

## **TEAM GUILFORD**

**Data from 21 Community Conversations, 1 on-line survey, and two paper surveys**

**Total Number of respondents: approximately 300**

**November 2007 – February 2008**

### **WEAKNESSES – ORGANIZED**

#### **Environment for kids**

- Lack of youth space/activities
  - Bored suburban teen angst
  - Young population needs activities, something to do after the school day
  - Under-aged substance abuse
  - Limited activities for middle school aged children
  - Engaging teens in activities/ diversity
  - Either teens do nothing or make poor choices/ parents need to provide activities – no alternative in Guilford
  - A community center for sports – not seniors, like b-ford has had for 30+ years
  - No facility for students outside of school day-Rec Center perceived as Senior Center
  - No place for teens
  - Need a place to kids to congregate, i.e. teen center The old storage building/Former food bank is a possible location
  - Not enough places for kids to hang out
  - Guilford is wonderful when you're young, but older teenagers have nothing to do but hang out downtown
  - Kids who are not in supervised activities/perhaps need a coffee house
  - Lack of Sizzle
  - Nothing to do for kids – x4
  - Lack of pool
  - BORING (nothing for teens to do)
  - No night/weekend activities/recreation for teens – x4
  - No place in Guilford for teens to "hang out" and be supervised by an adult... workout center, coffee house
  - We lack for young adult opportunities beyond high school.... Exs: Movies (for public) in the auditorium, programs in the GFL if extend the hours
  - Community Center = Senior Center
  - Lack of places for kids to go
  - Not enough for kids to do except sports
  - No bowling alley or movie theatre for kids to hang out
  - Not enough after school activities
  - No community center for children/teens
  - Lack of things for young people to do – esp. in North Gfd
  - R&R opportunities and services for teens are less than for younger children and adults/seniors
  - Kids don't have enough to do
  - Lack of community activities for teens
  - No fun place to hang out

- More sports fields for babe ruth baseball – nearby towns as examples
- Lack of opportunity for “increasing” recreational potential
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- Problems with parent involvement
  - Pressure to “Ivy League”
  - Lack of parental involvement with kid (i.e., PTO)
  - Overprotected kids
  - Parents really don’t know what’s really going on with their kids
  - Parents not home
  - Permissiveness and lack of supervision of children
  - Wealthy & overindulged kids
  - Poor adult role modeling
  - Weak parenting skills (teachers should teach)
  - “Curling” parenting (sweeping the way for their kids)
  - Technology is a negative-parents telecommute and kids stay in an play on the computer
  - Changes in the family unit- GHS students go to a job, club or to practice after school
  - Kids have too many extra curricular activities – over booked
  - Some kids obtain material things too easily
  - Lack of learning to be independent adults
- Kids left behind
  - There are problems for kids who are not athletes. It’s an attitude problem among parents & youth that gets worse on Adams and the High School
  - Negative attitudes among kids who are “ahead of the curve” in intelligence, grades, etc.
  - Superior school system, but there is a large group at GHS that falls through the cracks
  - Lack of educational support for students who are not either in the high achieving category or learning disabled/disciplinary categories
- Harassment/peer pressure
  - Sexual harassment of girls by boys
  - Peer Pressure in Schools to do bad things
  - High school kids come into Adams
  - Peer pressure role playing is great
  - Bullying in sports and schools
- Lack of youth involvement in the town/connections with kids
  - No voice from teens
  - Don’t reach out to our younger people
  - Stratification exists – more intergenerational activities need to happen
  - Lack of inter-generational involvement in kids life
- Community Attitudes
  - No embracing of alternate tracks (trade school, employment etc vs straight to college)
  - Huge emphasis to build a resume/impressive transcript at very young age
  - Apathy toward how we’re raising our kids; drugs, sex, theft, alcohol use, etc.

