their own planning and action.

## **I. Background**

**O**n Friday, September 5, the eve of Labor Day weekend, 65 stakeholders with interest in the Somali community of Lewiston, Maine gathered in City Hall to learn about a new approach to community-based planning and action. Faculty and students from Clark University's Department of International Development, Community and Environment (IDCE) described a cluster of participatory tools that help communities to identify their highest priority needs and reach consensus on how to solve them. For more than 20 years, Clark researchers have pioneered community-based techniques for analysis and planning in Africa, including Somalia and Somaliland. It was intriguing to speculate whether such tools might help a Somali diaspora community that had trekked one third of the way around the world to Lewiston.

Lewiston's Somali community is unique. While many Somali refugees have been settled across America through government subsidized programs, the Lewiston Somalis are different. They made the decision themselves to come to Lewiston from other parts of the US, largely because of moderately priced housing, a low crime rate, a supportive city administration, and potential entry-level jobs. Beginning in early 2001, as many as 2000 Somalis began moving to Lewiston, an old New England factory city of about 37,000 people. While the Somali community has greatly enriched the cultural diversity of Lewiston and while the city's educational and social service agencies have worked hard to provide for needs in health, housing, and employment, tensions appeared early in the process. Simultaneously, the Somalis brought from their homeland much of their political baggage from the continuing 20 year civil war and clan conflicts. Clan hostilities that exploded in Mogadishu, Kismayo, Berbera, and Merca now simmer in Lewiston. Tensions between locals and the newcomer Somalis plus conflicts inside the Somali community had led to a number of sticky confrontations.

For example, in the fall of 2002, 18 months after the Somalis began to arrive, the Mayor of Lewiston wrote an open letter to the Somali community stating:

This large number of new arrivals cannot continue without negative results for all. The Somali community must exercise some discipline and reduce the stress on our limited finances and our generosity. I am well aware of the legal right of a U.S. resident to move anywhere he/she pleases, but it is time for the Somali community to exercise this discipline in view of the effort that has been made on its behalf. Our city is maxed-out financially, physically and emotionally.

Somalis were outraged at the language and sentiment of the letter, as well as with the way in which it was delivered as a public statement and demanded not only an apology but responded that it was "the writing of an ill-informed leader who is bent toward bigotry." The dispute widened when white supremacists of the World Church of the Creator requested permission to hold a rally in Lewiston in support of a plan to expel all Somalis from the city. Over 5000 people from Lewiston and communities throughout Maine rallied on behalf of the Somalis and held a parallel rally to demonstrate their backing for all Somalis as well as other ethnic groups in Lewiston.



While the immediate crisis was averted, a lingering memory remained. The City, working in conjunction with Somali leaders, decided to take action. During the spring and summer (2003), Clark University, the City of Lewiston, and the Somali community began conversations about whether any of Clark's participatory peace building, conflict mediation, community-based planning, and needs assessment work in Somaliland might have applicability for Lewiston's Somalis. The conversations continued and led to an agreement that two professors (Richard Ford and Laura Hammond, both of whom have worked in Somalia) in the Department of International Development, Community, and Environment, along with a graduate student from Somaliland (Shukri Abdillahi), and 15 additional graduate students, would conduct a pilot participatory needs assessment of 60 Somali households resident in Hillview, one of the City's larger public housing units. Upon completion, the assessment would be reviewed and perhaps extended to other neighborhoods and groups of Lewiston Somalis

The stakeholder meeting was offered to brief interested parties about the Clark approach and to encourage thoughts and ideas from the Somali community as well as from those already working with Lewiston Somalis. Clark Professors Ford and Hammond explained that a Clark team would spend three weekends with the 60 Somali households living in the Hillview public housing community to:

- J collect and analyze data
- J consider accomplishments of the Hillview community
- J mediate conflicts within the community and outside of Hillview
- J rank perceived needs from most to least severe
- J analyze problems, considering both causes and possible solutions
- J rank possible solutions
- J create a Community Action Plan (CAP) to implement solutions
- J create a Community Action Committee (CAC) representing all constituencies among Hillview Somalis to oversee implementation of the CAP
- J select indicators so the community could monitor progress in implementing its plan.

The overall objective was to enable Hillview Somalis to bring together their diverse clan, gender, age, class, and educational diversities to build unity and to speak with one voice about their needs. This unity would be accomplished through implementing the CAP that the entire community would support.

Clark has promoted such assessments in hundreds of African villages, some of which have continued their own planning and implementation since 1986. If participatory tools could help communities in Africa, what about using them for African groups living in America? For Lewiston, Clark's team established two ground rules. First, the assessment would be conducted primarily in the Somali language. Second, only Somalis and the assessment team would participate in the exercises. Excluding some of the stakeholders was an intentional strategy to allow the Somalis some private space to air their feelings, attitudes, and impressions of their Lewiston situation.

## II. Data Gathering and Analysis

The process started well. While some sessions had relatively small numbers of Somalis present, others had between 40 and 50. The sessions and their accomplishments included:

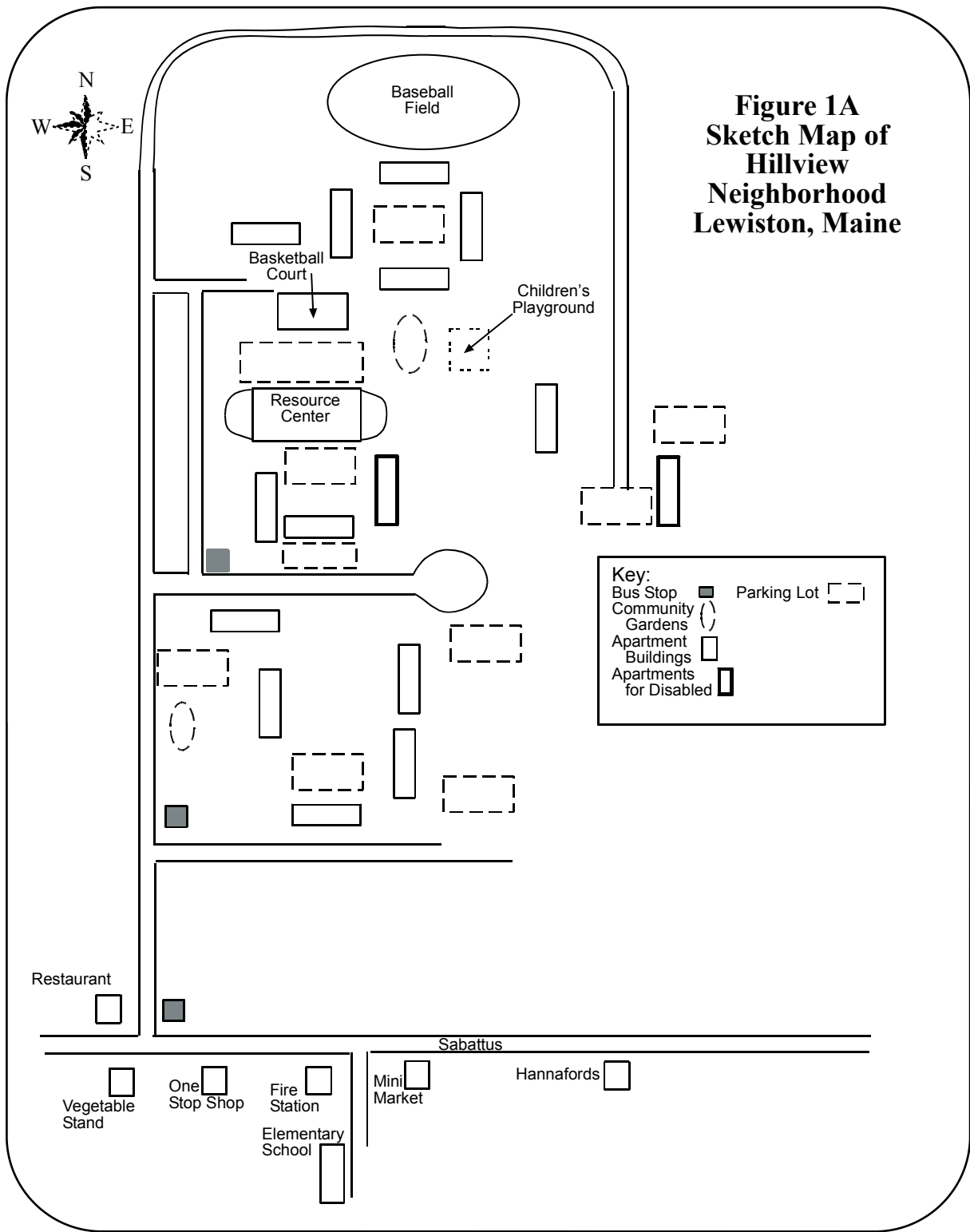
1. Sketch Map – to identify assets and needs of the Somali community
2. Gender Calendars – to ascertain who performs which functions in the daily routine and to stimulate conversations about where changes might be part of their solutions
3. Institutional Analysis – to examine which institutions inside and which outside the Somali community are working effectively and which less effectively
4. Problem Analysis – to assess the causes of the community’s greatest needs
5. Problem Ranking – to place the community’s needs in order from most to least severe or from highest priority to lower priority
6. Community Action Plan – to formalize those solutions the community has identified to be the most effective ways to solve their problems as well as to state which individuals or local institutions would be responsible for implementing these solutions

In addition to these six exercises, the Clark team, working with Somali colleagues, carried out a brief household survey of 25 Hillview families. The survey provides quantitative data on income, expenditures, health, and education to complement the qualitative data generated through the above participatory exercises.

