



Spanish Lake Youth Needs Assessment Report



St. Louis County
Department of Human Services
Department of Planning



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Project Team Members

St. Louis County Department of Human Services
Rosemary Terranova, Director, Office of Family and Community Services
Tom Fee, County Youth Programs Manager
Lisa Snyder, Youth Services Specialist
Sarah Spiess, Youth Services Case Manager

St. Louis County Department of Planning
Lori Fiegel, Comprehensive Planning Manager
Kara Lubischer, Comprehensive Planner
Solana Rice, Comprehensive Planner

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- I. Executive Summary
- II. Introduction
 - A. Purpose
 - B. Background
- III. Methodology
 - A. Overview
 - B. Indicator Analysis: Demographics and School Data
 - C. Qualitative Methods
 - 1. Key Informant Interviews
 - 2. Youth Discussion Groups
 - 3. Parent Focus Groups
 - 4. Community Focus Groups
 - 5. Parent Surveys
- IV. Indicator Analysis
- V. Analysis of Youth Issues and Needs
- VI. Gaps in Programming and Services
- VII. Recommendations
- VIII. Appendices

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

In March of 2006, St. Louis County initiated a study of youth needs in Spanish Lake. The two purposes of the study were first, to assess the scope of youth concerns in Spanish Lake, and second, based on the assessment, develop appropriate strategies to address youth needs and related issues. Specifically, the study set out to:

- Identify prominent issues facing Spanish Lake youth;
- Understand the conditions contributing to youth problems;
- Assess gaps in programs and services; and,
- Recommend an action plan for St Louis County to address youth needs in Spanish Lake.

The study was the result of an initiative to target services to neighborhoods in Spanish Lake. St. Louis County conducted this assessment in hopes of better serving the needs of families and children in Spanish Lake by primarily targeting its own services and resources in the community. Clearly, however, local government alone cannot address all youth needs. It is hoped that the study informs other service providers and community partners of the challenges facing Spanish Lake youth and the need for programs and resources to meet those challenges.

Methodology

The assessment used both quantitative data and qualitative methods to analyze data and trends, as well as present the perceptions of a broad range of stakeholders about youth needs in Spanish Lake. The quantitative analysis is based on twenty commonly used indicators from the U.S. Census, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Qualitative information was gathered from over 250 stakeholders, through methods including: 40 key informant interviews; 7 youth discussion groups involving 82 kids; 5 focus group discussions with 41 parents and community leaders; and 90 surveys responses from parents. The trends identified in the indicator analysis, combined with a high degree of consistency of stakeholder input, provide a strong basis for concluding findings and forming recommendations.

Major Findings

Demographic and Socio-Economic Factors

Among the most significant quantitative findings are dramatic shifts in population, race, household types and economic conditions in Spanish Lake. The pattern of change can be characterized as a decline in the aging population of small households, being replaced by a younger population in larger households. These changes are basic driving forces increasing the demand and need for services, programming, and facilities in Spanish Lake:

- Between 1990 and 2000, the population in Spanish Lake increased at double the rate of the County, and the youth population in Spanish Lake grew by 30 percent.

- Between 1990 and 2000, Spanish Lake transitioned from a majority white population to a majority African-American population.
- By 2000, one-third of the population (7,278) were kids age 19 and under.
- The number of households with children in Spanish Lake increased 33 percent, and even greater changes were seen in the portion single parent headed households, which increased from 27 percent to 52 percent by 2000.
- Between 1990 and 2000, both the number of children in poverty in Spanish Lake, and the number of families with children living in poverty increased by 200 percent.
- For the past five years, the percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunch has continued to rise at all four schools in the area.

Prominent Issues And Conditions Impacting Youth

When both qualitative and quantitative findings were analyzed, the prominent issues identified as impacting youth in the Spanish Lake community included the following:

Absence of Structured Activities

- Lack of before/after school, weekend and summer activities
- No community center/recreation center
- Youth-oriented venues/businesses are absent, moved, or closed
- Activities elsewhere are too expensive, difficult to access

Inadequate Supervision of Children

- Kids are taking care of kids, an estimated 30% of grade school kids taking care of siblings
- Lack of parental control, especially while at work
- Hardships/ limitations of single-parent households

Prevalence of Violence and Crime

- Fighting and bullying at home, in school, in neighborhood
- Gang activity and “gang-like” affiliations; kids making poor choices
- Children do not feel safe outside of school

School and Education

- Increasing enrollment and crowding
- High rate of student transfers/ turnover and problems associated with disparity of -performance and resources
- High rate of drop out, the 6th highest of 34 in the County
- Problems brought to school from home and community

High Rate of Births to Teens

- Births to teen mothers increased 30% between 2000-2005
- Rate of teen births is 13%, compared to County’s 8%
- Cited as a growing concern by Principals, Social Workers, Health Educators

Lack of Public and Private Transportation

- Lack of public and private transportation is a major barrier to kids participating in programs
- Bus service is limited/ not available at night and on weekends

Limited Community Cohesion

- Lack of sense of community
- Limited community activities to bring people together; families, schools, churches, youth are not strongly connected

Absence of Sidewalks and Street Lighting

- Safe walking routes to school are in question
- Cited as a serious safety concern for both adult and youth at night
- Locations of concern at apartment complexes, intersections and retail area

Gaps in Programming and Services

While youth development activities are available in Spanish Lake, there is clearly higher demand for services and programs than can be met based on the current and growing needs of the youth population. This assessment did not include a comprehensive inventory of current programs and services, but did gather as much information as possible from participants in the qualitative assessment. Based on input from key informants, youth, parents, and community leaders, gaps and the limitations of existing programs were identified, including capacity, accessibility, cost, and relevancy to the youth population. Consistent input from participants suggest the need for before, after school and summer programs; more sports and recreational programs; a wider range of programs and services for youth and families; a facility to house programs and activities; and more events and activities to build community cohesiveness.

Recommendations

St. Louis County is the primary provider of local government services to the unincorporated community of Spanish Lake. As such, the recommendations in this assessment primarily focus on the actions St. Louis County departments can undertake to address the most pressing youth issues. However, in many cases, St. Louis County will need to collaborate with other agencies and organizations to reach the goals set out in the study. In instances where required actions extend beyond the scope local government, St. Louis County's role will be to convene and facilitate appropriate stakeholders, agencies and organizations. The recommendations in the study are proposed to span the next three to five years, with an annual review of progress being made.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose

In March of 2006, St. Louis County initiated a study of youth needs in the Spanish Lake community. The purpose of the study was twofold: 1) to assess the scope of youth concerns and needs in Spanish Lake, and 2) based on the assessment, develop appropriate strategies to address youth needs. Specifically, the study set out to:

- identify prominent issues facing youth;
- better understand the conditions that may contribute to young people becoming involved in problem behavior;
- identify current programs and services, as well as gaps in programs and services; and,
- recommend an action plan to address the key issues facing youth.

St. Louis County conducted the study so that it can better serve the needs of families and children in Spanish Lake by primarily targeting its own services and resources in the community. Clearly, however, local government alone cannot address all youth needs. It is hoped that the study informs other service providers and community partners of the challenges facing Spanish Lake youth and the need for programs and resources to meet those challenges. Building community partnerships between St. Louis County and schools, services agencies, churches, businesses, and community groups will be key to the long-term effect of improving the lives of young people in Spanish Lake.

Background

The initiative to assess youth needs in Spanish Lake was prompted by St. Louis County's role as a direct service provider to unincorporated areas. Spanish Lake is an unincorporated community of about 22,000 that receives municipal type services from St. Louis County government. In 2005, the County identified a portion of Spanish Lake as a "focus area" for its Neighborhood Preservation Strategy (NPS), a program designed to focus services and resources in targeted neighborhoods. The NPS effort involves a designated team of County service departments, who meet regularly to assess the needs of "focus areas", collaborate, and coordinate services.

As part of the NPS program, St. Louis County hosted a community meeting in Spanish Lake on July 28, 2005 to provide information about County services, as well as gather input from residents about issues of concern in their neighborhood. Resident input obtained from the community meeting revealed a number of youth-related concerns, ranging from vandalism, graffiti, and gang activity, to the need for sidewalks, streetlights and more recreational activities. In response to residents' concerns, the County's NPS inter-departmental team developed an action list of strategies, including the recommendation to conduct a youth needs assessment. The County's NPS team believed it was important to better understand and define the scope of youth needs in Spanish Lake before determining what programs, services, and resources were required to address those needs. In early 2006, a project team from the Departments of Human Services and Planning was formed to undertake the assessment.

METHODOLOGY

Overview

The Spanish Lake Youth Needs Assessment uses both quantitative data and qualitative methods to analyze youth needs in Spanish Lake. The quantitative analysis is based on commonly used indicators, mainly derived from the U.S. Census, the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services and the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Several qualitative methods were used to solicit input from stakeholders, including key informant interviews, focus group discussions with parents, kids, and community leaders, and a parent survey. For the purpose of this assessment, data and input was collected for the 63138 zip code, which coincides with U.S. Census geography, as well as with the generally accepted boundaries of unincorporated Spanish Lake.

By using both quantitative and qualitative methods, this assessment attempts to present the demographic and socio-economic trends affecting youth, as well as depict the perceptions of a broad range of stakeholders about youth needs in Spanish Lake. The assessment provides substantial information about youth issues and needs, but its limitations should also be recognized. The main limitation is that input collected from qualitative methods cannot be generalized to necessarily reflect the views of the community at-large. For example, not all segments of the population were represented in interviews, and self-selected participants and survey respondents do not always represent majority viewpoints. Nevertheless, the trends depicted in the indicator analysis, combined with the consistency of stakeholder input, do provide a strong basis on which to assess youth needs in Spanish Lake.

Quantitative Assessment

The first step in the assessment process was to select indicators that would provide data about the Spanish Lake community, its youth and their families. Overall, twenty indicators were selected to illustrate demographic, socio-economic, education, health, crime data and trends. Using the U.S. Census, including 1990 and 2000 data, selected indicators included:

- Population
- Age
- Race, including the minority population under 18
- Disability
- Household types
- Grandparents as primary caregivers
- Household income
- Poverty status for individuals, families and children
- Educational attainment

To analyze the characteristics of students in the Hazelwood School District in Spanish Lake, data was derived from the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, including:

- Public school enrollment
- Racial composition of Spanish Lake public schools
- Students eligible for free and reduced lunch
- Student mobility rate
- Dropout rate
- Graduation rate

Additionally, indicators related to the health of children and teens in Spanish Lake, derived from several sources, include:

- Births to teen mothers
- Pregnancy in St. Louis County by age of female
- Child abuse and neglect hotline calls
- Lead poisoning rate

Finally, the St. Louis County Police provided crime data for Part 1 and Part 2 offenses in Spanish Lake. The full analysis of all the indicators is provided in Section IV of the study.

Qualitative Methods

Several traditional techniques were used to gather qualitative input about youth needs in Spanish Lake, including key informant interviews, discussion and focus groups with youth, parents, and community leaders, and a survey targeted to parents. A total of 253 participants were directly involved in providing input: 40 adult key informants, 82 youth, 41 parents and community leaders, and 90 survey respondents.

Collecting qualitative input helps provide insights on how different groups of people think and feel about specific issues and why they might hold certain opinions. Interviewing key informants provided input from individuals with specific knowledge and expertise relating to youth and/or community issues. Discussion and focus groups brought together individuals with common characteristics and interests. A survey targeted to parents provided yet another means to gather input. As noted above, qualitative research may be indicative of community views, but should not be construed as predictive and scientific.

Key Informant Interviews

Qualitative research began with interviewing key informants, meaning people with direct knowledge, specific expertise and interest in youth concerns in Spanish Lake. The objectives were to gather information on what has been learned about youth issues in Spanish Lake and to describe the scope of youth concerns and needs in Spanish Lake. A list of contact people representing a variety of service sectors and stakeholders in the community was developed, including: public and parochial schools, social service agencies, community-

based organizations, churches, child care, individual residents, and St. Louis County departments and divisions, including Police, Family Court, Parks and Recreation, Problem Properties Unit, Health Education, and Workforce Development. Key informants were asked to respond to six core questions:

1. What are the most significant youth issues or problems affecting youth in the Spanish Lake area (ZIP Code 63138)?
2. What are prominent conditions in Spanish Lake that contribute to the likelihood that youth become involved in problem behavior?
3. What programs, services or individual people are already engaged in addressing youth problems and risk factors among youth in Spanish Lake?
4. Dream: If you had more funding and staff, what type of program(s) would you design and provide for children or teens in this area?
5. What reports, studies, or survey results could you share with us that address youth problems or effective interventions in Spanish Lake?
6. What other key individuals should we talk with to gather information on youth needs in the Spanish Lake area?

Background material on the Spanish Lake Youth Needs Assessment project and the interview questions were shared in advance with participants in order to help them prepare for the interviews. Between May 17 and July 31, 2006, the project staff interviewed a total of 40 key informants. Twenty-six interviews were conducted on a one-on-one basis, lasting an average of one-hour in duration. The remaining 14 key informants were interviewed in one of two focus groups, each lasting two hours in duration.

Youth Discussion Groups

Gathering input directly from Spanish Lake youth was an important aspect of the needs assessment. Multiple discussion groups, held over a six-week period, were intended to involve a variety of kids and provide a comfortable setting for young participants to express themselves. In total, there were seven discussion groups held in October and November of 2006 involving 82 young people.