- Mental health pressures – huge stress to “be” someone; stress for college acceptances; leads to compulsive coping behaviors and more
- Not teaching them to deal well with failure
- Blaming/finger pointing between parents and schools vs. “we’re all adults in these kid’s lives”
- Community expectation that the school will deal with these issues
- Kids not exposed enough – insulated
- It’s hard to identify what interests kids
- Children need too much stimulation.
- GHS data shows student need for closer connections... mentor or advisor/advisee to see each day for a period
- Lack of pre-school services
- Summer school in town is only for enrichment, not for academic improvement
- Problems for kids with disabilities
  - No after-hours activities available, leaving most disabled kids to watch tv
  - What can Guilford do to help them blend into “normal” community? Pair with senior citizen?

### **Youth and Drugs**

- Drug and alcohol issues not being addressed
- Drug problems
- Drugs and Alcohol abuse in schools
- Drug and alcohol use by high school students and easy access to both
- Drugs
- Crack cocaine
- Drunk Driving
- Drug/alcohol problems with youth
- Drugs and Alcohol in Adams. There have been kids drunk in school.
- Pot is too available
- drinking and drugs on the rise
- Substance abuse middle school and high school and lack of consolidated effort to prevent
- Lots of drugs and alcohol in town
- Ready availability of cash and cars that enable students to access illegal substances outside of the community
- Nothing to do- leads to pot
- Boredom
- MAIN ISSUE- Nothing to do causes people to do drugs.
- Parent’s trend of hosting parties
- Harassment on the Green by a HS student who was obviously drunk or high. The police saw her but didn’t arrest her.
- Losing our teenagers to fast driving and drugs
- Unclear where kids and/or families go for support

### **Schools**

- School facilities
  - New school buildings
  - Poor school facilities

- Poor School facilities
- School conditions
- School facilities/structures in need of serious repair & change
- Need better school facilities/ physical plants
- Condition of the school buildings
- Schools need serious care - biggest cost town will carry, yet avoided year to year
- Adams and high school deplorable facilities
- To keep taxes down, facilities such as Adams and the High School are not kept up
- School Buildings Falling Apart- High School, Mold in Adams, Windows falling apart
- School buildings need attention
- Adams facility is an embarrassment
- Guilford buildings don't compare to physical plants in other towns, i.e. New Haven. This affects our students' sense of pride.
- Physical disrepair of the schools – particularly the high school
- Negative impact of sub-optimal physical plant on academic performance
- Need for long-term plan to create a community facility
- Town takes a band-aid approach to repairs
- Schools are lacking/ in bad physical shape
- High School facility is sub-optimal
- High School facility should be a focal point of the community
- Need for more informative communication to community in re: need for improved HS facility
- Low funding of school system
- No planning for the future with regard to school facilities
- Lack of focus on educational facilities, too much money unnecessarily spent on the POLICE FORCE.
- Youth voice at schools
  - Student voice in GHS
  - STUDENT VOICE AT GHS!
- Curriculum/programs
  - Limited # of elective classes due to lack of classroom space
  - No alternative school program
  - No transition class (kindergarten to first grade)
  - Half-day kindergarten
  - Poor support for ELL (English Language Learners) in our schools
  - The school should teach comparative religion. They can't teach one religion, but comparative religion is ok. Political correctness is too strong.
  - Too much of our time is spent on homework. More of the teaching should be in the classroom.
  - At GHS lack of lunch time for some students, locker spaces
  - Not enough breaks in school day; Should change schedule for longer classes on fewer days, longer breaks, lunch period for everyone
- No Late Buses
  - No late bus service for middle or high school students

- No late buses
- No late buses
- No after-school busses
- Lack of updated technology in schools
  - out-of-date websites
  - teachers not trained, no access from home
- Concern over quality of education in schools
- High suspension rate
- Unfairness in the schools around of stereotyping and leveling
- Lack of school supplies
- No snack bar at Adams
- Teachers don't state their opinions
- Loss of quality faculty and applicants to neighboring schools
- Misconceptions about school budget and expenditures
- Loss of % of students to private institutions
- Some of the schools have no recycling
- Parent complacency or denial