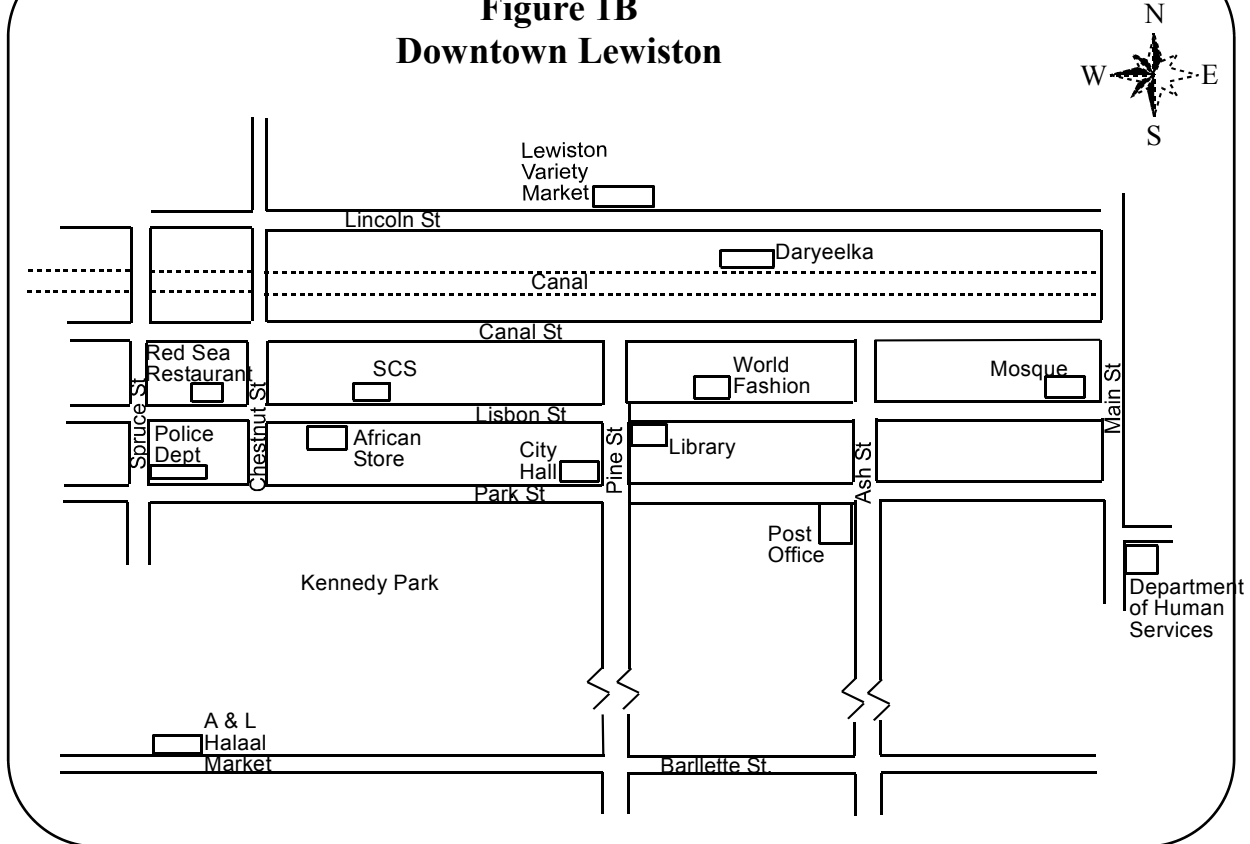
When the formal activities concluded, the Clark and Hillview “family” enjoyed evening activities such as Somali poetry, a splendid play, several shared meals, and home stays in which the Clark students were the guests of the Hillview Somali community.

The first step was to collect spatial, time-related, and institutional data. On our first weekend (Friday – Sunday September 12 –14) a group that varied from 20 to 40 Hillview residents prepared two sketch maps using the basketball court and several boxes of chalk (Figures 1A and 1B), a set of gender calendars (Figures 2A and 2B), and institutional analyses (Figures 3A and 3B).

The maps served as a good opener as they stimulated discussion as well as created an initial listing of community accomplishments and a second list of priority needs (Figures 4A and 4B). The maps helped to set a tone that data collection would involve everyone and provide visual representations of their knowledge and their environment. The gender calendars turned out to be a rather bland exercise, unlike the responses they usually stimulate in rural African communities. The difference is that gender roles among Somalis in Africa are far more differentiated than within US refugee communities. If there is a difference in roles and functions among the Hillview Somalis, it is between the young and the old. The youth know little of “the old coun-



**Figure 1B**  
**Downtown Lewiston**



Two sketch maps represent items of importance to Lewiston Somalis. Figure 1A presents the Hillview neighborhood. Note that even though there are many private homes across the street from Hillview, they do not appear on the map. Hillview Somalis rarely socialize outside of their housing area. Playgrounds, community gardens, bus stops, athletic facilities, and the Hillview Resources Center (Community Center) are prominently featured, indicating that these sites are valued resources in the residents' daily lives. Shops and a school along Sabattus Avenue are also prominently featured. For downtown Lewiston (Figure 1B), City Hall, Police, Post Office, and the library are visible, but the only commercial locations noted are shops that either cater to or are owned by Somalis. The mosque is also prominent.



This sketch map helped to inform Somalis that the Clark team wanted to learn from them. It also helped the Clark team to see that there was limited interaction between the Somalis and the existing Lewiston residents.

**Figure 2A: Gender Calendars in Hillview:  
Women’s View of Women’s and Men’s Daily Lives**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>Adult Woman</b>	<b>Adult Man</b>
5-6 am	Wake up Shower Pray*	Wake up Shower Pray*
6-8 am	Work Wake up children Cook breakfast Clean the house	Dress the kids; Eat breakfast Go to work
8am-6pm	Go to school or work	Work
6-am-9pm	Change clothes Cook dinner Bring kids from playground Have dinner; Clean the house; Start social activities; Phone Friends; Check email; Watch TV; Receive visitors; Play with baby Sleep	Husbands who come home early will cook Go to Mosque Read paper Some go to work Meet friends Care for children  Sleep
Week-ends	Laundry Cleaning Parties Grocery shopping	Sleep Teach kids Koran
	<i>*Prayer is done 5 times daily wherever women are</i>	<i>*Prayer is done 5 times daily wherever men are</i>

Unlike rural African communities where gender roles are highly diversified, in Lewiston, men and women do mostly the same things. Both seek wage employment, help mind the children, pray, help children with homework, and do the shopping. While women may do more shopping and cooking and while men may spend more time at the mosque, specializations of tasks are not as clearly defined as in villages. This is an interesting finding and suggests that gendered roles have changed significantly for both men and women since leaving Somalia. This would be an interesting starting point for a more in-depth analysis of changing gender roles in the community, but the discussion did not go into this level of detail.

**Figure 2B: Gender Calendars in Hillview:  
Men's View of Men's and Women's Daily Lives**

<b>TIME</b>	<b>Adult Man</b>	<b>Adult Woman</b>
5 am	Fasar prayer/Wake up wife/prepare children for school	Fasar Prayer
5:30 am	Leave for work	Prepare breakfast for children
6 am	At work	
7 am	At work	Send children to school
8 am	At work	Housecleaning; Shopping
1 pm	At work	(10—12) Cleaning & Laundry
2 pm	At work	(12—2 pm) Dhuru Prayer/Lunch
3 pm	At work	(2—3 pm) Give lunch to children
4 pm	At work	Help children with the homework
5 pm	Return from work Shower/Asr prayer	Asr prayer/Go to school
5:30 pm	Help children with homework	Help children with homework
7 pm	Magrib prayer	Prepare Supper
8 pm	Eat supper	Eat supper
8:30 pm	Isha prayer	Isha prayer
9 pm	Help children to sleep	Prepare homework
11 pm	Go to bed	Go to bed



try” and are deeply socialized as Americans. They go to school, are comfortable in English, play on sports teams, absorb American teenage values through US television, and have friends who are not Somalis. The older generation has been less influenced by US culture. It might have been more productive to conduct the exercise as typical days for those under 21 and those over. Conducting age-specific calendars might be an effective tool for developing consensus and mobilizing communities in other refugee settings.

The third data gathering exercises, Institutional Analysis (Figures 3A and 3B), were the most thought provoking, stimulating, and productive. One group discussed institutions within the Hillview Community while a second analyzed those outside of Hillview that influenced their lives. The discussion, including about 40 residents, dealt with the two together. The conversation started slowly with the presenters noting groups such as the City of Lewiston, the Housing Authority, Somali Community Services, the mosque, the Career Center for Employment, and the Department of Human Services. However, when the discussions turned to the relative importance of these institutions, the temperature began to rise. At least three themes emerged.

First was an attempt to clarify the role of the City. While people were generally happy that the City had established programs (such as recreation or English as a Second Language) and were pleased that housing was available at affordable rates, there was concern that much of the extended funding coming into the City in support of the Somali refugees was going to studies and staff. Some of the Somali community expressed concern that programs could be made more valuable by responding more directly to people’s needs. In this way, some of the results could be more concrete and specific to resident-defined priorities.

The second topic concerned the mosque. All agreed that it was a vital and central institution supporting their spiritual life, it created a sense of identity, and helped to unite the entire Lewiston Somali community. However, mosques around the world generally do not play active roles in social or economic programs. In the absence of any social or economic institution among the Somalis, should the mosque assume a broader set of responsibilities? Or should a new organization – or an existing group such as Somali Community Services – provide a forum for Lewiston Somalis to discuss their socio-economic needs and organize actions to meet them? There was no consensus on this issue but a great deal of discussion.

The third theme grew out of the second. Briefly stated, many Somalis wanted to know “who speaks for the Somali community?” The problem, as articulated, is that several speak for the community and they do not always agree. The lack of unity consumes time and impedes efforts to solve problems such as transport, health services, language training, or employment. Again, there was no consensus but the discussion led to a probing and meaningful exchange among the community. There were no clear alliances by clan, age, gender, or levels of education. Instead, there was genuine concern that Hillview Somalis functioned as many individuals rather than as a cohesive unit and therefore individual agendas eclipsed possibilities for group action.

The list of needs (Figure 4B) was broadened to include possible creation of new institutions and to think about a means to identify leaders who could speak for a united Somali community. Saturday concluded with a gracious dinner for the entire Clark group provided by the families of Hillview, followed by poems of peace delivered in Somali and English. It was a memorable

conclusion to an eventful day.

The second weekend was slow to start but once the community realized the direction things were moving and ways in which their discussions were leading to thoughtful and penetrating exchanges, the discussions picked up. The weekend was invested almost totally in problem analysis. Figure 5 represents efforts to bring order and structure to the needs listed in Figure 4B. Whereas this process normally takes one to two hours, the Hillview residents wanted to take more time. They gradually began to distinguish between short-term and long-term needs. They noted that issues such as transport, language training, health, housing, and employment — all major problems for the community — were short term and immediate needs. At a deeper level were concerns of leadership and institutional capacity. If, speakers noted, the community could strengthen its leadership and working institutions — *e.g.* United Somali Women, Council of Elders, Somali Community Services — then they would have a new capacity and confidence to solve many of their short-term issues such as employment or transport.

The group decided to carry out a detailed analysis of four problems: community institutions and leadership, unemployment, the cultural gap between Somalis and Lewiston community, and transport. Figure 5 provides two examples of these analyses, transport and community institutions and leadership. The other two, cultural gap and unemployment, are included in the narrative on pages 14—22. The discussions consumed two hours. The reporting back to the main group also took a long time. It was abundantly clear that these issues were of great concern to the community. It is also of interest to note that whereas up to that point women had been the main participants, several men from the Hillview community participated in these analytical sessions. The facilitators decided to let the problem analysis continue for the duration of the afternoon, even though the original plans had been to carry out pairwise ranking in the late afternoon. That would wait for another weekend.