Six of the seven youth discussion groups involved students in the Hazelwood School District living in Spanish Lake. School district personnel were instrumental in coordinating the discussion groups with St. Louis County, with building principals serving as the main points of contact. The discussion groups were held at three public schools in Spanish Lake: two groups were facilitated at Twillman Elementary, three groups at Kirby Middle School, and one group at Hazelwood East High School. Students at Twillman Elementary were in the

third, fourth, and fifth grades, or between the ages of nine and twelve. The Kirby Middle School students were in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, between the ages of 12 and 14. The high school students at Hazelwood East High were all sophomores, juniors, or seniors and between the ages of 14 and 18. In total, 76 Hazelwood School District students participated.

One of the discussion groups involved participants in the Doors to Success program, involving young people between the ages of 16 and 24. Operated by County Youth Programs, Doors to Success provides assistance to individuals seeking a GED or improving employment skills. This discussion group involved six participants at the Doors to Success site in Spanish Lake.

The discussion groups were designed to help understand how youth view their community and the issues that are most important to them. Staff from the Department of Human Services and Department of Planning facilitated the groups. The staff members rotated the roles of facilitator and note taker. The note taker recorded the answers on large newsprint for the youth to see during the session. The discussion groups were typically comprised of ten to twelve students, selected by school personnel based on their place of residence. The discussion lasted for approximately 45 minutes to one hour. The Hazelwood Doors to Success group was the smallest group with six participants. This discussion group lasted approximately 60 minutes. Specifically, the young people were asked to respond to eight questions:

1. What is the best thing about your neighborhood?
2. What don't you like about your neighborhood?
3. Where do you feel safe? Are there safe places to go in your neighborhood?
4. What kinds of kid problems do you see in your neighborhood?
5. What do you do with your free time? After school? In the summer? On the weekends?
6. What kid programs or special activities do you already know about?
7. If you don't go to these activities, what are the reasons you don't go?
8. If you were granted three wishes to improve your neighborhood for kids, what would you do? What kinds of new programs/activities would you go to? What kinds of programs do kids need in the neighborhood? Where would you hold the program? How much would it cost?

Overall, the participants in the youth discussion groups were very thoughtful with their responses and had a range of opinions and perceptions about the Spanish Lake community. The responses were developmentally age appropriate. The younger participants, in elementary and middle school, provided more egocentric responses related to their day-to-day surrounding world. The older students in high school and in the Hazelwood Doors to Success program were able to step back and take the broader view of the community as a whole and respond beyond their own personal lives. Across all of the discussion groups, it was easier for the participants to provide negative responses rather than positive ones.

Parent Focus Groups

In order to learn parents' perceptions of youth issues and needs in Spanish Lake, parents from Twillman Elementary were recruited to participate in focus group discussions. The focus group approach was selected to develop in-depth understanding of parents' views and their priorities for types of programs that would be of greatest benefit to children and families. The Twillman Elementary School Parent Liaison invited parents of children between the ages of 2 to 18 years old with the aim of recruiting parents with diverse views and experience.

Approximately 20 parents were invited and all were given follow-up calls the day before the event. Fifteen people attended and participated in the discussion groups, including: parents who have recently moved to the area; parents who have lived in Spanish Lake for extended periods; grandparents; the President of the Parent Teacher Student Association; the school Principal; and the Parent Liaison. The participants were vocal, motivated, and able to attend a meeting at 2:30 pm. Parents who were at work and those who are not already engaged in school activities were not represented.

The participants were assigned to one of two discussion groups: seven people in one group, and eight in the other group. After introductions, each group addressed a list of questions that were sent to parents before the discussion and handed out at the meeting. The questions were adapted from and comparable to the stakeholder interview questions and parent survey:

1. What three assets in Spanish Lake for kids do you value most?
2. What are the most significant youth issues or problems affecting youth in the Spanish Lake area?
3. What are prominent conditions in Spanish Lake that contribute to the likelihood that youth become involved in problem behavior?
4. What do children in Spanish Lake do with their time after school, evenings, weekends, and summers?
5. What youth programs are available and accessible for children or teens?
6. What obstacles, if any, keep kids from participating or make it hard for parents to send their kids to programs and activities?

7. Dream: If resources were available, what programs or resources would be of greatest benefit to children or teens in Spanish Lake?

All participants were encouraged to participate and were also given comment cards in case they had additional ideas, thoughts, and suggestions. Results were compiled from facilitator notes, note-taker notes and comment cards from participants.

Community Focus Groups

The St. Louis County Departments of Human Services and Planning sponsored a community meeting on November 16, 2006 at Trinity High School in Spanish Lake. The purpose of the meeting was to gather input on youth needs from community leaders who mainly represented parent groups, schools, churches, businesses, and community associations. A small group discussion format was used for the meeting, with County staff assigned to each group as a facilitator and/or recorder. There were a total of five County staff and twenty-one participants divided into three discussion groups of six to eight people.

Participants were solicited by invitation or referral over the course of several months. In May, County officials solicited interested citizens at two St. Louis County Town Hall meetings at Hazelwood East and Hazelwood Central High Schools. In October, parents attending parent-teacher conferences at Kirby Middle School were also invited to attend. In November, flyers were distributed at parent discussion groups held at Twillman Elementary. Lastly, invitations were given to the principals at Twillman Elementary and Larimore Elementary and to the president of the Parent Teacher Student Association (PTSA) at Hazelwood East High School for distribution to parents who were identified as active and interested. Written invitations were mailed or e-mailed to twenty-five people and follow-up phone calls were made.

At the meeting, after a brief introduction and overview of the County's youth needs assessment project, the groups were asked to respond to four key questions focused on identifying the assets of Spanish Lake for youth, the most important issues facing youth, how children spend their time and what programs or activities would be of greatest benefit to children and teens. Over the course of 75 minutes, the facilitated groups responded to the questions and their discussion was recorded on flip charts. After the meeting, each group's comments were typed up individually by County staff and then compiled into a single report.

Parent Surveys

A single page, six-question written survey was created using similar questions as those developed for informant interviews and discussion groups. The survey mainly included closed ended questions, with one open ended question. The surveys were especially important in gathering opinions from parents who were not interviewed or part of a discussion session.

The survey was distributed to parents attending the Parent/Teacher conferences at Kirby Middle School on Oct. 19th and 20th. Not all parents were from the 63138 zip code, but 147 surveys were given directly to parents as they arrived for their conference. Surveys were also left at the Twillman and Larimore Elementary schools and distributed to students to take home. Parents were to return them by mail, fax, or drop off at the school. The return rate for both schools was low. Parents at two local daycares, Kidz In Motion and St. Mary's Special Education Daycare, were also encouraged to fill out the survey. Parents had one week to return the survey; six surveys were returned from St. Mary's daycare.

Surveys Returned	
Kirby Middle School Parent Teacher Conferences*	48
Larimore Elementary School Drop-off	17
Twillman Elementary School Drop-off	5
Daycares	6
Mailed/Faxed in	14
Total	90

*All of the survey respondents may not be from the 63138 zip code

Summary

Using both quantitative and qualitative methods to assess youth needs provides a fuller depiction of the trends and issues in Spanish Lake than relying solely on one type of methodology. The use of commonly accepted demographic, socio-economic, and educational indicators provides a strong statistical basis to measure the well being of families and children in Spanish Lake. Several qualitative methods were used to gather input, and while limited by its nature, more than 250 participants were involved in the process. The major findings of the study based on the assessment methodology are found in Section V of the study.

INDICATOR ANALYSIS

Boundaries

The geographic boundaries for Spanish Lake are the Mississippi River to the east, the Missouri River to the north, Highway 367 to the west and Interstate 270 to the south. As shown on the map below, for the 2000 Census, Spanish Lake is made up of three Census tracts: 2101, 2107.01, and 2107.02. The Census boundaries did not change from 1990 to 2000. Data using zip code 63138 has the same geographic boundary as the combined three census tracts.



Population

In 2000, the Spanish Lake population totaled 21,872 people; the 2005 estimated population is 22,195. This change is an increase of 1.5 percent between 2000 and 2005. As of 2000, Spanish Lake made up 6.8 percent of St. Louis County's unincorporated population. As the table below shows, the population growth in Spanish Lake has outpaced the population growth in St. Louis County.

Population Change 1990-2000			
	1990	2000	% Change, 1990-2000
Spanish Lake	20,801	21,872	+5.1
St. Louis County	993,508	1,016,300	+2.3%

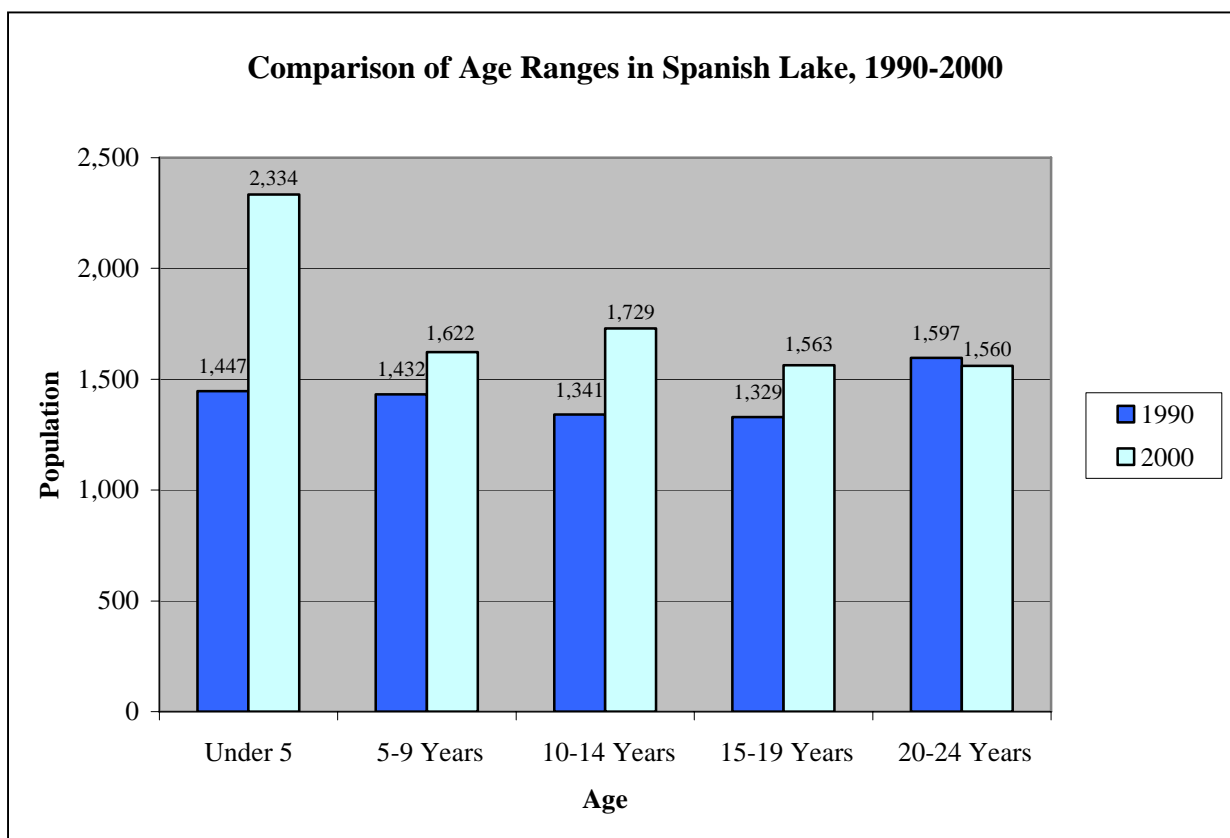
Source: 1990 & 2000 U.S. Census, Summary File 1

Age

Between 1990 and 2000, there was a 30 percent increase in people under 20 years of age. As shown below, the group of youth between 5 and 9 years of age had the largest increase of 42 percent, between 1990 and 2000. In 2000, the population under the age of 20 represented 33 percent of Spanish Lake's total population.

Youth Population by Age in Spanish Lake					
	1990		2000		
	Population	% of Population	Population	% of Population	% Change, 1990-2000
Under 5	1,447	7%	1,920	8.8%	+32.6%
5-9	1,432	6.9%	2,036	9.3%	+42.1%
10-14	1,341	6.4%	1,729	7.9%	+28.9%
15-19	1,329	6.4%	1,563	7.1%	+17.6%
20-24	1,597	7.7%	1,560	2.8%	-2.31%
25-29	2,042	9.8%	1,742	8.0%	-14.7%
30-34	1,894	9.1%	1,674	7.7%	-11.6%
35-39	1,629	7.8%	1,760	8.0%	8.0%
40-44	1,424	6.8%	1,620	7.4%	13.7%
45-49	1,050	5.0%	1,287	5.9%	22.6%
50-54	956	4.6%	1,134	5.2%	18.6%
55-59	950	4.6%	759	3.5%	-20.1%
60-64	934	4.5%	661	3.0%	-29.2%
65-69	859	4.1%	634	2.9%	-26.2%
70-74	666	3.2%	582	2.7%	-12.6%
75-79	534	2.6%	541	2.5%	1.3%
80-84	450	2.2%	346	1.6%	-23.1%
85+	267	1.3%	324	1.5%	-21.3%

Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census STF 1.



