A black and white photograph of a young child with curly hair, laughing heartily. The child is wearing a striped shirt and a backpack. The background is a blurred outdoor setting.

**Assets, Gaps,
and a Way Forward:
A Report on Early
Childhood Care and
Education in
the Willowbrook
Corner Area**



This report was completed by IFF's Building Blocks program. IFF developed Building Blocks with funder the Grand Victoria Foundation (GVF) to build the capacity of high-need communities throughout Illinois to meet their child care and early education needs. Working with community stakeholders, Building Blocks helps communities plan to address underlying gaps in the child care and early education service delivery system. Projects underway are building community networks, adding bricks and mortar capacity, and helping bring state-funded programs, including Preschool for All, to the areas where they are needed the most.

About IFF

IFF is a nonprofit community development financial institution that assists nonprofits serving disadvantaged communities with real estate planning, development and finance. Real estate consulting and project management services help nonprofits evaluate their space needs as well as plan and implement facility projects. IFF provides below-market-rate financing for real estate acquisition, facility construction or renovation, equipment, vehicles and facility repairs. Additionally, IFF conducts research and evaluation for and about the nonprofit sector.

Accessible, high quality early childhood care and education is a key component of a healthy and sustainable community. With the majority of mothers remaining in the workforce while their children are young, families need access to dependable, safe, and nurturing care for their children—sometimes for as many as 50 hours per week. This care needs to be affordable for working families of all incomes, and needs to fit families’ work schedules.

Equally important is ensuring that every child has access to quality early learning experiences. Decades of research has shown that children who participate in high quality educational programs from birth to five years enter school better prepared to succeed in kindergarten and beyond. This is especially true for children who are “at-risk” for future school difficulties due to low parental education, low family income, lack of English language skills, or other factors.

Yet most communities are not equipped to deliver comprehensive early education and care to children from birth to five years. In many, child care and other early learning programs cannot accommodate all of the children in the community who need these services. School districts and early childhood service providers struggle to ensure that parents are aware of and able to access the services they need, especially in communities where large numbers of new immigrant families arrive each year. Moreover, service providers often work in isolation rather than in coordination, leaving parents to navigate a fragmented system by themselves. As a result, many children enter school without having had the early experiences that could have best prepared them for success.

A Community Capacity Approach to Early Childhood Care and Education

In most communities, early childhood care and education is provided by a wide range of providers in an equally wide range of settings (see Early Childhood Care and Education Service Types and Funding Streams). In a single community, providers may include for-profit corporations, non-profit community-based agencies, faith-based groups, school districts, park districts, and individuals providing care in their own homes. This diversity of providers generally means that families have many different types of care and early education to choose from and programs are often able to flexibly respond to families’ needs. In many cases, however, a child may benefit from more than one program but cannot access both or all of them as they are offered by different providers at different sites. Most communities lack an overarching planning body responsible for ensuring that enough services exist, that they are affordable for families, and that they meet families’ needs. Even where these entities exist, resources are typically not available to assess the community’s needs and identify critical shortages.

A growing number of communities have come together to create their own local collaborative groups to jointly review and plan for early childhood care and education services. These local task forces or collaborations assess community needs and current resources, and develop strategic plans for increasing their community's capacity to meet the needs of young children and their families.

Building Blocks, through the Early Learning Planning Initiative, works with communities with large unmet needs for early childhood care and education to identify needs, develop collaborations, and set strategic plans. These communities include those identified through IFF's 2003 statewide needs assessment, *Moving Towards a System*, as well as additional communities that were not included in the 2003 assessment, but that county-level agencies identified as needing additional child care and early learning resources. Building Blocks brings together stakeholders in each community to examine the extent to which needed services are available, accessible, high quality, and efficiently distributed throughout the community, and the extent to which families, public officials, and other service providers know about these early childhood services. The collaborators then develop strategies and a plan to address their most pressing early childhood care and education needs. With a clear assessment of needs, an agreed upon set of strategies, and a concrete plan for moving forward, each community is equipped to make fundamental changes that will help to ensure that all children access the programs that prepare them for success in kindergarten and beyond.

The Willowbrook Corner Area Building Blocks Initiative

In early 2007, IFF began a collaboration with Positive Parenting DuPage to bring Building Blocks to DuPage County. Willowbrook Corner, an unincorporated community in southeast DuPage which has experienced dramatic growth in its low-income population in recent years, was identified as an area of high unmet need. About 70 percent of students in the local elementary school, Anne M. Jeans School, are from low-income families, up from only 30 percent in 2003-04.

In February 2007, IFF and Positive Parenting DuPage hosted a kick-off meeting to explain the program's goals and planning process. IFF issued an informal request for proposals inviting targeted communities to apply for assistance in completing a detailed analysis of supply, demand, and barriers to accessing quality early education and care and developing a community action plan to increase access. The Community House and Burr Ridge School District 180 took the lead in forming a Task Force, which began meeting in June 2007. The group included representatives from the Burr Ridge School District Early Childhood Program, Head Start, local child care and preschool providers, the DuPage County Health Department, Teen Parent Connection, and other interested parties. The Task Force chose to focus its efforts on the area served by Anne M. Jeans School, but to include in the demographic study the census tracts that include the area bounded roughly by Cass Avenue to the west, Plainfield Road to the north, County Line Road to the east, and the Chicago Sanitary and Ship Canal to the south (Figure 1).

About Positive Parenting DuPage

Positive Parenting DuPage is a multi-faceted, county-wide collaboration comprised of over 100 organizations that work with families during the first three years of a child's life. Positive Parenting DuPage seeks to change the culture of parenting and child development in DuPage County. By uniting organizations across the county with similar goals, Positive Parenting DuPage will coordinate and strengthen linkages, educational materials and access to support for all new families.

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IFF provided the Task Force with demographic data regarding the children in the community, including estimates of the number of children who need full-day, full-year child care and other early learning services. The Task Force analyzed these data and verified that they were consistent with their knowledge and experience. IFF also gathered information from the YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral and Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) databases about the availability of center- and home-based child care and use of the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) in the area. Providers were surveyed to confirm the total number of children they can accommodate and the number of children currently enrolled in their programs. This information was mapped to provide the graphic presentation of the current need for and supply of early childhood care and education. Figure 2 shows the supply and demand for full-day child care provided to children of all income levels, while Figure 3 depicts the distribution of children from birth to five years whose families have low incomes.