In the meantime, the Clark team paired up with members of the Hillview community to collect quantitative data for roughly half of the Somali households. The results are presented in tabular and graphic form in Annex I. These statistics were organized for three reasons:

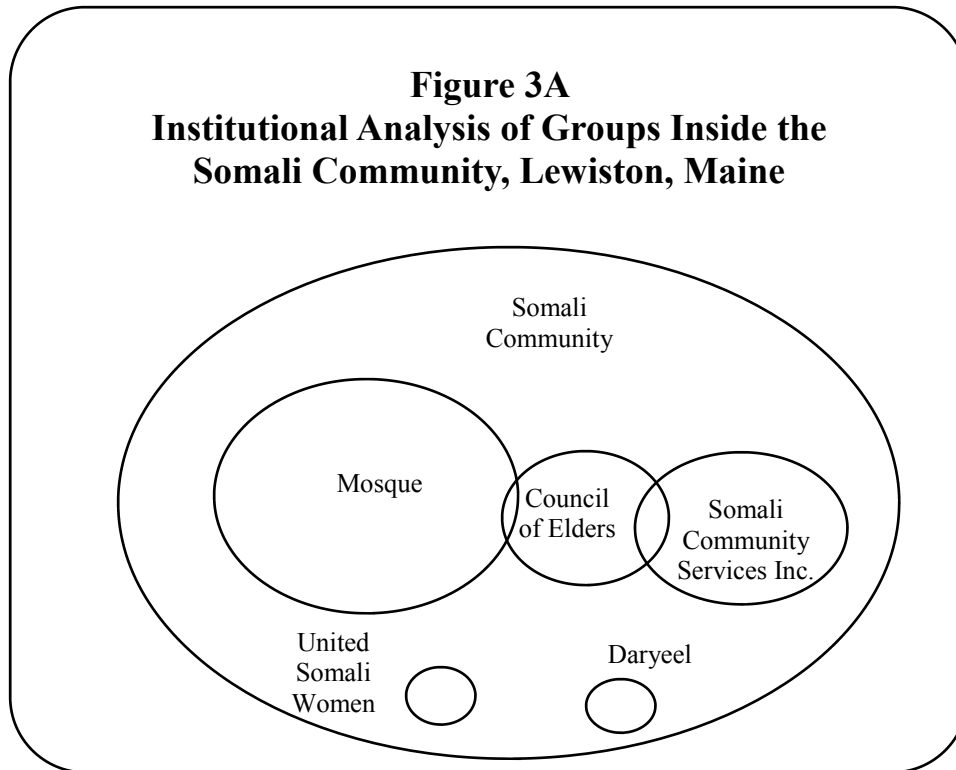
***To complement qualitative data from the participatory exercises*** — While qualitative data help to develop community ownership and investment in a process, quantitative data provide important additional information to describe a community;

***To provide a database to support proposals to partners*** — After designing and adopting a Community Action Plan (CAP), community groups can do amazing things. But they cannot necessarily solve all of their problems by themselves. They often need resources to supplement what they provide. Potential partners will be impressed if a community can describe its statistical situation and defend its proposed action with quantitative data;

***To provide a quantitative database to monitor change in the community resulting from the CAP's interventions*** — Great progress has taken place in recent years in monitoring with qualitative data. Yet household statistical benchmarks are still important databases. The household survey enables communities to monitor statistical changes in their livelihoods and human development.

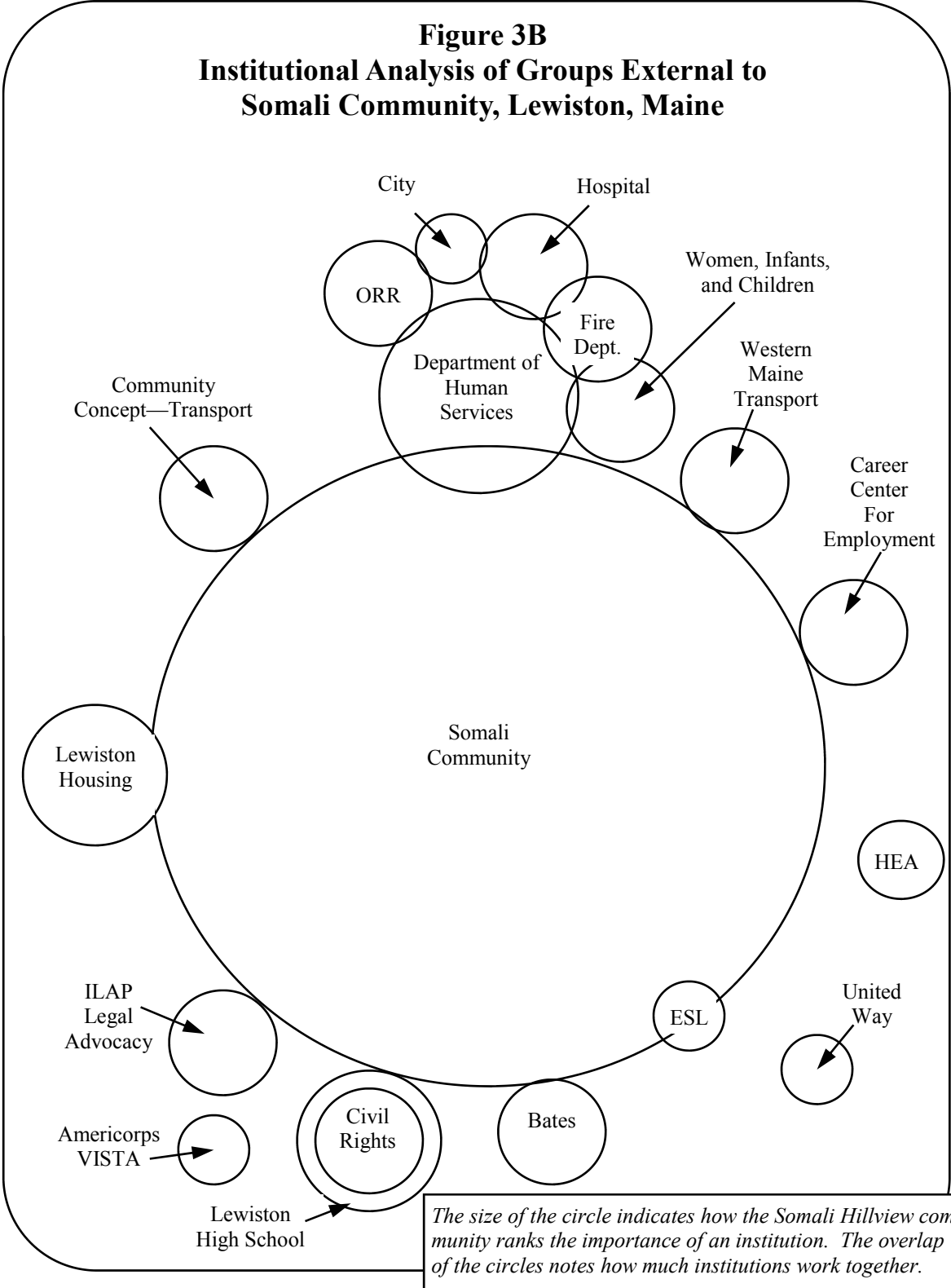


**Figure 3A**  
**Institutional Analysis of Groups Inside the Somali Community, Lewiston, Maine**



These two exercises marked a breakthrough for the Hillview assessment. It was exploration of the relative weight and importance of local institutions that changed the entire emotional and political environment. When word began to spread that the discussions were dealing with issues that the community felt were the most important — *e.g.* leadership and institutions — the adult men started to come. Prior to this exercise the men had observed the process, but did not play a very active role. The institutional analysis established a watershed, indicating that this was a serious planning activity and that the men should be part of it. A similar watershed took place in Dararweyne, Somaliland (see *Nabad iyo Caano*) when conducting the pairwise ranking. Problem analysis did for Hillview what the ranking accomplished for Dararweyne. It marked the formal passing of ownership from the Clark team to the Somali community. The Clark team knew by the end of the problem analysis discussions that Hillview would benefit from the exercises. It is of interest that since the conclusion of the Hillview assessment other Lewiston Somali groups have expressed interest in learning more about the Clark group and whether an assessment might be possible for their group. This is a significant indicator of the importance the Somalis attach to the approach.

**Figure 3B**  
**Institutional Analysis of Groups External to Somali Community, Lewiston, Maine**



**Figure 4A**  
**Accomplishments and Assets in Lewiston**  
**As Viewed by the Hillview Somali Community**

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Community Resource Center</li> <li>- Community gardens</li> <li>- Athletic facilities and playground</li> <li>- Bus stop for school children</li> <li>- Disabled housing units</li> <li>- Mosque</li> <li>- Somali Community Center</li> <li>- Lewiston High School/Adult Language School</li> <li>- Somali-owned businesses and markets</li> <li>- Country Kitchen and other near-by factories</li> <li>- Lewiston Public Library</li> <li>- Bates College</li> <li>- Elementary school near</li> <li>- Grocery stores near</li> <li>- Council of Elders</li> <li>- Somali Community Services</li> <li>- Somali United Woman of Maine</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dharyeel (shelter for abused women)</li> <li>- Department of Human Resources</li> <li>- High School Civil Rights Team</li> <li>- Lewiston Housing Authority</li> <li>- Western Maine Transportation Community Connection</li> <li>- ESL</li> <li>- OOR</li> <li>- City Hall</li> <li>- Kids are still obedient to family and contribute to household tasks</li> <li>- Working, praying, helping with children and household tasks seems equal among the men and women</li> <li>- Work and schooling available to both men and women</li> <li>- Social time and social activities available for both men and women</li> <li>- Many classes for students</li> </ul> |
|--|--|

Figures 4A and 4B evolve from an accumulation of all the data collection exercises. If one is to rank needs it is important to collect potential needs in indirect ways. It is also important to collect them in the context of needs AND accomplishments. A few words on this strategy are important.

Part of the participatory process is collecting people-driven data. Another part is to pass ownership to the people. Still another goal is to build *esprit* or self-confidence with the community to demonstrate that residents know things worth knowing and have accomplished things worth doing. These are all key steps in the participatory process and are all part of mediating or setting aside conflicts within the community. This aspect of the assessment — building ownership and consensus within the community — cannot be established with quantitative data nor can it emerge from top-down and centralized planning. Of necessity, it must come from interactive tools that engage residents on familiar ground — their territory. Collecting data about accomplishments and needs prepares the community for the next step: problem analysis.

**Figure 4B**  
**Preliminary and Unranked List of Needs in Hillview**

- Better transportation
- Driver education not available in Somali language
- Shops too far away; people need car to get to places
- Education too far away
- No adequate recreation place for teens
- Limited bathroom facilities in apartments
- ESL held only in morning; need for evening classes in Hillview Resource Center.
- Apartments too small for big families (some with eleven children) - only one 5 bedroom apartment available; also, apartments have only one bath
- Store selling Somali food needed in area of Hillview
- More time and program needed in Hillview Resource Center for cultural and religious activities
- Library services needed closer to Hillview
- Health services far and must book bus service 24 hours in advance
- Somali translators needed for social service access
- Information on services in Somali languages
- City Hall is initially very important, then role is unknown
- Not clear who speaks for the community
- Need more Somali-owned businesses and markets
- Leadership within Somali community unclear
- Lewiston High School/Adult Language School
- Some organizations in community receive outside funding but do little to help the community
- High school students must pay for school transportation
- Roles of social service organizations unknown to many in the community
- Somali Community Center
- Bus stop for school children
- Mosque
- Disabled housing units



### III. Problem Analysis

Over the course of the three weekends, the group held discussions to identify problems and to brainstorm about possible solutions. Looking first at the community's current methods for dealing with the problems they experience, the groups were asked to think about possible solutions that may not have been tried, or that could be tried with modest assistance.