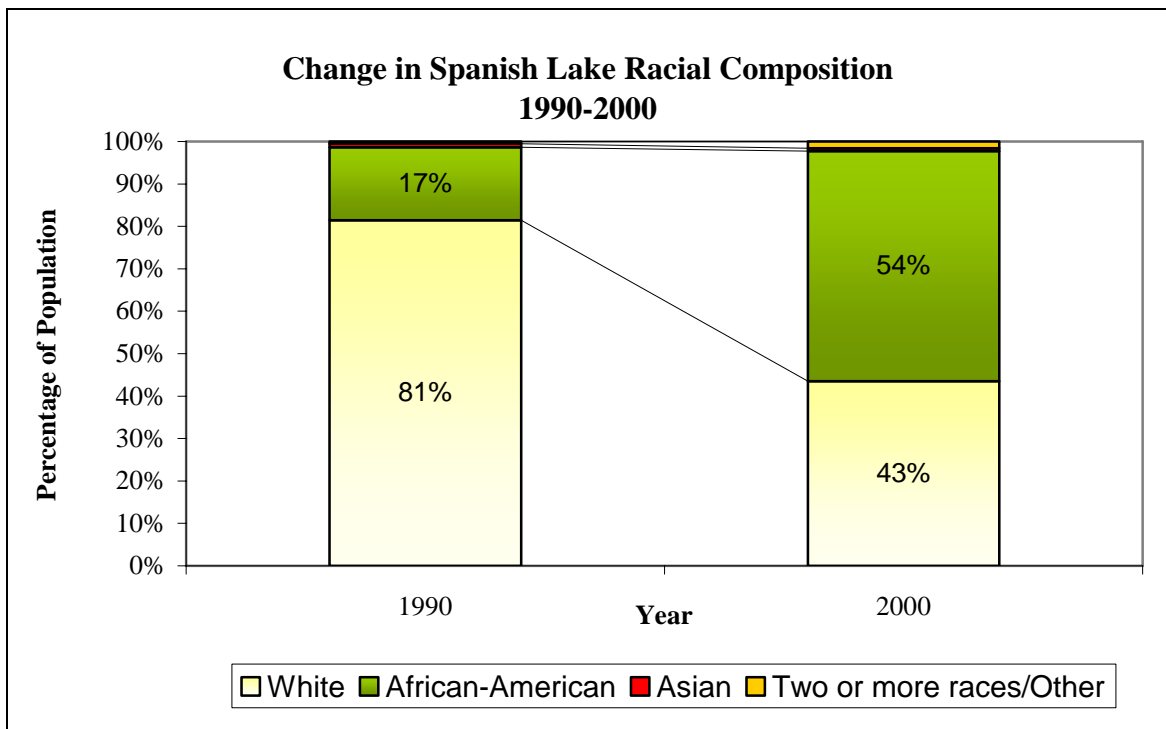
Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census, STF 1

Race

Between 1990 and 2000, diversity increased across St. Louis County, but Spanish Lake has far outpaced the County in growth of non-white populations. In 1990, Spanish Lake was 81 percent white and 17 percent African-American. By 2000, only 43 percent of the population was white and 54 percent was African-American. This represents a 230 percent increase in the African-American population in Spanish Lake. The African-American population increased by 39 percent in St. Louis County.

Population by Race in Spanish Lake					
	1990		2000		% Change, 1990-2000
	Population	% of Total Population	Population	% of Total Population	
White	16,943	81%	9,448	43%	-44%
African-American	3,574	17%	11,776	54%	+229.5%
Asian	172	1%	148	1%	-14%
Two or more races/other	112	.5%	351	2%	+213.4%

Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census, STF 1



Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census, STF 1

The growth in non-white populations is reflected in youth populations as well. The table below shows that in 1990, 23 percent of those under 18 were identified as minority. By 2000, this share increased to 68 percent. Overall, this change represents a 275 percent increase in the minority population under 18 years of age. St. Louis County saw a much smaller increase of 60 percent in the number of minority youth.

Minority Population Under 18 years of Age in Spanish Lake							
	1990			2000			
	Population 18 and under	Population 18 and under classified as minority	% of Population 18 and under classified as minority	Population 18 and under	Population 18 and under classified as minority	% of Population 18 and under classified as minority	% change in # of population under 18 classified as minority
Spanish Lake	5,281	1,273	24%	6,969	4,764	68%	+275%
St. Louis County	257,126	53,707	21%	269,830	85,665	31%	+59.5%

Source: 1990 and 2000 U.S. Census, STF 1

Disability

Disability for those under 14 years old, is defined as using a wheelchair, cane, crutches, or walker, or unable to perform one or more average daily activities. Disability also includes emotional, developmental, and functional disabilities like Autism, cerebral palsy, mental retardation, difficulty seeing, hearing, walking, running. According to the 2000 Census, 9 percent of people ages 5-20 years of age in Spanish Lake had a disability, compared to 8 percent in St. Louis County.

Disability Status of Non-institutionalized Civilian Population, 2000			
	Number of People with Disability Status	2000 Population	% of Population
5-15 years	274	3,765	7.3%
16-20 years	208	1,563	13.3%
21-64 years	1,919	12,197	15.7%
65-74 years	346	1,216	28.4%
75+ years	534	1,211	44.1%

Source: 2000 Census, STF 3

Household Type

In 2000 there were 8,559 households in Spanish Lake and nearly 40 percent of the households had children under 18 years of age. As the chart below shows, this share represents a 30 percent increase from the number of households with children under 18 in 1990.

Households in Spanish Lake					
	1990		2000		
	Total Households	% of Households	Total Households	% of Households	% Change, 1990-2000
Total Households	8,232		8,559		+4%
Households with Children under 18	2,678	33%	3,249	38%	+33%

Source: 1990 and 2000 Census, STF 1

Between 1990 and 2000, there was a 20 percent decrease in married-couple households with children under 18. In 2000, of households with children, half were single-parent headed households. Of the recent increase in households with children, most appear to be single-parent headed. Female-headed households increased in number by 143 percent from 1990 to 2000.

Household Type in Spanish Lake					
	1990		2000		
	Total Households	% of households with own children under 18	Total Households	% of households with own children under 18	% Change, 1990-2000
Households with own children under 18	2,678		3,249		21.3%
Married-couple households with own children under 18	1,967	73%	1,575	48%	-20%
Single-parent headed household with own children under 18	711	27%	1,674	51.5%	135%
Female-headed households with own children under 18	592	22%	1,440	44%	143%

Source: 1990 and 2000 Census, STF 1

In 2000, there were 233 households in which grandparents were the primary caregivers. Nearly 50 percent of grandparents living with their grandchildren are responsible for those grandchildren. In St. Louis County, only 42.9 percent of grandparents were responsible for a grandchild under the age of 18.

Grandparents as Caregivers, 2000		
	Spanish Lake	St. Louis County
Grandparents living in household with one or more grandchild under 18	477	16,393
Grandparent responsible for grandchildren	233	7,030
	48.8%	42.9%

Source: 2000 Census, STF 3

Income

In 2000, the median household income for the three census tracts ranged from \$33,246 to \$39,394. This range is significantly lower than the St. Louis County median household income of \$50,532. The Census data show that while there was an increase in household income since 1990, there was also a significant increase in families living in poverty. An increase in poverty greatly affects children. In Spanish Lake in 2000, 11.6 percent of people were living in poverty, this compares to a rate of 6.9 percent in St. Louis County. Both the number of children in poverty and the number of families living below poverty level with children increased over 200 percent from 1990 to 2000. More than one third of people in poverty are below the age of 18. In St. Louis County in 2000, 35.6 percent of those in poverty were children under the age of 18.

Individuals and Poverty in Spanish Lake					
	1990		2000		
	Population	% of population	Population	% of population	% Change, 1999-2000
Persons for which poverty status was determined	20,435		21,668		
Persons in poverty	1,078	5%	2,518	11.6%	133%
Children under 18	371	1.8%	1,221	18%	229%

Source: 1990 and 2000 Census, STF 3

The next table shows substantial increases in families living below the poverty level. This data implicitly shows that over 80 percent of families living in poverty with children under 18 are female-headed households. This proportion of the population did not increase much from 1990 to 2000.

Families and Poverty in Spanish Lake					
	1990		2000		
	Number of families	% of Families	Population	% of Families	% Change, 1990-2000
Families	5,676		5,892		+3.8%
Families (of all types) below poverty level	206	3.6%	600	10%	+191%
Families with children 18 and under below poverty level	165	3%	500	8.5%	+203%
Female-headed households with children below poverty level	137	2.4%	403	6.8%	+194%

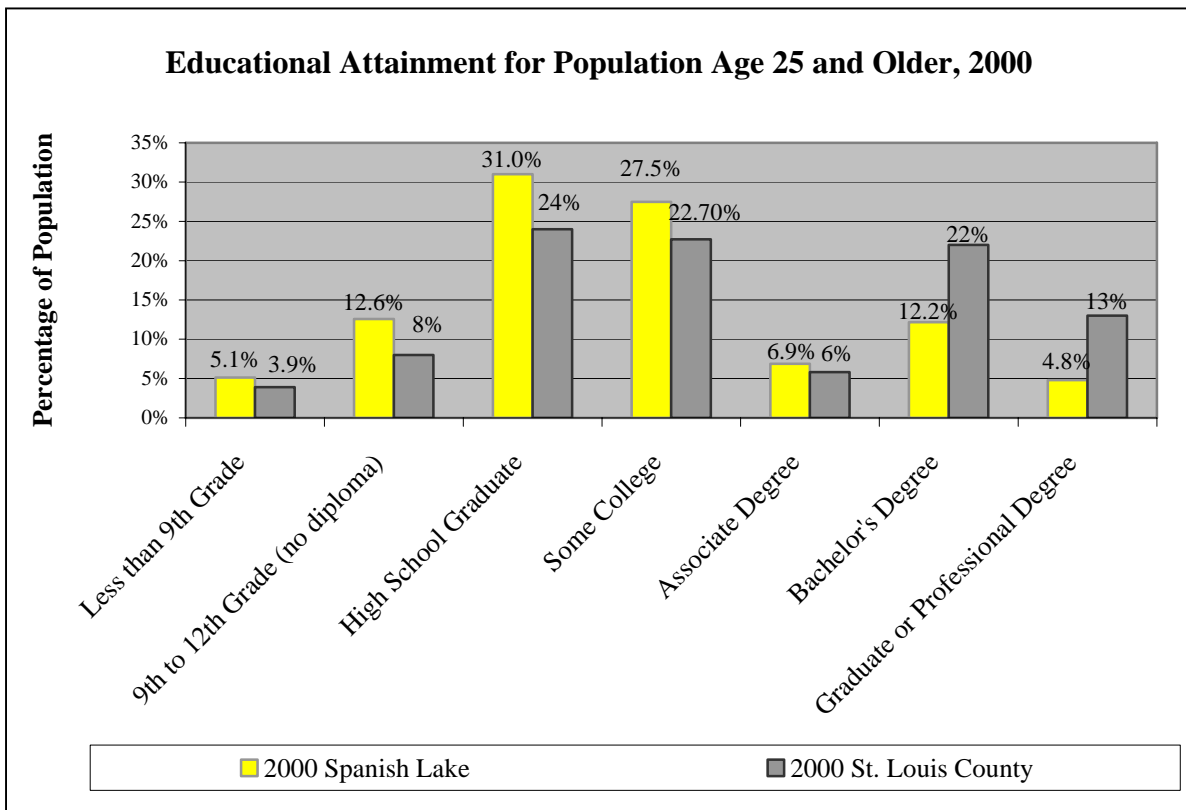
Source: 1990 and 2000 Census, STF 3

Education

The census data show a decrease in enrollment in private schools from 1990 to 2000. This decrease is likely due to the closing of several Catholic parishes in the area. Below is a chart showing the maximum educational attainment for persons over 25 years of age in Spanish Lake. 31 percent have a high school diploma as compared to 24 percent in the County. On the other hand, 22 percent of those in the County have a bachelor's degree, compared to only 12 percent in Spanish Lake.