### **Town Development**

- Pool/town facilities
  - Lack of swimming facility for schools/ public (could be regional)
  - No pool
  - No town pool
  - No Pool
  - Pool controversy – look at other towns such as Simsbury
  - No Swimming Pool
  - Lack of a swimming pool in the school system/community
  - Need less-expensive outdoor recreation opportunities
  - A real seashore beach
  - Poor beach and beach facility
  - Conflict between what is desired in resources, facilities, etc. and figuring out how to fund it while maintaining infra-structure
- Congestion
  - Dependence on cars (no sidewalks around the schools)
  - Rte 1 traffic flow is poor
  - Congested traffic on Rt. 1 during the weekends
  - Over development (housing) leading to this congestion
  - Need immediate action re overdevelopment leading to congestion
- Green Issues
  - Environmental issues regarding septic systems and lack of sewers
  - Not proactive with regard to "green things – recycling, alternative energies
  - Recycling program needs improvement
- Planning and Zoning
  - Appropriate growth, while maintaining the beauty
  - Tend to be reactive in vision rather than being proactive across the board
  - No master plan with regard to development

- Need Grand vision for municipalities
- Lack of zoning
- Route 1 not consistent with the rest of Guilford (not enough planning)
- Tighter restrictions on Zoning Regulations
- Rentals by the day/week
- "small business" out of a house has cars coming and going all hours
- Small houses are taken down to be replaced by very large houses
- Danger of encroaching on land – McMansions
- The challenge of keeping growth – most important appropriate growth – controlled in such a way that the beautiful, friendly and historic feel is maintained
- Business development issues
  - Too many Dunkin Donuts and gas stations
  - Need family restaurants, not more "coffee houses"
  - Not enough family restaurants
  - Need to keep small businesses intact as opposed to chain stores
  - Tax base relies too heavily on retail-needs light white-collar industry
  - Lack a strong revenue base
  - Lack of tax base
  - Tax base not strong enough
  - Taxes too high
  - Lack of infrastructure: street paving, garbage collection
  - Don't need a mall on the Rock Pile
  - There's only one super grocery store
  - Night life in Madison/Branford, but not in Guilford, or public recreation
  - Not enough affordable stores
  - Unwillingness to let industrial or shopping centers in to help alleviate the bite of property taxes
  - The lack of willingness to be open to industrial or shopping centers to help alleviate the bite of property taxes for homeowners.
- Graffiti
- Speeding vehicles are increasing
- Dog park?
- Farms are disappearing
- Rate of development
- Lack of Sidewalks
- Kids leave and parents are alone & isolated in their large houses
- Lack of bike trails, etc.... ways to enjoy the environment
- Parking issues with shopping areas
- Buildings downtown need to meet higher standards (need to be maintained better)
- No dog parks - People use public areas for dogs (including school grounds)
- Too many signs of the Green
- Lack of directional arrows on traffic lights
- Don't need a walkway down to the docks
- The move of the arts fair (Handcrafts) off the green
- Losing a sense of neighborhoods (for children to play)