The problems were then ranked according to their level of importance to the community. The ranking determined that the two highest priority challenges for the community were needs to build Somali leadership within the community and to strengthen Somali community-level organizations. There was broad consensus among the group that achieving these two goals would also go a long way towards helping to tackle the remaining problems.

The full list of needs, ranked from most to least severe, is:

- Build Somali community leadership
- Strengthen Somali community organizations
- Improve English as a Second Language (ESL) classes
- Improve communication with City Hall
- Improve access to social services
- Reduce the cultural gap between Lewiston's Somali and non-Somali residents
- Improve access to employment and working conditions
- Improve access to transportation services (public and private)

This section of the report expands on Figure 5 and offers a brief summary of the discussions held on the eight priority issues. Figure 7 provides the actual Community Action Plan (CAP) for all eight of the priority needs.

#### Priority 1. Build Somali Community Leadership

**Problem:** The highest priority need was to strengthen Somali community leadership. Residents agreed that good leaders should be helpful to others in the community, understand the needs of the community, and above all, be recognized as active members in the community. As such they should be seen as mediators between the community and external government and charitable organizations.

**Causes:** Residents offered several explanations about why the problem had developed. Lack of funds was the major cause, thereby requiring that leaders spend their time earning their family's livelihood rather than helping with community needs. The leaders were simply too busy trying to support their families. This shortage of funds led to a lack of communication within the community and between the community, the state, and other organi-

**Figure 5**  
**Hillview Problem Analysis (two examples)**

<b>Problem</b>	<b>Causes</b>	<b>Previous Coping Strategy</b>	<b>Opportunities</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unreliable transport</li> <li>- 5 people and only 1 car</li> <li>- Scheduling around rides or car services</li> <li>- Long wait to reach destination</li> <li>- Trouble going to market, mosque, work, or school</li> <li>- Emergencies</li> <li>- Fear of winter driving</li> <li>- High School Students pay \$60 per month transport costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not enough city buses</li> <li>- Bus routes inadequate or infrequent</li> <li>- High cost of transportation</li> <li>- Hard to get driver's license because of language and cost</li> <li>- Taxis are slow, costly, and inadequate</li> <li>- Free transportation must be scheduled a week in advance</li> <li>- Lack of winter driving experience</li> <li>- Lack of bus system information</li> <li>- No bus to community college</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Call someone for a ride</li> <li>- Call taxi for a ride</li> <li>- Reschedule tasks/work</li> <li>- Car pool</li> <li>- Take bus, then walk</li> <li>- Use 911 for emergencies</li> <li>- Ride bike</li> <li>- Call friends/family to shop for you</li> <li>- Family teaches other families to drive or to get help with license</li> <li>- Talk to City about new school bus</li> <li>- Community loan fund</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Post schedules and routes at bus stops and Hillview Resource Center</li> <li>- Request additional bus service</li> <li>- Expand community loan fund for people to buy cars</li> <li>- Organize car pools</li> <li>- Get more information on free transportation opportunities</li> <li>- Find closer stores or destinations</li> <li>- Talk to the "right" people about high school buses</li> </ul>
<p>- Community Organizations/ Leadership not as effective as they could be</p> <p>Good leader should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Be able to help others.</li> <li>- Understand needs of community</li> <li>- Be active</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lack of funds — Leaders may not be able to volunteer. Need payment to be able to give time to community.</li> <li>- People busy establishing careers</li> <li>- Lack of communication with City departments. City doesn't know how to listen to community</li> <li>- People claim to represent community without mandate from Somalis</li> <li>- Different leaders have trouble agreeing on common goals</li> <li>- Small tensions from clan differences.</li> <li>- Sometime misuse of power for personal gain</li> <li>- Time constraints for young adults</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Outside organizations fund from community donations</li> <li>- Passage of time — now people have more time.</li> <li>- Women emerging as leaders of grass roots activities. Some organizations run by/for women</li> <li>- Community unity starting to build through San Diego trip that included representatives from different groups</li> <li>- Mosque has been important aid to unity. because it builds trust</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Unity is most important</li> <li>- Set priorities</li> <li>- Attract resources</li> <li>- Demonstrate common purpose</li> <li>- Unity through dialogue</li> <li>- Umbrella groups</li> <li>- Mosque has specific role in spiritual aspects of life, deliberately reluctant to be political</li> <li>- Encourage youth leadership activities within existing groups</li> </ul>

zations. Some leaders who claimed to represent the community had no mandate from the Somalis because they (Somalis) did not trust them. Those who are recognized do not all, participants claimed, have a spirit of volunteerism. Some had tried to get the community to pay them for their leadership services.

People were aware that several leaders had trouble agreeing on common goals. Other expressed concern about potential conflict between clans. Still others noted that the youth, who might serve as important leaders given their fluency in English and familiarity with American bureaucratic structures, had little time to assume major community duties because of their obligations for their own work and study.

***Coping Strategies:*** The Hillview community has managed to cope with this problem by securing limited funds from outside organizations and donations by community members to run activities in the mosque. Whereas during the first year or two after their arrival people were preoccupied with the need to find jobs, housing, and to establish themselves in Lewiston, it was reported that people now have more time to attend meetings and discuss community issues. Women were emerging as leaders of grassroots activities in some organizations. References were made to the Somali United Women and Daryeel providing help to groups in Hillview.

***Suggested Opportunities:*** The group came to a consensus that unity is the most important opportunity to build effective leadership in Hillview. They agreed that there is need to use the mosque to build unity and trust among members, as the mosque has a specific spiritual role and cuts across clan lines. However, they agreed that the mosque should not work simultaneously either as a political action body or as a service provider. The group identified a need to be united to set priorities to attract resources into the community and to build consensus.

## **Priority 2. Strengthen Somali Community Organizations**

***Problems:*** The major problems identified for existing Somali organizations were lack of transparency and poor communication within the community. Most people had heard of the existence of about three Somali-organized groups that are operating in the name of the Somali community, yet not many had knowledge of what each organizations did. The community members also emphasized that none of these organizations has actually met with the entire community and asked about their needs or wishes. Most of the groups or individuals working with various agencies are said to be representing a narrow sub-section rather than the whole community and are not even communicating among each other on matters relevant to their work.

***Causes:*** The group is also aware of the difficult position in which these organizations or individuals are operating, especially their lack of funds to develop relationships with other (non-Somali) organizations in Lewiston. Participants in the group were aware that many rely on these Somali individuals and organizations to provide assistance. While they emphasized that they appreciate the efforts, they would like them to become more efficient, organized, and effective in order to serve the needs of all Lewiston Somalis.

***Coping Strategies:*** Since coming to Lewiston, members of the community have relied heavily on the mosque. There is considerable agreement that the mosque should be a spiritual center for the community, but that it should not be an assistance-providing agency. The community calls on its elders to intervene when major problems arise between people, and the very needy are assisted through individual or collective help of an *ad hoc* nature. Participants said that people are always assisting each other as the Somali culture and the Muslim religion demands of them to do in times of need. This system works well when those helping their neighbors are not experiencing difficulties of their own. However, because so many people are needy, the obligation to help each other is creating additional pressure on individuals and families already trying to manage their own problems.

***Suggested Opportunities:*** There is a need for Somali organizations to become more organized according to the community and be transparent to the community they are serving. As a first step, they need to convene with the whole community and inform them about the services they could provide and present a plan of action.

### **Priority 3. Improve English as a Second Language (ESL) Classes**

***Problem:*** This group discussed their general difficulties in building their English language skills and identified problems and opportunities with the existing ESL programs.

***Causes:*** There was a general feeling that while there are ESL class opportunities available, many people could not take advantage of them because they were held during times when people were working, or because they did not have transport to bring them to the training centers. In addition, some people expressed frustration that the classes focused more on conversational English and less on developing the kind of language skills one would need in the workplace or when interacting with social service providers.

***Coping Strategies:*** People have tried to cope with their limited English skills by using their children to translate for them, relying on translation services of the various service providers (which is problematic, see Priority #5, below), and carpooling to get to ESL classes. Many people have had to take jobs that do not require them to speak English; these jobs are low-paying and not very secure.

***Suggested Opportunities:*** To overcome the obstacles to effective ESL training, several people suggested having more ESL classes at night. ESL programs that provided transportation to participants would also be welcome. Many people said that they thought that the Somali community itself should be more involved in organizing ESL classes and agreed that they could work more actively in cooperation with ESL program sponsors.

### **Priority 4: Improve Communication with City Hall**

***Problem:*** While relations with the Lewiston city government are generally good, people felt that they could be made even stronger. Those who were among the first Somalis to move to Lewiston said they thought that the relationship with City Hall had been more constructive prior to the arrival of so many more Somalis.



**Causes:** The group expressed concern that certain Somalis who either work for the City or who “have the ear” of city officials did not necessarily represent the interests or views of the entire community. They felt that there was a need to identify people within the community who had a mandate to speak on their behalf (see Priorities 1 and 2). Failure to do this so far has resulted in splintering within the community and the creation of factions which are counterproductive. Because of this information blockage, people said that they did not feel that the City had a very clear idea of their needs and priorities.

**Coping Strategies:** The group said that in the absence of some effective services from the City government and social service sector (see Priority 5 below), people have relied upon each other for help. When the community was smaller, this was not such a problem. Now that the community is larger, however, such mutual assistance presents a huge drain on household resources, and many people are finding it difficult to share what little they have with others.

**Suggested opportunities:** The community is interested in promoting more dialogue with the City to address these problems. They also want to promote the development of Somali leadership within the community in order to be able to elect representatives with a mandate to speak on their behalf, to better engage with the City on issues of mutual concern.

### **Priority 5: Improve Access to Social Services**

**Problem:** The group discussed problems that have arisen over access to social services. The confusing myriad of agencies that provide these services was identified as one of the problems. In Somalia, members of the group explained, there was generally one agency (or a few agencies) that provided all needed services. In the US there are many more service providers, and people said that they had difficulty understanding how all these different agencies (Lewiston Housing Authority, Welfare Office, Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services, etc.) are structured and located.

**Causes:** The group broke the problem down into various parts, considering different kinds of services and discussing difficulties they faced. An example was given that in order to obtain a Green Card, one has to travel to Portland, the closest BCIS office. This large time commitment and the high cost of applying has led many in the Somali community to postpone or forego the paperwork. Each application requires a fee per person or child which is often more than they can afford.

As another example, the test for citizenship is only offered in English with no Somali translation, and includes questions that group members did not feel were relevant to living in the United States (for example, Who was the 16<sup>th</sup> American President?). Group members had heard that in other US states such as Minnesota (which has a very large Somali population) the test is available in Somali.

People said that they had difficulty communicating with agencies if their English was not very good. There are translators that are available via phone at places such as the hospital, but while these translators speak English well they are very poor in speaking Somali. This can lead to misdiagnosis, complications, and misunderstandings.