The Task Force identified several key community needs and developed a set of possible strategies for addressing them. This report represents the recommendations of the Task Force for continued capacity-building for early childhood services in the Willowbrook Corner Area.

Figure 1

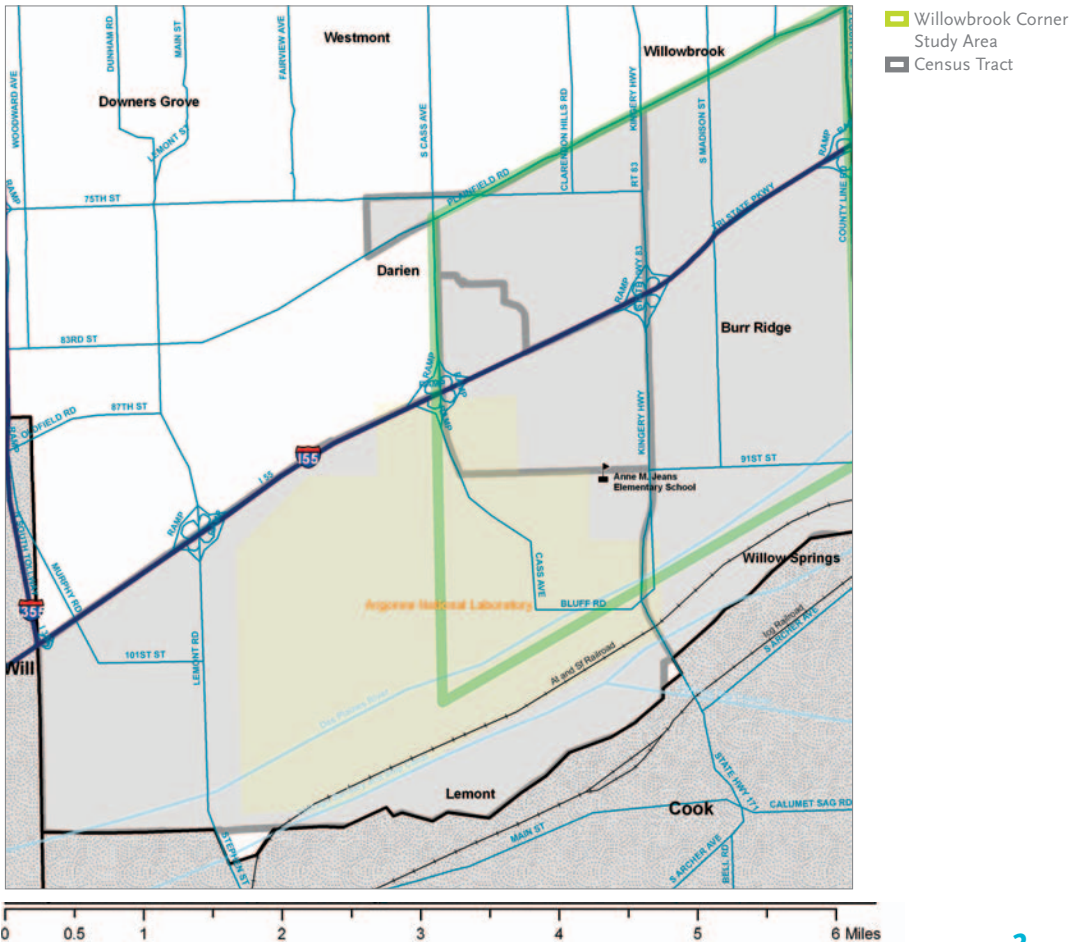
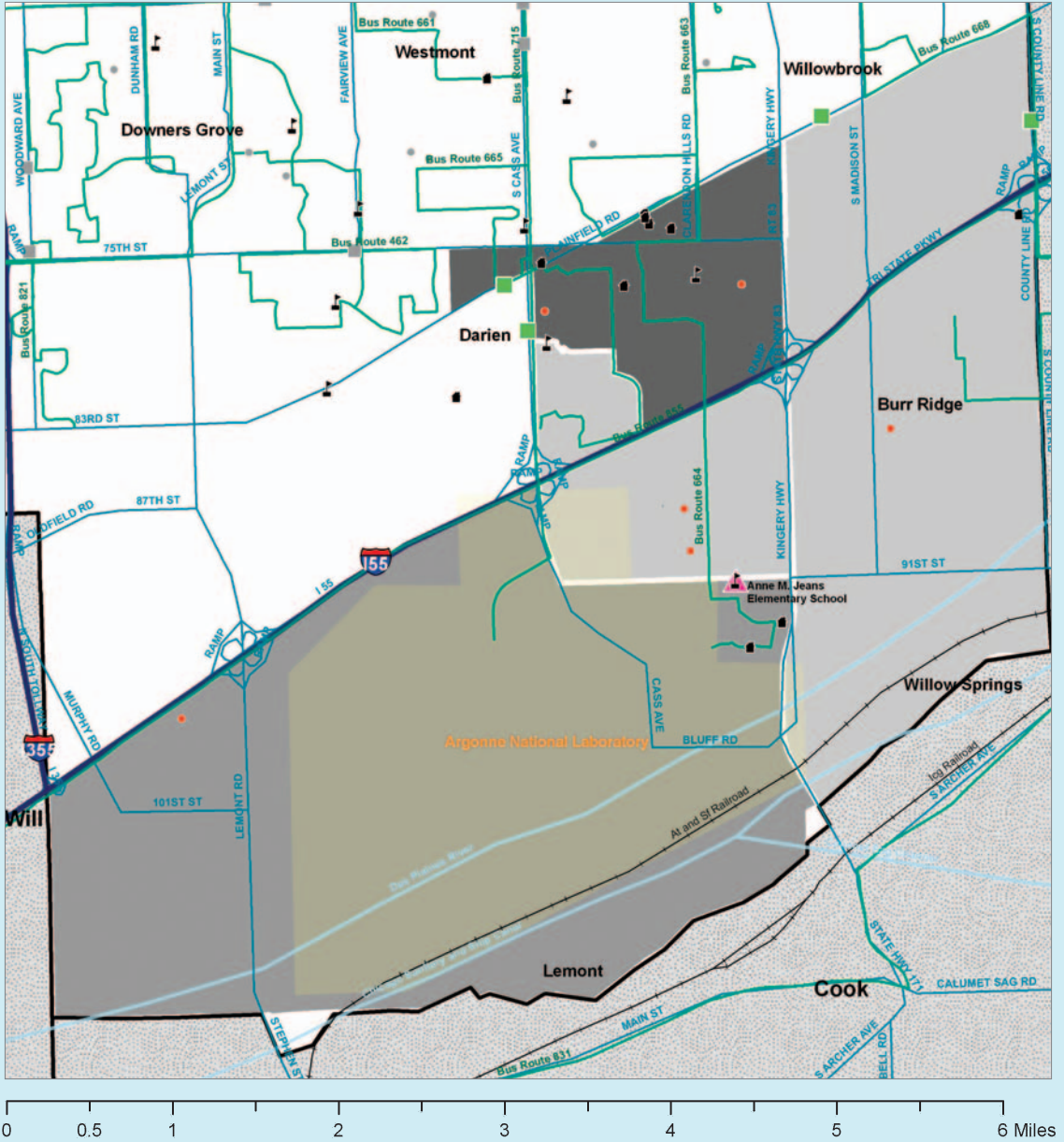