## **Breakdowns in services**

- Services for disabled
  - Difficulties of: access of / service for handicapped
  - Handicapped ramps in stores. They are like a "joke" like ski-lifts.
  - Check doors, bathrooms are they accessible to something like a scooter?
  - "The invisible disabled"
    - Only 2 businesses in the community employ the disabled; none employed by town
    - "It takes a village" concept needs to be broadcast and modeled – not just left to any one group or agency such as SARAH
  - Need for wrap-around resources to continue extended family support
- Mental health services
  - Diminishing community resources to address mental health and abuse issues
  - Outreach for mental health issues needs improvement/ community needs more education about these issues
  - Not enough mental health services
- Lack of services and/or coordination
  - Lack of coordination among social services
  - All the different youth leagues are at odds with one another at various times (for space, time, resources, and participants)
  - Some disconnect in community – lack of municipal agencies working together for the common good
  - Need a center for services, lack of awareness re: what's available, territorialism, information-sharing and communication between organizations needs improvement
  - Need for affordable resources and more availability of professional services
  - Need for more social services and case management
  - Lack of social services (on web pages)
  - Visible and audible competition among adults/adult coaches is too much
  - No where to turn in crisis. Have to reach beyond community for resources.
- Lack of community support for services
  - Lack of financial support for our support agencies
  - Funding environment is not abundant-need to fill in gaps
- Accessibility
  - Access to services is difficult
  - Agencies need the trust of the community
  - Problems and resources are often hidden – Community not reaching out to available resources because of stigma attached
  - Getting people effectively connected to resources when needed
  - Services are there, but connection to people is broken
  - Few clients referred from community to receive social services. Trust issue?  
Elephant in living room / hiding problems
- Nothing for families facing major issues with kids
  - No regular workshops or support groups

- No coordinating hub to call
- No crisis management / safe home setup
- Medical services – it's a problem getting hooked up with medical services if you're new in town... not all practices accept new patients (i.e. for a physical)
- Some physicians do not accept Medicare patients (elitist)
- Not being able to provide services to families who come under sudden financial crisis
- Relationship between youth and police
- Recreational activities for youth and families
- No schools for adults

### **Citizen behavior**

- Uncivil behavior
  - Some adults share a mean-spiritedness
  - Groups attacking the school system
  - Groups attacking our Selectman/officials
  - Horns blaring, tailgating
  - Drivers not cautious on back roads. "Teen in my neighborhood really speeds."
  - Loss of civility - "beeping around the Green"; not saying hello and meeting your eye when passing on street; rudeness
  - Cell Phones while driving
  - Rude drivers
  - People could be friendlier
  - People don't smile enough
  - People are rude and it stops conversations
  - Indifference / lack of civility / entitlement – behavior getting in the way
  - Sticks out of asses (I believe this means arrogant behavior, pompous)
  - Lack of civility
  - Negativity w/o being constructive (example, newspaper articles complaining about the school system, w/o positive change suggestions)
  - trend to be less friendly in general
- Not invested in community
  - Ambivalence/apathy to getting involved in the big issues
  - Second Home Residents - Some feel like outsiders, some just don't have time to get involved in community, is there a place for them?
  - Transient seasonal population who don't buy into or support the community
  - Apathy with regard to the schools
  - More people buying "summer" houses and not "invested" in the town
  - Too many New Yorkers
  - Transient population
  - Weekenders moving in (who have no vested interest in Guilford)
  - Self-serving population
  - Negativity from people not wanting to fund things such as education, especially older adults without children in school.
  - People self-centered rather than around community
  - Selfish elders

- Old folks voting things down/not wanting to spend money on schools, library, etc.
- Small group of people who "do all the work"
- The traffic and inconsideration of drivers is getting worse
- Many active Guilford residents not directly involved in the town or "paying back"
- Pace of life
  - Everyone flying from one place to another; in a hurry to get in and out of stores/parking/etc.
  - Irony that people may come to Guilford (even as a second home) because of small town appeal but then drive aggressively, talk on cell phone in street loudly, are impatient in stores, etc.
- Competition between haves/have nots
  - Particularly apparent in schools (clothes, electronics, vacations, etc.)
  - The ones who have money are all for hanging onto it
- Entire neighborhoods where people don't know or speak to their neighbors
- Loss of interconnectedness, quality of life, intimacy, interaction, becoming fractured, losing small town sense
- More recognition for volunteer services.
- Disengagement – loss of emotional connection to neighbors, each other due to increase of cell phones, emails, eating on the run
- Shifting values - Emphasis on material acquisitions vs. time with family and community
- Yankee conservatism
- Kids not street wise
- Kids' work ethic could be improved
- Some kids not accepting of those who have less
- People speed- high school kids, others
- People can dig in their heels about issues
- how people use police rather than their relationships, i.e. using police to do other work
- Lack of willingness to enhance what we do have