***Coping Strategy:*** Group members appreciated the availability of public housing in Lewiston, though some thought that the rent subsidies might act as a disincentive to seeking employment. They also expressed their concern that the apartments available to new Somalis had an average of two bedrooms and one bathroom. The maximum family size allowable in an apartment of this size is restricted at five people, yet many people have larger families and are forced to split up or risk being evicted from public housing if they are found to have more people living in the unit. They also expressed frustration that visitors, including close relatives, are only allowed to stay for a visit for seven days. The group felt that the rules did not adequately appreciate the social and cultural needs of the Somali community.

Another problem with social services that was mentioned is that the elderly and disabled do not receive social security payments. No one knew why this is so.

***Suggested Opportunities:*** Opportunities to facilitate obtaining Green Cards include inquiring whether a satellite office of BCIS could be located in Lewiston and seeing if another way to cover the application fee for children is possible (pay for all children with one payment instead of per child, or if loans or grants are available). The suggestion was also made that citizenship tests should be offered in Somali so that more could take it.

Opportunities that arose were inquiring whether better translators such as people from the Hillview community could be hired or if a service where people went with each other to these services was possible. To try to find larger housing units, people are actively seeking out other locations with the option of renting to own (a Lewiston program that provides home ownership opportunities).

## **Problem 6: Reduce the Cultural Gap Between Lewiston's Somali and Non-Somali Residents**

***Problem:*** A great deal of attention has been given to improving understanding and communication between Somali and non-Somali residents in recent months, and conditions have improved somewhat. Even so, members of the group said that the problem continues to exist. Inadequate understanding extends into the school system, where Somali children often face discrimination from their schoolmates, to the employment sector, where Somalis are given lower paying jobs because it is widely believed that they will find such wages acceptable, to general treatment in the streets of Lewiston by people who do not respect their religious and cultural differences.

***Causes:*** The group felt that the main obstacle to improving awareness was lack of integration. This is perpetuated by Somalis' limited English language skills. Many Somali youth

were born and/or raised in the US and have excellent English skills, but may try to down play their “Somali-ness” in order to better fit in to American society. This is a cause of concern for their parents. While the media has helped to bring attention to the problem, too much media coverage may have had a negative impact in overemphasizing the problem, thereby exacerbating it.

***Coping Strategies:*** Many attempts have been made to highlight and reduce the problems of misunderstanding in Lewiston. The Many and One rally held in early 2003 was a big step in bringing people together. The City and school systems have attempted to promote understanding; the establishment of civil rights groups in the high schools was cited as an important step. The group felt that the biggest advances had come through individual person-to-person contact between Somalis and non-Somalis.

While it was felt to be important to break down some of the barriers that exist between Somalis and non-Somalis, the group also stressed the need to preserve its own culture. The mosque is providing Somali language lessons to youth and stressing the religious and cultural values of the society; this is seen as a great service to the community.

***Suggested Opportunities:*** Several opportunities for increased collaboration were identified. The group stressed the need for each of them to make strong efforts to establish contacts and make friends with non-Somalis. They proposed working with local television and radio stations to develop appropriate and realistic programming that could help to educate non-Somalis about their culture and religion. They also said that they needed to continue their efforts to hold cultural festivals and events to bring the community together.

## **Priority 7. Improve Access to Employment and Working Conditions**

***Problem:*** Employment opportunities for Somalis are scarce, in part because entry level jobs are hard to find, many Somalis lack technical skills, and educational credentials earned in Somalia are not honored in the US.

***Causes:*** Participants in the discussion on employment said that they do not have the connections necessary to find employment opportunities. In addition, there is a problem of discrimination and stereotyping. It appears that employers do not want to hire them, because they do not have sufficient knowledge of the Somali culture and are also afraid that other employees will be upset if they hire Somalis. It is important to note that this issue of discrimination is perceived to apply to the younger generation as well. Although the youth have no problem with English (unlike most of their elders), they also experience difficulty obtaining jobs.

Another issue regarding lack of employment opportunities discussed is that the Somali system of education is different from the US. For instance, those who have a teaching certificate from Somalia are not allowed to work as a teacher in America, because of the difference in licensing. Though taking courses and obtaining additional teaching certificates would be one option, they would be both costly and time-consuming. Along the same line, it was acknowledged that there are not enough opportunities for professional development.

Those with children also face additional difficulties because they do not have access to childcare. Traditionally, they would prefer to take care of their own children. Given the lack of Somalis licensed to offer childcare services, working parents are uncomfortable with non-Somali care givers because they do not know the culture. A possible solution would be to organize a community-owned childcare system. However, licensing by the Department of Human Services is difficult, and not all parents are able to pay the fees that would be required to make such a center viable.

Some welfare benefits are only available to those who have lost their jobs, and some people felt that because they cannot find jobs, they lose out not only on potential wages, but on potential welfare benefits.

***Previous Coping Strategies:*** In the past, people have attempted to deal with these problems in the following ways:

- The local Career Center has hired a few Somalis to help people understand how to use the center and to minimize discrimination,.
- Some people whose lack of English language skills prevents them from finding a job have attempted to take ESL courses. But they say that they did not learn as much as they had hoped (this relates to the need to strengthen ESL classes, noted above),
- Some Somali employers have attempted to hire Somalis, but employee turnover has been high as people leave these jobs when better ones open up,
- Some hands-on professional training programs have been offered, but this had limited support since participants lacked transport to get to the training events,
- In terms of the issue of childcare, people have tried to create a social network to take care of each other's children informally.

***Opportunities:*** There is a need for:

- Cross-cultural programs for assimilation and integration, to educate non-Somalis about Somali culture, and vice versa.
- Regarding ESL courses, reassessment of the quality of the courses is desirable. Involving Somalis in teaching and curriculum development (especially using youth who are fluent in English) might help to make the courses more applicable to Somalis' everyday needs. Strengthening private tutoring was also mentioned as a solution.

It would be most convenient if there were public transportation linking their residential area and the business and market center (see Priority 8). Concerning driver's license, involvement of Somalis in creating tests would be an excellent step to take as language barrier is currently a problem. Also, as one person rightly suggested, the tests can also be visual in order to eradicate the same problem. Finally, encouraging the Somalis to obtain a driver's license was discussed. Priority #8 is therefore linked to #7.

### **Priority 8: Improve Access to Transportation Services (Public and Private)**

***Problem:*** Many of the Hillview Somalis face major obstacles in getting to and from work, school, shopping, and education/training.

**Causes:** Lack of transportation to and from the workplace was cited as an important problem. The fact that some people have quit their jobs due to lack of transportation shows how important this issue is. Carpooling may be one solution; however, this has been a problem in the past when the car owner/operator has quit or not been able to go to work (due to illness, family emergency, etc.) because others who ride with that person are then left with no way to get to work.

To combat this problem, it was suggested that more people should attempt to obtain a driver's license. This solution is not without obstacles: testing and documentation requires language fluency and also may be expensive for the individual.

**Coping Strategies:** To overcome or manage the difficulties presented by the lack of transportation options, people reported that they typically took public buses to locations that were as close to their destinations as possible and then walked the remaining distance, or else paid for taxi rides if they could afford them. If they could, they also shared rides to work (though this made them dependent upon the drivers and car owners' schedules; often sickness, other family responsibilities, or car breakdowns interfered with their ability to get to work). They asked family and friend to drive them to appointments, and coordinated their shopping trips with those of other friends and family who had cars. To learn to drive, they relied on family members and friends to teach each other. Despite their efforts to overcome the difficulties posed by transportation limitations, people said that their lives were seriously constrained by the lack of transportation availability.

**Opportunities:** There is a need for:

- Extension of public transportation services to link the Hillview residential area to the business and market centers.
- Involvement of Somalis in translating and administering tests would be an excellent step to take as the language barrier is currently a problem.
- The community acknowledged the need to encourage more Somalis to obtain driver's licenses.

## **IV. Ranking and the Community Action Plan**

Pairwise ranking inevitably turns out to be the tool that brings the entire assessment together. In the initial stage of the assessment, discussions turned frequently to ESL, employment, housing, transport, and related physical needs that occur daily in the lives of the Somali community. These are real needs and they represent some of the greatest challenges that the Somali community faces. Yet the pairwise ranking enabled the Hillview residents to rise above their day-to-day issues and to understand that basic to solving their daily problems are institutional and leadership priorities. Solving their organizational and management problems will enable the Hillview Somalis to deal with transport and ESL on their own rather than asking outsiders to come help.

Examine the pairwise ranking chart in Figure 6. It enabled Hillview residents to compare different types and levels of need. For example, when they compared priority for transport or employment and leadership, they ranked leadership needs higher in both cases. This decision reflects a level of maturity and sophistication among Lewiston Somalis suggesting that the highest priority is not the daily need. The community has articulated their understanding of going to the basics rather than the daily.

Pairwise ranking enables communities to look inward, to discuss these basic needs, and to address means to solve them. The ranking concludes with creation of the action plan (Figure 7), adding a time table, assigning responsibility for who will do which tasks, and putting a set of indicators in place that the community can monitor to determine how well the plan is being implemented.

**Figure 6**  
**Ranking of Needs: Hillview**

Topic/Need	TRSP	EMP	LDSP	Gap	ESL	INST	SServ	Comm	Score	Rank
Transport		TRSP	LDSP	Gap	ESL	INST	SServ	Comm	1	5b
Employment			LDSP	Gap	ESL	INST	SServ	EMP	1	5a
Leadership				LDSP	LDSP	LDSP	LDSP	LDSP	7	1
Cultural Gap					Gap	INST	SServ	Comm	3	4c
ESL						INST	ESL	ESL	4	3
Institutions							INST	INST	6	2
Social Services								Comm	3	4b
Communication With City Hall									3	4a

#### Key to Abbreviations

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. TRSP = Transport</li> <li>2. EMP = Employment</li> <li>3. LDSP = Leadership</li> <li>4. Gap = Cultural Gap</li> <li>5. ESL = English as a Second Language</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>6. INST = Community Institutions</li> <li>7. SServ = Social Services</li> <li>8. Comm = Communication with City Hall</li> </ol> |
|--|--|

#### Final Ranked Order

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Leadership</li> <li>2. Institutions</li> <li>3. ESL</li> <li>4.a Communications with City Hall</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>4.b. Social Services</li> <li>4.c. Cultural Gap</li> <li>5.a. Employment</li> <li>5.b. Transport</li> </ol> |
|---|--|

**Figure 7  
Action Plan**

Rank	Problem	Suggested Activity	First Step	Labor, Materials, Money	Who Will Act and/or Follow up	When	Indicators
1	Build Leadership Within the Somali Community	- Identify leaders to speak for community	- Organize community for electing working committee	- Meeting space - Volunteers to mobilize - Collecting money - Transport	- Elected committee of elders, youth, women	- During Eid celebration - After Ramadan	- When community elects official leader
		- Encourage youth leadership	- Organize youth for discussion	- Space - Volunteers to mobilize - Raise money	- Elected committee and youth	- One month after Ramadan	- When they organize tasks and activities
		- Leadership and organizational training	- Request organization to support training - Somali experts to help Clark U and other institutions offering training	- Time - Money - Space - Experts	- Elected committee - Universities of Maine, Clark, and Bates - City Hall	- Within two months	- Improved skills available

Figure 7 presents the planned action, as established in a community forum, to deal with the eight ranked priorities (Figure 6). The columns set out the activity(ies) that community groups think will help ease or solve the problem, how to get started, what materials or resources are needed (including both resources from within the community as well as assistance that external partners may provide), who will do it, when, and how they can tell if their actions are working. To strengthen their leadership, for example, they have designed a three-pronged attack including a process to identify and select leaders, efforts to place particular priority on working with the youth, and means to organize leadership training. It is important to note that these suggestions came from the community. In this way the eventual leaders and community institutions (Ranked needs #1 and #2) will belong to the Lewiston Somalis, not to the City or Clark or other external groups. The action plan continues on the next few pages, noting strategies for strengthening community institutions and enhancing English language training.