Educational attainment for those over 25 years of age in Spanish Lake					
	1990	% of Population	2000	% of Population	St. Louis County 2000
Number of Persons over 25	13,620		13,103		677,027
Less than 9 th grade	1,420	10%	670	5%	4%
9 th to 12 th grade (no diploma)	1,699	12%	1,649	13%	8%
High school graduate	4,092	30%	4,063	31%	24%
Some college	2,836	21%	3,600	27.5%	22%
Associate degree	836	6%	900	6.9%	6%
Bachelor's degree	1,962	14%	1,594	12%	22%
Graduate or professional degree	775	6%	627	5%	13%
Doctorate	0	0	0	0	1%

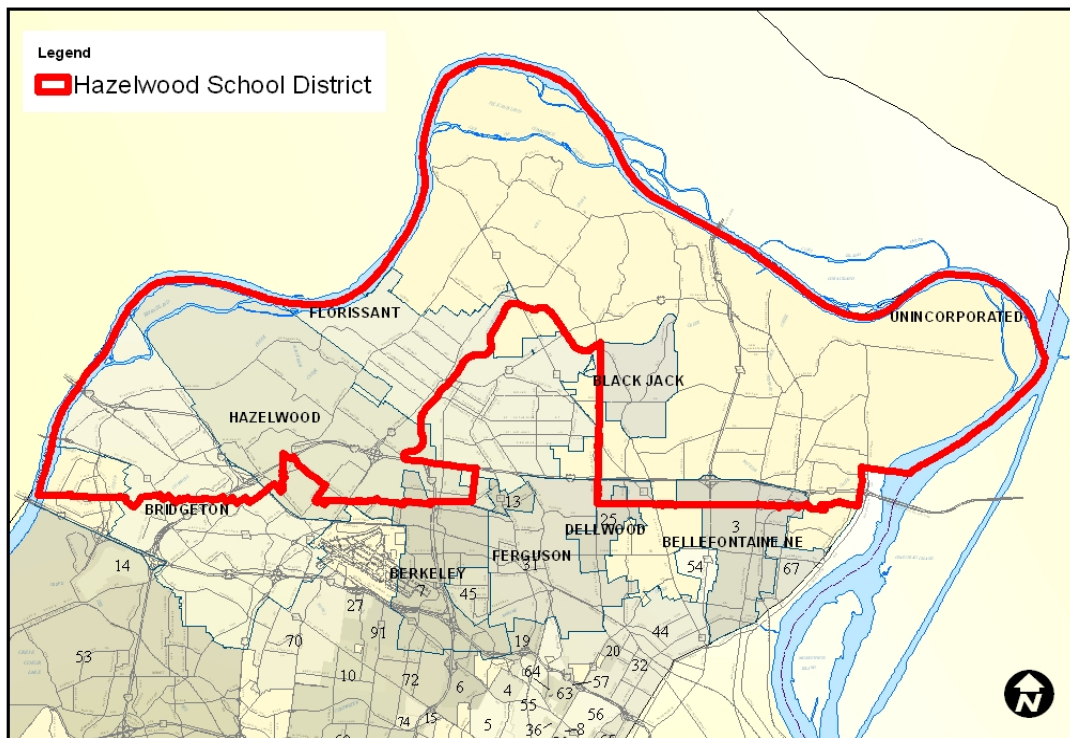
Source: 1990 and 2000 Census, STF 3



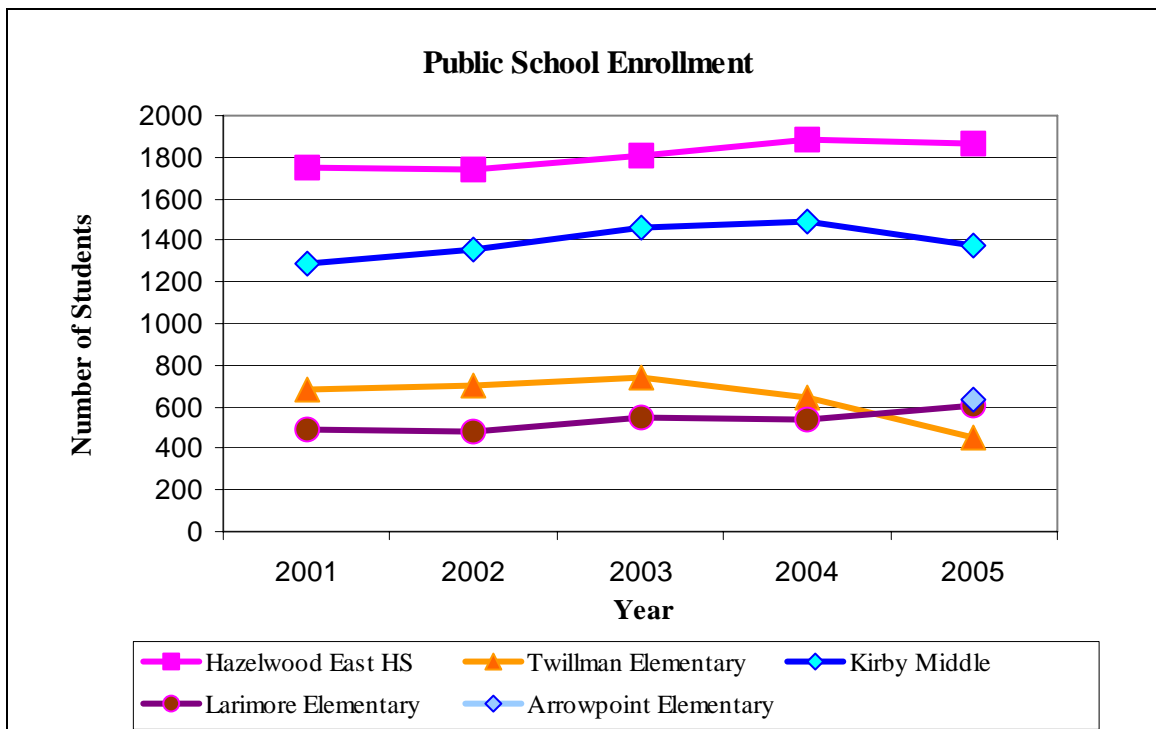
Source: 1990 and 2000 Census, STF 3

Education Indicators

Spanish Lake is served by the Hazelwood School District, which is the second largest school district in St. Louis County. The map below shows that the Hazelwood School District covers most of the North County region. The Hazelwood School District includes three high schools, three middle schools and twenty elementary schools and enrolled nearly 20,000 students in 2005. Four new middle schools are planned for 2007.



Below is a chart of enrollment for 2001-2005 for the five public schools within Spanish Lake: Hazelwood East High School, Kirby Middle School, Twillman Elementary, Larimore Elementary, and Arrowpoint Elementary. Hazelwood Southeast Middle School will be opening in 2007 at 910 Prigge Road.



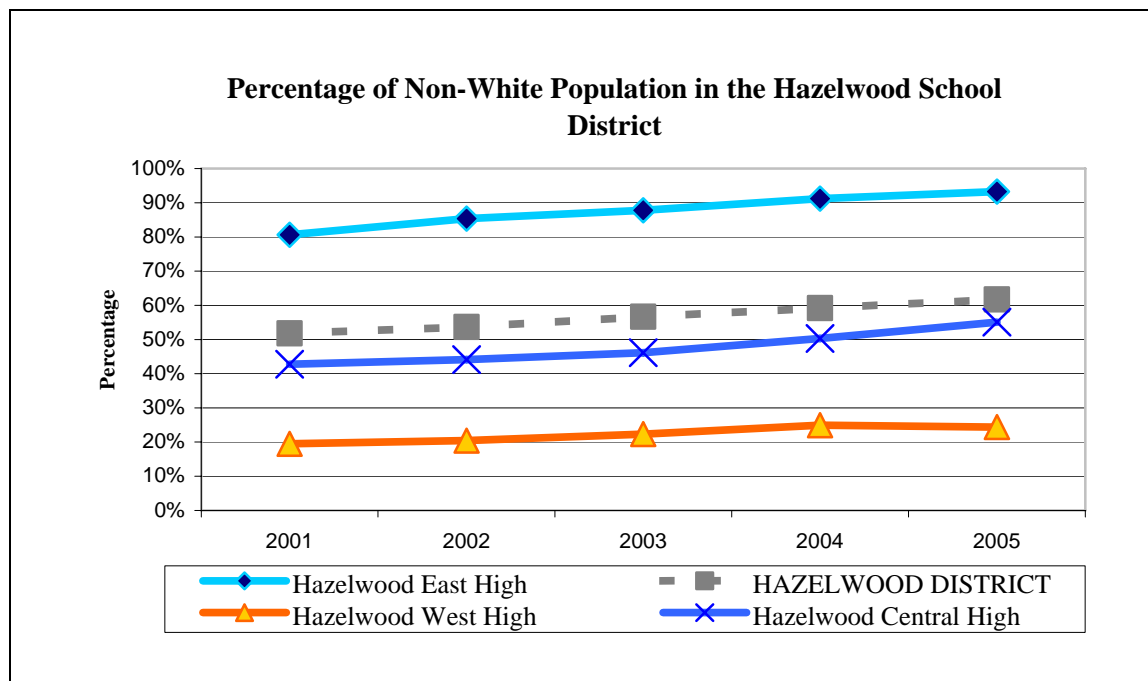
Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

The demographic change in Spanish Lake is reflected in the school population. The table below shows that all of the public schools in Spanish Lake have predominantly an African-American student population.

Racial Composition of Spanish Lake Public Schools, 2005			
	Enrollment	% Black	% White
Hazelwood School District	19,315	59.7	38.3
Hazelwood East High School	1,861	93.2	6.7
Kirby Middle School	1,371	97.0	2.8
Larimore Elementary	601	76.2	22.1
Twilman Elementary	448	98.0	1.8
Arrowpoint Elementary	639	94.8	4.2

Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

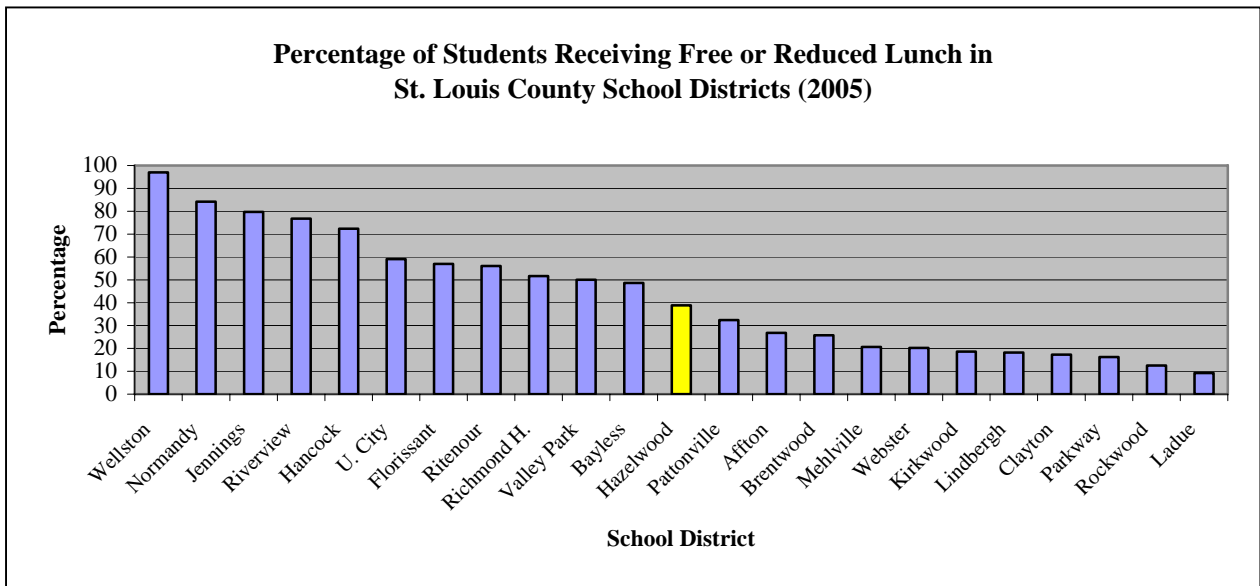
The non-white population at Hazelwood East High School grew from 80.6 percent of the total enrollment in 2001 to 93 percent of the student population in 2005, a 23 percent increase. Hazelwood School District overall saw a 21 percent increase in non-white populations. The chart below compares the percentage of non-white students at Hazelwood East High School to the district and other high schools in the district.



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

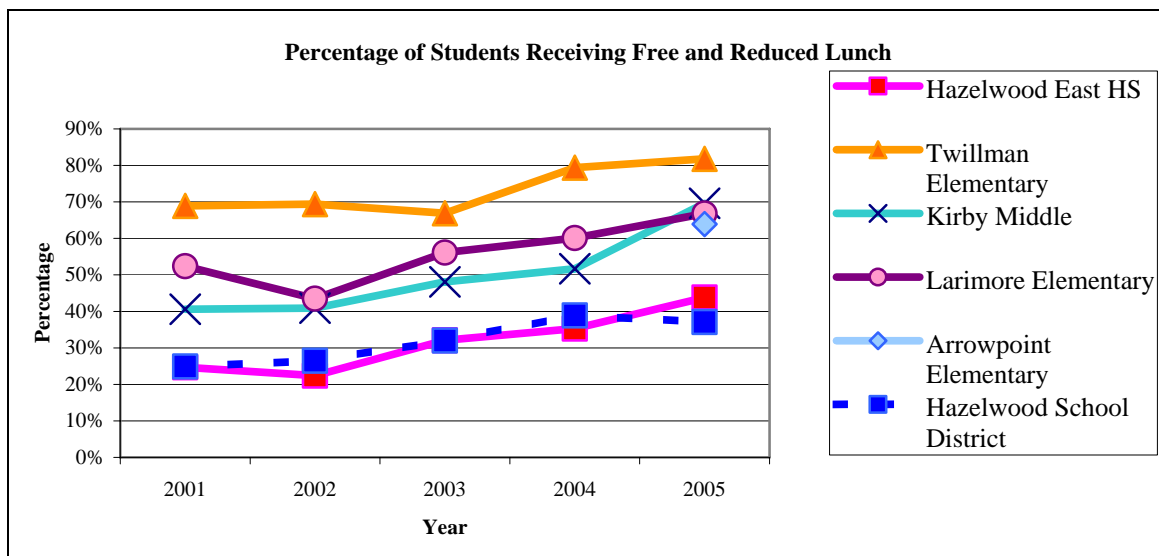
Free and reduced lunch

Between 2003 and 2005, there was a small increase from 32 percent to 39 percent of students in the Hazelwood School District eligible for free and reduced lunches. Of the 23 school districts in St. Louis County, the Hazelwood School District had the twelfth highest percentage of students eligible for free and reduced lunches from 2003 to 2005. The chart below shows the range of school districts across St. Louis County for 2005.