Figure 2
Willowbrook Corner Estimated 2005 Demand
for Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care



2005 Demand for Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care

- 99 - 150 children
- 151 - 200 children
- 201 - 224 children

Target Area Providers

- Licensed, License-Exempt Center
- Licensed Child Care Home
- Preschool for All

Elementary School

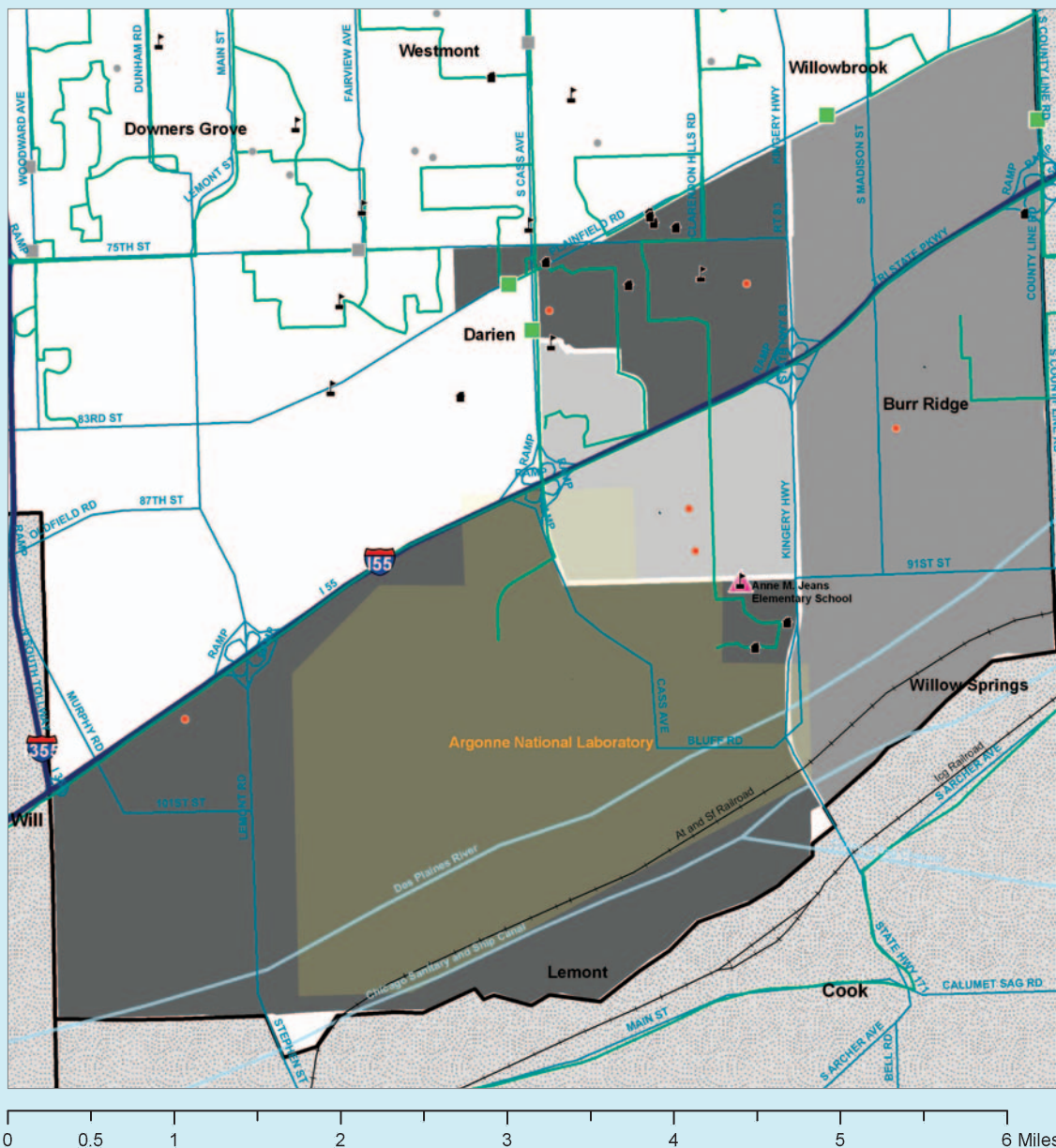
- Apartment Complex
- Major Road
- Bus Route

Other Providers

- Licensed, License-Exempt Center
- Licensed Child Care Home

Figure 3

Willowbrook Corner Estimated Number of Low-Income Children in 2005



Estimated Number of Low-Income Children in 2005

- 13 - 50 children
- 51 - 75 children
- 76 - 99 children

Target Area Providers

- Licensed, License-Exempt Center
- Licensed Child Care Home
- Preschool for All Grantee

- Elementary School
- Apartment Complex
- Major Road
- Bus Route

Other Providers

- Licensed, License-Exempt Center
- Licensed Child Care Home

The Children of Willowbrook Corner and Their Families

The first step in any community planning initiative is to collect relevant data on the need for and availability of services in the community. This is often a challenging task, as data are often not available in the formats or by the community area breakdown that would be most useful. For this project, estimates of the number of children in need and the services available were calculated for the three census tracts that intersect the Burr Ridge School District 180 boundaries, and one additional census tract just north of the school district. Altogether, this area includes more than three times the number of children in District 180 itself. Where possible, estimates of the number of children and services within District 180 boundaries and in each census track are provided.