**Figure 7 (continued)**  
**Action Plan**

Rank	Problem	Suggested Activity	First Step	Labor, Materials, Money	Who Will Act and/or Follow up	When	Indicators
2	Strengthen Somali Community Organizations	- Ensure that all organizations are registered	- Mandate from community - Papers to register organization	- Organize meetings, space	- Elders - Elected committee - Universities - Somali organizations	- 2-3 months	- Proof of registration - Community consent - Clear plan is available
		- Create a system of informing community of available benefits and services	- Community Center for information about programs run by Somalis - Create information pack in Somali – (e.g. include information on rent to own scheme)	- Volunteers - Time - Money	- Somali organizations to present info/ activities/structures to community - City Hall - Elected community organization	- 6-8 months (to finish)	- When the information package or book is completed
		- Improve relationships with social services and City Hall	- Elected community leaders meet with City Hall and make an agreement - Regular meetings	- Schedule a meeting	- Elected committee - Somali organization	- Monthly	- Improved support from City Hall to the community organizations
		- Approve plan of action	- Done	- Community involvement	- The community - Elected committee will act	- After Ramadan	- When the results of action plan begin to show
		- Create proposals for officially approved plans	- Getting approval from community for the proposal and making it official	- To submit the proposal - To prepare for action	- Elected committee - Somali organizations	- 2-3 months	- When funds come
		- Create visible activities/be a voice for the community	- Meet with all elders, elected committee and existing organizations	- Time and space	- The elected committee	- Before Ramadan	- When the roles are clear to community

**Figure 7 (continued)  
Action Plan**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Activity</b>	<b>First Step</b>	<b>Labor, Materials, Money</b>	<b>Who Will Act and/or Follow up</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
3	Improve ESL Classes	- More ESL classes for different levels of English ability and education	- Meet those people organizing ESL and discuss opportunities	- Space - Time - Follow up	- Literacy organization. elected committee - City Hall	- Within a month	- Implementation of ESL levels and classes, changes and availability of transportation is improved
		- More private lesson opportunities	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above
		- Have evening classes, also longer classes	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above
		- Orient ESL towards what people need in work and at workplace	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above
		- Provide transportation to ESL classes	- Evening classes at Hillview	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above

**Figure 7 (continued)**  
**Action Plan**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Activity</b>	<b>First Step</b>	<b>Labor, Material, Money</b>	<b>Who Will Act and/or Follow up</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
4	Improve Communication with City Hall	- Elect spokesperson(s) to speak on our behalf	- Organize meeting of community to elect committee	- Space to meet with volunteers to mobilize - Collect money - Transport people	- Elected committee of elders, youth, women	- During Eid celebration after Ramadan	- When community elects official leader
		- Collaborate with Somali city officials	- Organize meeting of community to elect committee	- Space to meet with volunteers to mobilize - Collect money - Transport people	- Elected committee of elders, youth, women	- During Eid celebration after Ramadan	- When community elects official leader
		- Establish Community Center	- Choose location - Mobilize people - Approach City Hall and NGOs	- Space - Money	- Cultural people - Mr. Jawab and elected committee - Somali organizations	- Start in 2 months	- Opening of Cultural Center

**Figure 7 (continued)  
Action Plan**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Activity</b>	<b>First Step</b>	<b>Labor, Material, Money</b>	<b>Who Will Act and/or Follow up</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
5	Improve Access to Social Services	- Identify larger apts. with more bedrooms and bathrooms	- Meet with housing authorities	- Space - Time - Follow up	- Somali organization - Elected committee	- 4-6 months	- Bigger apts. are provided
		- Get info about rent to own opportunities	- Passing info to community		- Housing Authority	- 4-6 months	
		- Get info from DHS: - role of soc svc agencies in the US - social security payments - ask for more opportunities to meet people in Lewiston community	- Meet with housing social authorities - Collecting info - Organize event through committee	- Time - Money	- DHS - Social Services - Elected committee	- 6-8 months	- When info book about services is published
		- Advocate for more Somali translators in each agency - Ensure Somali fluency	- Find translators - Meet with agencies	- Time - Mobilizing people - Paying translators - Change translators	- Agencies - Elected committee - Somali organization	- 2-3 months	- When official, skilled translators are available
		- Request Green Card office in Lewiston (1 day/week)	- Make request to City and government authorities - Schedule a meeting	- Time - Space	- Elected committee - City Hall - Somali org.	- 2-3 months	- When there is an office in Lewiston
		- Advocate for citizenship test to be offered in Somali	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Translated test available in Maine

**Figure 7 (continued)**  
**Action Plan**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Activity</b>	<b>First Step</b>	<b>Labor, Material, Money</b>	<b>Who Will Act and/or Follow up</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
6	Narrow the Cultural Gap Between Somalis and Wider Lewiston Community	- Organize activities to bring the two cultures together - Make more friends	- Organize gatherings - Invite Lewiston community to social occasions	- Space and time - Money - Invite media	- Cultural people – Mr. Jawab	- 2-3 months (ongoing)	- More cultural events take place
		- Promote Somali culture through cable TV, radio (music, talk shows), and newspaper interviews with Somalis and Somali experts	- Meet with media and make arrangements about meeting on media - Train those who approach media - Prepare an agenda	- Time - Written agreement - Informed people	- Elected committee - City Hall - Somali organization - Cultural people – Mr. Jawab - Media	- 2 months	- Somali broadcasting - More Somali in media
		- Educate people about Somali culture and religion in school system	- Involve parents - Support civil rights teams to advocate Somali culture - Educational classes on Som. culture and religion - Talk to school admin about this issue - Meet parents and school faculty	- Time - Volunteers	- Parents - Elders - Youth - Somali organization - School administration	- Within a month (ongoing)	- When parents are more involved in school - Schools more accommodating towards Som. culture and needs - Less conflict in school
		- Parents should educate their children about the strengths of Somali culture	- Teach kids at home about Somali culture and language - Education	- Time - Effort - Role model - Follow up	- Parents - Elders	- Today (ongoing)	- Behaving kids - Speaking and aware about Somali culture
	- Establish museum/cultural center	- Location (space) - Mobilize people - Approach City Hall and other groups	- Space - Money	- Cultural people, Mr. Jawab - Elected committee - Youth - Somali organization	- Start in 2 months	- When the cultural center is complete	

**Figure 7 (continued)  
Action Plan**

	<b>Problem</b>	<b>Suggested Activity</b>	<b>First Step</b>	<b>Labor, Material, Money</b>	<b>Who Will Act and/or Follow up</b>	<b>When</b>	<b>Indicators</b>
7	Lack of Jobs	- Provide training centers/resources to build skills	- Locate partner to help train - Locate people to be trained	- People to train - Money - Space - Trainers	- Elected committee - Training professionals - Other organizations	- After 2 months	- People are informed and being trained - Get jobs
		- Encourage Somali child care providers in training/licensing	- Find space - Licensing - Approach Social Services	- Money - Space - Training	- Parents - Somali organizations - DHS	- After 2-4 months	- When Somali child care is available
		- Promote understanding of Somali requirements in workplace (dress, prayer, etc.)	- Informing people about safety at work - Through meetings and events - Gathering info.	- Space - Time	- Religious leaders - Elected committee - Women's organizations	- Start 2 months (Ongoing)	- More Somali employment
		- Explore possibilities for adapting to requirements of workplace	- Media to promote Somali culture	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above	Same as above
8	Inadequate Transport	- Create formal network of carpooling	- Meet with Somali community - Schedule official meetings - look for donations	- Space - Time	- Elected committee - Somali organization.	- 2-6 months	- When there is organized transport
		- Link bus routes btwn residential areas and market/business centers	- Meet with transport authorities - Make arrangements	- Time	- Same as above	- 3-8 months	- More bus routes - Transport to market
		- Involve Somalis in Dept. of Transportation	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above	- Same as above
		- Discuss with City need for free bus for high school students	- Arrangement with school admin. and City Hall	- Time scheduling	- Parents - PTA - Somali organizations	- 2-6 months	- Free bus transport for high school children

## V. Conclusions and Recommendations

What does all of this data gathering, analysis, ranking, and planning mean for Lewiston's Somali Hillview community? Will it move them forward in resolving and maintaining internal harmony? Will it result in strengthening their leadership and community institutions? Will Somalis be able to increase their economic well-being and social development as a result? And perhaps most important, will the new generation of young Somalis be able to advance in their educational achievement and skill acquisition because of increased educational and employment opportunities?

The response is a tentative yes. All agree that three "process goals" were achieved.

**Good Local Support.** The Somali community is positive about and enthusiastic for the effort. Abundant information emerged from the discussions, especially conversations about institutional strengths within the Somali community as well as institutional relationships that might be crafted through liaisons with groups external to the community. Questions of whether there were now institutions available to implement a local action plan were discussed. While nothing was decided, there is no question that levels of interest in the process of setting one's own priorities caught the attention of many in the community.

**Meaningful and Probing Discussions.** Even though people in the Hillview community see and speak to each other many times a week, the conversations are not necessarily focused on how to solve needs of the community. At the conclusion of the planning process, several people described how helpful the charts and diagrams had been to get people thinking and talking about solving their own problems. On Saturday evening, SCS arranged for a resident who is a gifted poet to recite some of his original poetry, mostly about peace, justice, and equity. The Somali women had cooked a meal for 50 people and the entire group ate together. The food and poetry were another opportunity for everyone to think deeply about why we had come together and what could be accomplished as a result. While it is much too early to say that the discussions were "successful," it is possible to say that all took the meetings seriously and thoughtfully.

**Local Ownership.** Another goal of the participatory method is for the residents to take over the action plan and make it their own. While we are only beginning the process, it is clear that many of the Hillview residents already see the needs, the institutional discussions, the action plan, and the responsibility for implementation as something they are ready to take over. The key to sustaining action plans is local ownership. The Hillview Somalis are off to a splendid start.

Beyond the process accomplishments at least five "products" were created.

**The assessment achieved consensus.** While fragile and tentative on a number of occasions (due to lack of information about the process, busy work schedules, and childcare responsibilities), the concluding sessions were fulfilling. The participatory tools drew out

many views and attitudes that became central to the final list of priority needs. Levels of commitment at this initial stage are substantial because of the participatory nature of the discussions. The mechanics of implementation are now being worked out. Not only is there accord among all residents, Clark has received requests from two additional Lewiston Somali groups to conduct similar needs assessments for their groups.