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

The chart below depicts the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch by school. Four of five public schools in Spanish Lake have a greater percentage of students eligible for free or reduced lunch as compared to the Hazelwood School District overall. (Note: Data for Arrowpoint Elementary, which opened in 2004, was not available until 2005.)



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Mobility

The Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education defines student mobility as the “number of students that transfer in added to the number of students who transfer out divided by fall enrollment”. This formula essentially measures the amount of turnover within the student population; it is a percentage showing how many of the enrolled students have either started or ended in that year.

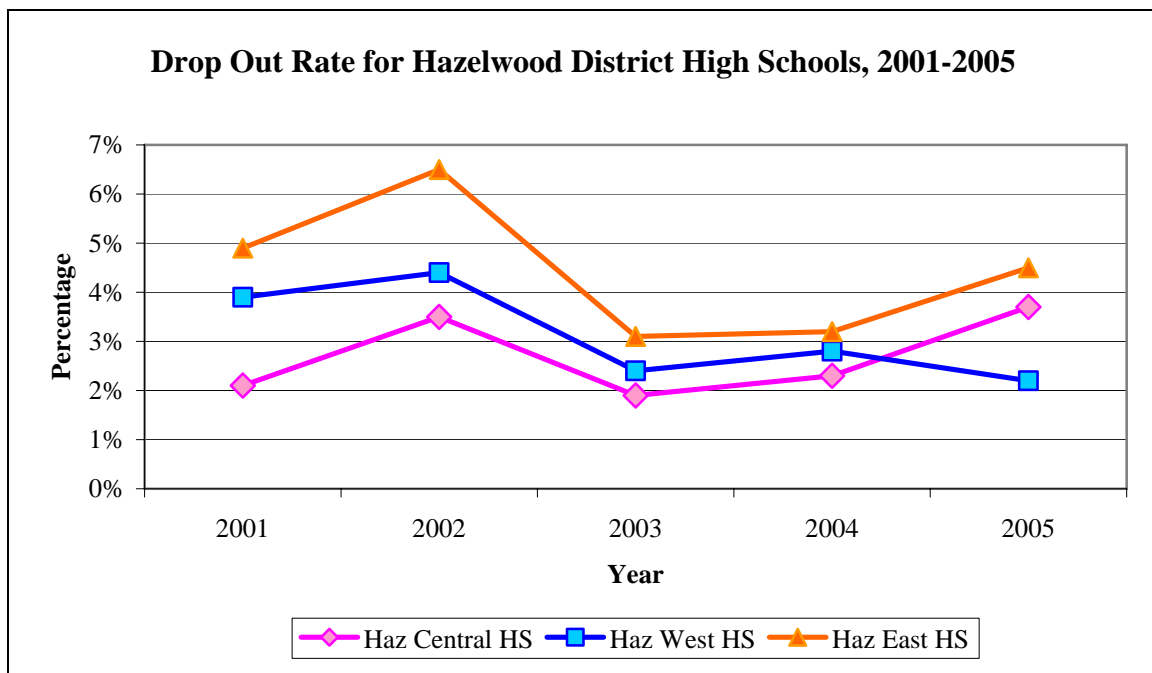
In 2005, the Missouri state average for mobility was 31 percent and the rate for the Hazelwood School District was 62 percent. As shown in the chart below, in a 2005 comparison of St. Louis County’s 23 school districts, the mobility rate ranged from a high of 81.9 percent for the Normandy School District to a low of 3.9 percent in the Clayton School District. Hazelwood has ranked in the top five school districts for highest mobility rate in 2003, 2004 and 2005.

Mobility Rate of School Districts In St. Louis County, 2005	
School District	Percentage
Normandy	81.9
Jennings	66.2
Hazelwood	61.3
University City	59.2
Riverview	57.0
Richmond Heights	53.7
Wellston	53.2
Florissant	49.6
Hancock	48.1
Bayless	42.0
Pattonville	36.0
Affton	32.8
Brentwood	25.6
Lindbergh	21.3
Webster	20.7
Ritenour	18.0
Ladue	17.6
Mehlville	17.2
Valley Park	13.3
Parkway	10.3
Rockwood	6.2
Kirkwood	5.5
Clayton	3.9

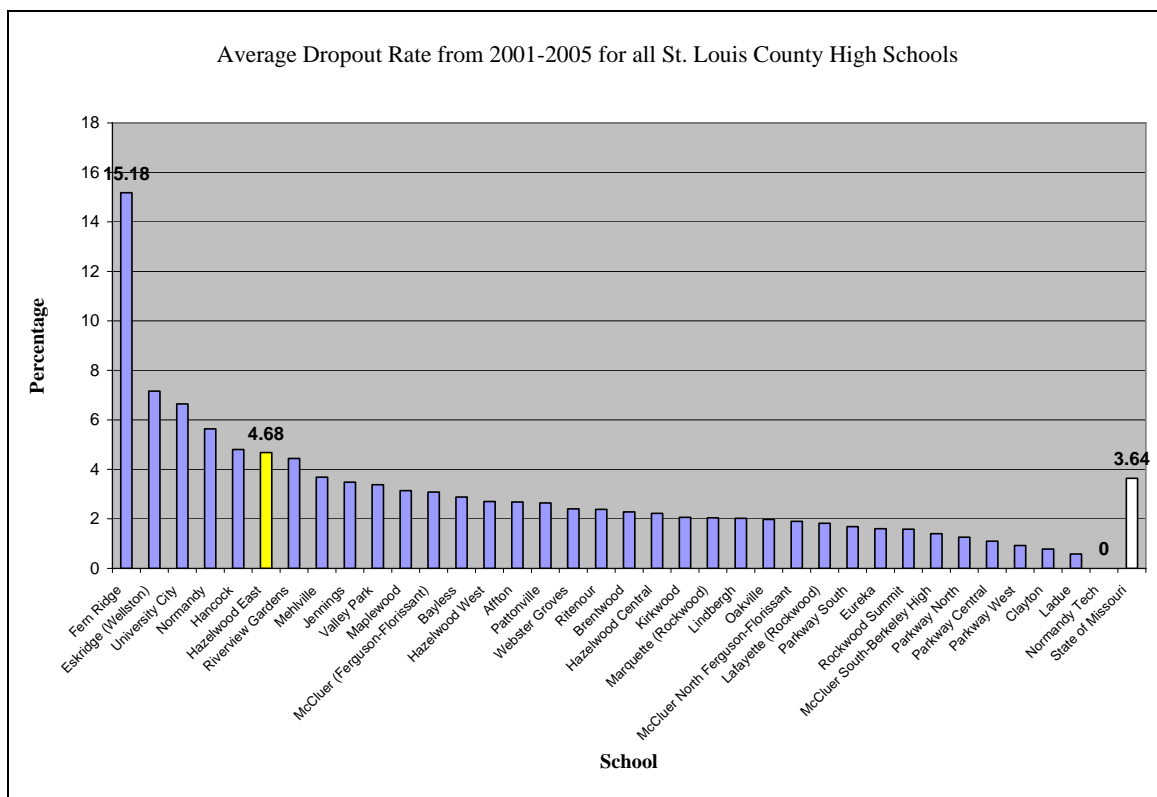
Source: Missouri Department of
Elementary and Secondary Education

Dropout Rate

The following chart compares the dropout rates among the three high schools in the Hazelwood School District. Of the three schools, Hazelwood East, located in the Spanish Lake area, had the highest dropout rate from 2001-2005.

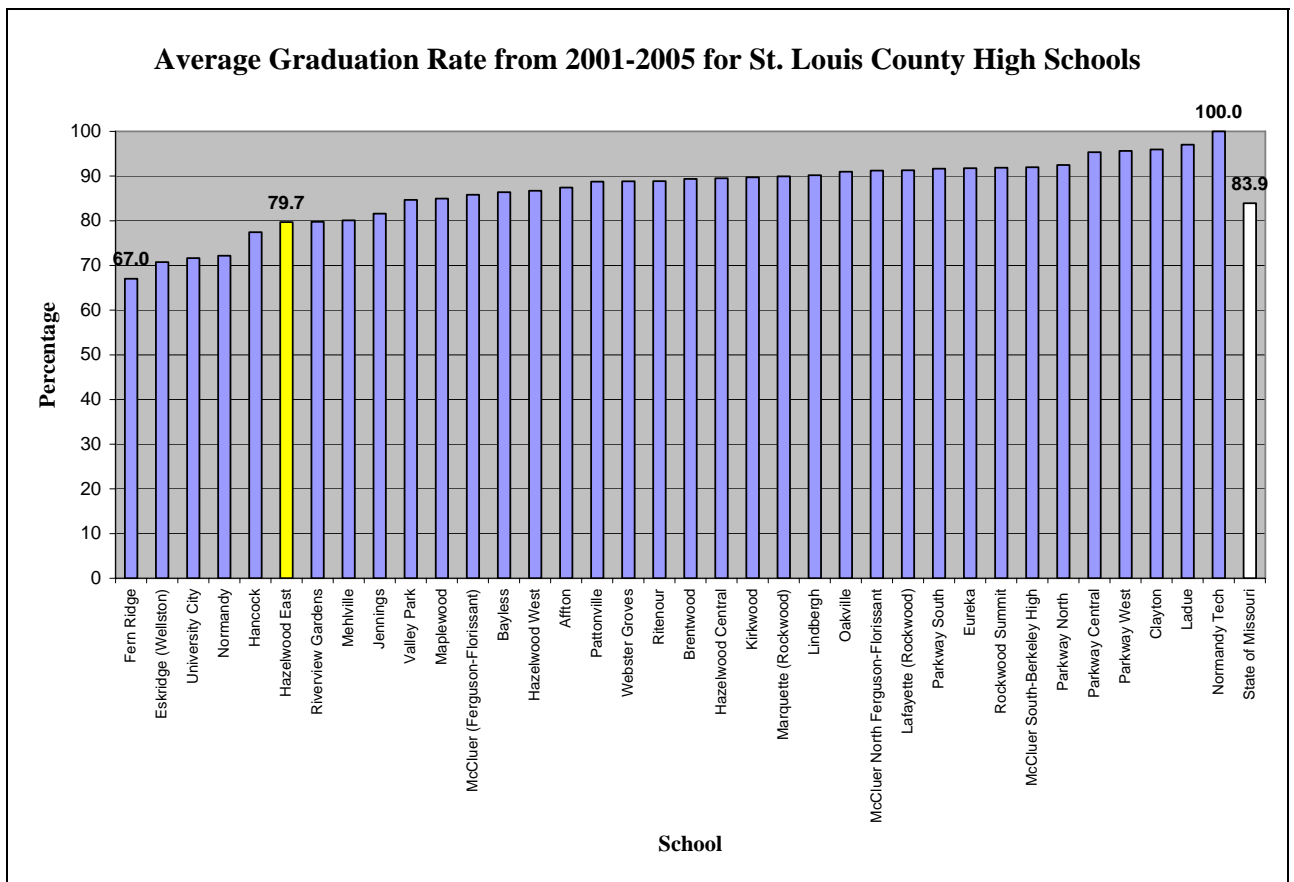


Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Hazelwood East has an average dropout rate of 4.8 percent for 2001-2005. This is the 6th highest dropout rate for all St. Louis County high schools. In conjunction with this, Hazelwood East High School has the 6th lowest average graduation rate (79.7 percent) of all high schools in St. Louis County.



Source: Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

Health Indicators

The following tables show births to teen mothers in the 63138 zip code and in St. Louis County from 2000 to 2005. In 63138, the number of live births to teen mothers has increased by 30 percent between 2000 and 2005. The tables show that births to women under 20 years old in Spanish Lake is much more prevalent than in St. Louis County. Also, while there has been a downward trend among this population in St. Louis County, there has been a slightly upward trend in Spanish Lake.