Number of children: Getting an accurate picture of young residents in a community can be difficult, especially more than six years after the last census. IFF took several steps to estimate the current population and its characteristics, including using 2005 population estimates from ESRI and school data on students' eligibility for Free and Reduced Price Lunch. According to these updated data sources, the Willowbrook Corner area is home to approximately 1,745 children from birth through age five. This includes approximately 840 children under two and 905 children between three and five. About one-third of all of these children live within the Burr Ridge School District 180 boundaries. The Methodology section on page 20 provides additional details on the methods used for all supply and demand estimates included in this report.

The need for child care: IFF estimated the number of children who, because of the work status of their parents, need full-day, full-year child care and do not have a relative or friend available to provide care. In the Willowbrook Corner Area, there are over 600 children from birth through age five who need full-day, full-year child care. Of these, approximately 300 are infants through age two and 300 are age three through five. About one-third of all of these children (or approximately 200 children under age six needing full-day, full-year care) live within the Burr Ridge School District 180 boundaries.

In addition, there are many families who need child care for their children on a part-time or episodic basis. Many parents work only a few months each year, and others work nontraditional or highly varied work schedules. Center-based child care may not meet these families' needs; instead, they are more likely to rely on informal "family, friend and neighbor" care.

The need for subsidized child care: At least 125 children from birth through age five in the Willowbrook Corner Area need full-day, full-year child care and would qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP, see Early Childhood Care and Education Service Types and Funding Streams), including about 60 children from birth through two years and 65 children ages three through five.

According to the Task Force members there is also a substantial number of children in Willowbrook Corner who need full-day, full-year care but whose families do not qualify for CCAP because their parents are disabled and not working. Many of these families have recently relocated to Willowbrook from public housing developments in Chicago. These families face paying market rates of \$200 to \$250 per week per child for center-based child care – rates that are often beyond their reach. As a result, many older children are not participating in after school programs because they are needed to care for their younger siblings at home.

The need for Preschool for All and Head Start: Of all the young children in the Willowbrook Corner Area (four census tract areas), an estimated 13 percent live in families with low incomes, defined as below 185 percent of Federal Poverty Level (the eligibility cut-off for Free and Reduced Price Lunch and Medicaid/WIC services). As previously noted, approximately 70 percent of children enrolled in Anne M. Jeans Elementary School are from low-income families. Of the 590 three- and four-year-old children in the area, at least 80 qualify as high-priority for Preschool for All based on their family income. With the area’s recent low-income population growth, this number may have increased to as many as 140 high-priority three- and four-year olds. Furthermore, approximately 65 three- and four-year-olds and 50 children from birth to three years are in families with incomes low enough to qualify for Head Start or Early Head Start.

Other family characteristics: As noted above, Willowbrook Corner has been changing rapidly over the past few years. There has been a large influx of families displaced from public housing in Chicago, including many single parent families where the parent is unemployed and/or disabled. The Task Force participants noted that many of these parents are unaware of the early learning opportunities available for their young children in this community. Enrolling children in early childhood education programs may take low priority, both because the family is concentrating on getting settled in their new home, and because the parents may not understand the importance of early learning.

Summary of Needs:

- Willowbrook Corner is a rapidly changing community with more and more local children needing state-funded child care and early learning programs.
- Over 600 children need full-day, full-year child care.
- Approximately 125 area children qualify for the state-subsidized Child Care Assistance Program according to census data. Enrollment trends at the local Anne M. Jeans Elementary School suggest that this number is growing.
- There are nearly 600 preschoolers in the area. As many as 140 in the area surrounding Anne M. Jeans may qualify as high-priority for Preschool for All.

Current Programs and Services

Child Care: The Willowbrook Corner Area has a substantial base of licensed child care providers, including four child care centers and eight licensed family child care homes. Together, these centers and homes can provide care for approximately 464 children from birth through five. However, this represents only 75 percent of the estimated need for full-day, full-year care. Furthermore, almost all of the licensed child care in the area is located more than two miles from the Hinsdale Lake Terrace apartment complex where many low-income families with young children live (see Figure 4). According to Task Force participants, these centers and homes are not easily accessed by families.

Child care centers in the community report vacancy rates of 20 to 40 percent, indicating that there is some capacity to serve more children than are currently enrolled. In addition, two child care centers indicated that they have additional space in their facility and could open additional classrooms if there were sufficient demand. However, these centers are among those that are nearly two miles away from the area of highest unmet need.

Subsidized Child Care: All of the child care centers in the area accept Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) certificates as payment for child care, although most require parents to pay an additional \$20 or more per week per child above the state-required co-pay to partially offset the difference between the provider's current market rates and the state reimbursement rate. The four centers differ widely in the proportion of subsidized families they serve. In three centers, less than 25 percent of the children they serve are receiving subsidies. Yet, in one center, as many as 65 percent of the children enrolled are subsidized.