The **Community Action Plan** is profound. While several “needs” of a short-term nature were discussed during the initial meetings – *e.g.* transportation, employment, English language training – the two issues ranked as the highest priority needs were strengthening leadership and building community institutions. Discussion during the ranking noted that the core problem of the recently settled Somalis was one of building cohesiveness and cooperation amongst themselves. With good leadership and smoothly functioning institutions, the Somalis noted, they would be able to create their own solutions for transportation, employment, and many other needs. The Action Plan is included as Figure 7.

The **Action Committee** has strong backing from the community at the present time. The new and highly energized group represents most elements of the Hillview community and is already meeting to work out its plan of action. The community has tentatively nominated eight people who are well respected and who understand and are committed to the process of action plan implementation. These nominations have been approved by the entire Hillview community.

**Somali Community Services, Inc.**, a small non-governmental organization recently founded and run entirely by Somalis to focus on Somali needs in Lewiston, is prepared to assist in facilitating the creation of partnerships between Hillview and external agencies (both Somali and non-Somali). If the model of community-generated plans and a locally-based facilitating group can make a dent on the needs of leadership and community institution building, there may be lessons learned that will benefit other Somalis in the Lewiston-Auburn area and perhaps in other parts of the US and Canada as well.

**Partnerships** are the final ingredient that will make the process work. At an initial stakeholders meeting held in early September, approximately 65 people came to hear about the tools of analysis to be used in the needs assessment and how their institution might help out. The December Stakeholders’ meeting, held on a Saturday, drew approximately 45 participants. It should be noted that a partnership is not simply an agency funding one or more “projects” of the Hillview Somalis. Rather, the partnership is defined as a joint enterprise in which Somali institutions join with external groups to define and implement actions that are of benefit to all partners. While there may be some money invested by all member partners, the purpose of the partnership goes beyond money. The details of individual partnerships will vary, depending on circumstances, yet at the core of the agreement is an understanding that all parties have things to contribute and benefits to receive.

Achieving consensus in December 2003 does not mean that harmony and consensus will last



for the next few years. There will be challenges to conclusions and recommendations. People will differ on precisely how to implement particular action. Skilled leaders will move away or take new jobs. Partnerships will rise and fall, depending on many circumstances. Yet the CAP belongs to the entire community, not just to the leaders of the Action Committee. Regular meetings, periodic monitoring, continuous updates on the action plan, and frequent consultations with the City, NGOs, and other partner agencies will form the ingredients that assure sustained energy and ownership.

The Lewiston needs assessment worked, not because it is a miracle methodology. Rather, it was effective for three reasons:

The data gathering was an **inclusive and public process**. Young and old, male and female, multiple clan groups, and the Clark team came ready to listen to one another in meaningful and serious ways. The visual nature of the documents helped transcend language and cultural barriers. The participatory tools helped all members of the group express their ideas and attitudes.

**The ranking worked effectively**. It provided a public arena in which all members of the community had opportunity to express views, listen to others, and decide for themselves. There was no voting, no caucusing, and no politicizing. Rather it was a genuine sharing of views and a process of give and take to achieve consensus.

**The Community Action Plan (CAP) will guide the Somali community** as it embarks on **implementing solutions** as well as **attracting partners**. The Hillview residents have organized their information and mobilized their resources. These are reflected in the CAP. These steps greatly increase the possibility of development partners joining with the community and substantially assure that both parties to the partnership will achieve their goals.

These ingredients — inclusiveness, public group process, transparent ranking, listening to others, visual data gathering techniques, building consensus rather than voting, creating a Community Action Plan, organizing information, mobilizing resources, and building partnerships — are the foundation upon which sustainable actions will be built. They are the qualities that will enable the Hillview Somali community to continue listening to each other as well as to become the managers of their own community. The next move, implementing the Action Plan, belongs to the Somalis. If they can solve their leadership needs, it is because they have learned how to do it during the needs assessment. If they create effective community institutions, it will be based on their efforts implementing the Action Plan. Community-based planning builds upon the strengths of the community, not on the funds of outside helpers. For the many stakeholders who have been working with the Lewiston Somalis and for the City of Lewiston that has done a good job of satisfying initial needs, the key for the next few years is to listen to the new leadership and collaborate with the new institutions. The resulting partnerships hold the answer to the long term and sustainable well-being for Lewiston's newest citizens.

## Annex I

# PAPPA Data Collection Workbook: Hillview, Lewiston, Maine

Total Population of Households Interviewed: **145**  
 Households Interviewed: **25**

<b>Profile of Respondent</b>			(page 1)			
<b>Gender</b>			<b>Marital Status</b>			
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>	
Male	5	20%	Married	19	76%	
Female	20	80%	Single	2	8%	
			Widow/er	4	16%	
			Divorced	0	0%	
<b>Age Group</b>			<b>Head of Household</b>			
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>	
0-19	0	0%	Yes	24	96%	
20-39	17	68%	No	1	4%	
40-59	7	28%				
60+	1	4%				
<b>Education Level / head hh</b>			<b>Months in Community / head hh</b>			
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>	
NIL	4	16%	0-5	5	20%	
Primary	5	20%	6-10	2	8%	
Secondary	9	36%	11-20	7	28%	
Post-Secondary	7	28%	21+	11	44%	
<b>Adult Population</b>			<b>Under 18 in School</b>			
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Average</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Percent</i>
Male	17	0.68	Male	46	1.84	77%
Female	28	1.12	Female	34	1.36	85%
			Total			80%
<b>Under 18 Population</b>			<b>Household Size</b>			
	<i>Total</i>	<i>Average</i>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Average</i>	
Male	60	2.40	Population	145	5.80	
Female	40	1.60				

The survey of half the Somali households provides helpful insights into the community. Households are largely female headed with 2/3 of the heads under 40. By Somali standards in Somalia, these are well education people with more than a third of the heads of household completing secondary school and an additional third taking some form of post-secondary training. Of those under the age of 18, 80% are in school — another high score for most Somali communities. Nearly half have lived in Lewiston for more than 21 months. The survey explains that Hillview Somalis are young, well educated, stable, and pursuing more schooling.

## Property of Household

(page 2)

### Own Automobile

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Yes</b>	19	<b>76%</b>
<b>No</b>	6	<b>24%</b>

### Rent Cable TV

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Yes</b>	22	<b>88%</b>
<b>No</b>	3	<b>12%</b>

### Own Television

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Yes</b>	25	<b>100%</b>
<b>No</b>	0	<b>0%</b>

### Own a Computer

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Yes</b>	13	<b>52%</b>
<b>No</b>	12	<b>48%</b>

### Own DVD Player

	<i>Total</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Yes</b>	8	<b>32%</b>
<b>No</b>	17	<b>68%</b>

## Household Livelihood / month

### Major Source Livelihood

*Total*

<b>Government Payments</b>	12
<b>Wage</b>	13
<b>Business</b>	0
<b>Remittances</b>	0

### Government Payments/month

*Average:* **\$546**

### Wages of All Household Members/month

*Average:* **\$872**

### Income Earning/month

*Total*    *Average*

<b>Government</b>	\$13,639	<b>\$546</b>
<b>Wages</b>	\$21,794	<b>\$872</b>
<b>Business</b>	\$ 1,000	<b>\$40</b>
<b>Remittances</b>	\$ 8	<b>\$0</b>

### Trading and Business Earning/month

*Average:* **\$40**

### Income from Remittances/month

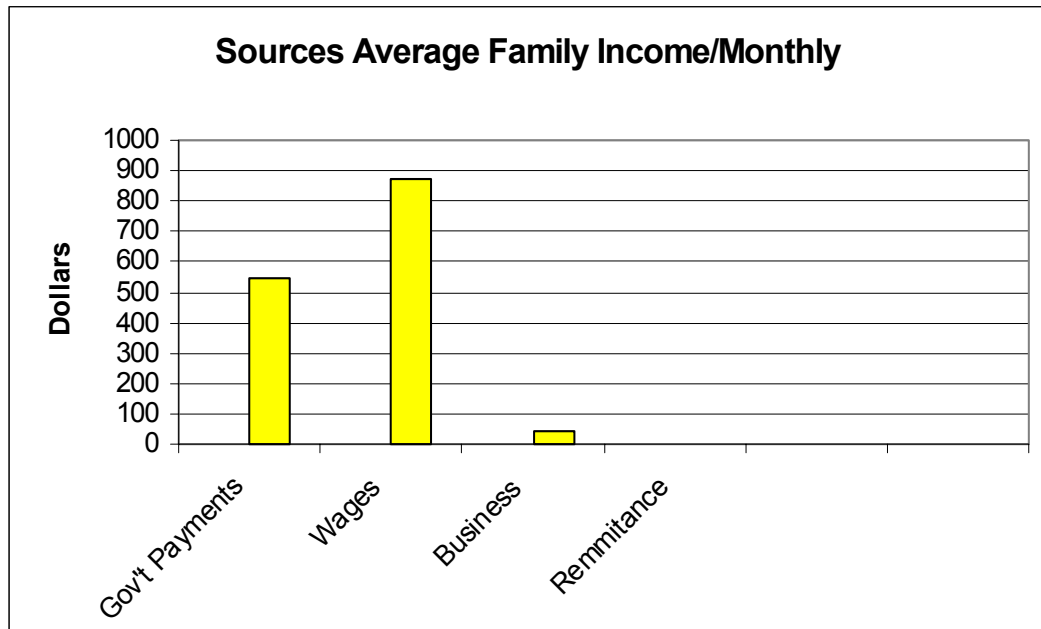
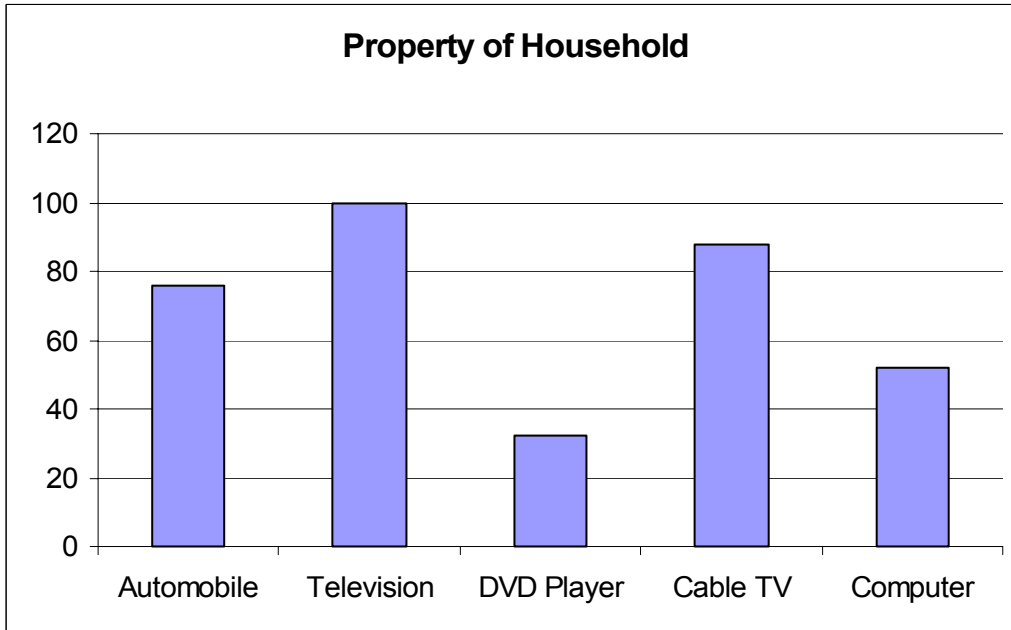
*Average:* **\$0**

### Total Income/month

*Average:* **\$1,458**

Three-quarters of the households interviewed own cars, all have TV, about half own computers, 90% have cable TV, though very few have DVD players. Households are not primarily dependent on government payments for their livelihoods (average of \$912 from wages and business as compared with average of \$546 from government). Earned income is one and one half times greater than government payments, on average.