### **Diversity**

- Lack of racial and ethnic diversity
- Lack of ethnic and economic diversity
- Diversity – ethnic/economic is needed
- Cultural diversity
- Lack of diversity
- Lack of diversity
- Lack racial / cultural diversity which contributes to our denial
- Lack of religious/racial diversity, difficulties with connecting, if one isn't connected via religion or children
- Lack of Diversity
- Unrealistic- too homogeneous
- Not enough diversity
- Lack of diversity/there are voices that are not heard
- Lack of diverse social activities, especially for certain populations, (high school & college-age young adults, single, divorced, poor, black, gay, seniors, etc....)

- Not enough diversity
- Not ethnically diverse
- Limitations in cultural and ethnic diversity
- Lack of racial diversity
- Lowest % of non-English speaking students
- Other towns/schools more diverse
- Need a way to expose our students to diverse cultures
- Economic diversity vs. ethnic diversity
- Much more diverse socio-economically than people think
- Need to honor diversity and be more welcoming
- Guilford still has a range of citizens from all socio-economic levels, but we don't always see this
- Those that represent diversity need to connect more with the community
- No community groups based upon culture/ethnicity unity
- Difficult for people of diverse economic backgrounds to live together

### **Problems with governance/citizen engagement**

- Decisions made by small group
  - Some departments in town have too much control over what happens, such as planning and zoning.
  - The affluent have more say than the less wealthy
  - Only the affluent are setting the policies for others
  - Powerful and vocal core group – they tend to vote no on many things
  - Lack of whole community engagement as evidenced by voting turn-out
  - Low voting
  - Not enough people come out to vote
  - Not enough people out to vote
  - Community is not represented by the Board of Selectmen
  - Some departments in town have too much control over what happens, e.g., planning and zoning
- Sometimes too much dialogue on issues and nothing gets done
- Petty political actions, disputes
- Very political environment
- Have we outgrown our system of government?
- Having Town Meetings in a place too small to fit everyone
- Antiquated form of Town Government
- Apathy in governing decisions
- Need better feedback and follow through with Boards and Commissions of Town Government
- Need for more opportunities, i.e. open forums, to reconnect the disenfranchised with community and town officials
- Political format bogs down process
- Political process is very partisan/ need non-partisan

### **Housing**

- Too expensive – locks some out

- Concerned about development, especially these cookie cutter huge homes. These make it hard for young people to afford to come back here to live
- Little elder housing close to center of town – walking distance
- Lack of senior housing like Sachem Hollow
- High cost of real estate limits who can move into town
- Lack of affordable housing
- No affordable housing
- Housing problem in Guilford
- Lack of affordable housing
- Kids can't afford to live in Guilford – shore properties costs are skyrocketing
- Lack of affordable housing
- Expensive housing
- Lack of affordable housing for low income families
- Lack of affordable housing for people under 20
- Not enough affordable housing for more diverse population.
- All new homes getting larger and more expensive
- Lack of affordable housing for lower socio-economic population
- Need low income housing to fit people's resources
- More affordable housing (wait lists are 50-100 people) to allow people to remain in Guilford
- Rents are too expensive