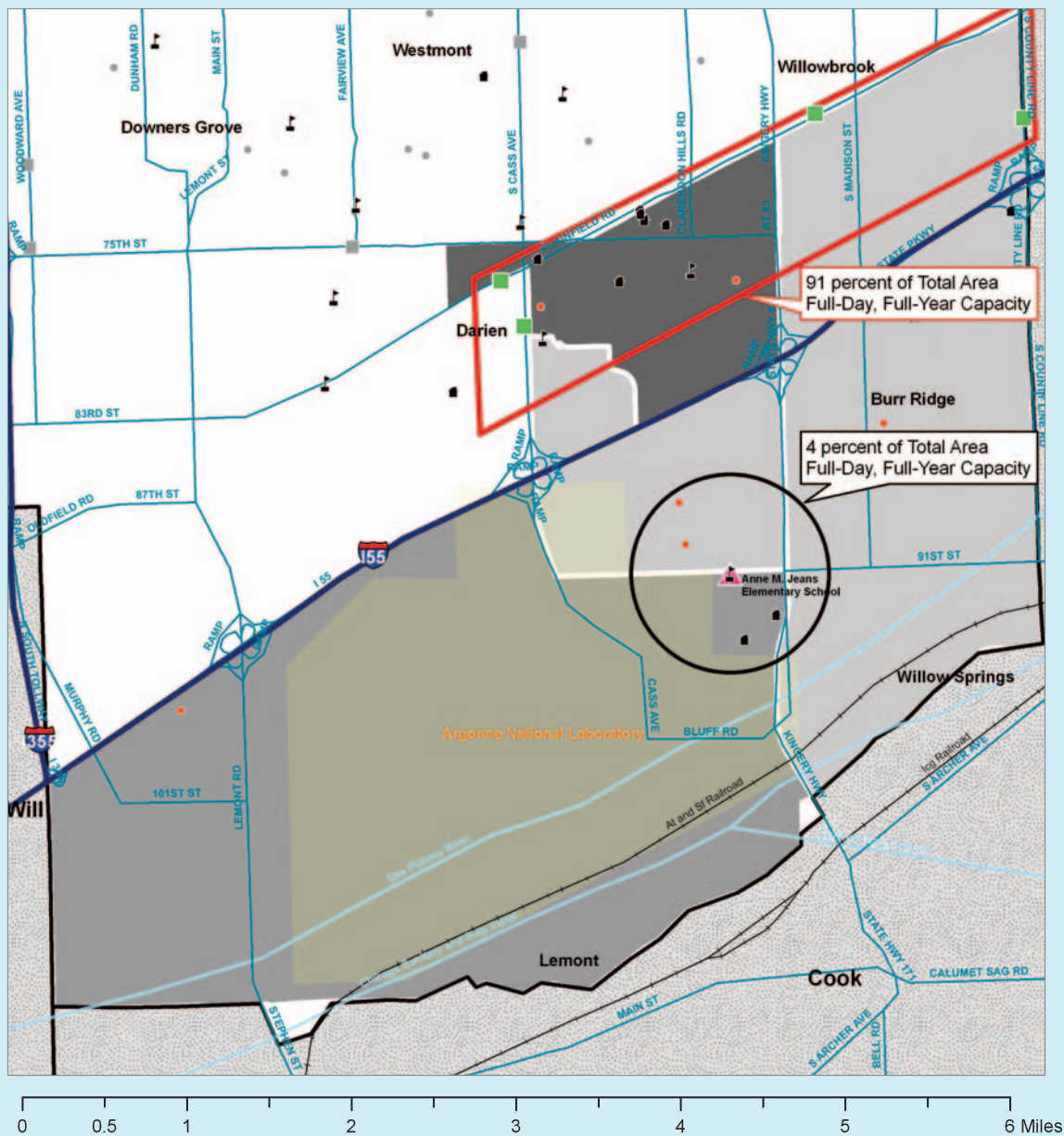
Preschool for All: Burr Ridge School District 180 has a Preschool for All program that serves 40 three- and four-year-olds in a half-day program. At the end of the 2006-07 school year, this program had a waiting list of nearly 40 children who qualify for priority admission based on family income or risk factors. Neighboring Cass School District 63 also has a Preschool for All program, while Darien School District 61 and Gower School District 62 do not.

Head Start: Lifelink Head Start serves a few Willowbrook Corner children through its home-based program, but no children living in the target area participate in center-based Head Start.

Summary of Current Programs and Services:

- Area child care centers and licensed family homes can provide care to approximately 464 children, but many have vacancies and are located more than two miles from the highest need area.
- Though all local providers will accept Child Care Assistance Program subsidies, most charge families additional fees to bridge the gap between the state reimbursement rate and their market rate, putting licensed child care out of reach for many families.
- Only 80 area preschoolers can be served by area Preschool for All programs.

Figure 4
 Willowbrook Corner Estimated 2005 Demand
 for Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care



2005 Demand for Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care

- 99 - 150 children
- 151 - 200 children
- 201 - 224 children

Target Area Providers

- Licensed, License-Exempt Center
- Licensed Child Care Home
- Preschool for All

- Elementary School
- Apartment Complex
- Major Road
- Bus Route

Other Providers

- Licensed, License-Exempt Center
- Licensed Child Care Home

Critical Service Gaps and Barriers

Availability of Early Childhood Education: Burr Ridge School District 180 has identified increasing children’s preparedness for kindergarten as a key strategy for ensuring their success in school. Currently there is not enough publicly-funded preschool education in the Willowbrook Corner Area to serve all of the preschool-aged children. With as many as 140 preschoolers in low-income families, and many children with other risk factors such as low parental education, there is a substantial need for additional no-cost preschool. Both half-day programs and programs integrated with full-day child care are needed.

The primary obstacle to providing more early childhood education has been a lack of appropriate space for additional preschool classes. While program operating funds could likely be obtained through a Preschool for All expansion grant, and The Community House has identified some funding for acquiring and renovating space, neither The Community House nor the school district have been able to find an appropriate location that is available for purchase or lease.

Coordination Between Early Childhood Care and Formal Preschool: Currently there are no programs in the Willowbrook Corner Area that integrate Head Start or Preschool for All with full-day, full-year child care. Families that need full-day care but also want their child to participate in a formal preschool program must make arrangements with a center, family child care provider, or a relative or neighbor to provide before and after preschool care, often including transportation to and from school.