Births to teen mothers in the 63138 zip code						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Age of Woman						
10-14 years old				1	1	1
15-17 years old	11	10	6	17	13	18
18-19 years old	25	36	37	23	28	28
Total births to mothers under 20 years of age in 63138	36	46	43	41	42	47
Total Births in 63138	364	331	337	334	341	367
Percentage of births to women under 20 in 63138	9.89%	13.89%	12.76%	12.28%	12.32%	12.80%

Source: Missouri Dept. of Health and Senior Services, Missouri Information for Community Assessment (MICA)

Births to teen mothers in St. Louis County						
	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005
Age of Woman						
10-14	17	15	12	26	24	16
15-17	349	335	292	280	305	283
18-19	711	649	633	595	605	652
Total births to mothers under 20 years of age	1,077	999	937	901	934	951
Total Births in St. Louis County All Ages	12,892	12,407	12,138	12,218	12,190	11,998
Percentage of births to women under 20 in St. Louis County	8.35%	8.05%	7.71%	7.37%	7.66%	7.92%

Source: MO Dept. of Health and Senior Services, Missouri Information for Community Assessment (MICA)

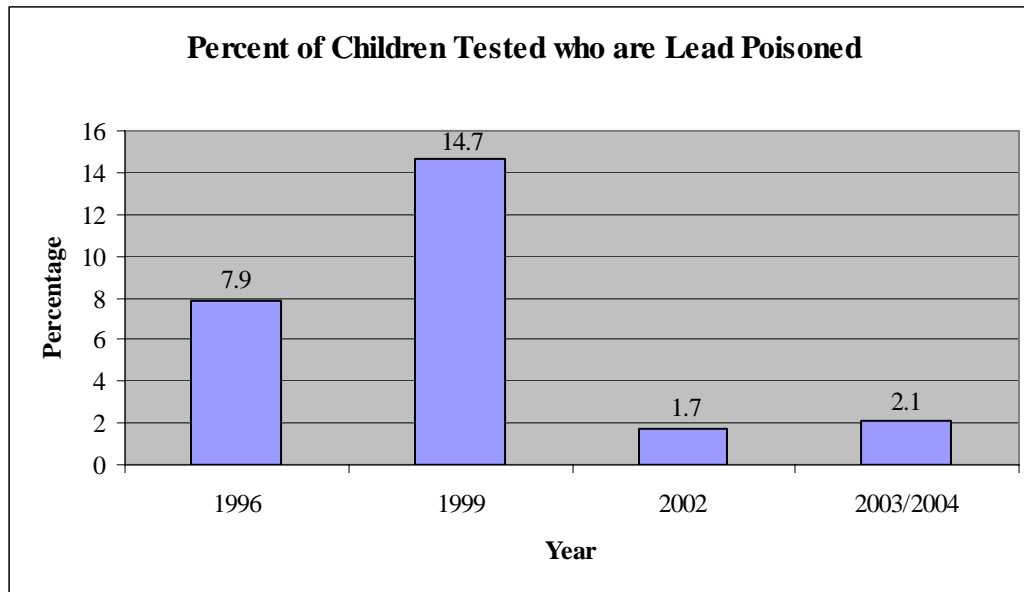
Child abuse and neglect

In Missouri, child abuse and neglect hotline tracks the number of calls requiring follow-up services based on the severity of the case. Severe cases require an investigation with substantiation, investigation with no substantiation but with recommended preventive services or a family assessment with preventative services. In the 63138 zip code, 20.2 percent of calls for neglect or abuse require follow-up services; the county average is 22.7 percent of calls. 13.9 children per 1,000 children are at-risk of neglect or abuse in the 63138 zip code. At-risk is defined as cases that have been substantiated or advised to seek

preventative services. Compare this statistic to 6.1 children per 1,000 in St. Louis County who are at risk of neglect or abuse.

Lead Poisoning

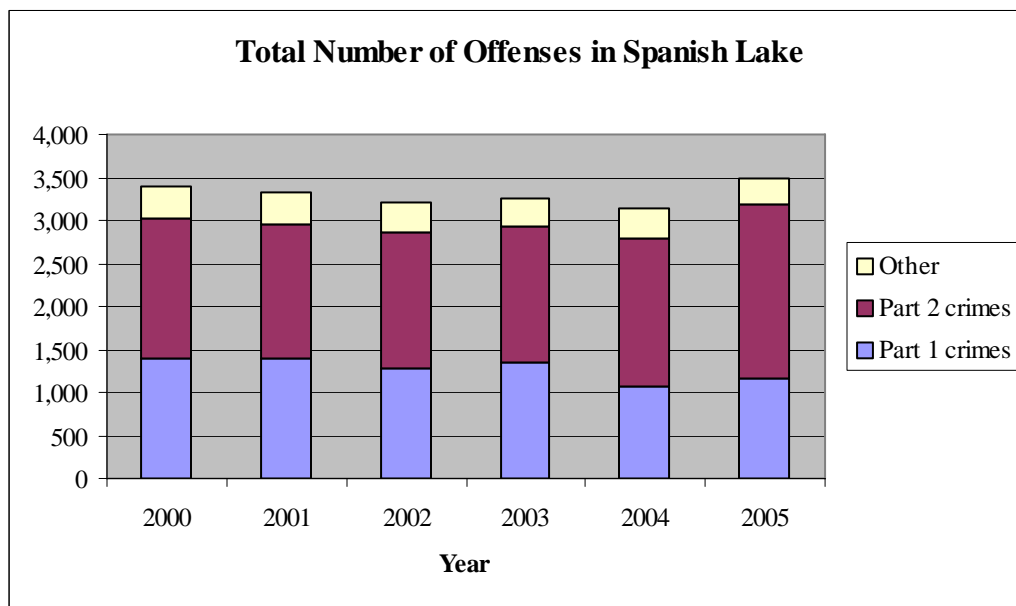
In the 63138 zip code, there have been dramatic decreases in the percentage of children who test positively for lead poisoning. Graph below shows the improvement between 1999 and 2002.



Source: 2005 Vision for Children At Risk Report

Crime Data

The chart below shows the total number of offenses in Spanish Lake between 2000 and 2005. Part One crimes are more serious offenses, including homicide, rape, assault, burglary, and arson. Part Two crimes are less serious offenses, including disorderly conduct, fraud, trespassing, and vandalism. The Other offenses category includes incidents like vehicular accidents, attempted suicides, some traffic offenses and other crimes not defined as Part One or Part Two. In Spanish Lake, Part One serious crimes decreased 16.5 percent between 2000 and 2005. Part Two less serious crimes increased 23.8 percent between 2000 and 2005.



Source: St. Louis County Police Department

ANALYSIS OF YOUTH ISSUES AND NEEDS

Overview

An analysis was conducted of the results from all of the quantitative and qualitative information gathered by the Spanish Lake Youth Needs Assessment project team between March and November 2006. The results on demographic and other quantitative indicators provide a context for evaluating the relative significance of findings. The most important quantitative findings show dramatic changes in demographic and socio-economic indicators in Spanish Lake, including: an increasing youth population; a majority proportion of single parent households; and, a significant percentage of youth and families in poverty.

When both qualitative and quantitative findings are taken into consideration, the prominent issues identified as impacting youth in the community include:

- the absence of structured activities;
- inadequate supervision of children;
- prevalence of violence and crime;
- school and education challenges; a high rate of births to teens;
- lack of public and private transportation;
- limited community cohesion;
- lack of safe walkways and inadequate street lighting.

Demographic and Socio-Economic Factors

Growth of Youth Population

The population profile in Spanish Lake has changed dramatically in recent years. Overall, the population in Spanish Lake increased 5.1 percent between 1990 and 2000. This rate was almost double the County population growth, at 2.3 percent, during the same period. The pattern of change, from 1990 to 2000 can be characterized as a decline in the aging population of small households, being replaced by a younger population in larger households.

The youth population in Spanish Lake grew by 30 percent, with the result that by the year 2000, one-third (33 percent) of the population in Spanish Lake was children and youth under age 20. There were corresponding declines in the older population age groups. The number of youth ages 5 to 9 years old had the largest increase of 42 percent. This growth in the youth population is a basic driving force increasing the demand for services, programming, and facilities in Spanish Lake.

Increase in Single Parent Households

The number of households with children in Spanish Lake increased from 2,678 in 1990 to 3,249 in 2000, representing a 33 percent increase in households with children. Even greater changes were seen in the portion of families that are single parent headed households, which increased from 27 percent in 1990 to 51.5 percent in 2000. In other words, by the year 2000, more than half of the families

with children in Spanish Lake were single parent headed households. Female-headed households with children represent most of this increase, growing by 143 percent.

While the number and proportion of families with children have increased significantly, households with two parents have declined. When other factors are taken into consideration, it is reasonable to conclude that there are proportionally fewer resources in many single parent families for parenting and supervision of children. For similar reasons, single parent families are more likely to have limited discretionary time for transporting children and for engaging in community and school activities.

Children and Families in Poverty

Between 1990 and 2000, both the number of children in poverty in Spanish Lake, and the number of families with children living in poverty increased by 200 percent. Over 80 percent of the families in poverty were female-headed households with children.

Poverty has been shown to have selective, but substantial impact on child and adolescent wellbeing, including undesirable outcomes in early childhood development, health, school performance, teen pregnancy/parenting, and violent crime. Families in poverty are likely to experience “eat or heat” type choices at some point in their lives. At various times, low income (“working poor”) families do not have enough resources required for one or more basic needs, meaning housing expenses, transportation, health care, child day care, and food.

In Spanish Lake, the cost of youth activities and lack of transportation are thought to be the two greatest barriers to youth access to existing programs and venues.

Prominent Issues And Conditions Impacting Youth

The results of the qualitative analysis indicated wide agreement in responses from the 253 study participants on three prominent youth issues in Spanish Lake.

While expressed in different ways, the responses from the various subgroups of participants were more alike than different on these issues

1. The absence of accessible, structured activities for youth
2. Inadequate supervision of children and youth
3. The prevalence of violence and crime

Analysis of quantitative data and participant feedback indicate that the high rate of births to teens is also a significant issue. Participant groups identified additional community conditions that have considerable impact on youth issues in Spanish Lake, including: a lack of public and private transportation; limited community cohesiveness; a lack of safe walkways/sidewalks; and inadequate street lighting.

Absence of Structured and Supervised Activities

First and foremost, there is universal agreement in responses from participants that one of the most significant youth issue in Spanish Lake is the lack of structured, supervised activities for youth of all ages, especially after school, on weekends, and in the summer. With a high degree of consistency, participants shared concerns about kids loitering, not having enough supervised activities, making poor choices, and getting into trouble. The belief is also widely held that because there are no activities for them, children in Spanish Lake are finding things to do that lead to trouble for themselves and others.

Key informants frequently responded to the assessment questions by naming venues and activities that are missing from the community. For example, they said:

There are no sports for grade school children, no cultural enrichment programs and no businesses that cater to kids. There is no library branch, no accessible summer school, and no dance or arts program. There are no constructive activities for youth to keep them off the streets. They have a lot of idle time and nothing to do after school until their parents get home. There are no community centers in neighborhoods, no safe place for kids.

Results from the youth discussion groups also indicate a need for more structured activities for kids. Over and over again, the youth groups discussed their desire for a “place to go” after school where there are positive programs and activities available, at low cost. Many of the youth felt that all of the negative things about Spanish Lake (i.e. fights, drugs, vandalism, gangs, etc.) are a result of kids having nothing else to do and nowhere to go during their free time.

Participants in the parent discussion groups identified a lack of affordable, accessible and safe activities as the most significant issue facing youth in Spanish Lake. Many parents see a correlation between all youth issues and the fact that youth are without constructive activities. They described the problem as youth ages 8 – 18 hanging out in the street, with no recreational opportunities and a lack of before and after school care.

At the community meeting, discussion groups of parents and community leaders shared similar perceptions. The most frequently cited issues were the lack of structured activities for kids after school and during the summer months and the lack of a facility or recreational/community center where families and kids can go. Group participants reiterated the concern that there were too many idle kids roaming free. They also named venues and programs that are missing from the community.

When parents were surveyed and asked to identify conditions in Spanish Lake that lead to youth issues and problems, most responses cited a lack of safe places for recreation in the neighborhood, and a lack of structured activities.

Inadequate Supervision of Children

There was broad agreement among key informants, youth groups, parents and community discussion groups that supervision is inadequate for many children and teens in Spanish Lake. They reported that there are children with no adult supervision for significant amounts of time. Many responses cited inadequate parental control and discipline as a major factor. However, key informants and parents also pointed out that some children are supervised well, depending on the resources of the family and the abilities of the parents.

Key informants from the school district estimated that over 30 percent of the elementary students are taking care of siblings while parents are at work. They said:

When there are parents working two or three jobs, the children are left at home. They cook for themselves and decide when they go to bed. These children come to school hungry and tired.

It's a tough issue. Parents have to work when the work is available, and they don't have money to pay for childcare, even if it was available at night. While they are at work, they are not tending to their children.

Participants expressed the view that the parenting skills of some parents in Spanish Lake are inadequate or ineffective, including some who are in denial about their child's behavior or trouble. Others turn to the Family Court to refer their child for incorrigibility. There are also parents in Spanish Lake who, for whatever reason, are not involved with their children. They are not always involved in solutions.

Responses from key informants and parent discussion groups also indicate that some families are more successful in supervising their children. They have more adult help at home and they have the ability to take their kids places and keep track of them.

Participants in the oldest youth discussion group (ages 16 to 24) were vocal about the lack of parenting skills of some parents and how young children needed supervision to succeed. This group also described the hardships of single parents and stated that they often do not have time to properly discipline their kids or offer guidance because they have to work. It is interesting that this same youth discussion group said that the police could assist with this by enforcing curfew.

The most frequent responses cited in the parent discussion groups related to unsupervised children as a result of lack of parental involvement and a prevalence of negative role models that both parents and community members provide for youth. Participants described ambivalence, work commitments, and unawareness as reasons for lack of parental involvement.

Violence and Crime

Almost all key informants and many of the youth group participants stated that youth in Spanish Lake are exposed to and impacted by violence and crime. Key informants described a range of forms of conflict, violence and behavior related to crime in Spanish Lake, including: bullying at home, in the streets and at school (some parents reportedly condone the behavior); gangs in Spanish Lake (new gangs start up; gang graffiti in the Spanish Lake Property Conservation District); fights among youth, increasingly with weapons (e.g. shootings have occurred; some fights at school have included weapons); marijuana use by youth at the middle and high school level; kids selling drugs and other items for income; and youth referred to Family Court for drug possession.

There is an ongoing concentration of crime at apartment complexes, with Countryside and Oak Park (formerly Sierra Vista) most frequently mentioned. Drug possession and drug sales by adults are prevalent. Several informants said that kids see older youth and young adults involved in crime and they are being influenced to see it as “no big deal”.