#### **Denial/false perceptions**

- Most are unaware of poverty in town
- Lack of seeing big picture – we put band aids on things
- False sense of security
- Unrealistic expectations as pertains to social issues
- Lack of awareness of community resources
- Kids are aware of issues, don't necessarily pay attention to these issues
- Children become complacent
- Dealing with image (people are embarrassed when they face problems)
- Perception that Guilford does not need help - Feed 161 families per year with meals on wheels, and many don't know this.
- Element of denial about social issues
- Lack of awareness or denial about drug and alcohol use and abuse and the processes of addiction
- Strengths can cause things to go under blanket
- Social issues invisible – i.e. drugs/alcohol; seniors trying to stay in home...
- Denial is big issue – we can make problems go away with our affluence
- Stigma around social problems / hiding
- People do not want to deal with drug/alcohol issues or other serious mental health issues (in adolescence). Or serious social issues.
- We are not open to these issues
- Not concerned with real problems that exist
- Image of more wealth – a perception that's not real
- Poverty much more prevalent, but no resources or funds for these families

- Denial about drug and alcohol use among youth

### **Transportation**

- There's no/very limited public transportation
- Very limited public transportation
- Hard for everyone to get to lovely areas of town (trails, beaches)
- Hard for kids who are isolated at home after school
- Particularly hard for anyone with any kind of disability to get around
- Transportation
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of public transportation
- Suboptimal public transportation – unable to access most services without a car
- Lack of public transportation - an issue that needs to be further addressed
- Transportation
- Hard to travel by foot ie: crosswalks, signs to cross.

### **Seniors and disabled**

- Degree of isolation especially for many senior citizens
- Seniors may be largest or fastest growing group, but the level of overall involvement in P&R programs and services reaching the entire population is low
- Getting seniors involved
- Find ways to support “family” and decrease the isolation
- Do not see a lot of senior involvement throughout the community
- Seniors stay in at night – when working adults and teens are out – involvement for seniors must take into account what time is best for them
- Isolated
- Make recreation (golf) accessible to seniors/handicapped (ie: carts)

### **Lack of Communication**

- Lack of information/promotion about ways to volunteer to care for seniors, how to take the train, programs
- Town website and GPTV is not useful enough for regular use
- Pathetic under use of media and web sites for updates, information, etc.
- Lack of communication
- Communication – how does the population know that there someone is hungry?
- Lack of communication – websites, emails, banners, GCTV (not up to date)
- Breakdown of communication informing citizens about meetings and parents about the education system

### **Marginalized people**

- Lots of poor people/ Food Bank too small
- Marginalized populations (lower socio-economic group)
- A lot of people who are hungry
- Several homeless people in Guilford
- A lot of people with mental issues

## MISCELLANEOUS

- It's expensive to live here
- There is less open space and freedom to have fun as there was when I was younger
- I'd improve the police pension plan
- There are no schools for adults
- Holding private property responsible to make sure storm
- Sometimes snow maintenance not good.
- Drainage system on streets ie: pot holes (North Street)
- Clearage happens for walkers
- Commission clichés (not non-partisan)
- No informal social network
- Segregated community due to income
- Library needs more of a community feeling
- Need to protect this town's sense of place (i.e. mall on the rock pile?)
- Long Hill and New England Roads not plowed
- Stores should remove pornography from the magazine racks
- Community "literacy"
- Green has bad reputation – negative activities on the Green
- Too many Democrats- one party dominates the government
- Too spread out- Can't walk
- Library under construction (Adams kids can't walk there)
- Taxes are too high
- Not a lot of jobs
- Not enough police
- Second hand smoke in cars
- Jacobs Beach has shells, and the water is muddy
- High cost of living
- Lack of RTM
- Infrastructure not kept up
- Old community
- Technology hasn't advanced
- Safety on the "Green"
- Guilford Police
- Officer Gardener
- Lack of leadership
- Cop in School
- Community center
- Libraries/ too many old people voting for libraries
- Guilford is already an affluent community, moving to even higher costs; it gives one concern
- How much (affluence) do we need; how much is too much?
- What do we mean by community?
  - In definition of common goals & interests...are we there yet?
- Wealth/well-educated – make difficult
- There is an image of Guilford; does it show reality?

- Affluence is a risk factor for social problems
- Don't use our geography well enough / talents within our town enough
  - coordination of talents is needed
- Aren't regional (use of these services) enough