A coordinated program between formal preschool and family child care (both licensed care and informal “family, friend and neighbor” care) would allow for greater learning opportunities for young children. Publicly-funded preschools typically provide only 2.5 to 3.5 hours per day of instruction, but research shows that more intensive services (six hours per day or more) are more effective at helping prepare children for success in school.¹ Intentional linkages between the classroom and home child care providers, including shared curriculum and learning materials, training for child care providers, and ongoing communication, can extend children’s learning throughout the hours they are in care. The Illinois State Board of Education encourages the development of these linkages in Preschool for All programs.

Transportation: Another key need identified by the Task Force was for transportation to and from early childhood education and care programs. The Willowbrook Corner area has no public transportation, and it is often difficult for families to bring their children to early childhood programs. Many families in the target area live within walking distance of the elementary school, which houses the Preschool for All program. However, additional transportation resources are needed, especially for families with infants and toddlers and those who need full-day, full-year care.

Availability of full-day child care: Only 464 children needing full-day child care can be served by existing community programs, leaving approximately 150 children without good options (see chart on page 11). The unmet demand is not only for subsidized child care, but for all family income levels, and is most critical in the area near the Hindsdale Lake Terrace Apartments and Anne M. Jeans School, where there are very few providers. The community needs approximately 100 more slots of licensed infant/toddler care and 50 more slots of licensed care for children ages three through five. Ideally, these expanded child care services should be educationally enhanced and integrated with Preschool for All and/or Head Start services.

¹ Robin, K. B., Frede, E. C., & Barnett, W. S. (2006). *Is more better? The effects of full-day vs. half-day preschool on early school achievement*. New Brunswick, NJ: NIEER. Available at <http://nieer.org/resources/research/IsMoreBetter.pdf>.

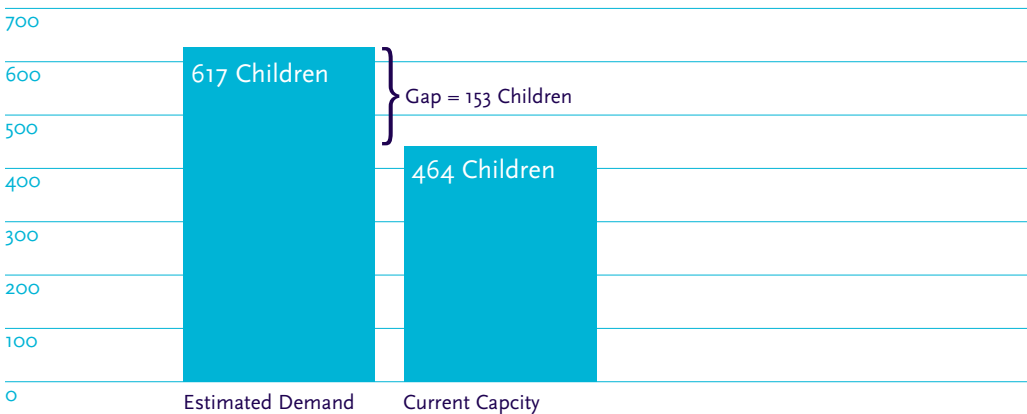
Affordability of child care: As previously noted, many families in the Willowbrook Corner Area who need full-day, full-year care for their children cannot afford to pay the market rates for quality licensed care. For the many families who are over the income eligibility cut-off for CCAP or who are on disability, the cost of licensed child care could exceed half the families' income.

Awareness of and Access to Child Care Assistance: The Task Force noted that many families who qualify for CCAP are not aware of the program and do not know how to apply for this assistance. Social service providers in the community, including school social workers, have limited knowledge about the program and its eligibility requirements. In addition, families frequently have difficulty accessing CCAP when they do attempt to apply for it. The application process is complicated, and according to the YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral, as many as 90 percent of first time applications are incomplete and must be returned to the applicant for additional information. Once fully completed, the application can take two to three weeks to be approved. As a result, families who urgently need child care typically face a long wait to receive CCAP. Child care providers are very reluctant to allow families to enroll their child in care until the CCAP approval has been received, unless the family pays the full market rate for care.

Summary: Critical Service Gaps and Barriers

- Preschool for All programs cannot meet the community's growing needs. Only 80 of 590 area preschoolers can currently be served.
- Child care is not affordable for many families. Available programs are both expensive and located outside of the highest need areas.
- Eligible families are not applying for subsidized child care. Many families may not know about the program or struggle to complete the required paperwork.

Estimated 2005 Demand & Current Capacity for Full-Day, Full-Year Care



Strategies for Meeting the Needs

The Willowbrook Corner Task Force identified four primary goals for strengthening the early education and care system in the community, as well as specific strategies for accomplishing each goal.

Develop both short-term and long-term solutions to space needs so that District 180 can apply for additional Preschool for All funds for FY09 and beyond

- **Burr Ridge School District 180** will investigate the possibility of running three sessions of preschool per day in its current preschool classroom at Anne M. Jeans School, as well as the long-term feasibility of building an addition to the school to accommodate more early childhood and/or after school programming.
- **Burr Ridge School District 180 and local child care providers** will investigate the possibility of housing Preschool for All services at nearby child care centers, either integrated within the centers' full day programs, or as a part-day program in a designated classroom.
- **IFF will assist The Community House and the Burr Ridge School District** in conducting a feasibility study to assess options for a new or expanded facility and determine the details of what a new facility would include (e.g., early childhood education, after school programs, etc.), funding requirements and sources, and possible locations.

Increase awareness and use of CCAP, Head Start, and early childhood services

- **Positive Parenting DuPage and the Willowbrook Corner Coalition** will work with local providers to create informational materials about the early childhood services available in the community and implement a plan to distribute them. These may include brochures and "talking points" for local service providers who can help share information about these services with families. A resource directory with contact names and phone numbers for programs will be developed and distributed to a wide range of local service providers.

- **The YWCA Child Care Resource & Referral**, together with Positive Parenting DuPage, will conduct trainings for social service and child care providers in the community on how to effectively help parents apply for and receive CCAP.
- **Local service providers** will learn about CCAP, Head Start, and the District 180 preschool program, and will be prepared to assist families in completing their applications for the CCAP program.