In the youth discussion groups, participants described things such as: “knick knocking” (pushing the doorbell and running); bullying; name calling; cursing, vandalism, and loud noises/music at night. Serious crimes are also a concern of the youth (i.e. burglary, drugs, speeding, theft, gangs, and kidnapping). Fighting was the most frequently mentioned concern of the youth participants, and this was described as “youth on youth, adult on adult and sometimes students on students (from different schools)”.

Parents in one discussion group expressed concern about a range of behavioral issues among youth in Spanish Lake, including: low self-esteem, peer pressure, vandalism, affiliation with gangs, increase in crime, and the negative influences of popular culture (e.g. music glorifying drugs, money, and promiscuity). Both parent discussion groups identified drugs as a problem in the community.

Kids having to deal with peer pressure and making poor choices were concerns expressed in different ways by each of the three groups at the community meeting. Participating in crime, hanging out at liquor stores, behaving badly at school sporting events, and affiliating with cliques or even gangs (e.g. Black Mob) were all identified as issues. Some participants in each group at the community meeting expressed fear that young boys and girls were “getting lost” and others were “trying to survive” among various competing groups of kids. One group commented that kids fight, get into trouble and engage in criminal behavior, especially if they are kicked out of school.

School and Education Issues

Most key informants and several of the parent group participants identified school related issues and problems among students enrolled in public school in Spanish Lake. Frequently cited issues included: academic challenges presented by the students transferring into the district; a high rate of school drop out; conflicting

expectations between parents, educators, and students, as new families move into the area; and youth issues brought into the schools from home and from the community.

The dramatic changes in the population demographics in Spanish Lake are reflected in dramatic changes in the student population in the area. During the past ten years, the growth in the youth population has resulted in considerable pressure on school facilities. Student enrollment has continued to rise beyond the capacity of the five schools in Spanish Lake. As an example, Kirby Middle School was originally designed for 900 students and there are currently almost 1,400 students enrolled. The school district is responding to this growth through a variety of methods, examples of which include: using temporary outbuildings to expand classrooms; numerous administrative changes; and a building campaign that includes constructing four new middle schools in the district. One of these, Hazelwood Southeast Middle School, will be completed and opened in August of 2007.

Key informants from the school district and the Family Court said that many transferred students are significantly behind academically and that differences in their basic skills continue to be challenging. Some transfer students also have behavior issues related to how well they cope with disparity of knowledge, abilities or resources. Informants said that many of the students are transient, meaning they move from house to house and stay enrolled for a short time. The high rate of student mobility at the secondary level is an indicator of this problem. The student mobility rate increased from 43.7 percent in 2003 to 61 percent in 2005, as compared to the Missouri average of 28.7 percent in 2003 and 31.1 percent in 2005. Transient students are considered at high risk for dropping out.

The high rate of school drop out is a significant problem in Spanish Lake. The five-year average drop out rate at Hazelwood East High School is the sixth highest of the 34 public high schools in the county. The graduation rate of 79 percent for the same period is the sixth lowest in the county. The stakes are high both socially and personally for students who drop out of the traditional high school setting. On a personal income level, dropouts on the average will earn \$9,245 less per year than their high school counterparts. High school dropouts are 3.5 times more likely than high school graduates to be arrested in their lifetime, and imprisonment is more likely, as 75 percent of America's state prison inmates are high school dropouts. Dropouts are at a risk for emotional and physical abuse, alcohol and drug abuse, and teenage pregnancy. Teen girls in the bottom 20 percent of basic reading and math skills are five times more likely to become mothers over a two year high school period than teen girls in the top 20 percent. Being a child of a parent who has dropped out of school also increases the likelihood that they, too, will become a dropout.

Teen Birth Rate/ Parenting Teens

The issue of the prevalence of teen pregnancy in Spanish Lake was described as both a significant problem by itself, as well as a primary factor contributing to

problems in parenting and supervising children. Key informants, including school principals, health educators and a social worker, cited teen pregnancy as an issue. This issue also surfaced in one of the parent discussion groups, where concerns were expressed about girls as young as 14 years old becoming pregnant and the lack of resources for them in crisis, including a way to help them continue their education when they drop out of school.

Although teen pregnancy and teen parenting were cited as issues by a relatively few number of study participants, a review of the health data on births to teens indicate that indeed there is cause for concern. In Spanish Lake, births to teen mothers increased by 30 percent between 2000 and 2005. While there has been a downward trend in births to teens in the County as a whole, there has been an upward trend in Spanish Lake. In 2005, the percentage of births to teens in Spanish Lake (13 percent) almost doubled the rate of the County (7.9 percent).

Lack of Public and Private Transportation

Public transportation is universally viewed as inadequate to address the need of the youth and families in Spanish Lake. Almost all key informants stated that many families do not have transportation (e.g. they can't afford a reliable car). The Metro bus stops are too far away from where these families live. There is virtually no accessible bus service at night or on weekends. Participants in the parent groups and community discussion groups identified the lack of public and private transportation as a significant barrier to kids' access to activities and services. The youth discussion group participants also cited the lack of public transportation as a major problem. Reportedly, some youth can get rides from friends or parents. However, due to parents' work schedules and a general lack of private transportation, many children and youth walk to get from place to place.

Limited Community Cohesiveness

An issue that emerged in various forms throughout the assessment is a lack of community cohesiveness. Participants in each group indicated in various ways that there are inadequate connections between families, schools and the community.

The high school age participants talked at length about the lack of a sense of community in Spanish Lake. They stated that families and youth don't know each other, and that there are no events or experiences that link youth together. These youth also expressed a need for information and notification about community events and programs. Additionally, they expressed a desire for opportunities to voice their point of view on community issues.

A need for building connections between people in Spanish Lake was also cited in the parent and community meeting discussion groups. Various participants said:

People don't know each other. Parents don't know what their kids are doing at other people's homes. Adults are afraid of kids.

There are not enough connections and support between schools, families and organizations.

A Lack of Safe Walkways/Sidewalks

Key informants, youth and parents and community participants stated that the absence of sidewalks is a serious safety hazard for children and youth in Spanish Lake. It is encouraging to note that some key informants acknowledged that recent construction of sidewalks on Bellefontaine Road has improved safety for children walking to and from school. Many more participants stated that there are areas where there are no safe walkways or sidewalks. Larimore Road was frequently cited as an example.

Inadequate Street Lighting

Youth, parents and community discussion group participants consider lack of street lighting a serious safety issue. Youth reported that they do not feel safe walking at night due to lack of street lighting. Several parents and school participants identified Bellefontaine Road needing streetlights, particularly near street intersections and businesses (i.e. near a liquor store). As stated by one of the local school principals, “a lot of kids and adults have to walk on Bellefontaine Road at night. There are places where it is too dark and people are afraid of crime...for good reason. Street lights would make a big difference”.

GAPS IN PROGRAMMING AND SERVICES

Overview

As part of the qualitative assessment, key informants and participants in the discussion groups and focus groups were asked to identify programs, services, and individuals currently in place to address youth needs in Spanish Lake. Survey respondents were asked to identify how their kids spend their time. All groups in the qualitative assessment were able to identify some programs and services for youth in Spanish Lake. However, it should be noted that a comprehensive inventory of programs and services was not conducted as part of the assessment process. Rather, the identification of programs and services is based on what was known and reported by key informants, kids, parents and community leaders. The summary of responses provides insight into the community's awareness of programs and services in Spanish Lake and elsewhere, as well as their perceptions about gaps in addressing youth needs.

Further, participants were given the opportunity to identify the programs and services they would like to see offered in the community. Adults were asked *"If resources were available, what programs or activities would be of greatest benefit to children and teens in Spanish Lake?"* Young people were asked, *"If you were granted three wishes to improve your neighborhood for kids, what would you do?"* Their responses strongly correlate with the major issues identified in the assessment.

Identification of Existing Programs and Services

All groups in the qualitative assessment were able to identify some programs and services for Spanish Lake youth. While many programs mentioned are located in Spanish Lake, some are located outside of the community, including in the City of St. Louis. Responses from participants are summarized below. A table of the specific programs and services identified by participants is provided at the end of this section.

Key Informants

Most key informants were able to name programs or people currently providing services for youth in Spanish Lake. The area is not entirely devoid of assets for youth development. However, several informants could name only one or two programs for youth, and some could not name a single youth program within the Spanish Lake area. More significantly, the responses clarified the limitations of programs that exist, including capacity, accessibility, cost, and relevancy to the youth population. Key informants said:

Very few youth programs exist in this area. The programs that exist are too expensive for the majority of the families. If you have money you can access programs, and if you are very poor you can utilize subsidized programs. But the majority of the youth who need these programs do not qualify in either category. Many youth "fall through the cracks" for they do not qualify for the programs that do exist in the community.

Kids must go to other areas to find programs for them. There is not much here. It is remote. There are simply not many people providing organized things for kids in this area.

Some existing programs at the parks are not oriented to youth. Parks were built in the 1960's and 1970's when the trends were different. Day camps were run at the recreation complex and the neighborhood parks. There were also church-run athletic leagues then. The programming needs to change with the demographics. We need to ask residents what activities they want.

The Spanish Lake Park is beautiful. However, it is isolated from where the kids live.

Youth

When kids were asked to identify existing programs and activities currently available, they predominately listed athletic programs. All participants identified football, swimming, basketball, and cheerleading programs. Both the high school students and participants in the Hazelwood Doors to Success program identified a list of existing programs for younger kids, such as DARE and the Dream Football League. Older kids felt that there are not programs available for their age group (14 years old and older); that there is “nothing to do”. Several older students agreed that if they want to do anything fun they have to outside of the Spanish Lake community.

Parents

When parents in the focus groups were asked to identify existing programs for children and teens, only two responses were cited by more than one parent: football at Spanish Lake Park, and the North County Recreation Complex. Other parents were aware of activities at Twillman Elementary, such as the Chess Club and Family Night. Among parents who responded to the survey, 36 percent indicated that their children participated in after school programs and the same percentage noted their children spent time in church youth groups.

Community Leaders

Participants in the community leaders' focus groups were able to identify a wide range of programs and considered some of them assets of the community, such as the football program at Spanish Lake Park, the Lady Hoopers basketball program, Chess Club at Twillman Elementary, Girl Scouts and Boys to Men program. Many were able to identify athletic programs, but some of these were located outside of Spanish Lake (e.g. Matthews-Dickey and Herbert Hoover Boys & Girls Clubs in the City of St Louis). At least one group of community leaders felt that there were some programs available to address youth issues in Spanish Lake, such as the DARE dances at Jamestown Mall and the County's Crime Free Multi-Housing program.

Limitations and Gaps in Existing Programs and Services

Key informants and other participants, while able to identify programs and services for Spanish Lake youth, also recognized the limitations of many of the programs and the absence of many needed activities and services. The responses below summarize the issues raised by participants in the qualitative assessment.

Accessibility

Most organized programs that exist are inaccessible to youth in Spanish Lake because the location is too far away from where they live. Families without transportation, for example, are unable to get to the Emerson YMCA, Lewis and Clark County Library, or the boys and girls clubs in the City of St Louis. Other issues identified by participants that keep kids from accessing programs include:

- The cost is too great (e.g. YWCA Latchkey program); and/or
- The programs do not operate at times when kids and families need them most (e.g. North County Recreation Complex);
- Eligibility is restricted (e.g. tutoring at elementary school only for selected students; Gear Up program enrollment restricted to targeted class)

Capacity

The capacity of existing programs is not sufficient to provide opportunities to the many children and teens in the area. For example, Girls Club is once per week for one group of girls at one elementary school, compared to the several hundred girls who are not involved in any after school activities. Some programs for youth have been cut back or eliminated, including County recreational programming. Other programs and services have eligibility requirements.

Need/program mismatch

Some facilities and programs do not match the developmental needs or interests of the youth population. More active, not passive, recreational activities are desired at the parks. There is high interest in basketball among kids, but almost no facilities available. Activities for older youth, aged 14 years old and up, appear to be very limited.

Gaps in programming

There are virtually no programs in place to address some youth issues, such as supervision after school, summer activities, and teen pregnancy/parenting teens. Overall, there is a lack of variety in programming and, specifically, an absence of cultural, music and art programs, academic, leadership, life skills, and mentoring programs. Health and social services for kids and their family are also needed in the community.

Desired Programs, Services and Facilities

All of the participant groups shared their ideas for programs and activities for kids, as well as suggested facilities to house those activities. In many cases, programs and activities were specifically discussed in relationship to schools, a community center or recreational facility. The input from key informants, youth, parents, and community leaders is summarized below.

Sports and Recreational Programs

Sports and recreational programs were the most consistently desired activities for kids by all groups participating in the qualitative assessment - key informants, youth, parents, and community leaders. For school age kids, sports and recreational programs were just about the only type of activity identified in response to the “three wishes” question. While a variety of sports and recreation activities were mentioned, participants most consistently wanted opportunities to play basketball and swim.

Before and After School Activities

Key informants were most likely to suggest using schools for programs, especially after-school and in the evenings. Community leaders and Doors to Success participants also advocated the use of school facilities. Many specific suggestions were made to provide before and after school care and programs, expand school hours, make use of school facilities in the evenings, and to consider using the new Southeast Middle School as a site for after school/evening activities.

Career Development and Job Training

For adults, career development and job training for youth were the most frequently identified desired activities, after sports and recreational programs. Key informants, community leaders and parents all had suggestions, including introducing different careers to 4th and 5th graders, doing more career fair activities, and providing youth employment experiences in the summer.