These data suggest that the Hillview community has passed beyond a state of refugee dependence and is now entering into a new stage of self-sufficiency. High enrollments in education support this finding. While not yet fully self-sufficient, they are moving steadily in that direction. The chart (Sources Average Family Income/Monthly) presents these findings in visual format.

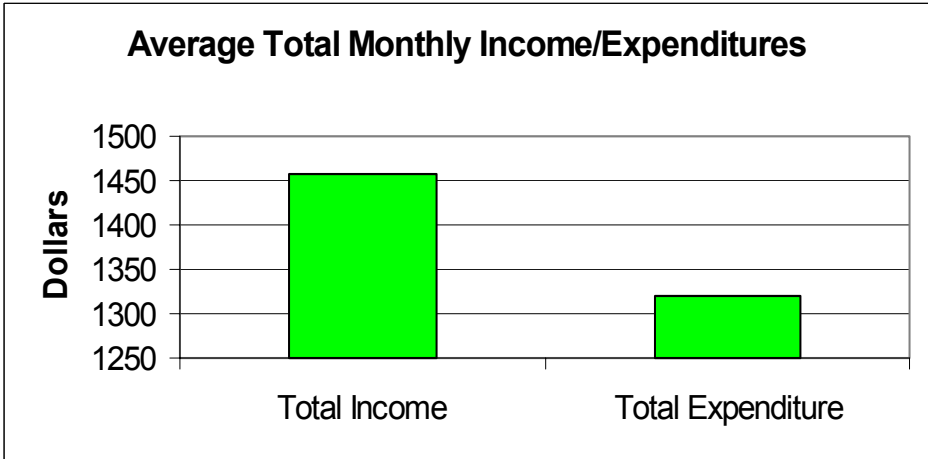
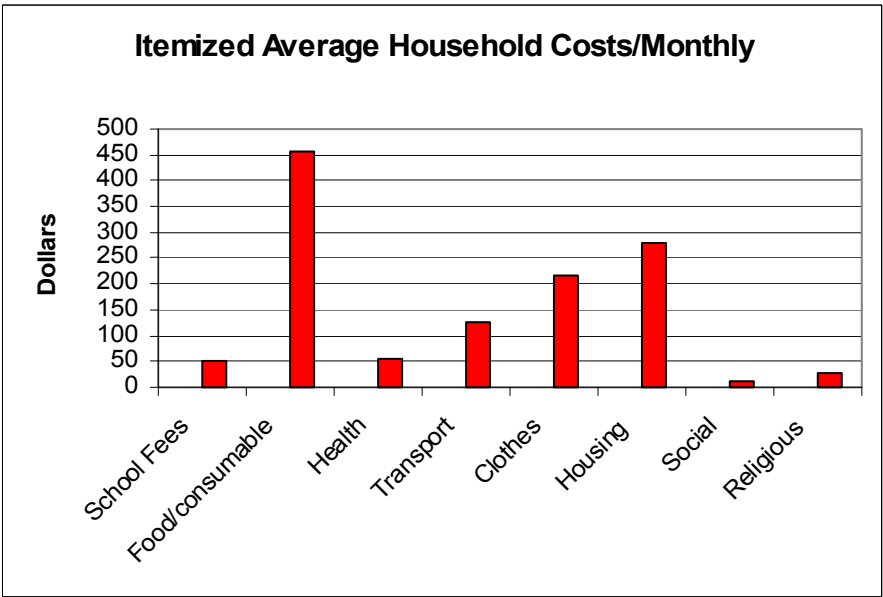
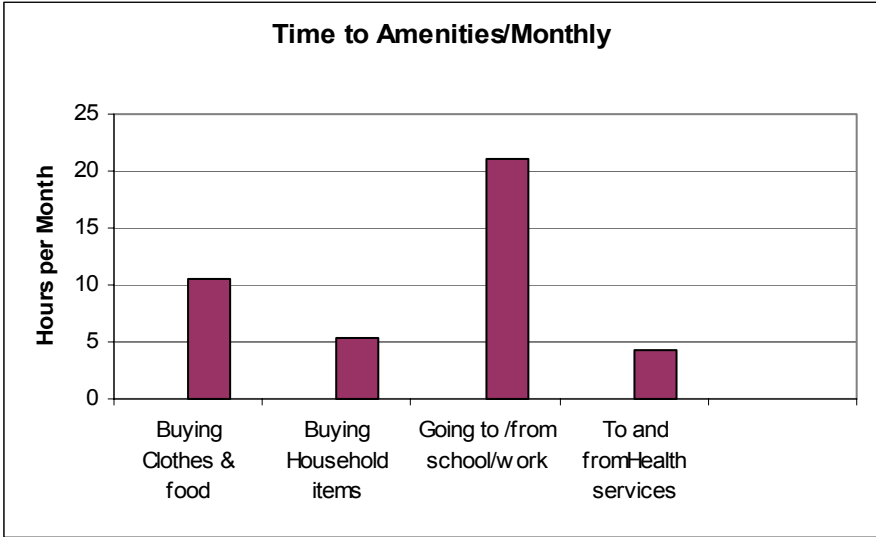


<b>Household Expenditures / month</b>						(page 3)
<b>Business Costs / mo</b>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Average</i>	<b>Family Costs / month</b>		
					<i>Total</i>	<i>Average</i>
<b>Hired Labor</b>		\$500	<b>\$20</b>	<b>School Fees</b>	\$1,330	<b>\$53</b>
<b>Rent</b>		\$350	<b>\$14</b>	<b>Food &amp; Consumables</b>	\$11,420	<b>\$457</b>
<b>Raw Materials</b>		\$0	<b>\$0</b>	<b>Health</b>	\$1,346	<b>\$54</b>
<b>Equipment and Supplies</b>		\$100	<b>\$4</b>	<b>Transportation &amp; Fuel</b>	\$3,122	<b>\$125</b>
<b>Transport</b>		\$300	<b>\$12</b>	<b>Clothing</b>	\$5,412	<b>\$216</b>
<b>Taxes</b>		\$1,200	<b>\$48</b>	<b>Housing</b>	\$6,946	<b>\$278</b>
				<b>Social Events</b>	\$310	<b>\$12</b>
<b>Total Business Costs</b>		\$2,450	<b>\$98</b>	<b>Religious Contributions</b>	\$695	<b>\$28</b>
				<b>Total Family Cost</b>	\$30,581	<b>\$1,223</b>
<b>Time for Activites/month</b>						
<b>Travel Time / month</b>		<i>Total</i>	<i>Average</i>	<b>Common Diseases</b>		
					<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Rank</i>
<b>Buying Clothes and Food</b>		266	<b>10.6</b>	<b>Malaria</b>	0	<b>7</b>
<b>Buying Household Items</b>		86	<b>5.4</b>	<b>Coughs and Colds</b>	16	<b>1</b>
<b>Going To/From School</b>		484	<b>21.0</b>	<b>Pneumonia</b>	1	<b>3</b>
<b>To/From Health Services</b>		100	<b>4.3</b>	<b>Problems in Pregnancy</b>	1	<b>3</b>
				<b>HIV/AIDS</b>	0	<b>7</b>
				<b>Tuberculosis</b>	0	<b>7</b>
				<b>Malnutrition</b>	0	<b>7</b>
				<b>Skin Diseases</b>	1	<b>3</b>
				<b>Diarrhea</b>	1	<b>3</b>
				<b>Other</b>	7	<b>2</b>
<b>Work Days Missed due to Sickness</b>						
<i>Average:</i>						<b>3</b>

The Hillview families interviewed are not deeply involved in business or entrepreneurial activities at the present time. These qualities will come as the community attains additional skills and establishes more network relationships with other Somali communities and existing Lewiston groups.

The investment of time going to and from work/school is high (one family noted 55 hours per month and two additional noted 44 hours per month) and was ranked as the eighth highest priority need. Food and housing are the two highest household costs — that is normal.

Finally, note that average monthly income exceeds average total expenditures by more than \$150 per month. While these are estimates by each household head, it is encouraging that the community is practicing financial restraint.



# Measures of Well-Being

(page 4)

## How does your access to transport compare with others in Hillview?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Above Average</b>	8	<b>32%</b>
<b>About Average</b>	12	<b>48%</b>
<b>Below Average</b>	5	<b>20%</b>

## How does your access to health services compare with others in Hillview?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Above Average</b>	5	<b>20%</b>
<b>About Average</b>	18	<b>72%</b>
<b>Below Average</b>	2	<b>8%</b>

## How does your access to food compare with others in Hillview?

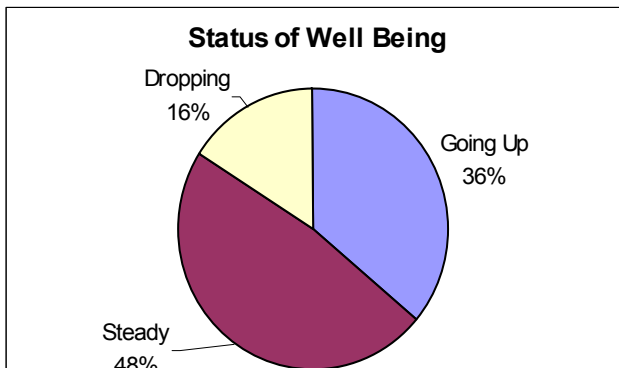
	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Above Average</b>	4	<b>16%</b>
<b>About Average</b>	16	<b>64%</b>
<b>Below Average</b>	5	<b>20%</b>

## How does your housing compare with others in Hillview?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Above Average</b>	2	<b>8%</b>
<b>About Average</b>	20	<b>80%</b>
<b>Below Average</b>	3	<b>12%</b>

## What is the status of your household's well-being?

	<i>Frequency</i>	<i>Percent</i>
<b>Going Up</b>	9	<b>36%</b>
<b>Steady</b>	12	<b>48%</b>
<b>Dropping</b>	4	<b>16%</b>



Measures of well being show a generally positive view of the Hillview situation. The number of residents seeing themselves “below average” in transport, health, food, and housing is generally small. For overall well-being, only 16 percent felt their situation was in a state of decline. While these figures represent only impressions, they convey a feeling or attitude among the community that they are getting on top of their situation. It would be both helpful and interesting to ask a similar set of questions a year after the action plan takes effect.

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