Increase accessibility of available slots in local child care programs

- **The Community House**, together with other Task Force members, will explore the potential to develop a proposal for a scholarship fund to help those families unable to pay the child care co-pay (especially amounts above the state-mandated co-pay), and to help families begin child care immediately rather than waiting for notification of eligibility for CCAP.
- **The Willowbrook Corner Coalition** will conduct focus groups of working parents in the Hinsdale Lake Terrace apartment complex who do and do not use local child care centers to better understand barriers to using center-based care, and develop strategies for linking more families who could benefit from center based child care with available services.
- **Local child care providers and Burr Ridge School District 180** will investigate options for providing transportation to child care centers from apartment complexes.

Create an ongoing forum for discussion of birth to five early childhood care and education issues in the Willowbrook Corner Area.

- **The Willowbrook Corner Coalition**, a group of community agencies (schools, apartment complex management, Health Department, and social service providers) that meets regularly to address community needs, will include early childhood issues as part of its agenda at each meeting.
- **Positive Parenting DuPage** will support the Coalition in addressing identified early childhood needs.

To get involved with any of these initiatives, contact Positive Parenting DuPage at 1-877-411-PARENT or visit positiveparentingdupage.org

Early Care and Education Services in Illinois

Early childhood care and education in Illinois is comprised of many parts, including for-profit and nonprofit child care centers, public and private preschool programs, and both licensed and license-exempt home child care providers. Each of these has a distinct role in ensuring that all families have access to high quality, enriching care and education for their young children.

License-exempt home care: Called “kith and kin care,” or “family-friend-and-neighbor care,” this type of child care offers many benefits and fulfills an important need for many families. A license-exempt provider is typically a relative, neighbor, or family friend who cares for the child either in the child’s home or the provider’s home. No licensing is required to receive reimbursement through the Child Care Assistance Program as long as the provider cares for no more than three unrelated children at a time (including the provider’s own children) or cares only for children from one family. Providers are required only to pass a child abuse and neglect background check. Parents can arrange for care at odd hours, such as weekends or night shifts, and providers can accommodate the variable work schedules that are common among low-wage jobs. Many parents feel most comfortable leaving their children in the care of family and friends, particularly when their children are infants or toddlers. For non-English-speaking families, license-exempt care may be the only type of care available where the provider speaks the family’s language and shares their culture. License-exempt care can also be the most affordable for parents, as some license-exempt providers (especially family members) waive the parent’s co-pay and charge only the minimal funding provided by the IDHS subsidy program.

Licensed home care: Licensed family child care providers can legally care for up to eight children (or up to 12 with an assistant) in the provider’s home. They must meet requirements established by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), including passing a home safety inspection, keeping required records of children’s immunizations and physical exams, and receiving certification in first aid and CPR. In addition, licensed providers must complete at least 15 clock hours of professional development each year.

Like license-exempt providers, licensed family child care providers may be able to meet parents’ need for care during non-traditional hours or with changing schedules, and may be conveniently located in the family’s neighborhood. Licensed providers, however, do tend to be more formal than license-exempt providers, and may require parents to commit to a regular, full-time schedule. Licensed providers are not specifically required to engage in learning activities with children, though they must have developmentally appropriate toys and books available for children. Some licensed providers are part of networks that provide high-quality early learning materials and training for caregivers in how to effectively support children’s development.

Licensed center-based care: Licensed child care centers are operated by a wide range of nonprofit community organizations, faith-based organizations, and for-profit small businesses and large corporations. Like licensed home care providers, center-based programs must have available appropriate books and toys for children. Lead teachers are required to have at least one year of college including six semester hours in child development or early childhood education and one year of experience as a teacher's assistant (or a two-year college degree), and center directors must have at least 18 semester hours in child development or early education. Programs are not required to provide any health or social services for children and families, although often child care centers are linked with a parent organization that provides a wider range of social services and supports.

Center-based programs provide parents with a reliable source of child care, particularly for those parents who work a traditional full-time schedule. Program operators typically have rich, deep ties to the communities they serve, and are able to identify and respond to changing needs among families. However, center-based programs often have little flexibility to support the changeable and non-traditional work schedules associated with many low-income jobs.

Public and private part-day preschool: Traditional part-day preschool programs offer an educational experience to children ages three and four in a classroom setting. The qualifications of the teaching staff in private preschool programs (including many faith-based preschools) varies widely, with some staff having only a few courses in early childhood education and others possessing a Master's Degree in Early Childhood. In publicly-funded preschool programs like Head Start and Preschool for All (see Key Funding Streams and Their Requirements), the requirements for teacher qualifications and program curriculum are typically more stringent.

Combined Program Models: Child care services combined with traditional preschool programs offer the best in early childhood care and education for children and families. For example, child care centers can integrate either (or both) Head Start and Preschool for All into their full-day program.

Key Funding Streams and Their Requirements

Child Care Assistance Program

The Illinois Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) was created to ensure that low-income parents have access to affordable child care so they can remain in the workforce and, ultimately, to ensure that young children have access to high quality early care and education, regardless of their family's income or geographic location. The program is administered by the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) and is funded through the federal Child Care and Development Block Grant, TANF funds, and State General Revenue. In order to qualify for assistance, a family must have an income below 50 percent of the State Median Income, or \$36,184 for a family of four in 2006, and be engaged in an allowable activity (such as work or certain education and training activities, including high school for teen parents). The subsidy will pay for care that is provided during the hours reasonably associated with the parent's work/school schedule, including transportation and study time. Reimbursement is made at a half-day rate for less than five hours per day of care, and at the full-day rate for more than five hours. Thus, to qualify for a full-day, center-based program, parents must be engaged in an allowable activity for at least five hours per day. Eligibility is typically re-determined every six months, and families can lose eligibility if their income rises above the income cut-off or if they lose their job. All families are required to contribute a co-payment for their child's care that is based on their income and the number of children they have in care who also receive a subsidy. This co-pay can be as high as 12 percent of the family's gross income; a single mother who earns \$1,850 per month and has two children in care would have to contribute a co-pay of \$222 each month.