Mentoring

Key informants, community leaders and parents completing surveys all wanted more mentoring type programs, especially to provide positive African-American male role models for kids. Suggestions were made for possibly utilizing Washington University, Florissant Valley or UMSL to recruit mentors.

Academic, Cultural, Life Skills and Leadership Programs

Key informants and community leaders suggested the most varied programs to address youth needs, including academic programs, tutoring, computer training, cultural programs (art, performing arts), life skills, social skills, anger management, and leadership development.

Health, Wellness and Medical Services

Key informants and parents participating in discussion groups and completing surveys all identified the desire for health and wellness programs and medical services for kids and families.

Parenting Skills and Special Services for Kids

Key informants and other group participants wanted parenting classes (for single mothers) and special services for kids and families, such as mental health services, bereavement counseling and a “Kids in the Middle” program.

Community Center/Recreation Center

Middle school and high school students, parents, and community leaders all identified the dream of a community center or recreation center where kids and families could gather for a variety of programs and activities. While some participants envisioned a new facility like the “Clayton Center”, others believed that existing facilities, such as local schools, could be used. Some participants, including kids, made suggestions as to where such a center could be located, naming several vacant lots and buildings in Spanish Lake. A wide variety of models were suggested for a community facility, including a County Youth Services Facility, a Comprehensive Family Center, and a Teen Drop-In Center. Suggestions were also made to bring services to the large apartment complexes, specifically Countryside and Oak Park (formerly Sierra Vista).

Park Programs and Facilities

Key informants and middle and high school students were most likely to make specific suggestions for improvements to parks and area playgrounds. Key informants suggested that the St. Louis County Department of Parks and Recreation gather input from residents and update their programs to better meet changing demographics, as well as consider updating the Ice Rink at the North County Recreation Complex into a gym/fitness center. Kids want to see basketball hoops placed in Larimore and Spanish Lake Parks.

Other Programs and Services

Other programs and services suggested by participants included:

- **Community building activities** - High school students, community leaders and parents all suggested ways to build community spirit and relationships in response to the “dream” question, including an annual community event (e.g. picnic or fair), more community activities and more ways to get to know neighbors.
- **Police services** - Key informants, community leaders and parents made suggestions for improved police services in Spanish Lake, including more community policing and curfew enforcement.
- **Community improvements** – The need for more sidewalks and streetlights was mentioned by several groups, as was the desire for improvements to the Oak Park apartments (formerly Sierra Vista) and Sierra Vista Shopping Center.
- **Transportation** - While access to activities was identified as a major barrier for kids, transportation related suggestions were less frequent. The desire for door-to-door transportation, more carpooling, and more frequent Metrobus service were all suggested.

Existing programs and services identified by participants in the qualitative assessment are listed in the table below.

EXISTING PROGRAMS AND SERVICES IDENTIFIED BY PARTICIPANTS	
Schools	
STEP , an alternative to suspension program is operated at the high school.	
Big Brothers and Big Sisters was mentioned as having a waiting list of 500 students.	
A Career Fair is sponsored by the district.	
Dental Care and Eye Care programs are available, but under-utilized.	
The Gear Up Program , provided through UMSL, for students in one class, grade seven through high school.	
Girls Club is offered once per week after school at one school.	
Girl Scouts are active at some schools; Boy Scouts are not active	
Family Night at Twillman School, offering topical presentations.	
Junior Achievement is a positive program	
Parenting Class was offered at Kirby Middle School and was cancelled due to lack of attendance.	
Parent Liaison positions at each elementary school.	
Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSA) are active at each school in the area.	
Student council, chorus and orchestra are available at schools	
Tutoring is available once per week at the elementary schools, for selected students.	
There is a Buddy Program at Hazelwood East High School, where teachers “adopt” a student and provide support; limited to selected students. The High School set up a voluntary account to provide food for hungry students .	
YWCA Latchkey program offers before and after school child care at one school. It is too expensive for families in Spanish Lake; very few children of the many kids that need it are enrolled.	
Churches	
First Church of God of St Louis has programs including Discover Club, Teen Youth group, and Vacation Bible School. A few youth from the neighborhood attend. They also have an event on Halloween so kids have a safe place to “trick or treat”. The church is host for the Doors To Success Program.	
Empowerment Church has several youth programs	
Hope Church has after school programs and counseling for youth.	
Name of Jesus and Bissell Hills churches jointly provide a Youth Group .	
Recreational Leagues/Activities	
Bowling at Dick Weber lanes	
Cheerleading program at Spanish Lake Park	
Dream Football League at Spanish Lake Park	
Florissant Raiders Football League	
Football at Kirby Middle School	
Herbert Hoover Boys & Girls Club (City of St. Louis)	
Matthews-Dickey Boys & Girls Club (City of St. Louis)	
Lady Hoopers basketball program	

Lutheran North High School basketball camp
Surrey Lane Baseball Association
Team St. Louis basketball program
Emerson YMCA swimming
St. Louis County – Parks & Recreation
Larimore and Spanish Lake Parks; fishing, tennis, ride bikes, playgrounds , other
North County Recreation Complex , the pool and ice rink , day camps, swimming lessons, ice skating lessons, and other related activities. Day camp participation was about 65% of capacity of 80.
Outdoor Education programs are offered at Spanish Lake Park.
St. Louis County - Family Court*
Delinquency Supervision
Specialized group programs , e.g. Group Counseling, Anger Management, other
Intensive Services , generally for 10-14 yr olds
Special Probation , for youth involved in gangs
Truancy Court (program being re-evaluated)
*Programs and services of the Court are restricted to youth under Court jurisdiction.
St. Louis County Police
Crime Free Multi-Housing program
DARE program and DARE dances
National Night Out
Neighborhood Patrol
School Resource Officers
Teen Academy
Police Explorers program
St. Louis County - Human Services, and Dept. of Health
Doors To Success Program (case management, GED; job prep; counseling; life skills; community service activities).
Workforce Investment Act youth program, Urban League ; currently 22 youth in Spanish Lake (Zip code 63138).
Teen Health Consultant program , peer counseling at Hazelwood East High School; concluding Spring 2007.
Other Services and Providers
BJC Crisis Response provides services for crisis calls for mental health emergencies.
Community Action Agency of St. Louis County (CAASTL) provides counseling and other services for youth who are referred by school Social Workers; for youth who are at-risk at the 6 th grade to middle school level.
Community Response Team (CRT) ; multiple school and agency representatives meet regularly to respond to youth and family crisis and issues.
Crisis Nursery , next to Christian North East Hospital
Family counseling is offered at Florissant Psychology and Counseling; up to four counseling sessions for students/families in Hazelwood School District.
The Missouri Conservation Department has a program involving youth at the Columbia Bottoms Center .

A Food Pantry is operated by several churches in the area (moving from Redman to Trampe Road).
“ Sista-Keepers ” program provides a curriculum for young girls; on healthy relationships, peer refusal; <i>located outside of the area</i> .
Spanish Lake Community Association is renovating the Twillman House and pursuing development of support for facilities and organized activities for youth and adults.

Priorities and Action Agenda

Criteria

Priorities are based on recommendations that: 1) address the greatest need, 2) impact the greatest number of youth, and 3) and are highly visible in the community.

Community-wide Priorities

1. Increase opportunities for youth to participate in supervised activities after school
2. Increase summer and weekend activities for youth and families
3. Increase community-policing services
4. Target youth and family services at the Oak Park and Countryside Apartment complexes
5. Provide programs to reduce school drop out, increase enrollment in job training and continuing education, and reduce risk factors for teen pregnancy.

Priorities 1 and 2: Activities

A. Increase the availability of supervised academic and athletic **activities after school** from 3:00 – 6:00 pm in collaboration with the Hazelwood School District and key community organizations. *Lead responsibility: County officials to facilitate partnerships between Hazelwood School District, Herbert Hoover Boys and Girls Club, and other community organizations*

- **Establish a Boys and Girls Club in Spanish Lake**

B. Increase availability of supervised athletic and extracurricular **activities on weekends and during the summer** by working with key community organizations to develop and provide programming for youth and families.

Lead Responsibility: Department of Parks and Recreation

- **Provide summer camp opportunities, potentially at Spanish Lake Park, Larimore Park, or the North County Recreation Complex**
- **Make improvements to the North County Recreation Complex**

Priority 3: Community Policing

A. Develop the School Resource Officer (SRO) as a main point of contact between the St. Louis County Police and young people. School Resource Officers have the potential to serve as mentors and expand their role in schools beyond enforcement.

Lead Responsibility: St. Louis County Police to work with the Hazelwood School District

- **Re-evaluate the role and responsibilities of SROs in order to maximize their effectiveness in working with school personnel, students and community organizations.**

- B. Expand outreach and marketing of existing and future programming by connecting Neighborhood Policing Officers and School Resource Officers with community organizations like Parent Teacher Student Associations (PTSAs) and churches.

Lead Responsibility: St. Louis County Police Dept

- Increase the number of police officers
- Strengthen Teen Academy and Explorers program and/or consider new types of youth outreach.
- Expand Neighborhood Watch and Power in Numbers

Priority 4: Target Services

- A. Design a pilot program at the Countryside and Oak Park apartment complexes in Spanish Lake to offer family stabilization activities and support services. Components would include social services, educational services and support activities for youth and their families. *Lead responsibility: Department of Human Services*

Priority 5: Youth Education and Support

- A. Develop school-based and community-based programs to successfully address school dropout and teen pregnancy. *Lead responsibility: Department of Human Services, Department of Health, and Hazelwood School District*

- Develop and pilot the school-based Teen Outreach Program, a national model proven successful in reducing dropout and pregnancy, in partnership with the Hazelwood School District.
- Develop community-based programs to address drop-out and pregnancy prevention, in partnership with health and social service agencies (e.g. CAASTLC, Urban League, and Better Family Life)
- Expand the Hazelwood Doors to Success program for youth who have dropped out of school, by coordinating Department of Labor funding and General Revenue funding resources within the Department of Human Services.

2007 Additional Actions

In addition to the Priorities and Action Agenda, St. Louis County is initiating the following activities in 2007:

Recreation – Department of Parks and Recreation

- Begin evaluating future programming at the North County Recreation Complex.
- Build basketball courts next to the tennis courts at Larimore Park.
- Convert one tennis court to basketball at Spanish Lake.
- Begin playground improvements at the North County Recreation Complex.
- Work with the Spanish Lake Community Association to bring Movie Nights and other activities to Spanish Lake Park.

Social Services – Department of Human Services

- Develop a pregnancy prevention program with Doors to Success youth.

Safety – County Police and Family Court

- Collect and analyze the Family Court's juvenile crime data.

Community Improvements – Department of Highways & Traffic, Department of Planning

- Construct pedestrian walkway on the portion of Larimore Road from Senate to Larimore Parkway
- Plan for sidewalk construction on Prigge Road by Southeast Middle School in 2008.
- Evaluate MetroBus services to Spanish Lake.

APPENDIX A - Key Informants Interviewed

Schools - Hazelwood School District:

Dr. Chris Wright, Superintendent, Hazelwood School District
Brenda Harris, Principal, Twillman Elementary
Audrey Cherry-Bates, Director School Safety
Dr. Blaine Henningsen, Assistant Superintendent for Accountability
Mark Martin, Principal, Hazelwood East High
Laura Maybry, Assistant Principal, Hazelwood East High
Dr. Richard Bass, Principal, Kirby Middle
Janice Jones, Assistant Principal, Kirby Middle
Wade Steinhoff, Assistant Principal, Kirby Middle
Jean McClendon, Principal, Larimore Elementary
Pat Giles, President, PTSA, Hazelwood East High
Julia Burke, Assistant Superintendent for Student Services
Linda Meyer, Administrative Assistant
Allison Walton, Social Worker
Vershaun Howze, Director of Residency
Lisa Johnson, Social Worker

Churches/ Parochial Schools:

John Klotz, Senior Pastor, First Church of God
Dan Grumich, Development Office, Trinity High School
Patty, Secretary, Our Lady of the Rosary Catholic Church
Sister Mary Lawrence, Principal, Christ Light of the Nation Catholic School

Agencies:

Angela Tate, Op. Officer, Urban League WIA Workforce Development
Lowanda Powell, Case Manager, Urban League

St. Louis County:

Billi Patzius, DJO, Family Court, North County
James Cashett, DJO, Family Court, North County
Michael Crayton, DJO North County
Joe Saiz, DJO, Family Court, Central County
Officer Sammie Bush, School Resource Officer, Police
Officer Tim Ware, Police
Officer Dave Porter, Police
Bob Robinson, Problem Properties Unit, Department of Public Works
Peggy Mohl, Health Education, Department of Health
Warren Jackson, Health Education, Department of Health
Jeanette Murphy, Workforce Development, Department of Human Services
Eric Johnson, Complex Manager, North County Recreation Complex, Parks Department
Steve Tiemann, Park Ranger Supervisor, Parks Department
Tom Ott, Assistant Director, Parks Department

Individual resident leaders

Carletta Washington, Education for All
Dora Gianoulakis, President, Spanish Lake Community Association
Brian Shaw

APPENDIX B – SUMMARY REPORTS

The following summary reports are available upon request:

1. **Summary of Key Informant Interviews**
2. **Summary of Youth Discussion Groups**
3. **Summary of Parent Focus Groups**
4. **Summary of Community Focus Groups**
5. **Summary of Parent Survey Results**