Eligible families in the Willowbrook Corner Area can access subsidized care through the YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral. Families receive a Child Care Assistance "certificate" and can choose from a wide range of child care services, including licensed center-based care, licensed family day care homes, or legally license-exempt care (usually care by a relative or care in the child's own home). Providers must meet all state licensing standards, or in the case of license-exempt care, pass a child abuse and neglect-focused background check. IDHS pays a daily rate to child care providers that varies by the type and location of the providers. This ranges from a low of \$11.29 per day for license-exempt home providers to a high of \$37.61 per day for infants and \$26.20 per day for preschoolers for a center-based program serving preschoolers in DuPage County. This rate is reduced by the amount of the required parent co-pay. Subsidies are provided only for those days children actually attend and parents are engaged in an allowable activity (centers are reimbursed for all days the child is eligible as long as the child maintains 80 percent attendance).

Head Start: Head Start is a federally-funded program administered in DuPage County by Lifelink that provides a comprehensive set of educational, health, and social services to children age three to five and their families in an effort to "break the cycle of poverty" and improve children's chances for success in school and later life. Participants' household income must be below the poverty line (currently \$19,350 for a family of four) or they must be receiving TANF or SSI benefits to qualify for the program, although once a child is enrolled he or she can remain in the program until kindergarten entry even if the family's income rises.

Head Start programs must comply with the Head Start Performance Standards, a set of federal regulations that require the provision of a wide range of health, nutrition, mental health, special needs, and social services to enrolled children and their families. The Head Start program employs several staff members in addition to classroom staff in order to provide these services. Federal funds cover the cost of a half-day (3.5 hour day, 4 day week) center-based program.

Preschool for All: Preschool for All is a state-funded program that grew out of a successful 20-year state prekindergarten program. Funded with General Revenue dollars and administered through the Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Block Grant, Preschool for All provides funding for a half-day, school year program for children ages three and four. While funding priority in funding to programs serving a majority of “at-risk” children, all children are eligible to participate in Preschool for All.

Preschool for All programs may be operated by school districts or a wide range of community-based organizations, including nonprofit and for-profit child care providers. While state funding provides for only 2.5 instructional hours, Preschool for All can be integrated into a full-day, full-year child care program. Programs must use a research-based curriculum, and must have Type-04 (Early Childhood) certified teachers.

Methodology

This report analyzes the supply and demand for and geographical distribution of early childhood education and care resources in the Willowbrook Corner Area. Providing this picture requires the assessment of the overall need for full-day, full-year child care for all children regardless of income, as well as the need for publicly-funded early childhood education and care programs, including the Child Care Assistance Program (both licensed and license-exempt), Head Start/Early Head Start, the Illinois Pre-K program, and the Illinois Preschool for All program.

The IFF determines “demand” by combining updated 2005 population data acquired from ESRI with Census 2000 data on the work status of parents, family income, and other program-specific eligibility requirements, depending on the category of care or education.

- Full-day, full-year child care demand includes all children from birth through five in working families after removing a fraction to reflect families that work split shifts or have other family members care for their children based on estimates adapted from the Urban Institute’s National Child Care Survey.
- Subsidized child care demand includes all children from birth through five in working families with incomes at or below 185 percent of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) after removing a fraction to reflect families that work split shifts or have other family members care for their children.
- Head Start and Early Head Start demand include children from birth through two and three through five, respectively, whose family income is at or below the FPL.
- Pre-K demand includes three- and four-year-olds living in families with incomes below 185 percent of the FPL. This estimate produces a quantifiable number of at-risk children based solely on income, but does not account for other determinants of Pre-K eligibility. This income threshold is used because it is a familiar benchmark in other school aid programs such as Title I and school lunch; however, the IFF recognizes that school districts may set other admissions guidelines at their discretion.
- Preschool for All demand includes all three- and four-year-olds, reflecting the broad goal of the program.

“Supply,” for the purposes of this report, means the number of spaces or slots in the different types of care or education settings available to the target population of children, including licensed child care centers, licensed family child care homes, and license-exempt child care centers (schools, colleges and governmental facilities).

Data on slots were provided by the YWCA Child Care Resource and Referral in May 2007. IFF surveyed area providers in June 2007 to update and expand upon the data provided by the YWCA.

IFF analyzed the demand and supply information for the four census tracts that include the area bounded by Plainfield Road to the north, County Line Road to the east, the Canal to the south, and Cass Ave to the west. Providers located in the target census tracts and/or within .25 miles of the census tracts are included in the analysis.

Glossary

Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP)	Illinois Department of Human Services program that subsidizes child care for low-income working families.
Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R)	Illinois Department of Human Services-funded system for providing child care referrals to parents and training to child care providers.
DCFS	Department of Child and Family Services: state agency with primary mission of protecting children from abuse and neglect; responsible for licensing child care centers and family day care homes.
Early Childhood Block Grant	Mechanism for funding Preschool for All, Parental Training, and Prevention Initiative programs.
Early Childhood Care and Education	For this report, Early Childhood Care and Education refers to the system of programs that support children's early learning needs and includes full-day, full-year child care programs, preschool programs, and Head Start.
Full-Day, Full-Year Child Care	Child care that is available throughout normal business hours and is open all year long.
Head Start	US Department of Health and Human Services-funded program for children in poverty; provides education, health, nutrition, and social services to eligible children ages three through kindergarten entry and their families.
Licensed child care	Care provided by a center or home that has been licensed by DCFS.
License-exempt care	Care provided by a center or home that is legally exempt from DCFS licensure; license-exempt home providers are typically relatives or close family friends who care for no more than three children.
Home Child Care Provider	A child care provider who cares for children in a private home. Licensed home child care providers follow the regulations of DCFS and may care for only a limited number of children.
Preschool for All	A state-funded program that provides free preschool to children ages three and four with priority given to children who are at-risk for educational challenges. Administered through the Illinois State Board of Education Early Childhood Block Grant.
Willowbrook Corner Area	For this report, the Willowbrook Corner Area refers to the area roughly bounded by Plainfield Road to the north, County Line Road to the east, the canal to the south, and Cass Ave to the west.
Slots	Number of spaces available, or the number of children a program or center can accommodate at full capacity.
Subsidy	Child care assistance for low-income working families.
Task Force	The group of individuals in each community who met regularly and contributed to the development of this report.

Task Force Members

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